ON REWRITING RECONSTRUCTION HISTORY

For many years both Northerners and Southerners who wrote on Reconstruction were dominated by sectional feelings still embittered by the Civil War. Men of the postwar decades were more concerned with justifying their own position than they were with painstaking search for truth. Thus Hilary Herbert and his corroborators presented a Southern indictment of Northern policies, and Henry Wilson's history was a brief for the North. Few Southerners were writing history. Northern historians long accepted the thesis of Radical Republicans that Radicals had saved the Union by their Reconstruction program, that their Democratic opponents were traitors, and that Andrew Johnson was a drunkard and an incompetent. A much-needed revision came at about the turn of the century, associated principally with Rhodes and the “Dunning school”. For the first time meticulous and thorough research was carried on in an effort to determine the truth rather than to prove a thesis. The emphasis of the Dunning school was upon the harm done to the South by Radical Reconstruction and upon the sordid political and economic motives behind Radicalism. Rhodes and the Dunning group drew a picture of a South that—but for outside interference—might have made a happy and practical readjustment suited to the new social, economic, and political order. Rhodes, however, while crediting the President’s faults to weakness rather than to wickedness, yet accepted the older picture of Andrew Johnson and blamed his mistakes for much of the disaster that overtook the South. Then still another group rehabilitated Johnson. Dewitt rewrote the story of the impeachment as early as 1902. Schouler’s last volume, which appeared in 1913, carried the revision further. In the twenties a group of historians completed the process with several detailed studies of Johnson’s career. About the same time Bowers gave the public his rather superficial but

1 Based on a paper read at a meeting of the Southern Historical Association on November 3, 1939.

2 David Miller Dewitt, The Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson (New York, 1903).


widely read study of the period.\textsuperscript{5} His work was based on the serious study of the revisionists. It accepted their reinterpretations. But it departed so far from the older pro-Republican point of view that it became almost a Democratic campaign document. Feeling that the pendulum had swung too far, several younger historians have initiated a new revision. As far as it has gone, this latest rewriting seems to stand upon substantial ground. Yet its point of view has not become "classic", as the Dunning reinterpretation did. The ideas of the Dunning school still largely influence writing on the Reconstruction period.

It would seem that it is now time for a younger generation of Southern historians to cease lauding those who "restored white supremacy" and instead to begin analyzing the restorationists' interests to see just what they stood for in opposing the Radicals. Such a study of Reconstruction will certainly rehabilitate some of the Radical leaders in the South, even as the equally denounced President of the United States was rehabilitated a few years ago. A constituent for whom Sumner had obtained a Freedmen's Bureau appointment once wrote Sumner from the South: "After six months of intimate association I have determined on the startling proposition that a man is not necessarily a saint because black, nor a devil, because white."\textsuperscript{6} Even Northern historians would universally accept this once "startling proposition". Yet some of them have approached dangerously near to its converse. In accepting the terms "carpetbagger" and "scalawag" historians have almost inevitably accepted certain contemporary biases along with the suggestive names. Is it not time that we studied the history of Reconstruction without first assuming, at least subconsciously, that carpetbaggers and Southern white Republicans were wicked, that Negroes were illiterate incompetents, and that the whole white South owes a debt of gratitude to the restorers of "white supremacy"?

Some young historians, most of them Southerners, have already answered this question affirmatively by proceeding to write history in a new spirit. Just as Rhodes, Dunning, Dunning's pupils, and others of the Dunning school rendered a service a generation ago by careful researches into political sources and by writing with an attitude freed from the war animosities of their fathers, so another new generation has begun to retell the story in terms of the economic and social forces at work and without the preconceptions that limited the earlier group. Of the Dunning school itself a few, like Mildred Thompson, Flem-

\textsuperscript{5} Claude G. Bowers, \textit{The Tragic Era} (Cambridge, 1929).

\textsuperscript{6} J. C. Beecher from Summerville, South Carolina, to Charles Sumner, Oct. 25, 1867, Sumner MSS., LXXIV, Widener Library, Harvard University.
ing, and Garner, delved into social and economic life, though without seeing its full implication; Miss Lonn and Miss Thompson, to a certain extent, and Garner, notably, escaped from the restricting frames of reference of the others.\textsuperscript{7} Years ago Alex Mathews Arnett led the way in reinterpretation of Georgia Bourbons.\textsuperscript{8} Among the younger historians to whom we must turn for reinterpretation are Francis B. Simkins, C. Vann Woodward, Horace Mann Bond, Vernon L. Wharton, Paul Lewinson, Roger W. Shugg, James S. Allen. And there is one, no longer young, W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, whose race and social philosophy give his work, \textit{Black Reconstruction},\textsuperscript{9} freshness. Du Bois's volume is far too wordy; it is distorted by insistence upon molding facts into a Marxian pattern.\textsuperscript{10} Yet in describing the Negro's role Du Bois has presented a mass of material, formerly ignored, that every future historian must reckon with. Allen's application of Marxian theory to the period has also forced upon those of us who do not accept his general interpretation certain important modifications of our own points of view.\textsuperscript{11} From a non-Marxian point of view Shugg has described in one state the class struggle between merchants and planters, on the one hand, and small farmers and laborers, on the other, and has pointed out that this conflict began in ante-bellum days and continued through Populism.\textsuperscript{12} Lewinson pioneered ten years ago in restudying the Negro's place in Southern history.\textsuperscript{13} Wharton, a native Mississippian, in a study of the Negro in his state from 1860 to 1890, has presented facts that are

