The Brownsville Episode and the Negro Vote

By Emma Lou Thornbrough

By 1900 the number of Negro voters in some northern cities was large enough to constitute the balance of power between the major political parties. Nevertheless, Negroes seldom enjoyed political recognition proportionate to their numbers. Because of their record of unswerving loyalty to the party of Lincoln, Republican leaders tended to take their support for granted, and few Democrats made a serious bid for Negro votes. Although the habit of voting a straight Republican ticket continued into the twentieth century, there were signs of increasing disillusionment among Negroes for the failure of the party to protect their rights in the South. Hopes of Negroes for more equitable treatment were raised temporarily by gestures in favor of racial equality made by Theodore Roosevelt. By dining with Booker T. Washington, by using the Negro educator as an adviser, and by fighting for the confirmation of a Negro as collector of the port of Charleston, South Carolina, Roosevelt won a personal following among Negroes which none of his recent predecessors had enjoyed. But one incident — the discharging from the United States Army without honor of three companies of Negro troops in November, 1906 — threatened Roosevelt's personal popularity and also raised the possibility of a wholesale defection of Negro voters from the Republican party.

The story of the “shooting up” of the town of Brownsville, Texas, the subsequent discharge of the Negro troops stationed at nearby Fort Brown, and the numerous investigations of the affair has been told elsewhere, although some elements of mystery remain.¹ The

The purpose of this article is to consider the political repercussions that followed the presidential order for the discharge, and especially to examine its effect upon Negro voters. The unprecedented mass discharge grew out of the fact that on the night of August 13, 1906, a group of armed men (whose identity was never established) had "shot up" the town of Brownsville, killing one person and wounding two others. White residents, who had previously shown hostility toward the colored soldiers of the Twenty-fifth Infantry, which had recently been assigned to the Brownsville post, immediately charged them with the outrage. Subsequent investigations by military authorities appeared to confirm that soldiers were responsible, but it was impossible to fix the guilt on any individuals. No one in any of the companies would confess, nor would any member reveal the guilty ones. All steadfastly persisted in maintaining their innocence and in denying any knowledge whatsoever of the raid. In the face of this alleged "conspiracy of silence" the Inspector General of the Army recommended that all the members of the three companies be discharged without honor, even though they included men with records of service ranging up to twenty-five years and six who had won medals of honor. The President, after studying the report of the Inspector General, approved its findings and instructed Secretary of War William Howard Taft to carry out the recommendations for the discharge. The order was not released to the public, however, until November 7, 1906, the day after elections in which Republicans retained control of the House of Representatives.

From first to last Roosevelt insisted that his action was in no way influenced by the fact that the troops were colored, and that he would have acted in exactly the same way had they been white. The effect of his action, however, was to arouse a wave of race feeling, in which extreme advocates of white supremacy exulted in the humiliation of the black troops, while Negroes and their white defenders deplored it. Some southern newspapers which had excoriated the President a few years before for entertaining Booker T. Washington at the White House now applauded him.2 On the other hand, many northern white journals, regardless of their political leanings, were critical of the discharge and especially of its timing. It was widely reported that several Republican congress-

2 The Atlanta Journal, November 8, 1906, for example, termed the discharge "in disgrace" of the entire battalion as "most commendable" because the innocent had tried to shield the guilty.
men, including the President's son-in-law, Nicholas Longworth, could attribute their election to the fact that the discharge was not revealed until after election day. The Waterville (Maine) Sentinel declared that in many northern districts colored voters had turned the tide for the Republicans because of their personal devotion to Roosevelt. "They did not care so much for the local candidates. It was a case of 'we are coming brother Theodore, three hundred thousand strong,' but they would have been coming in different temper had they known that on brother Theodore's desk was an order to disgrace and humiliate the entire colored battalion of the 25th infantry." The Sentinel charged that the President's action did "more credit to his adroitness than to his frankness, and the picture of a President whose chief merit is supposed to lie in his fearless bravery dodging an issue like this one, until after the votes are counted, is not pleasant to look upon, even though it stamps him as a clever politician." 3

The Negro press greeted the President's order with unprecedented bitterness. The main point of attack was that the order applied to the innocent and guilty alike. Negro editors defended the refusal of the soldiers to expose the guilty men, even if they had known their identity, on the grounds that to have done so would have been to turn them over to lynch law. The most distinguished Negro paper, the New York Age, edited by T. Thomas Fortune, attacked the President's action for its flouting of due process. It declared: "It is carrying into the Federal Government the demand of the Southern white devils that innocent and law abiding black men shall help the legal authorities spy out and deliver practically to the mob black men alleged to have committed some sort of crime. The spirit invoked is not only vicious and contrary to the spirit of our Constitution, but it is an outrage upon the rights of citizens who are entitled in civil life to trial by jury and military life to trial by court martial." The Age insisted that "if we cannot get justice in the army, we are not compelled to enter it," and urged that any black man who offered to enlist to fill the place of a discharged soldier should be spurned by other Negroes. 4

In Washington, D. C., the vitriolic Calvin Chase, editor of the Bee, exclaimed: "If this is military discipline, then we say to h...1

3 Waterville (Maine) Sentinel, November 26, 1906. See also Washington Star, November 22, 1906.
4 New York Age, November 8, 1906.
with military discipline.” He, too, defended the soldiers for not betraying the guilty men, and asserted that “had they known and told who the guilty ones were, and they had been delivered up to the Brownsville civil authorities, there would have been a lynching the next night.” Chase was of the opinion that the outcome of the recent elections in the Northeast would have been different if the presidential order had been promulgated earlier, and he predicted that the discharge would have far-reaching political repercussions. The following week he suggested with bitter sarcasm that Roosevelt run for another term “and see how dearly he is loved by the colored citizens of the United States. . . . Jefferson Davis is more honored today than Theodore Roosevelt. Benedict Arnold would have a monument erected to his memory sooner than Theodore Roosevelt.”

