

ISSUE 17



Was Reconstruction a "Splendid Failure"?

YES: Eric Foner, from "The New View of Reconstruction," *American Heritage* (October/November 1983)

NO: Thomas Holt, from *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (University of Illinois Press, 1977)

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Professor of history Eric Foner asserts that although Reconstruction did not achieve radical goals, it was a "splendid failure" because it offered African Americans in the South a temporary vision of a free society.

NO: Thomas Holt, a professor of American and African American history, contends that in South Carolina, where African Americans wielded significant political clout, Reconstruction failed to produce critical economic reforms for working-class blacks because of social and cultural divisions within the black community.

Given the complex political, economic, and social issues that America's leaders were forced to address in the post-Civil War years, it is not surprising that the era of Reconstruction (1865-1877) is shrouded in controversy. For the better part of a century following the war, historians typically characterized Reconstruction as a total failure that had proved detrimental to all Americans—northerners and southerners, whites and blacks. According to this traditional interpretation, a vengeful Congress, dominated by radical Republicans, imposed military rule upon the southern states. Carpetbaggers from the North, along with traitorous white scalawags and their black accomplices in the South, established coalition governments that rewrote state constitutions, raised taxes, looted state treasuries, and disenfranchised former Confederates while extending the ballot to the freedmen. This era finally ended in 1877 when courageous southern white Democrats successfully "redeemed" their region from "Negro rule" by toppling the Republican state governments.

This portrait of Reconstruction dominated the historical profession until the 1960s. One reason for this is that white historians (both northerners and

southerners) who wrote about this period operated from two basic assumptions: (1) the South was capable of solving its own problems without federal government interference; and (2) the former slaves were intellectually inferior to whites and incapable of running a government (much less one in which some whites would be their subordinates). African American historians, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, wrote several essays and books that challenged this negative portrayal of Reconstruction, but their works were seldom taken seriously in the academic world and were rarely read by the general public. Still, these black historians foreshadowed the acceptance of revisionist interpretations of Reconstruction, which coincided with the successes of the civil rights movement (or "Second Reconstruction") in the 1960s.

Without ignoring obvious problems and limitations connected with this period, revisionist historians identified a number of accomplishments of the Republican state governments in the South and their supporters in Washington, D.C. For example, revisionists argued that the state constitutions that were written during Reconstruction were the most democratic documents that the South had seen up to that time. Also, while taxes increased in the southern states, the revenues generated by these levies financed the rebuilding and expansion of the South's railroad network, the creation of a number of social service institutions (including hospitals, orphanages, and mental institutions), and the establishment of a public school system that benefited African Americans as well as whites. At the federal level, Reconstruction achieved the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which extended significant privileges of citizenship (including the right to vote) to African Americans, both North and South. Revisionists also placed the charges of corruption leveled by traditionalists against the Republican regimes in the South in a more appropriate context by insisting that political corruption was a national malady in the second half of the nineteenth century. Finally, revisionist historians sharply attacked the notion that African Americans dominated the reconstructed governments of the South. They pointed out that there were no black governors, only 2 black senators, and 15 black congressmen during this period. Furthermore, in no southern state did blacks control both houses of the legislature.

More recently, a third group of historians, the postrevisionists, have challenged the validity of the term *radical* as it has been applied to the Reconstruction era by both traditionalists and revisionists. The following selections represent two variations of this postrevisionist approach. In the first selection, Eric Foner concedes that Reconstruction was not very radical, much less revolutionary. Nevertheless, he argues, it was a "splendid failure" (a phrase coined by Du Bois) because it offered African Americans a vision of how a free society could look. Thomas Holt, however, maintains that there was nothing splendid at all about the failure of the Reconstruction government in South Carolina to provide necessary economic reforms for black laborers and that proposals to benefit working-class blacks fell victim to the opposition of free-born, mulatto Republican politicians, whose social and cultural origins distanced them from the black proletariat.



The New View of Reconstruction

In the past twenty years, no period of American history has been the subject of a more thoroughgoing reevaluation than Reconstruction—the violent, dramatic, and still controversial era following the Civil War. Race relations, politics, social life, and economic change during Reconstruction have all been reinterpreted in the light of changed attitudes toward the place of blacks within American society. If historians have not yet forged a fully satisfying portrait of Reconstruction as a whole, the traditional interpretation that dominated historical writing for much of this century has irrevocably been laid to rest.

Anyone who attended high school before 1960 learned that Reconstruction was an era of unrelieved sordidness in American political and social life. The martyred Lincoln, according to this view, had planned a quick and painless readmission of the Southern states as equal members of the national family. President Andrew Johnson, his successor, attempted to carry out Lincoln's policies but was foiled by the Radical Republicans (also known as Vindictives or Jacobins). Motivated by an irrational hatred of Rebels or by ties with Northern capitalists out to plunder the South, the Radicals swept aside Johnson's lenient program and fastened black supremacy upon the defeated Confederacy. An orgy of corruption followed, presided over by unscrupulous carpet-baggers (Northerners who ventured south to reap the spoils of office), traitorous scalawags (Southern whites who cooperated with the new governments for personal gain), and the ignorant and childlike freedmen, who were incapable of properly exercising the political power that had been thrust upon them. After much needless suffering, the white community of the South banded together to overthrow these "black" governments and restore home rule (their euphemism for white supremacy). All told, Reconstruction was just about the darkest page in the American saga.

Originating in anti-Reconstruction propaganda of Southern Democrats during the 1870s, this traditional interpretation achieved scholarly legitimacy around the turn of the century through the work of William Dunning and his students at Columbia University. It reached the larger public through films like *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone With the Wind* and that best-selling work of myth-making masquerading as history, *The Tragic Era* by Claude G. Bowers. In language as exaggerated as it was colorful, Bowers told how Andrew Johnson

"fought the bravest battle for constitutional liberty and for the preservation of our institutions ever waged by an Executive" but was overwhelmed by the "poisonous propaganda" of the Radicals. Southern whites, as a result, "literally were put to the torture" by "emissaries of hate" who manipulated the "simple-minded" freedmen, "inflaming the negroes' egotism" and even inspiring "justful assaults" by blacks upon white womanhood.