\textsuperscript{7} Ella Lonn, of course, like several others of the group, was not a student of Dunning's, but she is nonetheless one of the most distinguished members of the "Dunning school".

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{The Populist Movement in Georgia: A View of the "Agrarian Crusade" in the Light of Solid-South Politics} (New York, 1922).

\textsuperscript{9} New York, 1935.

\textsuperscript{10} Some Marxists would disown Du Bois. Yet his interpretation he owes to Marx's influence. Perhaps it would be fairer to Marx to call Du Bois a quasi-Marxist.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Reconstruction} (New York, 1937).

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers during Slavery and after, 1840-1875} (University, La., 1939). Unfortunately, though he does an admirable job in tracing the class struggle and its implications, Shugg merely mentions casually in passing many of the most important factors, such as corruption under the Conservatives before Radicals came into power, the relation of business to government, the profit that respectable Southern whites made from Radical corruption, the failure of the Radicals to accomplish important social reforms, and their effect upon education. This is a pity since he has brought such fine understanding to the development of his major thesis. Furthermore, by his failure to carry his study on through the days of the restorationists up to the full flowering of Populism, he fails to shed the light on Reconstruction itself that a comparison of Bourbon conservatism with the Radicalism it overthrew would have made possible.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Race, Class, and Party} (New York, 1932).
revolutionary in their significance for Reconstruction history. In a most provocative study of Alabama, Bond has revealed the determining influence that business interests exerted upon the political struggles in that state. In his study of the Georgia Bourbons, whom he calls “New Departure Democrats”, Woodward has brought understanding to what has been a veritable “dark age” in American history. Simkins and Woody, in their work on still another state, have been unusually fair-minded toward the Negro and the white Reconstructionist and have shown interest in social and economic forces. Simkins’s work on South Carolina, together with his various suggestions of other important factors, ranks him as a leader in fundamental reinterpretation.

It is my purpose to suggest further studies and changed points of view necessary to a full understanding of Reconstruction. What I say must be tentative. It can merely raise questions and suggest work that needs doing, for until much work of this newer sort is done, we shall not have the facts from which to generalize with any assurance.

First, we need to stop passing judgment on persons and to begin studying forces. It is not so important to know whether a few more or a few less carpetbaggers or so-called scalawags were righteous or iniquitous as it is to know what social and economic forces brought them to power and motivated them. Furthermore, it is time to stop defending or attacking opponents of Radical rule and to discover what the Conservatives’ interests were and what forces actually controlled their actions. Our judgments upon either group are relatively unimportant in history. An understanding of the bewildering complexity of conflicting interests and social phenomena of the day has been lost in the midst of historians’ proud or unconscious partisanship for or against Radicals, Conservatives, Negroes, scalawags, or restorers of white supremacy.

16 Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel (New York, 1938), pp. 52-190. See also “Tom Watson and the Negro in Agrarian Politics”, Journal of Southern History, IV (Feb., 1938), 14-33, and an unpublished article, “Bourbonism in Georgia”, read at the 1937 meeting of the Southern Historical Association in Durham.
17 Francis Butler Simkins and Robert Hilliard Woody, South Carolina during Reconstruction (Chapel Hill, 1932); Simkins, The Tillman Movement in South Carolina (Durham, 1926).
Secondly, we can understand Reconstruction only if we study it in its setting. Most Southerners have treated the Reconstruction period in American history as if it were Southern history, whereas even the history of the South during this period can be understood only as part of our national history. We must cease considering Reconstruction as a heart-rending story of oppressed and oppressing personalities isolated in time and space. For instance, the corruption of Southern Radical legislatures has been usually attributed to the peculiar nature of the Northerners who came south, the lack of character of Southern men who supported them, and the naïveté of newly freed Negroes. It seems probable that more important as causes of corruption were the same factors that at the same time were corrupting Northern state legislatures, the purely Democratic Tweed Ring in New York City, and congressmen and members of the Grant administration in Washington. It seems likely that the same factors caused corruption then that caused it among Southern ruling whites when in Van Buren’s day numerous Southern Democratic land agents stole public funds. Public office has been used to further personal interests under the Bourbons who threw the Radicals out and in our own day by the conservative friends of business whom Huey Long displaced and by Long’s followers who had denounced their predecessors. And there are other Southern states that cannot cast stones at Louisiana. Radical corruption will not be understood by those who insist that it was a peculiar Radical phenomenon of the period 1868-77.19