Richard W. Thompson, whose weekly column appeared in Negro newspapers throughout the country, wrote from Washington that not since the Supreme Court decision in the civil rights cases in 1883 had Negroes been so aroused, and that had the announcement been made a day earlier “there would have been a disastrous slump in the colored Republican vote.” Writing privately to Emmett J. Scott, secretary to Booker T. Washington, Thompson expressed sorrow that “Roosevelt has made the mistake of his life in that 25th regiment discharge. . . . The South has bewitched Roosevelt as it did McKinley. . . . He may correct this thing, if he takes it in hand and rescinds the order in time. If he stands pat, his name will be anathema with the Negroes from now on.” Other private correspondence arriving at Tuskegee seemed to corroborate this view. From Columbus, Ohio, another Negro newspaperman, Ralph W. Tyler, wrote Booker T. Washington that “the Negroes are deploiting the dictionary of adjectives in their denunciation of the President.” Another correspondent wrote: “Things in Chicago are at fever heat in the race matter. You cannot find a Negro who is not denouncing the President in frightful terms of abuse. I never saw and heard anything like it. Mass meetings are held in which the President’s acts and motives are held up to scorn.”

5 Washington Bee, November 10, November 16, 1906.
In pulpits throughout the country colored congregations heard their ministers attack the President. In New York City the minister of the Olivet Baptist Church indirectly threatened political opposition when he declared: "You have often heard me speak in admiration of the President, but now he has yielded to the ungodly prejudice of the South and has acted as he never would have done with white people." At the Abyssinian Baptist Church the minister made an even less veiled political threat. "The President's decree was signed the day after the election," he said. "He shot us when our gun was empty. But we have two years to work, and our slogan shall be a Republican Congress to protect our people in the South, a Democratic President to resent the insult heaped upon us. Thus shall we answer Theodore Roosevelt, once enshrined in our hearts as Moses, now enshrouded in our scorn as Judas." 8

While ministers, editors, and other would-be race spokesmen were outdoing themselves in denunciation of the President, Booker T. Washington, the best-known and most influential American Negro, was noticeably silent. The situation created by the Brownsville order was not only embarrassing to him but it posed a potential threat to his position as race leader. Although Washington frequently deprecated political activity and disparaged Negro politicians, he himself had become a powerful political figure since Roosevelt had begun to consult him on race matters and southern politics. The fact that the President relied on the educator and ignored Negro political leaders in making appointments aroused resentment among politicians and was one reason for increasing criticism of Washington by members of his own race. At the same time a more fundamental reason for opposition to the "Tuskegee Wizard" was disagreement with his conservatism and his willingness to compromise where the rights of Negroes were concerned. Some of the more intellectual and militant Negroes even charged that his leadership had resulted in betrayal of the best interests of the race.

In spite of Washington's efforts to suppress criticism through control of the Negro press and race organizations, by 1906 opposition to him was becoming organized and vocal. A few Negro newspapers — among which the Boston Guardian, edited by Monroe Trotter, a Harvard graduate, was the most virulent — had opened an at-

tack upon his leadership, while organizations which he could not control were demanding an aggressive fight for civil rights. In the summer of 1905 the Niagara Movement, a forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, had been launched by a group led by W. E. B. DuBois and including Monroe Trotter. The Constitutional League, made up of both whites and Negroes but financed principally by white men, was attempting a fight for recognition of legal and political rights of Negroes. The dominant figure in the League was John E. Milholland, with whom Washington had once been on friendly terms but from whom he was now estranged. The old Afro-American Council, which had been dominated for years by Washington and his friend, T. Thomas Fortune of the New York Age, was no longer under his control. Because Washington was known to have influence with Roosevelt, the discharge of the Negro troops created a situation which his opponents (whom Washington privately referred to as "the enemy") might use to embarrass him and to challenge his leadership.

Washington had advance knowledge of the President's decision to discharge the troops and had written to him asking him to reconsider. But Roosevelt replied: "I could not possibly refrain from acting as regards those colored soldiers. You cannot have any information to give me privately, to which I could pay heed, my dear Mr. Washington, because the information on which I act is that which came out of the investigation itself." Although unable to deter Roosevelt, Washington privately circulated information that he had tried to do so. To one friend he sent a copy of the above letter with the remark: "I did my utmost to prevent his taking the action he did. I feel that I did my full duty in the matter which the enclosed copy of a letter from him will show."  

After his failure with Roosevelt, Washington turned to Secretary of War Taft, with whom he was on cordial terms and whom he hoped to see nominated for the presidency in 1908 if Roosevelt did not seek another term. Washington urged Taft to hold up the discharge until the President returned from a trip to Panama. He expressed the hope that when the President returned some plan might be worked out which would change the feeling of colored people over the discharge. He explained to Taft: "I have never in all my ex-

peririence with the race, experienced a time when the entire people have the feeling that they now have in regard to the administration.” Taft complied with the request, but his plea for delay was rejected by the President. Although Taft had no part in the decision to discharge the troops and was at first a victim of Roosevelt’s impetuosity, he later asserted that he regarded the discharge as “fully sustained by the facts” and he steadfastly refused to question or criticize the action. When Roosevelt returned to the capital later in November, Washington sent Emmett J. Scott to the White House with a message. The contents of this message were not revealed, but whatever they were they did not cause the President to modify his stand.

Washington realized that his own opponents among the Negroes would try to use the President’s action to discredit him. Even though he privately disagreed with that action, he believed that he should not criticize it publicly. He spoke of his dilemma to one of his protégés, Charles Anderson of New York, who owed his appointment by Roosevelt as collector of internal revenue more to the influence of Washington than to the New York politicians. Washington said that it was regrettable that the discharge order had been delayed until after the election and predicted that “the enemy will, as usual, try to blame me for all this. They can talk; I cannot, without being disloyal to our friend, who I mean to stand by throughout his administration.” Anderson in reply expressed regret that their “friend” had not acted upon Washington’s advice and informed him that “the Milholland crowd” were “making the most” of Roosevelt’s action.