In a discipline that sometimes seems to pride itself on the rapid rise and fall of historical interpretations, this traditional portrait of Reconstruction enjoyed remarkable staying power. The long reign of the old interpretation is not difficult to explain. It presented a set of easily identifiable heroes and villains. It enjoyed the imprimatur of the nation's leading scholars. And it accorded with the political and social realities of the first half of this century. This image of Reconstruction helped freeze the mind of the white South in unalterable opposition to any movement for breaching the ascendancy of the Democratic party, eliminating segregation, or readmitting disfranchised blacks to the vote.



Nevertheless, the demise of the traditional interpretation was inevitable, for it ignored the testimony of the central participant in the drama of Reconstruction—the black freedman. Furthermore, it was grounded in the conviction that blacks were unfit to share in political power. As Dunning's Columbia colleague John W. Burgess put it, "A black skin means membership in a race of men which has never of itself succeeded in subjecting passion to reason, has never, therefore, created any civilization of any kind." Once objective scholarship and modern experience rendered that assumption untenable, the entire edifice was bound to fall.

The work of "revising" the history of Reconstruction began with the writings of a handful of survivors of the era, such as John R. Lynch, who had served as a black congressman from Mississippi after the Civil War. In the 1930s white scholars like Francis Simkins and Robert Woody carried the task forward. Then, in 1935, the black historian and activist W. E. B. Du Bois produced *Black Reconstruction in America*, a monumental reevaluation that closed with an irrefutable indictment of a historical profession that had sacrificed scholarly objectivity on the altar of racial bias. "One fact and one alone," he wrote, "explains the attitude of most recent writers toward Reconstruction; they cannot conceive of Negroes as men." Du Bois's work, however, was ignored by most historians.

It was not until the 1960s that the full force of the revisionist wave broke over the field. Then, in rapid succession, virtually every assumption of the traditional viewpoint was systematically dismantled. A drastically different portrait emerged to take its place. President Lincoln did not have a coherent "plan" for Reconstruction, but at the time of his assassination he had been cautiously contemplating black suffrage. Andrew Johnson was a stubborn, racist politician who lacked the ability to compromise. By isolating himself from the broad currents of public opinion that had nourished Lincoln's career, Johnson created an impasse with Congress that Lincoln would certainly have avoided, thus throw-

ing away his political power and destroying his own plans for reconstructing the South.

The Radicals in Congress were acquitted of both vindictive motives and the charge of serving as the stalking-horses of Northern capitalism. They emerged instead as idealists in the best nineteenth-century reform tradition. Radical leaders like Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens had worked for the rights of blacks long before any conceivable political advantage flowed from such a commitment. Stevens refused to sign the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1838 because it disfranchised the state's black citizens; Sumner led a fight in the 1850s to integrate Boston's public schools. Their Reconstruction policies were based on principle, not petty political advantage, for the central issue dividing Johnson and these Radical Republicans was the civil rights of freedmen. Studies of congressional policy-making such as Eric J. McKittrick's *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction*, also revealed that Reconstruction legislation, ranging from the Civil Rights Act of 1866 to the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, enjoyed broad support from moderate and conservative Republicans. It was not simply the work of a narrow radical faction.



Even more startling was the revised portrait of Reconstruction in the South itself. Imbued with the spirit of the civil rights movement and rejecting entirely the racial assumptions that had underpinned the traditional interpretation, these historians evaluated Reconstruction from the black point of view. Works like Joel Williamson's *After Slavery* portrayed the period as a time of extraordinary political, social, and economic progress for blacks. The establishment of public school systems, the granting of equal citizenship to blacks, the effort to restore the devastated Southern economy, the attempt to construct an interracial political democracy from the ashes of slavery, all these were commendable achievements, not the elements of Bowers's "tragic era."

Unlike earlier writers, the revisionists stressed the active role of the freedmen in shaping Reconstruction. Black initiative established as many schools as did Northern religious societies and the Freedmen's Bureau. The right to vote was not simply thrust upon them by meddling outsiders, since blacks began agitating for the suffrage as soon as they were freed. In 1865 black conventions throughout the South issued eloquent, though unheeded, appeals for equal civil and political rights.

With the advent of Radical Reconstruction in 1867, the freedmen did enjoy a real measure of political power. But black supremacy never existed. In most states blacks held only a small fraction of political offices, and even in South Carolina, where they comprised a majority of the state legislature's lower house, effective power remained in white hands. As for corruption, moral standards in both government and private enterprise were at low ebb throughout the nation in the postwar years—the era of Boss Tweed, the Credit Mobilier scandal, and the Whiskey Ring. Southern corruption could hardly be blamed on former slaves.

Other actors in the Reconstruction drama also came in for reevaluation. Most carpetbaggers were former Union soldiers seeking economic opportunity in the postwar South, not unscrupulous adventurers. Their motives, a typically American amalgam of humanitarianism and the pursuit of profit, were no more insidious than those of Western pioneers. Scalawags, previously seen as traitors to the white race, now emerged as "Old Line" Whig Unionists who had opposed secession in the first place or as poor whites who had long resented planters' domination of Southern life and who saw in Reconstruction a chance to recast Southern society along more democratic lines. Strongholds of Southern white Republicanism like east Tennessee and western North Carolina had been the scene of resistance to Confederate rule throughout the Civil War; now, as one scalawag newspaper put it, the choice was "between salvation at the hand of the Negro or destruction at the hand of the rebels."

At the same time, the Ku Klux Klan and kindred groups, whose campaign of violence against black and white Republicans had been minimized or excused in older writings, were portrayed as they really were. Earlier scholars had conveyed the impression that the Klan intimidated blacks mainly by dressing as ghosts and playing on the freedmen's superstitions. In fact, black fears were all too real: the Klan was a terrorist organization that beat and killed its political opponents to deprive blacks of their newly won rights. The complicity of the Democratic party and the silence of prominent whites in the face of such outrages stood as an indictment of the moral code the South had inherited from the days of slavery.

By the end of the 1960s, then, the old interpretation had been completely reversed. Southern freedmen were the heroes, the "Redeemers" who overthrew Reconstruction were the villains, and if the era was "tragic," it was because change did not go far enough. Reconstruction had been a time of real progress and its failure a lost opportunity for the South and the nation. But the legacy of Reconstruction—the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments—endured to inspire future efforts for civil rights. As Kenneth Stampp wrote in *The Era of Reconstruction*, a superb summary of revisionist findings published in 1965, "If it was worth four years of civil war to save the Union, it was worth a few years of radical reconstruction to give the American Negro the ultimate promise of equal civil and political rights."