Similarly, the extravagance of Radical legislatures can be understood only as part of a national era of expansion that affected Western and Northern states, Northern cities, and the Federal government. All of these were using public funds lavishly and unwisely to further “progress”.20 So, too, have other Americans done—including Southern aristoc-

19 For instance, in Louisiana, where corruption under the Radicals attained as serious proportions as anywhere, Shugg points out that in the Conservative loyalist convention of 1864 there was an “enormous waste of public money by a body in which neither carpet-baggars nor corrupt Negroes were present”. He ascribes this in part to “the blunders and speculations” of members “too unaccustomed to politics to be well tutored in the management of public affairs” (pp. 202-203). He concludes that it is “important to realize that no race, class, or party could lay a virtuous claim to clean hands” (p. 226).

20 In the bad situation in Louisiana Shugg again points out that, irrespective of party, “politicians bribed legislators for party and parish favors, and business men and corporations bribed the politicians for economic privileges”. He quotes a congressional report that testifies: “The legislative corruption involves both parties. Among the principal movers of legislative jobs were wealthy, influential, and highly respectable democrats.” He cites Governor Warmoth’s testimony “on Democratic votes for four railway subsidies” (ibid.). The pity is that he did not investigate this factor in his class struggle with the same thoroughness and fine spirit that he applied to other aspects of that class struggle.
crats in Jackson's day, Bourbons after Reconstruction, and Americans of all sections again in the 1920's. Writers of Reconstruction history have felt it unimportant to study the causes and effects in the South of the panic of 1873. Yet these causes and effects were important in determining the political history of Southern states.

Furthermore, the influx of Northerners into the South needs to be separated from the usual assumption that for Northerners to move into the South was somehow proof of vicious or vindictive natures. This postwar migration must be studied apart from emotions and as one of the many movements of population that have been important in our national development. We need to study its causes and effects without advance moral judgment on the participants, just as we study the Westward migrations at all stages of our history, the movement of Southerners into the Northwest long before the Civil War, the migration of country folk to cities, of Europeans to America, of French Canadians to New England, of Southern Negroes to Northern cities in the twentieth century, and of thousands of young white Southerners of our own day to the North. Usually the hope was for better economic opportunities. Many Northerners who came south were honest citizens seeking to contribute to the well-being of their new homeland through activities that would have been welcomed had they moved west instead of south. Only when we have ceased condemning them and have studied the Northerners who moved south and differentiated them according to the various motives and interests and types they represented shall we understand their part in Reconstruction.

Many of the severest critics of Reconstruction governments hold up the ante-bellum South as America's nearest approach to Utopia. We need to remind ourselves constantly that it was this ante-bellum life that had fastened ignorance or inexperience upon millions of whites as well as Negroes and that it was this ignorance and inexperience that caused trouble when Radicals were in power. The North had then and the nation has now a similar problem of making democracy work among ignorant and inexperienced people. Yet, in spite of the labors of educational leaders, the wealthy Southerner of ante-bellum days, except where the power of poorer men forced it on him, seldom recognized the need for general education of even the white masses.21 When he

21 Shugg, for instance, points out: "Nothing was done to remedy these conditions [the inadequacies of popular education] because of the indifference of wealthy planters and Creoles toward popular education. Their apathy was chiefly responsible for the failure of free schools in Louisiana before the Civil War" (ibid., pp. 74-75). The rural nature of the South made schools more difficult to establish there than in Northern towns. But
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returned to power after Reconstruction the ruling white was niggardly in providing education for poor men. We cannot understand Recon-
struction without recognizing the part that ignorance and inexperience played in government.

Furthermore, the tendency to cut Reconstruction off from the Civil War that preceded it and the Bourbon and Populist eras that followed has led to misinterpretation. No one would think of trying to understand the Confederation period without relation to the American Revolution and the Constitutional Convention and the Federalist regime. We need to restudy as a whole the period from 1850 to the turn of the century in order to understand the segment of it that has usually been bounded by the years 1865 and 1877.

