

Long before the passage of this act in Virginia, Congress had become the center of the controversy. Davis had come to the point where no tradition however cherished would stand, in his mind, against the needs of the moment. To reinforce the army in great strength was now his supreme concern, and he saw but one way to do it. As a last resort he was prepared to embrace the bold plan which so many people still regarded with horror and which as late as the previous November he himself had opposed. He would arm the slaves. On February 10, 1865, bills providing for the arming of the slaves were introduced both in the House and in the Senate.

On this issue all the forces both of the Government and the opposition fought their concluding duel in which were involved all the other basal issues that had distracted the country since 1862. Naturally there was a bewildering criss-cross of political motives. There were men who, like Smith and Lee, would go along with the Government on emancipation, provided it was to be carried out by the free will of the States. There were others who preferred subjugation to the arming of the slaves; and among these there were clashing of motive. Then, too, there were those