

THE SOUTH DURING RECONSTRUCTION

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The reconstruction years in the south and the same years in the north were somewhat a period of crime, intolerant mass psychology, business depression, moral slump, official sinning, and the launching of a new party opposition to the Republican. This period partly parallels with the period just after Wilson's administration. There was, however, one major scientific advance during this period, which was the successful laying of the Atlantic Cable in 1866 between Europe and America. The southern army, at the end of the war, automatically disbanded and parolled. The northern army had been reduced to 56,815 men, by Sept. 30, 1867; and a year later it was reduced to 43,741 men and still later it was reduced even more. The south was made poor and broken by the war. Billions of dollars of economic value in slaves had been wiped away with the stroke of a pen in emancipation measures without compensation whatsoever. Money was scarce. The U.S. Treasury agents siezed cotton, valued at about thirty million dollars. Hundreds of thousands of people were on U.S. Government relief. Transportation was in a pitiful state, with most of the bridges and railroads torn up by the war. The war had left a three million dollar national debt with one million lives lost. There were no shameful executions or treasons. The war also left a depreciated paper currency. Though the southern army, including General Lee, were parolled, various southern leaders were jailed by the Federals for a short period then released later. The one case of a long imprisonment was that of Jefferson Davis. The compact issues of the case cannot be reviewed here, but the case was dropped in the late 1868's through the efforts of Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Times at that time. Social and economic rehabillitation naturally awaited political adjustment. For one must realize, that in Lincoln's mind, reconstruction was a presidential duty, in the first, producing political stabability. Lincðln proposed his so-called 10% plan, which would restore a seceeded state upon request of 10% of its 1860 voters.

This plan got as far as to have provisional governments created in Virginia, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Arkansas. The radicals in congress succeeded in stopping it that far. The radicals did not agree with Lincoln even though they belonged to his party. The primary radicals were Davis, Wade, Chandler, Julian, Stevens, and the notorious Sumner. These radicals helped to pass the Wade-Davis Bill of 1864. The Wade-Davis Bill was a severe measure which made restoration difficult by entrusting the reconstruction of a state not to a minority ready for future loyalty but to a majority whose Unionism was a matter of past conduct. Thus one may see the comparison of the 10% plan and the Wade-Davis Bill, in that the 10% Plan called for a minority of southern rebels who had returned to the Union and the Wade-Davis Bill which called for a majority of loyalists who were loyalists during the war. It can be clearly seen here that the Wade-Davis Bill would bring on the so-called carpetbaggers to the Southern states. Those people who wanted the privilege of voting for delegates to the states' constitutional conventions were limited by this bill, in speaking of the Wade-Davis Bill. It was limited by this bill to those who would swear that they had never voluntarily borne arms against the U.S. Government, nor given aid to persons with arms who had hostility thereto, nor had voluntarily supported any hostile government. This oath originally appeared in the Federal Act of July 2, 1862, and reappeared in various pieces of later legislation. It was known as the notorious "Iron-Clad Test Oath."

Thus by Pocket Veto, President Lincoln prevented the Wade-Davis Bill from becoming law. President Lincoln did, however, allow the states the choice of either system. Lincoln's felling of carpet bag politics in the south could be summed up in a letter which he sent to Georgia Shipply, Lieut. Governor of Louisiana at that time. The letter is as follows: "Dear Sir, Dr. Kennedy, barrer of this, has some apprehension, that federal officers, not citizens of Louisiana, may be set up as candidates for congress in that state. In my view there could be no possible object in such an election.

We do not particularly need members of congress in these states to enable us to get along with legislation here. What we do want is conclusive evidence that respectable citizens of Louisiana are willing to be members of congress and to swear to support the constitution; and that other respectable citizens are willing to vote for them and send them. To send a parcel of northern men here as representatives, elected as would be understood and perhaps more so at the point of a bayonet, would be disgraceful and outrageous and were I a member of congress here, I would vote against admitting such men to a seat. Yours very truly, Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln never succeeded in putting his 10% Plan of reconstruction into full effect in any state, really. This is because of congresses' failure to recognize the representatives in the states in which the 10% Plan was used. The ineffectiveness of his well-meant efforts is emphasized by the concessions he made to the radicals of congress. An example of one of these concessions is when Lincoln recognized the Wade-Davis Bill as a plan for reconstructing a southern state. The Wade-Davis Bill had little effect on the southern states at that time since all of them rejected the plan as a method of reconstruction.

On April 14, 1865, Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. Vice-President Andrew Johnson took office almost immediately after Lincoln's death. History shows that Lincoln had a tremendous amount of influence upon the U.S. Congress and upon the people. On the other hand, however, Andrew Johnson was almost little known to the people and had no influence upon the U.S. Congress. This was due to the fact that Johnson was the Vice-President of the United States and historians sometimes jokingly refer to that office as the "Political Graveyard." It must be noted that at that time the U.S. Congress was out of session and would not convene until December of that year, which would be 1865. This gave Johnson almost unlimited powers in what to do about reconstructing the south. The radicals of congress saw at once that their obstacle, Lincoln, had been removed and they the radicals, thought that Johnson would be a pushover.