As Stampp's statement suggests, the reevaluation of the first Reconstruction was inspired in large measure by the impact of the second—the modern civil rights movement. And with the waning of that movement in recent years, writing on Reconstruction has undergone still another transformation. Instead of seeing the Civil War and its aftermath as a second American Revolution (as Charles Beard had), a regression into barbarism (as Bowers argued), or a golden opportunity squandered (as the revisionists saw it), recent writers argue that Radical Reconstruction was not really very radical. Since land was not distributed to the former slaves, they remained economically dependent upon their former owners. The planter class survived both the war and Reconstruction with its property (apart from slaves) and prestige more or less intact.

Not only changing times but also the changing concerns of historians have contributed to this latest reassessment of Reconstruction. The hallmark of

the past decade's historical writing has been an emphasis upon "social history"—the evocation of the past lives of ordinary Americans—and the downplaying of strictly political events. When applied to Reconstruction, this concern with the "social" suggested that black suffrage and officeholding, once seen as the most radical departures of the Reconstruction era, were relatively insignificant.



Recent historians have focused their investigations not upon the politics of Reconstruction but upon the social and economic aspects of the transition from slavery to freedom. Herbert Gutman's influential study of the black family during and after slavery found little change in family structure or relations between men and women resulting from emancipation. Under slavery most blacks had lived in nuclear family units, although they faced the constant threat of separation from loved ones by sale. Reconstruction provided the opportunity for blacks to solidify their preexisting family ties. Conflicts over whether black women should work in the cotton fields (planters said yes, many black families said no) and over white attempts to "apprentice" black children revealed that the autonomy of family life was a major preoccupation of the freedmen. Indeed, whether manifested in their withdrawal from churches controlled by whites, in the blossoming of black fraternal, benevolent, and self-improvement organizations, or in the demise of the slave quarters and their replacement by small tenant farms occupied by individual families, the quest for independence from white authority and control over their own day-to-day lives shaped the black response to emancipation.

In the post-Civil War South the surest guarantee of economic autonomy, blacks believed, was land. To the freedmen the justice of a claim to land based on their years of unrequited labor appeared self-evident. As an Alabama black convention put it, "The property which they [the planters] hold was nearly all earned by the sweat of *our* brows." As Leon Litwack showed in *Been in the Storm So Long*, a Pulitzer Prize-winning account of the black response to emancipation, many freedmen in 1865 and 1866 refused to sign labor contracts, expecting the federal government to give them land. In some localities, as one Alabama overseer reported, they "set up claims to the plantation and all on it." In the end, of course, the vast majority of Southern blacks remained propertyless and poor. But exactly why the South, and especially its black population, suffered from dire poverty and economic retardation in the decades following the Civil War is a matter of much dispute. In *One Kind of Freedom*, economists Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch indicted country merchants for monopolizing credit and charging usurious interest rates, forcing black tenants into debt and locking the South into a dependence on cotton production that impoverished the entire region. But Jonathan Wience, in his study of postwar Alabama, argued that planters used their political power to compel blacks to remain on the plantations. Planters succeeded in stabilizing the plantation system, but only by blocking the growth of alternative enterprises, like factories, that might draw off black laborers, thus locking the region into a pattern of economic backwardness.



If the thrust of recent writing has emphasized the social and economic aspects of Reconstruction, politics has not been entirely neglected. But political studies have also reflected the postrevisionist mood summarized by C. Vann Woodward when he observed "how essentially nonrevolutionary and conservative Reconstruction really was." Recent writers, unlike their revisionist predecessors, have found little to praise in federal policy toward the emancipated blacks.

A new sensitivity to the strength of prejudice and laissez-faire ideas in the nineteenth-century North has led many historians to doubt whether the Republican party ever made a genuine commitment to racial justice in the South. The granting of black suffrage was an alternative to a long-term federal responsibility for protecting the rights of the former slaves. Once enfranchised, blacks could be left to fend for themselves. With the exception of a few Radicals like Thaddeus Stevens, nearly all Northern policy-makers and educators are criticized today for assuming that, so long as the unfettered operations of the marketplace afforded blacks the opportunity to advance through diligent labor, federal efforts to assist them in acquiring land were unnecessary.

Probably the most innovative recent writing on Reconstruction politics has centered on a broad reassessment of black Republicanism, largely undertaken by a new generation of black historians. Scholars like Thomas Holt and Nell Painter insist that Reconstruction was not simply a matter of black and white. Conflicts within the black community, no less than divisions among whites, shaped Reconstruction politics. Where revisionist scholars, both black and white, had celebrated the accomplishments of black political leaders, Holt, Painter, and others charge that they failed to address the economic plight of the black masses. Painter criticized "representative colored men," as national black leaders were called, for failing to provide ordinary freedmen with effective political leadership. Holt found that black officeholders in South Carolina mostly emerged from the old free mulatto class of Charleston, which shared many assumptions with prominent whites. "Basically bourgeois in their origins and orientation," he wrote, they "failed to act in the interest of black peasants."

In emphasizing the persistence from slavery of divisions between free blacks and slaves, these writers reflect the increasing concern with continuity and conservatism in Reconstruction. Their work reflects a startling extension of revisionist premises. If, as has been argued for the past twenty years, blacks were active agents rather than mere victims of manipulation, then they could not be absolved of blame for the ultimate failure of Reconstruction.

Despite the excellence of recent writing and the continual expansion of our knowledge of the period, historians of Reconstruction today face a unique dilemma. An old interpretation has been overthrown, but a coherent new synthesis has yet to take its place. The revisionists of the 1960s effectively established a series of negative points: the Reconstruction governments were not as bad as had been portrayed, black supremacy was a myth, the Radicals were not cynical manipulators of the freedmen. Yet no convincing overall portrait of the quality of political and social life emerged from their writings. More recent historians have rightly pointed to elements of continuity that spanned

the nineteenth-century Southern experience, especially the survival, in modified form, of the plantation system. Nevertheless, by denying the real changes that did occur, they have failed to provide a convincing portrait of an era characterized above all by drama, turmoil, and social change.