Some of Washington’s critics even implied that he was responsible for the troop discharge. For example, the Reverend Clayton Powell, in an address in New York City, after denouncing Roosevelt, said: “It is hard to believe that the man with the big stick disarming and crushing the colored soldiers is the same Theodore Roosevelt who three years ago declared that as long as he was president every man should have a ‘square deal.’ What has caused him to change his stand? Dr. Booker T. Washington is his

10 Washington to Taft, November 20, 1906.
adviser. Some believe that he is responsible for the change in the President's attitude toward the Negro Americans. The awful march of events since the famous Roosevelt-Washington luncheon makes a thoughtful man ask: Has the colored race been sold for a mess of pottage?\footnote{New York Times, December 16, 1906.}

Instead of trying to reply to attacks of this sort Washington began a behind-the-scenes campaign to restrain the denunciation of the President. To Ralph Tyler he wrote: "Of course it was natural that some protest should be made, but I fear there is danger of too much of it. One thing the American people will not stand for any length of time, and that is abuse by any group of people of the President of the United States, and if our people in the North make the mistake of going too far there will be a reaction among the people, and the newspapers who have stood by us. I am doing all I can to check that folly." Shortly thereafter, speaking in a similar vein at a public banquet, he declared: "Civilization soon tires of a race, as of an individual, that continually whines and complains. And, likewise, the country will not tolerate any element in the population abusing and cursing the chief executive." When a group of newspapermen asked him to comment on the discharge of the troops Washington refused, merely saying: "I have nothing to say on that subject. I will not applaud nor condemn."\footnote{Washington to Tyler, December 5, 1906; Springfield Republican, December 26, 1906; Pittsburgh Times, January 4, 1907. In an editorial in the New Orleans Democrat, December 31, 1906, Washington's reticence with regard to the troop discharge was the occasion for sarcastic comment: "It is not the wont of Booker to remain silent when any subject whatsoever is under discussion. . . . Is it possible that the dusky educator does not know 'where he is at'? With the President at one end and the criminal soldiers of his race at the other, is it possible that both ends of the poker are too hot for his handling, and a middle course too confined to give leeway for his utterance?"

Although Washington preferred to ignore the Brownsville matter and sought to make Negroes forget about it, the issue would not die so long as other groups and individuals insisted upon keeping it alive. One of these groups was the Constitutional League, which not only sponsored protest meetings but sent Gilchrist Stewart, a colored lawyer who was active in New York politics, to conduct an investigation of the discharge in an effort to obtain more evidence to place before the President.\footnote{Stewart reported evidence which cast doubt as to whether any of the soldiers had been responsible for the shooting and which raised the question whether there was actually a "conspiracy of silence." New York Evening World, November 26, 1906; Youngstown Telegram, November 27, 1906.} The Afro-American Council also
employed a lawyer to take steps to protect the legal rights of the discharged soldiers.

But the individual who more than anyone else was responsible for keeping the Brownsville affair alive and making a political issue of it was Senator Joseph B. Foraker of Ohio. When Congress met in December, Foraker introduced a resolution calling for the secretary of war to turn over to the Senate all the evidence as to guilt of the soldiers which had led to the discharge. In January, as the result of his prodding, the Senate authorized an investigation by the Committee on Military Affairs. Foraker claimed that the evidence on which Roosevelt had acted was flimsy and untrustworthy, and he himself presented to the Senate persuasive evidence to show that not only was there no "conspiracy of silence," but that it would have been impossible for members of the three companies to have perpetrated the outrage.

Foraker's motives for pressing the inquiry were the subject for much speculation. He himself insisted that his only concern was for the discharged soldiers, who, in his opinion, were the victims of an unjust and probably unconstitutional action on the part of the President. But persons interested in politics concluded that Foraker probably had presidential ambitions and that the investigation would win him Negro support and at the same time embarrass Roosevelt in the event he sought another term. The investigation would also have the effect of putting an obstacle in the way of Foraker's fellow Ohioan, Taft, if Roosevelt did not seek the nomination himself. Taft probably accurately analyzed the situation when he told his brother: "Foraker is determined to make the President as uncomfortable as possible, and incidentally eliminate me from the Ohio situation." 17

Regardless of his motives, Foraker's stand won him enthusiastic support in the Negro press. A few days after the troop discharge had been ordered a Negro paper, the Cleveland Gazette, forecast that the senator would take some steps in behalf of the discharged soldiers. At the same time the Gazette attacked Taft. "It should not be forgotten these days," it pointed out, "that the secretary of war is an Ohioan, the Hon. William H. Taft of Cincinnati. What kind of a member of the U. S. Supreme Court or president of the United States would he make from a race viewpoint. The dismissal

17 Taft to Charles P. Taft, December 26, 1906, Pringle, Life and Times of Taft, I, 326.
of the three companies of the Twenty-fifth infantry was hatched up in his department." Soon afterward the Washington Bee declared: "Mr. Taft may be nominated for President but there is one thing certain, and that is that the colored voters of the country will not support him if nominated." 18

Any possibilty that Roosevelt would attempt to retreat gracefully from the predicament in which he had placed himself by the discharge order vanished when Foraker entered the fray. Characteristically, the President impugned the motives of the Ohio senator and everyone else who criticized his handling of the affair. Foraker's opposition he described as "simply a cloak to cover antagonism to my actions about trusts, swollen fortunes and the like." Newspapers such as the New York Sun which attacked him for discharging the troops did so, he said, because they represented the interests of the "capitalistic reactionaries." The opposition by the leaders of the Constitutional League, John E. Milholland and Andrew B. Humphrey, Republicans who had supported Roosevelt at earlier stages of his political career, he characterized as "wicked and silly agitation" and declared: "These creatures have no place in the Republican party and are entitled to the scorn and abhorrence of every patriotic citizen." He insisted repeatedly that no one who was both honest and intelligent could question the guilt of the soldiers and that anyone who did so was condoning murder and perjury. 19

While continuing to justify the discharge, Roosevelt insisted that he was utterly indifferent to any political consequences. When he learned that Taft was considering the suspension of the discharge order until he returned from Panama he wired that he cared "nothing whatever for the yelling of either the politicians or the sentimentalists." To a personal friend he wrote: "There has been great pressure not only by sentimentalists but by the northern politicians who wish to keep the negro vote. As you know I believe in practical politics... but in a case like this, where the issue is not merely one of naked right and wrong but one of vital concern to the whole country, I will not for one moment consider the political effect." 20

18 Cleveland Gazette, November 17, 1906; Washington Bee, December 22, 1906.
19 Roosevelt to George Spinney, January 22, 1907, Elting E. Morison (ed.), The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt (8 vols., Cambridge, 1931-1954), V, 560; Roosevelt to Herbert Parsons, April 10, 1908, ibid., VI, 999; Roosevelt to Lyman Abbott, May 10, 1908, ibid., 1026.
20 Roosevelt to Taft, November 21, 1906, ibid., V, 498; Roosevelt to Silas McBee, November 27, 1906, ibid., 509. He wrote several letters in similar vein. See, for example, the letter to Curtis Guild, Jr., November 7, 1906, ibid., 489.
In spite of these protestations the President was not unmindful of political consequences and especially of the damage which Foraker might do to him and Taft. He hit upon a scheme which he thought amusing because it would be beating Foraker at his own game. He wrote to Booker T. Washington asking him to recommend the names of one or two colored Republicans, preferably in the Cincinnati area, who would be worthy of appointment to a position such as a collectorship of internal revenue or a surveyorship. A few weeks later there were newspaper reports that, on the recommendation of Washington, Roosevelt intended to name Ralph W. Tyler of Columbus, Ohio, to the position of surveyor of the port of Cincinnati, Foraker's home city.  