However, when Johnson had had the North Carolina Proclamation adopted by his government, this meant that the President, Andrew Johnson, had definitely accepted the Lincoln policy. The fight was on and the radicals turned on Johnson. Representative Sumner, who was one of the leaders of the radical party, was shocked. Having taken the bit in his teeth, Johnson proceeded vigorously along the line of his North Carolina Proclamation and soon, under provisional governors of his selection, the work of Presidential Reconstruction was in progress. Thus Johnson's government was set up in Tenn., Va., La., Ark., N.C., Ge., Tex., Ala., S.C., and Fla. It must be noted that not one appointment of the governors was unworthy. This was irritating to the radical leaders in the north. It was an assumption of the power, of the President, to be the reconstructing official, and offered no hope for immediate negro suffrage.

In December of 1865, Congress refused to recognize the representatives of Johnson's government in the south. Also in 1865, the 13th Amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment abolished slavery wherever it still existed in the south. Johnson's government ratified the amendment and repealed the Ordinances of Succession. In Johnson's view, the seceded states were entitled to be recognized as states in the Union with full powers. Congress, however, thought that further guarantee's were necessary for the negro. The Freedman's Bureau Bill of 1866, was passed. This bill was aimed at protecting the rights of the poor whites and the negroes. Johnson vetoed the bill and congress overrode the veto. Then congress turned around and passed the Civil Rights Bill of 1866, which gave citizenship and equality to all freed men. The President of course vetoed the bill and congress overrode his veto. In the Senate, the vote overridding the veto was 35-15. In the House there were 122 yeas and 41 nays with 21 not voting. And guess what was tacked on this bill? The so-called "Iron-Clad Test Oath". This of course brought on hoards of greedy northern adventurers better known as the carpetbaggers.

The carpetbaggers settled down in the south and set up governments supported largely by negro votes. To preserve order a small federal force was still maintained and the unpopular carpetbag governments looked to it for protection. It seems that the mid-term congressional election of 1866 came up. As luck would have it, the radicals won the election and Johnson was stuck with them again. It can be easily seen that the south was going to have a hard time with the radicals in office.

In 1867, the Tenure of Office Act was passed. This act stated that the President of the United States was forbidden to remove any civil office holder without the consent of the Senate. Infraction or violation of this law by the President was to be a high misdemeanor. In spite of this act, Johnson undertook to defame the Senate by removing the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, whom Johnson disliked especially. The House of Representatives then followed suit by impeaching Johnson for high crimes and misdemeanors. The Senate then tried him. If Johnson was found guilty he would be removed from office, and in that case, the big wheel in the radical party, Benjamin Wade, also Pres. of the U.S. Senate, would become Pres. of the US. Well, back to the trial. Chief Justice Chase presided over the trial. A 2/3 vote was necessary for conviction. After all the proceedings the vote was finally taken on May 16, 1868. The tally was: 35 for conviction and 19 for acquittal. Johnson was saved by one vote. Take note, that of those who voted for acquittal, 7 were Republican. It must be noted again, that the goings-on in Washington would affect the south in the process of reconstruction one way or the other. Congress decided to admit the reconstructed states to the Union if they would ratify the 14th Amendment. This amendment provided for the following:

- 1--Citizenship for all persons born or naturalized in the U.S.
- 2--Reduction in Representatives for states denying negroes the right to vote.
- 3--Disqualification of ex-Confederate leaders in politics.
- 4--Repudiation of the Confederate debt.

This amendment literally forced the states to give the negro the right to vote. Some people claim that the 14th amendment is no constitutional because the reconstructed states were not even states but military districts when they were forced to ratify the amendment. If they, the reconstructed states, wanted to come back into the union with equal powers. The amendment was passed in 1868. About that time secret organizations sprang up in the south. Among which was the Klu Klux Klan and the not so well known, the Knights of the White Camellia. These organizations prevented the free exercise of the negro's rights. The south silently cheered them on while the north became angry.

In 1868, there was a Presidential election in which Ulysses Grant was elected. Grant took office in 1869. As Grant struggled with his official duties, the Republican Party swept with a rush into public offices. Doing so, they found their own Tenure of Office Act, which was aimed at Pres. Johnson, a considerable embarrassment. The House passed a repeal bill for it, but the Senate would not give up some of their powers by passing it. Thus we find that the Republicans were trapped by their own evil minded schemes.

In 1860, the 15th Amendment was passed. This amendment provided that the right of citizens of the U.S. right to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. This of course guaranteed to all adult negro's the right to vote.

With the Klu Klux Klan running loose in the south, sometimes committing deeds of violence and horror and murder and crime, the law responded with the Klu Klux Klan Acts which enforced the 14th & 15th Amendments. These acts were passed in 1870 and 1871. In 1872, the General Amnesty Act was passed. The act, in fact, restored the white rule in the south. This act provided for the removal of Confederate disabilities. This meant that the so-called "Iron-Clad Oath" would be removed. Also, the better class of southern citizens would come back into power.

In 1877, withdraw of federal troops from the east, of the carpetbag governments in S.C., Fla., and La., was completed. This was another indication that the better class of southern citizens would come back into power since the carpetbaggers had lost their federal troop protection. The General Amnesty Act was one of the last steps of reconstruction of the south.

In conclusion, thus one may trace the reconstruction of the south and the politics in Washington that affected the south during this period of time.

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