Many of us have accepted Beard's pronouncement that the Civil War was a revolution. Du Bois tried to apply it unqualifiedly to the period but failed because he did not comprehend the importance in Southern life of the yeoman farmer, who was neither slaveowning nor "poor white". And his effort to portray the Negro and certain whites of the rural South as a typical proletariat distorted unfortunately the revolutionary thesis. Yet, in spite of Du Bois's misuse of it, this hypothesis of Beard's has validity. The revolutionary hypothesis, however, must not be overdone. The period was complex. Many of the actors in the revolution were unconscious of it; others had mixed motives. Yet beginning even before 1850 and extending over several decades there occurred a revolution in American life. The revolution was twofold. An agrarian group heretofore dominant in the nation was overthrown by an industrial and urban interest. Simultaneously in the South a ruling order was overthrown. The ante-bellum South was not nearly so pure an aristocracy, socially or politically, as contemporary defense theorists or later romanticists would have one believe. Many regions were controlled by middle-class folk or recently self-made men; in many places Jacksonian democracy still retained strength. The struggle of yeoman farmer and laborer against planter and merchant that culminated in Populism had already begun.22 Nor was the post-bellum

a comparison of Southern schools with schools in the old Northwest and even in the trans-Mississippi West, also rural regions, will indicate the importance of other factors in the South. Southerners repeatedly point out that beginnings had been made, but in most places those beginnings were largely hopes for the future. School statutes were often permissory rather than mandatory. Even where large amounts of money were spent, the influence of planters sometimes got the money for planter schools and left other people's children unschooled. Historians of education have too long boasted of statutory enactments and have failed to look at schools—or lack of them.

22 See, e.g., Shugg's study.

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period thoroughly democratic, even under the Radicals. Yet, with proper reservations and qualifications, it is still true for many parts of the South that control by large property holders of political, economic, and social life, based on slave labor, was displaced by a more democratic way of life, based on free labor, and that this change not only emancipated Negro slaves but gave poor white men a chance to seek more political power. It is in terms of this twofold revolutionary hypothesis that the period needs to be re-examined.

Historians to whom politics has seemed an all-engrossing end in itself have failed to comprehend that thousands of white Southerners during Reconstruction wanted nothing from politicians but a chance to live their lives undisturbed. They were quietly going about the stupendous task of rebuilding the South's shattered economic and social life and their own fortunes. One reason for the defeat of Lee's armies in 1865 was the war-weariness of the people back home. Men were tired of war, of strife. They wanted peace. They were willing to forget their cause, cease arguing with the North, take oaths of allegiance, even swallow their former prides, if only they could have peace. If we understand this, it ceases to be puzzling that thousands of Southerners remained politically indifferent through the various turns of political fortune, that many accommodated themselves to Radical rule, and that some supported it. Some preferred military rule to further strife. To many it was the Radical personnel that was objectionable. There were many white Southerners who felt equal dislike for the Ku Klux Klan and the Loyal League and for the same reason. Many Southerners finally supported those who "restored white supremacy", not so much because they cared who held office as because they were

23 Shugg points out that in Louisiana the tendency toward centralization put "imperial power" into the governor's hands under the Constitution of 1868. Even here the authorities Shugg cites make one wonder if he has in this merely too easily accepted the judgment of critics opposed to Radical purposes.

24 Shugg points out that in Louisiana "the postwar years" were "the seedtime of the labor movement" (ibid., pp. 300-301). Labor became important in politics (ibid., pp. 198-99). Even under the Conservative rule of 1864 there were "no representatives of the old slaveholding regime" in the convention, which was "in the hands of a new order of men with little or no experience in public life". "Debates reveal their liberal intentions but not the education of gentility. They came from a social class which had never before been important in Louisiana politics. The fact that they occupied seats of power was of even greater revolutionary significance than the new organic law which they compiled" (ibid., p. 203). "The fundamental issue" in the election of 1864, says Shugg, "was whether Louisiana should be restored to the control of planters and merchants under the old constitution, or put in the hands of a majority of loyal white people under a new organic law" (ibid., p. 198).
tired of constant turmoil that was injurious to nonpolitical pursuits.

Many Southerners opposed to its democratic phase were sympathetic with the industrial phase of the revolution. These men were ready to support Johnson governments if they were friendly to business interests. They would support Radical governments on the same terms. And they could as easily support Bourbons in their turn. Reconstruction can be understood only if the Southern movement for development of industry is treated as a whole from ante-bellum days to the twentieth century. The desire for industrialization and railroad building, manifested in the commercial conventions and in the large grants of state aid during the fifties, was not killed by the war. Many saw a lesson for the South in the contrast between Northern wartime prosperity and Southern economic weakness. Not only in the North but in the South modern industry grew up behind the noise of political controversy. Textiles, coal, iron and steel, tobacco factories, railroads, and mill villages were as important as loyal leagues, klans, and black codes, but they have been generally ignored by historians. There were charges, even before the war, that the national Democracy was selling out to business. It is significant that during war Governor Joseph E. Brown, in the name of state rights, opposed Jefferson Davis’s ideal of a Southern nationality and that Brown was on good terms with the ruling group during the Civil War, under Johnson Conservatism, under Radical rule, and under the Bourbons. His Radical record did not prevent his returning to power under white supremacy. The key to his career was his interest in using political power to favor business development in general and his own vested interests in particular. It mattered little whether it was carpetbaggers and Negroes or Bourbon politicians who granted the favors to business, just so the favors were granted. Similarly in Alabama the same group of men were powerful enough to get state aid for their business ventures from ante-bellum planter governments, the Conservative Johnson governments, the Radical Republicans, and the Bourbons who restored white supremacy. Holden in North Carolina, too, needs restudying by someone not prejudiced by his support of the Radical cause.

