

Nullification Crisis ^[1]

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by David L. Cockrell, 2006

The Nullification Crisis of 1832 found North Carolina generally opposed to the position of other southern states, particularly South Carolina, regarding a federal tariff on [agricultural goods](#) ^[2]. The "tariff of abominations" that they found so harsh did not radically affect North Carolina's diversified agricultural [economy](#) ^[3]. In 1830 early indications of South Carolina's bold stand against the federal government produced scattered demonstrations throughout North Carolina denouncing such action. At year's end, the General Assembly [passed a resolution](#) ^[4] declaring that, although the tariff was "unwise" and "oppressive," it was not constitutional for "an individual state of this Union to nullify a law of the United States." In the words of Judge William Gaston, "the people [of North Carolina] may disapprove of the tariff but they love the Union more."

South Carolina's adoption of its [nullification ordinances](#) ^[5] in November 1832 sparked renewed criticism from vocal North Carolinians. The editors of the *Raleigh Register*, one of the state's most prominent [newspapers](#) ^[6], called these ordinances "revolutionary" and warned that their passage could only lead to "dissolution" of the Union. While a resolution moved through the [General Assembly](#) ^[7] condemning the South Carolinians for their actions, a few moderates, such as [Richard Dobbs Spaight Jr.](#) ^[8], offered to mediate the crisis. Ominously, during the resolution's final passage several lawmakers declined to support the motion. A few editorialists echoed these sentiments, asserting that, despite the fact that South Carolina was in the wrong, any "tyrannical act of oppression would be apt to enlist North Carolina in the cause of her sister state."

Reference:

Archibald Henderson, *North Carolina: The Old North State and the New*, vols. 1-2 (1941).

Additional Resources:

"Primary Documents in American History: Nullification Proclamation" Library of Congress. 2011.
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Nullification.html> ^[9] (accessed October 12, 2012).

"Resolutions Passed in Gexeral Assembly of 1832-33." *Acts passed by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at the Session of 1832-1833*. Raleigh [N.C.], Charles R. Ramsay, Printer to the State. 1833. p. 105.
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/acts-passed-by-the-general-assembly-of-the-state-of-north-carolina-1832-1833/1955772?item=2081147> ^[4] (accessed October 12, 2012).

Houston, David Franklin. *A critical study of nullification in South Carolina*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1896.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=-XssAAAAIAAJ&pg=PP7#v=onepage&q&f=false> ^[10]

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[15]

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