Tyler was a part-time journalist and secretary to Robert Wolfe, owner of the Columbus Ohio State Journal and the Columbus Dispatch, both of which were opposed to Foraker. Neither Foraker nor his colleague, Senator Charles W. F. Dick, had been consulted; but, as one newspaper explained, it was a foregone conclusion that they would vote to confirm the appointment "without visible wincing" because there were about 50,000 colored voters in Ohio. Later it was reported that Roosevelt had changed his mind and would not press the appointment because the proposal gave pain to so many white Republicans in Cincinnati. It was said that his son-in-law, Nicholas Longworth, had protested that the naming of a Negro to such a post in his district would mean his political ruin. The intended appointee himself thought that the President's change of heart was due to the fear that the appointment would hurt Taft's candidacy. He had been informed by his employer, he reported, that Roosevelt did not want to antagonize the two senators and thus make it more difficult for Taft to secure the Ohio delegation in 1908. Tyler did not get the surveyorship, but he was appointed an auditor in the Navy Department in Washington, D. C., where his presence would not offend white voters and where, it was hoped, he would be useful in keeping Negroes faithful to the Republican party.  

22 Tyler to Washington, March 14, 1907; Cumberland (Md.) Times, January 31, 1907; Cincinnati Enquirer, April 11, 1907. That Washington had a hand in this blow at Foraker and senatorial courtesy was well known. When a Negro witness named Washington was called before the Senate committee investigating the Brownsville affair someone laughingly inquired whether it was Booker T. At this Foraker was reported to have retorted: "No. Booker Washington is too busy attending to his senatorial duties to come here." Montgomery Advertiser, February 8, 1907.
A few Negro newspapers gave lukewarm endorsement to the naming of Tyler, but others were openly scornful and suspicious. While the appointment was pending the Cleveland Gazette remarked: "There ought not to be, and we trust there is not, a member of the race in Ohio so ungrateful and disloyal as to permit himself to be used by the president of the United States or any other person as a club with which to 'punish' politically the most aggressive and best friend of the race in America today — Senator Foraker — for his efforts in behalf of the race." Later the same paper declared that by naming Tyler the President had "but aggravated the situation in Ohio as far as he and our people are concerned." 23 Calvin Chase, of the Washington Bee, in an open letter to Roosevelt declared that the appointment would not influence Negro voters. "If I was Ralph W. Taylor [sic]," he said, "and Ralph W. Taylor was editor of the Bee I would inform the President that I object to being used as catspaw or a toady to rebuke a man who has been a friend to my race. This appointment, Mr. President, is not a drop in the bucket. It will only influence one vote in the entire state of Ohio and that vote is no doubt doubtful — Ralph W. Taylor." 24

The efforts of Booker T. Washington to repair the damage done by the discharge of the troops extended far beyond the recommendation of Tyler. His confidant, Charles Anderson, warned him that members of the Constitutional League were saying that Foraker's fight would kill Roosevelt's aspirations for another term and "thereby knock out 'the Booker T. Washington Cabinet'." In an effort to hold the loyalty of the Negroes to himself as well as to the administration the Negro educator engineered several other appointments. As the result of his influence Roosevelt named two colored lawyers, William H. Lewis of Boston and S. Laing Williams of Chicago, as special attorneys for naturalization affairs in their respective cities. He also arranged numerous lesser appointments. When two Negroes were named to the board for the improvement of the city of Washington, he wrote to Roosevelt to thank him, assuring him that "these appointments will accomplish a great deal of good at this time." 25

23 Cleveland Gazette, February 9, April 20, 1907. See also New York Age, April 18, 1907; Indianapolis Freeman, February 9, 1907.
24 Washington Bee, April 20, 1907.
25 Anderson to Washington, January 4, 1907; Washington to Roosevelt, May 8, 1907. Both Washington and Anderson tried to discredit the Constitutional League in the eyes of the administration. For example, Washington told George B. Cortelyou,
In view of the fact that Negroes took a particular pride in their record of service in the army, Washington began a campaign to show that the discharge of the troops at Brownsville did not mean that Roosevelt and Taft were opposed to colored troops and their advancement. Emmett Scott, his private secretary, began correspondence with the War Department a few weeks after the discharge order, suggesting that Negroes be allowed to qualify as bandmasters in colored regiments, positions heretofore open only to white persons. Taft replied that he would try to arrange that the suggestion be carried out. After the size of the Field Artillery and the Coast Guard was increased by act of Congress, Washington wrote both Roosevelt and Taft for assurance that Negroes would be recruited to fill some of the posts. As a result of his influence a colored chaplain in Ohio, the principal battleground between Taft and Foraker, was elevated to the rank of major — the first Negro to attain that rank in the regular army.26

Washington’s campaign included arrangements for Taft to speak at a fund-raising meeting for Hampton Institute — a non-political affair at which the Secretary would nonetheless have an opportunity to display his friendship for the colored race. Negro speakers loyal to Washington were also in the field attempting to counteract the attacks upon the administration. For example, Fred R. Moore, the field representative of the Negro Business League, which was completely under Washington’s control, spoke in defense of Roosevelt and insisted that he had done too much good for the race to be repudiated for a single act.27

In spite of these efforts, there were numerous signs throughout 1907 that Foraker’s fight was winning him Negro support, while bitter opposition to Roosevelt and Taft continued to be manifested by the press and by race organizations. Washington himself was attacked because of his support of the administration. Even the New York Age (in which Washington had a secret financial interest) that the League was in reality little more than one man, John E. Milholland. Washington to Cortelyou, January 28, 1907.  