Historians have been so busy denouncing Radicals that they have not bothered to discover who profited from Radical extravagance—and from later Bourbon rule. Certainly few Negroes profited personally. Some white Radicals did; many did not. The whole debt story needs revising. Restudy will reduce the size of the debt in several states. Mississippi Radicals, for instance, were for years credited with leaving
a $20,000,000 debt. So respectable a person as Congressman St. George Tucker first gave currency to this. Jabeth L. M. Curry, E. Benjamin Andrews, and others accepted it as "fact". Actually Radicals contracted in Mississippi only a nominal current sum of about $500,000, for the reason that the Radicals, over the protest of their Conservative opponents, put a clause into the Constitution of 1868 forbidding the pledging of state funds to aid corporations. In Alabama the Conservatives claimed, and Fleming accepted their claim, that they reduced a debt of $30,000,000 to less than $10,000,000. In reality part of the $30,000,000 debt existed only in their campaign charges against Radicals. The portion they reduced was mostly potential debt that the state might have had to assume on behalf of railroads but in return for which the state would, by foreclosure, have come into the possession of valuable railroad properties. The so-called reduction of the debt was brought about not by payment or repudiation but by "adjustment" highly advantageous to the railroads, to which Bourbon leaders were allied.

Only a part of the debt of any state was contracted for the chemises and spittoons that have so intrigued historians. Past failure to collect taxes and arrears in payments on financial obligations placed heavy burdens upon the governments. Extraordinary expenditures were necessary for the rehabilitation of a war-ruined South. Bourbons economized by cutting off public services, such as education, important to the masses.

The larger portion of the debts financed grants or guarantees to railroads. Often those who restored white supremacy had favored contracting such debts under Radical rule and under Bourbon rule continued to extend public aid to private ventures. In North Carolina some of the "best citizens" profited by the floating of the Radical bonds that they and their party later repudiated and their descendants denounced.


In Alabama the same railroad men were important politically from the 1850's to the days of white supremacy, whatever the political complexion of those who held the offices. It is interesting that in Alabama the Southern names of Robert Patton, James W. Sloss, Luke Pryor, George Houston, Albert Fink, Sam Tate, V. K. Stevenson, John T. Milner, and Josiah Morris keep recurring in that important story of the interrelationship of business and politics. Morris, a Montgomery banker, wielded power behind the scenes. Pryor as a member of the legislature was working for railroad grants in 1853-54 and was still important in the 1880's. Sloss, an ante-bellum storekeeper who turned railroad and coal and steel operator, for several decades had power with legislators, whether Conservatives, Radicals, or Bourbons. Patton, a colleague of Sloss, as provisional governor under Johnson's plan advocated and validated the bonds that provided $12,000 a mile for the railroads sponsored by the Sloss group. Then under the Radicals he was vice-president of one of the Sloss railroads that benefited when the Radicals increased the grant from $12,000 to $16,000 a mile in what Fleming savagely condemns as "carpetbag financiering". One of the lobbyists was an agent of Russell Sage, but another was a leader in the development of Alabama coal and iron and an agent of Morris, the Montgomery banker. In Alabama, the Conservatives leased the penitentiary and convicts out to businessmen for profit as in slave days. The Radicals discontinued the practice in 1872. In Mississippi Johnson Conservatives began the convict-lease system. General Gillem, under military rule, gave a contract to one favored capitalist that carried almost absolute control over the convicts, most of whom were Negroes. The Radical governor tried to destroy the system. The Bourbon restorationists carried it to extremes until two investigations finally forced its abandonment in the Constitution of 1890.

