

Supplementary Material

Chapter 5: The Jacksonian Era – Foundations/Principles

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**Public Interest Groups in Jacksonian America: The American Temperance Society and the American Anti-Slavery Society**

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*The first enduring public interest groups were formed during the Jacksonian Era. The American Anti-Slavery Society, formed in 1833, is the best known of these associations. Led by William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist members of that organization urged Americans to free their slaves. The American Temperance Society, formed in 1826, was the largest public interest group in Jacksonian America. That organization had over one million members by the mid-1830s. In sharp contrast to the American Anti-Slavery Association, many prominent politicians were happy to be identified with the American Temperance Society.*

*Consider the following questions when reading excerpts from the constitutions of these organizations. Why did public interest associations play such an important role in constitutional politics during the Jacksonian Era? How do public interest organizations differ from political parties when engaging in constitutional politics?*

*Constitution of the American Temperance Society (1835)<sup>1</sup>*

As the use of Ardent Spirit, is not only unnecessary, but injurious, as it tends to pauperism, crime, and wretchedness; to hinder the efficacy of all means for the intellectual and moral benefit of society, and also to endanger the purity and permanence of our free institutions; and as one of the best means for counteracting its deleterious effects, is the influence of United Example, Therefore, we, members of Congress, and others, recognizing the principle of abstinence from the use of Ardent Spirit, and from the traffic in it, as the basis of our Union, do hereby agree to form ourselves into a society, and for this purpose adopt the following Constitution. . . .

...

*Constitution of the American Anti-Slavery Society (1861)<sup>2</sup>*

Whereas, the Most High God "hath made of one blood of all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth," and hath commanded them to love their neighbors as themselves; and whereas, our National existence is based upon this principle, as recognized in the Declaration of Independence, "that all mankind are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;" and whereas, after the lapse of nearly sixty years, since the faith and honor of the American people were pledged to this avowal, before Almighty God and the World, nearly one-sixth part of the nation are held in bondage by their fellow-citizens; and whereas, Slavery is contrary to the principles of natural justice, of our republican form of government, and of the Christian religion, and is destructive of the prosperity of the country, while it is endangering the peace, union, and liberties of the States; and whereas, we believe it the duty and interest of the masters immediately to emancipate their slaves, and that no scheme of expatriation, either voluntary or

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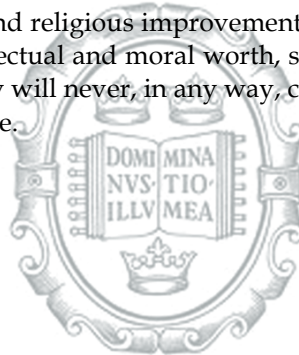
<sup>1</sup> American Temperance Society, *Permanent Temperance Documents of the American Temperance Society*, vol. I (Boston, MA: Seth Bliss, 1835), 329.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpted from *Declaration of Sentiments and Constitution of the American Anti-Slavery Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 1861).

by compulsion, can remove this great and increasing evil; and whereas, we believe that it is practicable, by appeals to the consciences, hearts, and interests of the people, to awaken a public sentiment throughout the nation that will be opposed to the continuance of Slavery in any part of the Republic, and by effecting the speedy abolition of Slavery, prevent a general convulsion, we believe we owe it to the oppressed, to our fellow-citizens who hold slaves, to our whole country, to posterity, and to God, to do all that is lawfully in our power to bring about the extinction of Slavery, we do hereby agree, with a prayerful reliance on the Divine aid, to form ourselves into a Society, to be governed by the following Constitution:

...  
Article II: The object of this Society is the entire abolition of Slavery in the United States. It shall aim to convince our fellow citizens, by arguments addressed to their understandings and consciences, that Slaveholding is a heinous crime in the sight of God, and that the duty, safety, and best interests of all concerned, require its immediate abandonment, without expatriation. The Society, will also, endeavor, in a constitutional way, to influence Congress to put an end to the domestic Slave trade, and to abolish Slavery in all those portions of our common country which come under its control, especially in the District of Columbia,—and likewise to prevent the extension of it to any State that may be hereafter admitted to the Union.

Article III: This Society shall aim to elevate the character and condition of the people of color, by encouraging their intellectual, moral, and religious improvement, and by removing public prejudice, that thus they may, according to their intellectual and moral worth, share an equality with the whites, of civil and religious privileges; but this Society will never, in any way, countenance the oppressed in vindicating their rights by resorting to physical force.



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