26 Scott to Taft, December 12, 1906; Washington to Roosevelt, March 8, 1907; Washington to Taft, May 31, 1907; Indianapolis Freeman, February 23, 1907; Philadelphia Ledger, September 12, 1907; Cleveland Plain Dealer, September 17, 1907. Taft expressed himself as favorable to the creation of a colored artillery unit but insisted that he could not take action so long as he was subject “to the suspicion of being influenced by political motives,” while the Foraker investigation was in progress. Taft to Washington, February 5, 1908. 

27 Norfolk (Va.) Pilot, January 19, 1907.
terest) criticized the Negro educator for his role in the contest between Foraker and Roosevelt. "In this posture of the contending forces," it said, "we regret exceedingly the wholly selfish use which the President is making of Mr. Washington and the colored people in this battle for political survivorship with Senator Foraker and the powerful interests and classes which he is leading. Neither Mr. Washington nor the colored people of the country can risk the hazard to be moved as mere pawns on this chess board of the President." The Washington Bee more bluntly declared: "The colored American will not support President Roosevelt for the Presidency or any man named by him, and if Prof. Washington cares for the good will and support of the people he should not tell them to be patient and support the President and Secretary Taft." 28

Washington diligently sought to change the tone of the Negro press and was partially successful. In June, 1907, he wrote Arthur I. Vorys of Columbus, Ohio, who was managing the pre-convention campaign for Taft, that he was putting pressure on T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the Age, and a few days later wrote that he was "doing some quiet and effective work" with other colored newspapers to quiet the agitation over Brownsville. His efforts with Fortune were so successful that the Cleveland Gazette (which was probably subsidized by Foraker) began to charge that the Age was being subsidized with Taft money as the result of Washington's influence. It warned: "Politics will yet kill the great Tuskegee school. Mark our prediction! When it does, Mr. Washington will have no one but himself to blame — Taft is too big a load for any person or thing to carry." 29

Meanwhile there were other signs of disaffection. The national convention of the Afro-American Council, meeting in Baltimore in July, approved an address which deplored the dismissal of the Brownsville soldiers as "subversive of fundamental rights." It praised Foraker for championing the black soldiers "against the enormous and unexampled injustice and wanton abuse of executive authority" and promised to help him in his political fight. Members of the Niagara Movement, meeting in Boston the following month, took a pledge to enter politics and to try to unite the Negro

28 New York Age, February 14, 1907; Washington Bee, June 30, 1907.
29 Washington to Arthur I. Vorys, June 26 and July 8, 1907; Cleveland Gazette, July 6, 1907.
race against the Republican party so long as it remained under the leadership of Roosevelt or a Roosevelt man.  

Negro ministers continued their attack upon the administration. Resolutions adopted at the New England conference of colored Methodists declared that the discharge of the colored troops had "done more to arouse our just resentment and unite all elements of our people than any act of any President since Emancipation" and predicted that the action would have political consequences. On the other hand, at the national Negro Baptist convention in Washington, D. C., at which Booker T. Washington was one of the principal speakers, attempts to introduce resolutions condemning Roosevelt were sidetracked, although a resolution praising Foraker was adopted. Washington wrote Roosevelt that this convention was the largest and most representative body of Negroes in America and added: "I was very glad to note, that with the exception of a few extreme radicals that the feeling toward you and your administration was kindly. . . . The feeling indicated at this convention, I think is representative of the change that is taking place gradually among our people in most parts of the country."  

More significant tests of the political feeling of Negroes were to be found in elections held in some of the cities of the North. Greatest interest centered in Ohio, where Taft and Foraker forces were engaged in a contest looking to control of the state's delegation to the national Republican convention in 1908. Foraker was openly making a bid for Negro support. In May a conference of Negro politicians meeting in Columbus criticized Taft's record on race questions and promised support of Foraker for any office he might seek. As commencement speaker at nearby Wilberforce University, Foraker took advantage of the opportunity to promise to fight for the rights of Negroes. Nevertheless in the Republican primary in Columbus he fared badly. In the pre-election campaign some Negroes attempted to exploit the Brownsville issue, but the Foraker candidate for mayor was reported to have received less than three hundred out of a possible four thousand Negro votes. A Negro

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30 Hampton (Va.) Fishermen's Net, July 5, 1907; Washington Bee, July 6, 1907; Baltimore Sun, June 29, 1907; Boston Transcript, August 29, 1907.

31 Montpelier (Vt.) Argus, July 12, 1907.

32 Washington to Roosevelt, September 19, 1907. See also Washington Herald, September 17, 1907; Richmond Planet, September 28, 1907.
candidate for the city council who also tried to capitalize on the troop discharge made an extremely poor showing.  

The results of the Cleveland election were less encouraging to the Taft forces. There Roosevelt and Taft supported the candidacy of Representative Theodore E. Burton against Tom Johnson for mayor, apparently in the hope that a victory would make Burton a potential contender for Foraker’s senatorial seat. In spite of their support Burton was defeated. Of the two wards in which Negroes were most numerous, one went Republican, as it had in the past, but the other gave Johnson a majority. The pro-Foraker Cleveland Gazette, which had been urging Negroes to support Johnson, hailed this as a repudiation of Roosevelt and as evidence that Brownsville had not been forgotten.  

In Boston, on the other hand, there was no evidence of a drift of Negroes to the Democrats. A Republican mayor was elected for the first time in years, despite strenuous efforts to capitalize on the Brownsville issue. Booker T. Washington, who was in the city during the campaign, wrote Roosevelt that the troop discharge had been “worked for all it was worth,” but that it had practically no effect. He assured the President that he no longer thought that the Brownsville affair would hurt Taft’s presidential candidacy. In spite of this optimistic report, however, both Washington and Taft’s advisers continued to have misgivings and to miss no opportunity to show Taft’s interest in the welfare of the colored race. Washington arranged that he and Taft should speak from the same platform at a meeting of the Armstrong Association in Brooklyn. He advised Taft not to dwell on politics or to combat charges which “the enemy” had brought against him, but rather to take “a strong affirmative position” on education and race progress.  