In Georgia "white supremacy" meant the supremacy of the business interests of Brown, Gordon, and Colquitt over the interests of thousands of small farmers who later revolted under the Populist banner. Toombs and Stephens, who really represented the Old South, saw, unlike later historians, the significance of the political situation and,

29 [Alabama] Inspectors of Convicts, First Biennial Report . . . to the Governor, from October 1, 1884, to October 1, 1886 (Montgomery, 1886), pp. 351-53.
30 Wharton, pp. 443-51. Even after 1890, however, the use of convicts seems to have continued "in illegal and irregular fashion" until the coming of Vardaman to power in 1904. Wharton to H. K. Beale, Oct. 23, 1939.
along with Watson, who subsequently led the Populists, opposed these “restorers of white supremacy”. Yet with Brown providing the business acumen, Colquitt speaking for religion to claim God’s sanction for their activities, and Gordon representing the military hero in politics, the Bourbon Triumvirate were able to use the banner of “white supremacy” and Grady’s slogan of a “New South” to further their business interests. And they were ready to retain Negroes in office and use Negro votes to maintain their “white supremacy” against white farmers who organized to protect small-farmer interests.\footnote{Woodward, \textit{Tom Watson}, pp. 52-72.} Indeed there seems to have been a striking similarity between waving the banner of “white supremacy” and waving the “bloody shirt” in the North. Both were waved simultaneously by a dominant party to avoid being turned out of office by a majority of farmers who objected to the use of government for furthering the interests of business groups.

The other phase of the revolution involved substituting democratic for aristocratic institutions within the South. From the point of view of restoring a happily united nation it was unfortunate that we had Radical Reconstruction, unfortunate that any attempt was made to impose, from without, changed ways of life upon the South. It is important, however, also to consider Reconstruction from the point of view of political, social, and economic revolution within Southern life. From this point of view, Southern planters were generously treated and escaped much of the disaster that often overtakes a defeated ruling class. A large part of their suffering resulted directly from civil war and the overthrow of an established political and economic system and would have occurred had there been no Radical reconstruction or Republican rule. In the present revolution in Germany, the Russian Revolution, the French Revolution, and to some degree in our own American Revolution privileged members of the old regime were “liquidated” or driven out, and their property was confiscated. In the South a part of the older planter aristocracy was temporarily deprived of its political privileges, but it was not deprived by political means of its property or its life. It was not driven out of its homeland. Why were the Southern leading families so gently dealt with in revolutionary change?

The answer requires much further study of the period. It lies partly in the Northern Radicals. They have usually been lumped together in praise or condemnation. Actually they represented strikingly different points of view, tied together only by certain common interests and a common desire to retain power for their party. Thad Stevens and
Charles Sumner agreed with the businessmen who backed the party in wanting a high tariff, which the South's return might endanger. But Stevens and Sumner were idealists in their concern for the Negro and human rights. Stevens at least was genuinely a radical. He wanted to confiscate planter property and divide it among Negroes. The Republican party never seriously considered this, because, while it would have served certain party purposes, the majority of Republican leaders and party members had not the least interest in social revolution, even in a distant section. They were men of property who would not endanger the sanctity of property rights for Negroes or poor Southern white men any more than they would divide ownership of their own factories or farms with Northern workingmen. There were sighs of Northern relief when death removed Stevens's troublesome radicalism. The Negro wanted forty acres and a mule, but his Republican backers had no serious thought of turning political into social and economic revolution.

We need studies of the Negro under Reconstruction in the spirit of Bell Irvin Wiley's study of the Negro in the Confederacy and Vernon Wharton's "Negro in Mississippi" before we can answer many questions that arise. Our picture of him is unfortunately colored by the racial prejudices of contemporaries who deemed even fundamental Negro civil rights and political activity unspeakable. Even Simkins and Woody in their excellent book never quite got away from instinctive assumption that their race must bar Negroes from social and economic equality. It is time to forget feelings about the Negro and study Reconstruction to see what the Negro really was and why he did not gain more from Reconstruction. Fairminded investigation will probably disclose that few Republicans or responsible Negroes, even at the height of Negro and carpetbag rule, carried their insistence upon political, civil, and educational equality over into attempts at social mingling.33 James Lynch, for instance, while secretary of state, and

32 Wiley, Southern Negroes, 1861-1865 (New Haven, 1938). Alrutheus A. Taylor's books on the Negro in Virginia and South Carolina during Reconstruction were significant as pioneer work by a Negro but, like the older histories by white historians, leave much to be desired.