Building upon the findings of the past twenty years of scholarship, a new portrait of Reconstruction ought to begin by viewing it not as a specific time period, bounded by the years 1865 and 1877, but as an episode in a prolonged historical process—American society's adjustment to the consequences of the Civil War and emancipation. The Civil War, of course, raised the decisive questions of America's national existence: the relations between local and national authority, the definition of citizenship, the balance between force and consent in generating obedience to authority. The war and Reconstruction, as Allan Nevins observed over fifty years ago, marked the "emergence of modern America." This was the era of the completion of the national railroad network, the creation of the modern steel industry, the conquest of the West and final subduing of the Indians, and the expansion of the mining frontier. Lincoln's America—the world of the small farm and artisan shop—gave way to a rapidly industrializing economy. The issues that galvanized postwar Northern politics—from the question of the greenback currency to the mode of paying holders of the national debt—arose from the economic changes unleashed by the Civil War.

Above all, the war irrevocably abolished slavery. Since 1619, when "twenty negars" disembarked from a Dutch ship in Virginia, racial injustice had haunted American life, mocking its professed ideals even as tobacco and cotton, the products of slave labor, helped finance the nation's economic development. Now the implications of the black presence could no longer be ignored. The Civil War resolved the problem of slavery but, as the Philadelphia diarist Sydney George Fisher observed in June 1865, it opened an even more intractable problem: "What shall we do with the Negro?" Indeed, he went on, this was a problem "incapable of any solution that will satisfy both North and South."

As Fisher realized, the focal point of Reconstruction was the social revolution known as emancipation. Plantation slavery was simultaneously a system of labor, a form of racial domination, and the foundation upon which arose a distinctive ruling class within the South. Its demise threw open the most fundamental questions of economy, society, and politics. A new system of labor, social, racial, and political relations had to be created to replace slavery.

The United States was not the only nation to experience emancipation in the nineteenth century. Neither plantation slavery nor abolition were unique to the United States. But Reconstruction was. In a comparative perspective Radical Reconstruction stands as a remarkable experiment, the only effort of a society experiencing abolition to bring the former slaves within the umbrella of equal citizenship. Because the Radicals did not achieve everything they wanted, historians have lately tended to play down the stunning departure represented by black suffrage and officeholding. Former slaves, most fewer than two years removed from bondage, debated the fundamental questions of the polity: What is a republican form of government? Should the state provide equal education for all? How could political equality be reconciled with a society in which property was so unequally distributed? There was something inspiring in the way

such men met the challenge of Reconstruction. "I knew nothing more than to obey my master," James K. Greene, an Alabama black politician later recalled. "But the tocsin of freedom sounded and knocked at the door and we walked out like free men and we met the exigencies as they grew up, and shouldered the responsibilities."



You never saw a people more excited on the subject of politics than are the negroes of the south," one planter observed in 1867. And there were more than a few Southern whites as well who in these years shook off the prejudices of the past to embrace the vision of a new South dedicated to the principles of equal citizenship and social justice. One ordinary South Carolinian expressed the new sense of possibility in 1868 to the Republican governor of the state: "I am sorry that I cannot write an elegant styled letter to your excellency. But I rejoice to think that God almighty has given to the poor of S. C. a Gov. to hear to feel to protect the humble poor without distinction to race or color.... I am a native borned S. C. a poor man never owned a Negro in my life nor my father before me.... Remember the true and loyal are the poor of the whites and blacks, outside of these you can find none loyal."

Few modern scholars believe the Reconstruction governments established in the South in 1867 and 1868 fulfilled the aspirations of their humble constituents. While their achievements in such realms as education, civil rights, and the economic rebuilding of the South are now widely appreciated, historians today believe they failed to affect either the economic plight of the emancipated slave or the ongoing transformation of independent white farmers into cotton tenants. Yet their opponents did perceive the Reconstruction governments in precisely this way—as representatives of a revolution that had put the bottom rail, both racial and economic, on top. This perception helps explain the ferocity of the attacks leveled against them and the pervasiveness of violence in the postemancipation South.

The spectacle of black men voting and holding office was anathema to large numbers of Southern whites. Even more disturbing, at least in the view of those who still controlled the plantation regions of the South, was the emergence of local officials, black and white, who sympathized with the plight of the black laborer. Alabama's vagrancy law was a "dead letter" in 1870, "because those who are charged with its enforcement are indebted to the vagrant vote for their offices and emoluments." Political debates over the level and incidence of taxation, the control of crops, and the resolution of contract disputes revealed that a primary issue of Reconstruction was the role of government in a plantation society. During presidential Reconstruction, and after "Redemption," with planters and their allies in control of politics, the law emerged as a means of stabilizing and promoting the plantation system. If Radical Reconstruction failed to redistribute the land of the South, the ouster of the planter class from control of politics at least ensured that the sanctions of the criminal law would not be employed to discipline the black labor force.



An understanding of this fundamental conflict over the relation between government and society helps explain the pervasive complaints concerning corruption and "extravagance" during Radical Reconstruction. Corruption there was aplenty; tax rates did rise sharply. More significant than the rate of taxation, however, was the change in its incidence. For the first time, planters and white farmers had to pay a significant portion of their income to the government, while propertyless blacks often escaped scot-free. Several states, moreover, enacted heavy taxes on uncultivated land to discourage land speculation and force land onto the market, benefiting, it was hoped, the freedmen.

As time passed, complaints about the "extravagance" and corruption of Southern governments found a sympathetic audience among influential Northerners. The Democratic charge that universal suffrage in the South was responsible for high taxes and governmental extravagance coincided with a rising conviction among the urban middle classes of the North that city government had to be taken out of the hands of the immigrant poor and returned to the "best men"—the educated, professional, financially independent citizens unable to exert much political influence at a time of mass parties and machine politics. Increasingly the "respectable" middle classes began to retreat from the very notion of universal suffrage. The poor were no longer perceived as honest producers, the backbone of the social order; now they became the "dangerous classes," the "mob." As the historian Francis Parkman put it, too much power rested with "masses of imported ignorance and hereditary ineptitude." To Parkman the Irish of the Northern cities and the blacks of the South were equally incapable of utilizing the ballot: "Witness the municipal corruptions of New York, and the monstrosities of negro rule in South Carolina." Such attitudes helped to justify Northern inaction as, one by one, the Reconstruction regimes of the South were overthrown by political violence.