Washington was concerned over the effect which the choice of delegates to the Republican convention might have on Negroes. He warned that rumors that Taft intended to rely on a Lily White delegation from Alabama might have an adverse effect in the North. To Vorys he wrote: “I am writing you all the more plainly and frankly on this subject, for the reason that no one knows better than yourself

*33 Cleveland Gazette, May 18, 1907; Columbus Ohio State Journal, June 21, 1907; Tyler to Washington, September 17, 1907.
34 Cleveland Gazette, November 16, 1907.
35 Washington to Roosevelt, December 16, 1907; New York Age, December 19, 1907.
36 Washington to Taft, March 9, 1908; New York Press, March 17, 1908.*
that we have a hard battle for ourselves to win the colored people of the North and doubtful states to the Secretary and I am very anxious that nothing be done in this or any other Southern state that will make the effort to overcome the Brownsville influence more difficult than it is.” As another step toward winning Negro support Washington had suggested that Charles Anderson be a delegate from New York. Roosevelt’s influence resulted in the selection of Anderson as a delegate at large. This was the first instance in which a New York Negro was given such a position and it was regarded as a stroke which would strengthen Taft against Governor Charles E. Hughes in that state.  

As Foraker’s presidential chances faded and it became evident that Taft would be nominated, Negro opposition to the latter’s candidacy evaporated. The dilemma in which members of the race found themselves was expressed by Richard W. Thompson in a private letter to Emmett Scott: “It is still Taft against the field. Foraker seems to be out of it in Ohio, and never was in it elsewhere. The Negroes are in a quandary, but might go to Hughes, if he looks like a winner. They will have to support Taft if he is nominated, and the wisest of them are taking in sail on the bolting question, while there is time to save them from being made ridiculous after next June.” 

As early as November, 1907, the New York Age, which had been trying to start a boom for Hughes, had paved the way for an endorsement of Taft when it declared that it would support him or any other Republican who might be nominated. Washington

87 Washington to Vorys, December 25, 1907; Washington to Roosevelt, July 23, 1907; Washington to William Loeb, Jr., February 7 and April 3, 1907; Loeb to Emmett Scott, April 16, 1908. Roosevelt was also concerned over the charges that Taft favored the Lily Whites. In writing to a Republican leader in Louisiana, he expressed his regret that there was to be no colored delegate from that state and said that he had personally seen to it that New York sent a colored delegate. He explained: “The very considerations which made me set my face like flint against white and black demagogues who attack me for my action in the Brownsville matter, make me feel that we should be scrupulously careful to do justice to the decent colored man.” Roosevelt to Pearl Wight, April 18, 1908, Morison (ed.), Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, VI, 1012.

88 Thompson to Scott, January 30, 1908.

89 New York Age, November 14, 1907. The changed position of the Age was made possible by the sudden withdrawal from the paper of T. Thomas Fortune, its editor and co-owner. Fortune’s interest was acquired secretly by Booker T. Washington, who nevertheless persistently denied having any financial interest in the Age or any other newspaper. Washington’s relationship to the Age is discussed in Emma Lou Thornbrough, “More Light on Booker T. Washington and the New York Age,” scheduled for publication in Journal of Negro History.
considered the influence of the Age greater than that of any other Negro paper, but he sought to impress upon Vorys the importance of getting control of other papers as well. Ralph W. Tyler, who, as an auditor in the Navy Department, continued to do yeoman service for the Taft cause, was given the assignment of rounding up the support of certain journals. In a short time he wrote jubilantly that he had seen Chase of the Washington Bee and had brought that paper into the fold in addition to winning over the Indianapolis Freeman. He also asserted that “the enemy” would not get control of the Chicago Conservator if he could help it — that it “must stand as supporter of Dr. Washington and the administration.”

In its next issue the Bee announced that it was bowing to the will of the majority and would support Taft since it was evident that the country was for him. Although Chase’s decision was no doubt due in part to Tyler’s powers of persuasion as well as to financial inducements, additional considerations which influenced him and other Negroes were set forth in the editorial: “If the Republican party says Taft, and if the Negroes of this country prefer the Republican party to the party of Tillman, Vardaman, et al., there is nothing left for us to do but to join in the general acclaim. . . . The Bee recognizes that the party is greater than any one man, and that the tail cannot wag the dog. . . . The Bee because of the accursed and relentless opposition of the Democratic party to the race must of necessity stand for the Republican party.”

The remaining opposition to Taft did not greatly alarm Washington. The Cleveland Plain Dealer, a leading holdout, declared that the colored people of the state were still for Foraker and suspicious of Taft, even after the Republican state convention in Ohio had given its solid support to Taft. Vorys continued to express concern, but Washington was convinced that the danger of an important defection of Negro voters had passed. After addressing conferences of both the African Methodist Episcopal church and the A. M. E. Zion church he reported to William Loeb: “It was very interesting to see how the great bulk of our people are coming around to the point where they understand the President and Secretary Taft and are ceasing to be misled by a few paid agitators [a phrase which both Washington and Roosevelt liked to use to describe members of the

40 Washington to Vorys, February 26, 1908; Tyler to Thompson, March 26, 1908.
41 Washington Bee, March 28, 1908.
Constitutional League]." 42 After this favorable state of affairs had been reached, Loeb proposed to prepare a statement regarding Brownsville for the Republican campaign textbook; but Washington replied that the less said about that unpleasant subject, the better, since colored people were beginning to forget about it.43

By the time of the Republican national convention most Negroes had climbed aboard the Taft band wagon. There was, of course, some resentment over the treatment which their race received at the convention, especially at the seating of Lily White delegations from the South, but, as one newspaper explained: "It was but natural for the colored Republicans to resent the insults, the trickery and fraud perpetrated upon them by the galvanized Republicans who dominated the Chicago convention, but when one considers the record of the Democratic party he must admit that it is out of the question for the colored man to vote for Bryan. The 'Jim Crow' laws of every Democratic State, the exclusion from the jury of almost every southern court, the mockery of a fair trial before every southern tribunal, all stand as brazen reminders of the eternal enmity of the Democracy toward the Negro." 44

Indeed, the fact that Negroes remained loyal to the Republican party in spite of the Brownsville episode and in spite of the gestures which Taft was making toward the white South was due as much or more to abiding suspicion of the Democratic party and the failure of that party to capitalize on Negro discontent as it was to the conciliatory efforts of the Republicans. Southern champions of white supremacy had not only applauded Roosevelt's discharge of the colored troops but were using the Brownsville affair as justification for proposing new racial disabilities. Both houses of the Tennessee legislature adopted resolutions commending the President for the discharge of the troops. This was followed by similar ac-

42 Cleveland Plain Dealer, April 27, 1908; Vorys to Washington, March 6 and April 3, 1908; Washington to Loeb, May 10, 1908. To Taft he reported a similar change in attitude on the part of a prominent colored Baptist and remarked: "It shows that our best men are gradually taking on sensible views regarding the Brownsville and other incidents. The race has gotten thoroughly sick and tired of John E. Milholland and his crowd." Washington to Taft, May 20, 1908.