33 Shugg thinks that in Louisiana the Radical stand for Negro equality and the Southern white's belief that civil rights for Negroes would mean miscegenation were disastrous to the Negro and Radical causes. Yet the Negro leaders claimed that "social equality meant nothing more to the intelligent Negro than the right of any man, whatever his color, to come and go in public places, and to pursue his own happiness, provided he did not infringe the equal right of another. . . . There was no thought of racial intermarriage, even among the uneducated, but only of the admission of freedmen
John R. Lynch while congressman, submitted to Mississippi's "Jim Crow" cars and restaurants without protest.34 One Marxian writer charged me with accepting "uncritically . . . the traditional role of the Negro",35 because I said "plantation hands were not only illiterate but 'had no conception of . . . the meaning of terms like government, morality, suffrage, or even free labor.'" 36 Yet this seems true nonetheless. On the other hand, many more Negroes were educated and able than one would have thought possible so soon after slavery and more than historians have led us to believe. Wharton made a number of interesting discoveries about the relation of the two races in Mississippi.37 For instance, carpetbaggers frequently disliked the Negro. They avoided social contacts with him. They "made little effort to conceal their distaste for him". Federal troops often sided with Democrats against Negroes. Radical Republicans were not eager to do more for Negroes than "to grant them the franchise and solicit their votes". The Negroes did not demand many offices. "Even in the minority of counties . . . [that] had Negro and Republican majorities, the freedmen seldom obtained many offices." The twelve Negro sheriffs were "a moderately satisfactory group, most of whom were at least capable of exercising the functions of their office. . . . Little difference can be discovered in the administration of their counties and that of the counties under Democratic control." Efficient local leaders of Negroes rapidly developed all over the state. Of the six Negroes who held high office, four were men of ability, leadership, education, and integrity, who did the state honor; two were obscure local politicians, one intelligent and educated but both dishonest. The Negroes favored, and Revels, a Negro, supported in the United States Senate the removal of white political disabilities. Many Negroes worked well under the new labor system. A good many succeeded as farmers, at least until the crop failure of 1867 ruined them. Ben Montgomery, a former slave, rented and then bought the Davis plantations and took national prizes with his cotton. His son established a prosperous all-Negro town.38

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34 Wharton, pp. 427-30.
37 Some of these things are already known to recent students like Lewinson, but they have not yet found their way into the picture usually drawn of Reconstruction even by historians.
Suppose slaveowners’ estates had been divided? We read much today from Southern whites in support of the view that the poorer Southern white man cannot improve his lot until the Negro’s lot is improved along with it. Andrew Johnson, Wade Hampton, and Alexander H. Stephens wanted to give educated and property-holding Negroes the suffrage. Suppose that, on some such plan as the Dawes and Burke acts for Indians, the Negro had been given land and then had been treated as a ward? Suppose he had gradually been given control of land distributed to him as he became economically experienced? Suppose he had been granted real rather than merely nominal citizenship as he individually became competent? What would have been the effect upon the Negro? Upon the South? Upon the problem of farm tenancy? From the point of view of the Radical aim, of even political equality, was the Negro not right in his desire for forty acres and a mule, and were not his white friends unrealistic in thinking they could secure political privileges for him without a basis for them in economic rights? Were upper-class Southern whites trying to work out a system of labor desirable for the South and satisfactory to Negroes as well as to whites? Or were they, in formulating their Negro policies and in demanding white supremacy, merely determined, like Northern capitalists in their labor policies, to keep for their own benefit a plentiful supply of dependent, ignorant, docile workers?

And what of the poorer white man? Were his interests really opposed to those of the Negro, or is this just another shibboleth encouraged by men whose interests were opposed to both Negroes and small white farmers? Bourbon leaders were motivated in part by the social factor that the racial prejudice of whites toward Negroes created; they did share with many poorer white men dislike of Negro rule. Yet Bourbon supremacy also embodied the conservative swinging back of the pendulum that frequently has followed the excesses of revolution. Planters shared the new aristocracy with men of business and were often dominated by them. In overthrowing the Radicals, the Bourbons fastened upon the South a government that served badly the interests of poorer white men who had for a time appeared to have a chance of obtaining greater political power. It took the Populists years to win back some of the democratic privileges lost in Bourbon restoration. In many cases the Bourbons maintained control over a majority of white men by raising fear of the Negro and at the same time using Negro votes in black counties to overbalance white majorities elsewhere. For a time they continued to allow Negroes to hold office.
Many of the same devices for control of elections that they had perfected in regaining white supremacy in the face of Negro majorities they continued to use to retain power against Populist white majorities. The ire of poorer whites thus aroused probably was important in the disfranchisement of Negroes and the strengthening of "Jim Crow" laws, both of which, be it remembered, in most states occurred in the late eighties and nineties, not with the restoration of white supremacy in the seventies. We need to study the origins of this Populist-Bourbon controversy in Reconstruction to see what its bearing on politics and economic conflicts was.