In the end, then, neither the abolition of slavery nor Reconstruction succeeded in resolving the debate over the meaning of freedom in American life. Twenty years before the American Civil War, writing about the prospect of abolition in France's colonies, Alexis de Tocqueville had written, "If the Negroes have the right to become free, the [planters] have the incontestable right not to be ruined by the Negroes' freedom." And in the United States, as in nearly every plantation society that experienced the end of slavery, a rigid social and political dichotomy between former master and former slave, an ideology of racism, and a dependent labor force with limited economic opportunities all survived abolition. Unless one means by freedom the simple fact of not being a slave, emancipation thrust blacks into a kind of no-man's land, a partial freedom that made a mockery of the American ideal of equal citizenship.

Yet by the same token the ultimate outcome underscores the uniqueness of Reconstruction itself. Alone among the societies that abolished slavery in the nineteenth century, the United States, for a moment, offered the freedmen

a measure of political control over their own destinies. However brief its sway, Reconstruction allowed scope for a remarkable political and social mobilization of the black community. It opened doors of opportunity that could never be completely closed. Reconstruction transformed the lives of Southern blacks in ways unmeasurable by statistics and unreachable by law. It raised their expectations and aspirations, redefined their status in relation to the larger society, and allowed space for the creation of institutions that enabled them to survive the repression that followed. And it established constitutional principles of civil and political equality that, while flagrantly violated after Reconstruction, planted the seeds of future struggle.

Certainly, in terms of the sense of possibility with which it opened, Reconstruction failed. But as Du Bois observed, it was a "splendid failure." For its animating vision—a society in which social advancement would be open to all on the basis of individual merit, not inherited caste distinctions—is as old as America itself and remains relevant to a nation still grappling with the unresolved legacy of emancipation.



Thomas Holt



Black Leaders and Black Labor: An Unexpected Failure

Reconstruction in South Carolina was a political failure. Of course, there were some notable successes: the establishment of a public education system, and the general process of democratizing a state which had been infamous for the lack of popular participation were significant achievements. Most significant of all, perhaps, was the fact that Reconstruction postponed, if not entirely forestalled, the development of an apartheid system of racial and economic relationships of the dimensions prefigured in the Black Codes.

Nevertheless, Republican government ultimately failed in its two most important tasks—the task of staying in power, and the task of using that power to solve the most critical problems of its constituents. After a fleeting moment of experimentation, blacks were consigned to a special caste in America's class society. Politically they were gradually reduced to a nonentity. Economically they were bound by new and insidious devices, such as debts, poverty, and convict lease, to sell their labor in a buyer's market. Socially they became America's untouchables.

Of course, black South Carolinians did not bear this oppression alone; the bright promise of emancipation had soured in other reconstructed states as well. But South Carolina was unique, because if political Reconstruction should have succeeded anywhere, ostensibly it should have succeeded in the Palmetto State. South Carolina had a black majority from 1820 to 1930, and in the middle of the Reconstruction period (1875) that majority rose to over 60 percent. This state placed more black leaders in elective office than any other southern state. Yet the legislative accomplishments of this brief interregnum do not match the actual or potential power of that leadership. Various explanations are offered to explain the political disaster in the election of 1876, but few have explained the failure of the Republican leadership to use its full power for the social and economic advancement of the black masses during the years preceding 1876. Indeed, if anything the party seemed to be retreating during the last two years of Republican rule. Rather than advancing measures to further social change in

South Carolina, Negro leaders found themselves struggling, sometimes unsuccessfully, to defeat the socially reactionary legislative initiatives of their own Governor Chamberlain.

But what did black leaders accomplish during the pre-Chamberlain years of 1868 through 1874 to promote the welfare of their constituents? Their work in establishing a modern, generally progressive and comparatively democratic constitution has been highlighted and commended by most scholars, but considerably less attention has been given to the legislative program after that date, except for the railroads, bond issues, and related activities. The fact is that the major legislative conflicts among Republicans developed around the latter issues, and not around the social or economic legislation most relevant to the poor blacks who were their constituents. Even the few modest programs launched to assist those constituents either were unsuccessful, or were so compromised as to become ineffective. The land commission, for example, was designed to purchase and subdivide the surplus property of debt-ridden planters for landless blacks and whites. But it was placed in the charge of an arrogant, corrupt, and inept administrator who perpetrated several fraudulent and costly transactions. The effort to replace this director involved the commission in new frauds which left its resources further depleted and its capacity to make significant land-reform initiatives severely limited. A public school system was established, but again it was so badly administered that its impact on illiteracy never reached its potential. Of course, there was success in the establishment of a state normal school and a scholarship program which opened up the state university to impecunious blacks. There was also progress in opening public accommodations to blacks, though the custom of segregation in many other aspects of social life remained largely unchanged and unchallenged.

On the whole, one is left with the impression that black freedmen, armed with an overwhelming electoral advantage, had a tremendous opportunity but failed to act to satisfy their most critical needs. Given this very uneven performance of the Republican government, how does one characterize the Republican leadership's performance during Reconstruction? Indeed, how does one characterize the Negroes who constituted the single most numerous group within that leadership? The most persistent image of the latter is that of a largely poor, working-class group, or representatives of the working class. In a sense, the crystallization of this image is represented in the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, who characterized the Reconstruction as "a vast labor movement" and marvelled that "poverty was so well represented," seeing in this "certain tendencies toward a dictatorship of the proletariat." Indeed, this attempt to impose a not entirely crystallized Marxian interpretation of Reconstruction politics brought Du Bois a great deal of criticism; consequently, many of his other insights have been ignored.

In one such insight he qualified his description of the black leadership class as representatives of the black proletariat; he observed that the group was intelligent, but "not at all clear in its economic thought." He recognized that "on the whole, it believed in the accumulation of wealth and exploitation of labor as the normal method of economic development." It failed to unite black and white labor "because black leadership still tended toward the ideas

of the petty bourgeois." He believed, nevertheless, that their participation and leadership in the incipient national black labor movement was proof that this orientation was undergoing a change as a result of pressure from the legislators' poor working-class constituents.

And indeed, pressure there was from constituents—but the pressure groups never effectively harnessed the political process to serve their ends. At least twenty bills purporting to govern the relationship between planters and laborers were introduced during the period of Republican rule, yet very few of these measures ever became law, and none seemed to have protected farm laborers satisfactorily. Their legislative histories are tangled; often there were no roll calls, and extant reports of the legislative progress of the proposals are filled with unaccountable gaps at critical junctures. But a pattern is apparent from the information that does survive. Black legislators introduced legislation designed to surround the laborer with a variety of legal protections against capricious eviction, fraud in the division of the crop, and the accustomed dictation by planters of many non-economic aspects of his life. These legislative initiatives were bottled up in hostile committees in many instances, compromised through drastic amendments in others, and killed outright on not a few occasions. Those few offered little protection to the laborers, and in some cases merely legalized their oppression.

