

“The Ignorant Vote—Honors Are Easy”

Harper's Weekly

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In the New York magazine *Harper's Weekly* on December 1, 1876, “The Ignorant Vote – Honors Are Easy” cartoon is showing the difference that the African American Republican vote and Irish Catholic Democratic vote played in the 1876 election between Rutherford B. Hayes, a republican, and Samuel J. Tilden, a democrat. There was a dispute on who the actual election winner was because the votes were so close.

This is being shown by the equal scale in the cartoon. In the 1876 election, the first returns of the ballots would indicate the win would go to Tilden because of the popular vote. 185 Electoral College votes are needed to win a presidential election and when all but the last 3 states sent in their votes, Tilden had only received 184. What complicated the matter was that Democrats in these three states won the state elections but only by violence, fraud, and intimidation. In the cartoon, the African Americans in the South are being represented by a man with a very wide smile while the Whites in the North are on the right side of the scale showing their anger because they believed the wrong man would soon be taking office.