43 Washington to Arthur S. Gray, May 19, 1908. Washington nevertheless wrote a statement in which he pointed out that although the mass of Negroes did not approve of Roosevelt's action with regard to the colored troops, they felt that he would have acted in the same way if the troops had been white. He also cited examples of actions which the President had taken in behalf of Negroes and asserted that it was unfair to condemn him for one act.

44 Dallas Express, quoted in Indianapolis World, August 15, 1908.
tions in other southern states. In the border state of Missouri a laudatory resolution was adopted by Democratic votes, with the Republican minority in the legislature voting against it. The people of Brownsville prepared to show their enthusiasm for the presidential order by presenting Roosevelt with a jewel-adorned "big stick." 45

The conduct of southern Democrats in and out of Congress, which their northern colleagues did nothing to restrain, prevented northern Negroes from joining Democratic ranks. In the debate over the discharge of the troops the Democrats in Congress not only supported Roosevelt against Foraker but even proposed that Negroes be barred completely from enlisting in the army. In support of such a step Representative James L. Slayden of Texas attacked the record of Negro troops in general and especially that of the troops stationed at Brownsville.46 The attitude of the Democrats caused Roosevelt to confide to his son-in-law: "In my judgment, when the report of the committee [investigating the discharge of the troops] comes in the Democrats of the committee will take such an extreme position as to make the colored men who have even the slightest shred of common sense realize where their real friends are." 47

Outside of Congress, the Democrats, instead of wooing the Negro voters of the North, followed a course which inevitably had the effect of alienating them. In Maryland a constitutional amendment to disfranchise Negroes by means of a "grandfather clause" was

45 New York Age, January 17, 1907. Even before the Brownsville affair Roosevelt had won a more enthusiastic following among white Democrats than had any of his Republican predecessors. The dismissal of the troops increased this popularity. At a dinner in honor of William Jennings Bryan, John Temple Graves went so far as to propose that Bryan should endorse Roosevelt for the presidency in 1908. The New York Age, April 18, 1907, warned: "If the Republicans are not on their guard the Democratic South will grab Theodore Roosevelt and appropriate him to their own uses."

46 Cong. Record, 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 776-80 (January 8, 1907). Another Texan, Representative John N. Garner, introduced a similar measure. A remarkable exception among the southerners heaping praise upon Roosevelt was Senator Benjamin R. Tillman of South Carolina, who attacked the discharge of the troops as lynch law.

47 Roosevelt to Nicholas Longworth, June 26, 1907, Morison (ed.), Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, V, 695. When the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, which had been investigating the troop discharge, made its report on March 11, 1908, the five Democratic members did not file a separate report as Roosevelt had evidently expected. They joined four of the Republican members in a majority report upholding the presidential discharge. A minority report was filed by four Republican members who held that the testimony on which Roosevelt had acted did not establish the guilt of the soldiers beyond any reasonable doubt. The minority asked that the discharged men be reinstated. See Senate Reports, 60 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 355.
passed by both houses of the legislature. In a speech in New York City, William Jennings Bryan defended the disfranchisement of southern Negroes and said that the white men of the South were giving Negroes better laws than Negroes would give white men if they were making the laws. The platform adopted at the Democratic national convention made no mention of the Negro and was silent on the subject of disfranchisement. John W. Kern, Bryan’s running mate, was reported to have made disparaging remarks about colored voters. There was a story that he attributed his defeat for the governorship of Indiana in 1900 to the fact that his opponent received the Negro vote. At a banquet after the election he said: “I am proud of the fact that I did not receive a Negro vote. I was elected by the white vote but defeated by the ignorant nigger vote.”

In view of the record of the two political parties an impartial observer might have concluded that Negroes could expect to gain little from either a Democratic or a Republican victory, but it required considerable rationalizing to decide that a victory by Bryan would be more favorable to the interests of the colored population than would a Taft victory. Nevertheless a few well-known Negroes campaigned for the Democratic candidate. One of them was the president of the Afro-American Council, Bishop Alexander Walters of the A. M. E. Zion church. Together with Monroe Trotter, president of the New England Constitutional and Suffrage League, and William H. Scott, president of the Boston Suffrage League, Walters sent out a call for a national convention of Negroes to decide upon a course of political action. The call declared that the alliance of Roosevelt and the southern nullifiers of the Constitution made such a meeting necessary. It also spoke of “the defaming and discharging in disgrace of more than a hundred soldiers, all colored,” and referred to the candidacy of a cabinet member, who in public speeches in the South, had condoned disfranchisement and who had “supinely endorsed in toto the brutal and autocratic discharge of colored soldiers.” The convention, which met in Philadelphia in April, was a rather sorry affair, attended by only about forty persons. All those present pledged themselves to support Bryan if Taft were nominated.

48 Indianapolis World, February 29, August 22, 1908; Indianapolis Freeman, May 2, 1908.
49 Indianapolis Freeman, February 22, 1908.
50 Ibid., April 18, 1908.
After the nominating conventions, Walters and Trotter continued to oppose Taft and to work actively for Bryan. Trotter’s paper, the Boston Guardian, declared: “There is only one proper and sensible thing for colored men to do, then, in real self-interest, and to help save their Southern colored brethren and that is to compass Taft’s defeat. To vote for him should be out of the question with any decent colored person.” W. E. B. DuBois, another intellectual, agreed. “It is high noon, brethren — the clock has struck twelve,” he exclaimed. “What are we going to do? I have made up my mind. You can do as you please — you are free, sane and twenty-one. If between two parties who stand on identically the same platform you can prefer the party who perpetrated Brownsville, well and good! But I shall vote for Bryan.”