Within days of the inauguration of Republican rule in South Carolina and the convening of the special session of the 1868 legislature, State Senator Benjamin F. Randolph introduced a "Bill to enable laborers who work under contract or otherwise to recover pay for their labor when said contract is not complied with." The judiciary committee, chaired by D. T. Corbin (who was also U. S. district attorney for South Carolina), reported unfavorably on this bill on July 22; this report was adopted, thereby defeating the bill. But a short time later a second bill was introduced by William Beverly Nash under the title, "A Bill to define the law of contract for hire." Supporters of this measure sought to bypass the hostile judiciary committee by referring it to a special three-man committee, but were defeated. Senator Randolph then moved to force the judiciary committee to report within a specified period. This effort was also unsuccessful, and no bill reached the floor of the Senate during the special session. Among this stalled legislation was a "Bill to protect laborers and persons working under contracts on shares of the crops" which had passed the House, but was postponed in the Senate until the session beginning the following November.

The latter bill, or at least one bearing its title, did pass during the regular session of the legislature and was approved by Governor Scott on March 19, 1869. That this new law intended no radical changes in the legal status of farmworkers vis-à-vis the planters is clear; however, from the action taken on it during the session. At the end of February Alonzo J. Ransier, chairman of the special committee in the House to which it was referred, reported "A bill to establish an agent to supervise contracts, and to provide for the protection of laborers working on shares of the crop," which had originally been introduced by William H. Jones. In committee the bill had been drastically altered, and all references to the appointment of contract agents were dropped in the revised text. A new title was appended which read simply "A bill to protect laborers and

persons working under contract on shares of crops." When this revised bill was taken up on March 3, Thaddeus K. Sasportas offered the following substitute for the first two sections.

Section 1. That any person or persons entering into contracts as laborers, consideration for which labor is a portion of the crop, are hereby declared to be co-partners, with all rights, privileges and emoluments guaranteed to corporations by existing law, in said crop, and no further.

Section 2. That a claim for labor, whenever performed, shall constitute a lien having a priority over all other liens. All Acts and parts of Acts inconsistent [sic] with this Act be, and the same are hereby, repealed.

Claude Turner, a Democratic member, moved to postpone the whole matter indefinitely. Robert B. Elliott moved that the bill and the substitute be tabled in order to take up out of its regular order a "Bill to define contracts for laborers, and for other purposes." Elliott's motion was approved 33 to 10, but action on the second bill was postponed to take up the Port Royal Railroad Bill.

The bill to define contracts for laborers was evidently the same proposal Senator Nash had introduced during the special session which had been continued to the regular session. However, Nash's bill had been altered in Whipper's judiciary committee with the following very critical substitute for section five of the original measure:

Section 5. Employees absenting themselves from labor without the consent of their employers, except in case of sickness, or on public days, or the usual holidays, shall forfeit his or her pay for the week or month, as the case may be, for which he or she was hired; Provided, however, That any persons attending public meetings shall forfeit only at the rate of their wages for the time lost.

This substitute, by which a laborer could be docked for up to a month's wages for one day's unexcused absence, was adopted on March 11 when consideration of the labor bill resumed. It was passed and sent to the Senate on March 16. Subsequent actions on the bill are unclear, but it was postponed until the following session and, apparently, allowed to die quietly.

Meanwhile, the bill written by Ransier's special committee had passed the House and Senate and had been approved by the governor in March, 1869. Judging from the content of the new law, however, the title—"To protect laborers"—was a misnomer, since in its practical application the planters would receive more "protection" than the farmworkers....

[T]he distinctive voting patterns on the two roll calls on the labor issue suggest the legislators' motives and, given other evidence, might permit some inferences to be drawn from their performance on this issue.

The first roll call was ordered on February 5, when the labor committee's substitute passed its second reading by a vote of 57 to 9. The second occurred when George Lee's motion to kill the Henderson bill was approved, 43 to 20. Therefore, 86 percent of those voting favored the substitute, with only five Democrats, three white Republicans, and one Negro voting against it. On the

Henderson bill, however, only 60 percent of the Negroes (as compared with 90 percent of the white Republicans) voted against the proposal—i.e., for Lee's motion to strike the resolving clause. However, the opposition included many House leaders, such as Robert B. Elliott and Robert C. De Large, along with more conservative Negroes like Henry W. Purvis, Philip Ezekiel, and Charles M. Wilder. The voting patterns of the Negroes by prewar origin and color indicate that those representatives closer to working-class blacks—that is, the black ex-slaves—tended to favor Henderson's bill, which promised direct assistance to resolve labor problems, rather than the legalistic and complex procedures favored by their freeborn and mulatto colleagues. With 50 and 60 percent of those voting on the bill identified by color and origins, respectively, only 11 percent of the freeborn compared to 48 percent of the slave-born, and 18 percent of the mulattoes compared to 35 percent of the blacks voted for Henderson's bill. When the categories of origins and color are combined, it is evident that black ex-slaves gave the bill its heaviest support and freeborn mulattoes its stiffest opposition. Thus, the voting behavior of the legislators on these two roll calls on the labor issue follow the pattern discerned in other roll calls during the early sessions of the legislature, when free mulattoes and black ex-slaves were found at the opposite ends of a conservative-to-radical continuum. Such opposition suggests that social class influenced political behavior.

Of course, a division along lines of prewar status and color does not prove that open class antagonism was reflected in this vote. Indeed, one would not expect such class conflict to be openly expressed, or possibly even honestly perceived by the participants. After all, these legislators, whatever their origins, color, or class, depended upon the poor black farmworkers to keep them in office. But the failure of the legislature to enact meaningful labor laws certainly suggests an underlying failure of purposefulness, a failure of perception, a lack of urgency in acting on the critical needs of those constituents. Legislation involving other economic issues, such as banks, bond issues, and railroads, had experienced much less frustration, being pushed along with more tenacity and skill than those relating to the common laborers. One is forced to the conclusion that while it did not cause this failure to legislate successfully for the working class, the considerable social and cultural distance between many of these legislators and their constituents must have contributed to that failure.

The forty-seven Negro legislators who were either elected from or resided in Charleston County are admittedly not a *random* sampling of the Negro leadership cadre for this period, but Charleston County offers the distinct advantage of extant and well-maintained tax records for the 1870's, in which the property holdings of two-thirds of these forty-seven men are recorded. In addition to this convenience, it is also evident that the twenty votes of the Charleston delegation were critical to the success of any legislation in the General Assembly. The median value of property of the legislators in this sample was \$1,000: five men were listed as owning neither personal nor real property; ten others paid taxes on property valued at less than \$1,000, and eleven on property valued at between \$1,000 and \$5,000, four on property worth \$5,001 to \$10,000, and one was taxed for property worth \$14,000.

Twenty-one of these men were paying taxes on real estate, and while some of them were legitimate farmers, others appear to have been land speculators. Some had properties in the country, a significant proportion of which was arable soil and under cultivation. For example, William R. Jervey's 136 acres in the Stephens district included 30 acres under cultivation, housed six buildings and several farm animals. A similar situation could be found with William H. W. Gray's 25 acres in St. John's.

On the other hand, a fair number of them appear to have been real estate speculators. This can be inferred from the fact that they held large sections, often in scattered sites in country districts, which were largely undeveloped, having much of the land covered with woods and few or no buildings or farm animals listed. This appears to have been the case with the 100 acres in the possession of Aaron Logan in St. Thomas, Samuel E. Gaillard's property at St. James Goose Creek, and George Lee's wooded lot in Summerville.

The practice of investing accumulated capital in land had roots in the prewar period, when this was one of the few capital ventures open to the mulatto bourgeoisie. The McKinlays, *père* and *fils*, were the wealthiest Negro politicians; much of their wealth, aggregating to \$40,000 for the collective family estate and consisting primarily of investments in rental properties around Charleston's Fourth Ward, came from real estate purchased before the war. The McKinlays also invested heavily in the stocks and bonds of their city and state and in the new, largely black-owned Enterprise Railroad. Bosemon, Louisa Ransier (wife of Congressman Alonzo J. Ransier), George Lee, and Florian Henry Frost also invested substantially in these same issues, especially the Enterprise Railroad. Frost had a part interest in a sloop, the *Martina Raven*, in addition to his other investments.

One suspects then that these people were, or aspired to become, a part of the emerging capitalist class of postwar Charleston. The economic temper was optimistic, boomed by various schemes for an east-west rail link which would usher that port city into a new era of prosperity. While their capitalist allies in the Republican party built railroads across the continent, some of the Negro leaders launched kindred ventures on a smaller scale in Charleston. A few weeks after they failed to get a labor bill through the General Assembly, a group of prominent Negro politicians succeeded in their effort to launch the Enterprise Railroad, a horse-drawn freight streetcar line which was set up to move goods in and out of Charleston harbor. All but one of the officers and directors were Negro. Richard H. Cain was president of the company; William James Whipper, vice-president; Alonzo J. Ransier, secretary; William R. Jervey, corresponding secretary; and William McKinlay, treasurer. The twelve-man board of directors included Joseph H. Rainey, Benjamin A. Bosemon, William J. Brodie, Charles Hayne, Thaddeus K. Sasportas, John B. Wright, Henry J. Maxwell, Lucius Winbush, Robert Smalls, William E. Johnston, and Samuel Johnson. The incorporators were to subscribe \$13,000 of the capital stock of the company. Some of the incorporators were publicly attacked because their rail line would throw the black draymen out of work. The road was established, however, and paid a handsome profit to its investors; it was still in use in the 1880's.

Other ventures of a similar nature were not so entirely black-controlled as the Enterprise Railroad. William J. McKinlay, Samuel E. Gallard, William R. Jerry, and others incorporated the Charleston and Sullivan's Island Railroad in 1874 to run from Christ Church Parish to Mouttrieville and connect Charleston with some of the outlying islands. And in the spring of 1870 William McKinlay and Charles M. Wilder were elected to the board of directors of the South Carolina Bank and Trust Company.

Others factors—more suggestive than demonstrative—point to the class consciousness of these men. Personal possessions are identified in the tax ledgers, and they often hint at a lifestyle that is clearly more middle than working-class. There appear in these ledgers the carriages, pianos, organs, and jewelry of people that have or seek a cultivated ease, charm, and elegance suggestive of an emerging bourgeoisie. Of course, the nouveau (as distinct from the traditional) bourgeoisie often reflected a certain lack of polish, the gauche expected of those who were only recently ushered to a new social level. The relish of ostentatious display evident in State Representative Sammy Green as he sped through the sandy streets of Beaufort with his thousand-dollar barouche and team exemplifies not only the cruder side of these aspirations, but the growing distance between Green and his constituents as well. In this case, as in many others, the social distance was not reflected in a concurrent political distance, for Green was generally identified with the extreme radical bloc in the legislature throughout his career. It merely points up the fact that what one expects to find here is not an iron law for the prediction of political behavior from social class, but something more subtle.

Certainly, the subtleties of the situation were not lost on some of the more perceptive observers of South Carolina society and politics. In a lengthy article in a Beaufort paper, a native white Southerner, obviously from the planter class, surprisingly favored the Civil Rights Bill of 1875 which was then being debated in Congress. The writer, who signed himself "W," declared that whites need not concern themselves with the Civil Rights Bill, for it would only benefit the educated class among the blacks and would serve to ally them even closer to the upper-class whites. He lectured his readers on emerging class and racial patterns in the state which would operate to maintain that status quo.

Among them will be found two classes whose conditions will be so distinctive that their own lines of demarcation will be as wide and as well defined as that which exists between the more cultivated and refined of the white race and those less trained and cultured of either. The one will consist of such as are as highly intelligent and educated as they are capable of; the other of such as are untutored and degraded as the need of such advantages makes them. In proportion to the advantages embraced by the first will their pride and conservatism be increased.

"W" went on to conclude that the Civil Rights Bill could never reconcile these two antagonistic classes among the Negroes, and thus the various constitutional amendments and civil rights laws would never be pushed beyond the "naturally constituted barriers of taste and prejudice." The Negro bourgeoisie would prevent such eventualities, because it would seek to maintain its own

social distance from the black masses. The writer felt that the experience of the past few years in Beaufort had certainly established that point, for there "where the colored element predominates there have been the fewest demonstrations of a desire upon their parts to assume any unwarranted position...." Thus the whites could expect to find allies among the Negro bourgeoisie.