Few Negroes shared this point of view, and the conduct of Bryan and the Democrats generally caused embarrassment to those members of the colored race who were supporting them. Early in the campaign there were reports that Bryan was eager for Negro support and was hopeful of capitalizing on dissatisfaction over Brownsville. Bishop Walters was reported to have said that Bryan had told a delegation of Negroes that he regarded Roosevelt’s discharge of the Negro troops as unjust, and that if elected he would recognize Negroes in appointments to office. But when questioned by a correspondent of the New York American about this statement, Bryan said that he had not discussed the matter of Brownsville for publication and did not recall “ever having stated any positive attitude upon either of the questions propounded.” He asserted that during the campaign he intended to confine himself strictly to the issues promulgated in the Democratic platform (which did not mention Negroes) and would not discuss Brownsville or Negro appointments. The Negro press did not fail to note that Bryan’s statement put Walters in an embarrassing position and, in fact, seemed to cast doubt on his veracity. One paper declared: “It’s too bad, and we are awfully sorry. Bishop Walters is a good, able, well intentioned man, but the good bishop lets his passions lead his judgment astray.” Another remarked: “Those disgruntled Negroes who have been expecting so much from the Democratic party and

51 Ibid., July 18, 1908, quoting Boston Guardian and Horizon (Washington).
52 Indianapolis World, August 1, 1908 (quoting New York American); ibid., August 8, 1908 (quoting New York Herald).
most especially its nominee for the presidency don’t seem to be getting it anywhere but in the neck.”  

Walters continued to work for Bryan in spite of these rebuffs. To him and a few others the Brownsville issue continued to transcend all other considerations. The Niagara Movement, meeting in Oberlin, Ohio, adopted the following appeal to voters: “Register and vote whenever and wherever you have a right. Remember the conduct of the Republican party toward Negroes has been a disgraceful failure to keep just promises. The dominant Roosevelt faction has sinned in this respect beyond forgiveness. We therefore trust that every colored voter will uphold men like Joseph B. Foraker and will leave no stone unturned to defeat William H. Taft.” The appeal continued: “Remember Brownsville and establish next November the principle of Negro independence in voting, not only for punishing enemies, but for rebuking false friends.”

To the rank and file the importance of the Brownsville issue declined in the face of fresh evidence of Democratic hostility to racial equality. In August the Democratic state convention of West Virginia adopted a platform containing two planks which observers predicted would do much to hold Negroes in the Republican party. The first, a demand for a constitutional amendment “to insure the purity of the ballot,” declared that the extension of suffrage to “a race inferior in intelligence and without preparation for the wise and prudent exercise thereof” had been a mistake. The second called for a law requiring separate accommodations in transportation for members of the white and colored races. In northern cities Republican party strategists instructed their speakers to answer hecklers who attempted to raise the Brownsville issue by simply calling attention to the Democratic record instead of trying to justify the discharge of the colored troops. They were told to refer to Democratic efforts in Congress to bar Negroes from the army, to the Jim Crow and disfranchisement planks in the West Virginia platform, and to the silence of Bryan on the race question. Writing to Booker T. Washington of this strategy Charles Anderson said that the mere recital of the Democratic record “ought to be a sufficient answer to any men who have the nerve to ask about Brownsville.”

53 Ibid., August 15, 1908, quoting Sumter (S. C.) Defender and Hampton (Va.) Fishermen’s Net.
54 Cleveland Plain Dealer, September 3, 1908.
55 Indianapolis World, August 15, 1908; Cleveland Journal, August 8, 1908.
56 Anderson to Washington, October 7, 1908.
During the campaign Anderson was quoted in the press as saying confidently that "ten out of every fourteen colored voters of this country are wearing Taft buttons or expressing in some way their feelings for Taft." This assertion was promptly challenged by some Negroes as being worthless because it came from a member of the "black bread and butter brigade" of federal officeholders. There continued to be predictions that the mass of Negroes would not vote for Taft — that they would vote for Eugene V. Debs instead if they could not bring themselves to vote for Bryan. Even Theodore Roosevelt privately expressed some pessimism in regard to the Negro vote.\(^5^7\)

The results of the election seemed to indicate that Anderson had assessed the situation quite accurately. Taft won easily, although neither his popular vote nor his electoral vote was as large as Roosevelt's had been in 1904. From available statistics it is not possible to separate the Negro vote from the white and therefore to state accurately to what extent the difference between the Republican vote in 1904 and 1908 was due to a decline in Negro support. The fact that Taft's margin of victory in certain northern states — Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois — was smaller than Roosevelt's may have been due in part to the loss of Negro votes. But the outcome did not reflect a personal antipathy to Taft, since he ran ahead of other Republican candidates in those states. Ohio, where it had been feared that the Negro feeling against him was especially strong, gave him its electoral votes but elected a Democratic governor. Taft also carried the neighboring state of Indiana, where both a Democratic governor and legislature were elected. Moreover, in New York, where efforts to turn Negroes against him had been particularly strenuous, Taft won by a larger margin than had Roosevelt, and he also ran well ahead of the gubernatorial candidate, Hughes. He also carried New Jersey, which had a sizable Negro vote, by a larger margin than had Roosevelt. From all this it appears that the Brownsville episode did not lead to a marked defection of Negroes from the Republican party, nor did Taft appear to have suffered personally because of his part in the affair.\(^5^8\)

\(^{57}\) Cleveland Plain Dealer, September 27, 1908; Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt, October 20, 1908, Morison (ed.), Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, VI, 1303-1304.

\(^{58}\) The fact that Taft's vote in such cities as Cleveland and Indianapolis was smaller than Roosevelt's had been may have been due in part to the loss of Negro votes, but in both cities Taft ran ahead of the Republican candidate for governor.
This does not mean, however, that the discharge of the colored soldiers had not created a real threat to the traditional loyalty of Negroes to the Republican party. There is abundant evidence that the members of the race were aroused over the treatment of the soldiers as they had not been aroused by the action of any other president. That Roosevelt’s order did not have the serious consequences that at first threatened was due in part to the record of the Democrats and their failure to take advantage of the opportunity to win Negroes away from their Republican allegiance. It was also due to the fact that in the two-year interval between the discharge of the soldiers and the presidential election the influence of Booker T. Washington had been a guiding factor in the waging of an astute and effective campaign to minimize the effect of Roosevelt’s action and to rehabilitate him and Secretary Taft in the eyes of the colored population. Although the general public was unaware of Washington’s role, some of the Negro leaders in the campaign recognized the importance of his contribution, and shortly after the election one of them wrote to him: “Without appearing on the stump or giving out any public utterance of more than a general character, you did more than any other dozen men in the country to bring into line for Mr. Taft the Negro masses.”

59 Thompson to Washington, November 22, 1908. See also Vorys to Washington, November 9, 1908, acknowledging the indebtedness which Taft and the Republican party owed to him for his unflagging support “particularly when the colored race was up in arms against Taft.”