From the educated and intelligent of the colored race whose home is to be amongst us we confidently predict so much conservatism and so much exclusivism among themselves that any effort to make use of them to entertain ill-blood among the races will prove futile. From the ignorant and vicious of the same race there need be no fear of other than an enforced obedience to the natural order which society is constituted according to organic law which man neither made nor can alter.

The radical and economic prejudices of "W" are clear, and his interpretation of the postwar social scene was with respect to his class self-congratulatory, if not self-serving. But his comments cannot be dismissed as mere wishful thinking, for they might have been based on observable phenomena. At least one of his Beaufort neighbors was a perfect example of the nexus between the solidification of class interests and an evolving political ideology. Thomas Hamilton was a Republican, although he was often a maverick on partisan issues. During the 1875-76 session Hamilton had a fairly radical voting record on fiscal issues but was clearly conservative on those relative to political and social reform that came to a roll call vote. His views are expressed more clearly and directly, though, in a speech to striking rice workers in 1876.

My friends, the longer I live and pursue my avocation as a planter the more am I impressed with the knowledge that our interests are identical with the owners of these plantations. Surely, if they are not prosperous, how can they pay you wages? You complain now that you don't get enough for your labor, but would you not have greater cause of complaint if you destroy entirely their ability to pay you at all? I am a rice planter, and employ a certain number of hands. Now, if my work is not permitted to go on, how can I gather my crops and pay my laborers, and how can my laborers support their families? They are dependent upon their labor for support; they are not calculated for anything else; they can't get situations in stores as clerks; they can't all write, nor are they fitted for anything else. There is but one course for you to pursue, and that is to labor industriously and live honestly.

In the critical election of 1876, Hamilton, whose comments prefigured the anti-labor, capitalistic, accommodationist philosophy of Booker T. Washington, abandoned the Republicans for Wade Hampton to complete the overthrow of Republican government, the last hope of justice—though perhaps a misplaced one—for those rice workers whom he addressed in the summer of 1876.

The rhetoric of some of Hamilton's colleagues was more pro-labor, but their accomplishments were no less pro-planter. That the 1869 labor law was not operating satisfactorily for farmworkers can be surmised from the fact that proposals were introduced in practically every subsequent session to remedy its defects. Most of the new laws that were passed, however, actually aided the planter much more than the worker.

Not that there were no legislative victories for the farmworker, but the practical effect of these victories was often quite different from the apparent intent. For instance, the cash-poor planters had instituted a system in some areas whereby they paid wage laborers in scrip or checks redeemable with certain local merchants. Sometimes the planter was also the merchant; in effect, he simply bartered high-priced merchandise for low-paid labor. In either case, the mark-up on prices at the company store was astronomical, and the workers got the short end of a line of credit that ultimately reached banking institutions beyond the state.

In 1872 the South Carolina legislature outlawed the issuance of checks except where it was specifically provided for in the labor contract beforehand. Of course, it is difficult to judge how much the loophole exempting cases where scrip was a prior contractual arrangement vitiated the effects of the law, since planters could make such arrangements a standard item in their contracts. But it is clear that the practice was continued, because it was directly responsible for the strike of rice workers in the summer of 1876. The law had been amended in March, 1875, so that scrips or checks would be prohibited only in those cases where they had to be redeemed "at some future time, or in the shops or stores of the employers." Thus the key features of the system were preserved—that is, workers could be paid in scrip instead of currency, and this scrip was only redeemable for goods available at the local store at exorbitant prices.

The workers in the lowland rice areas were mostly wage laborers, and therefore the primary victims of the scrip system. They rebelled in July, 1876, with a massive and violent strike. The workers abandoned the fields and generally coerced their less resolute colleagues to do likewise. The whites declared that it was insurrection and called upon Governor Chamberlain to send in the state militia. But, facing a gubernatorial election in the fall, Chamberlain also sent "the King of Beaufort," Congressman Robert Smalls, to investigate. Smalls, who was also a commander in the state militia, reported that the militia was no longer needed, that the ringleaders had been arrested, and that the workers had just grievances against the checks system. His position (which Chamberlain also adopted) was that the workers had a right to strike, but not to prevent others from working. This principle of "the right to work" was respectable enough, and certainly in keeping with the prevalent free enterprise philosophy of many Republican contemporaries. Smalls reported that the workers also agreed with his position, but evidently they were not so deluded as to believe they could win the strike following such a policy. They continued successfully to use might where right had failed to induce potential strikebreakers to adopt the better part of valor. Convinced that the state government would not protect them from the violent and illegal actions of the strikers, the planters decided to settle and to abandon the checks system.

One rice planter who deplored the government's vacillating course was State Representative Hamilton, who instructed the rice workers on the dangers inherent in such action. "I consider it a great misfortune that an example was not made of those persons who were tried a few days ago for whipping and otherwise maltreating laborers who were disposed to work, for it emboldens

others to repeat that which may be repeated too often, and until all patience and sympathy is exhausted."

While the legislators' efforts to regulate the use of checks failed to prevent the strike or protect the workers, their accomplishments on another labor-related issue were more successful. In 1872 a bill was passed which regulated the leasing of convicts by merely providing that their labor could not be sold at rates less than those current for comparable labor, and that the proceeds must go to the state. Two years later the leasing of convicts to private parties was outlawed altogether, and such use of inmates was restricted to state projects. During the 1875-76 session Governor Chamberlain's attempt to revive the practice of leasing to private concerns was defeated. Thus, although the system of convict lease was instituted under Republican government, it was also terminated by that government.

Unfortunately, this was one of the few entirely pro-labor accomplishments in nine years of Republican rule. On March 19, 1874, an "Act for the better protection of landowners and persons renting land to others for agricultural purposes" was passed. This law established for planters a preferential lien on one-third of the crop against the rental of the land or advances to farmworkers during the season. In December, 1876, after an election which brought an end to Republican hegemony in South Carolina, two legislatures convened in Columbia, one Democratic and one Republican, both claiming to be the legitimate representatives of the people. In the course of this heated dispute over the political future of the state, the economic future of black laborers received a fatal blow. Almost as an afterthought, the laws which had given laborers a lien on the crop of the planter were quietly repealed. This was done not by the Democratic Wallace House, but by the Republican Mackey House. It was not, in the end, such a splendid failure after all.