A Granger movement, usually ignored, developed some strength in the South. Why was it not stronger? What common economic interests did Negro and white farmer have? Why did they fail to unite successfully in the face of common economic enemies? 39 In some states Negroes were an overwhelming majority of the Radical electorate. But in Tennessee, at least, and probably from the eighties on in North Carolina, whites constituted a majority of the Republicans. In North Carolina whites could have controlled all the assemblies of the period had some whites not joined blacks against other whites. Even in Mississippi whites outnumbered Negroes in popular assemblies. For instance, the Constitutional Convention of 1868 contained only 16 Negroes in a membership of 100. The Southern whites—about 60—could have controlled the convention had 33 of them not sided with the minority of Negroes and carpetbaggers. 40 Why did this co-operation of blacks and whites for common ends break down? In Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia registered whites outnumbered registered Negroes even in 1868. If the old thesis holds that native whites were almost solid against Radical rule, why did not these white majorities prevent Radical rule? If they were not solid against Radical rule, why were they not? The number of whites disqualified from voting has probably been exaggerated, though that number in-

39 Shugg’s analysis (p. 301) indicates that it was the racial issue that broke the movement of small farmers and laborers against planters and merchants and drove the former into the camp of the latter. He shows, for instance, that in 1865 Negroes and whites joined in a common labor movement. In a strike in that year the opponents of labor took pains to divide white and Negro labor. When the Radicals were finally turned out it was because, under fear of Negro dominance, white farmers and white laborers had joined with people of their own race who were their class enemies against people of their own class interests who were of another race.

40 Wharton, pp. 265-66. These figures are estimates made by Wharton after thorough investigation. It is difficult to get information about all members of such a body.
cluded many of the South’s old leaders. How many were disqualified? A good many eligible citizens did not vote. Was it because of carelessness about registering, indifference, boycott, or unwillingness to sue for pardon or take oaths of loyalty?

We need to restudy Reconstruction in each state, freed from preconceptions of the right and wrong of Reconstruction and determined to discover just what lasting influences Reconstruction exerted. Carpetbaggers, Negroes, Southern Radicals, Conservatives, moderates, Bourbons, businessmen, various classes of farmers, laborers, all need careful analysis as to motives, purposes, economic interests, their relation to Reconstruction, and the effects of Radical rule and its overthrow upon their interests. We need to reanalyze the Radicals, the Independents of the seventies and eighties, and the Populists to see to what extent these three groups that tried political co-operation of Negroes and whites were parts of a common movement. The origin of modern industrialism, of the modern farm problem, of the power of business over Southern state governments, of Southern labor problems, all need investigating. The South’s relation to crop failures such as the one in 1867, to business depressions, to the Westward movement, immigration restriction, the national labor movement, the antimonopoly crusade, Grangerism, and other national phenomena requires study. An analysis of the romanticism in art and literature that appeared in the South during Reconstruction and just afterward would probably explain much about Southern attitudes toward this period, both then and now. We know full well the shortcomings of Radical governments. We need to know more of their accomplishments. For instance, the constitutions drawn up by the Radicals long outlived the Radicals. They contained many interesting features. They tended to centralize administrative power. They remodeled the judiciary and the taxing system. Not only did the Radicals carry on the government through troubled times, they did a good deal toward restoring public buildings, roads, bridges, schools, and courts that war had destroyed. They established new social services and would have established them better had they not been inexperienced in administration. The opening of schools, courts, and other public agencies to Negroes put a new burden upon


42 Shugg thinks that in Louisiana Radical reforms were “conspicuous for their absence” (p. 225). In some states they were important.
government, as did the increased relief problem and the oversight of new racial relationships. This all took money. That meant increased taxes, particularly upon land. Further investigation is necessary, but there is evidence that the increased taxes required for social services were an important cause of the tax-paying elements' resentment of Radical rule. Even the new taxes were still not high. But Southern property owners were not educated to paying for services for poor men. The tax policies and public services of the Radicals and Bourbons need comparing. Bourbons sometimes merely shifted administrative burdens from state to county, creating an appearance of economy that was not real.\textsuperscript{48} Where Bourbons did reduce expenses, was it not often at high cost in human values?

Radical administration needs reappraising. There were bad spots, but there were also good. We have heard too little about the good under Radicals and too little of the bad under Conservative administrations that preceded and followed them, South Carolina suffered from dishonest officials. Some states, however, were as well administered by Radicals as at any other time during this era. Honesty and dishonesty were not monopolies of any one group. In Mississippi, for instance, Garner points out that "there were no great embezzlements or other cases of misappropriation during ... Republican rule". In the whole post-bellum period he found only three cases: a Republican treasurer of the Natchez hospital who took $7251, a colored librarian who stole books, and a Democratic native white treasurer who embezzled more grandly to the amount of $61,962.\textsuperscript{44} A restorationist Democrat, however, elected in 1875, made away with $315,612.\textsuperscript{45} In North Carolina Conservatives starved the schools until Ashley, the superintendent, resigned. Then the Republican governor, Caldwell, appointed Alexander McIver, "a sincere and honest man ... keenly anxious to build up the schools". To succeed McIver, Governor Caldwell, in the face of pressure for a political appointment, chose Kemp P. Battle, a much respected educator. In 1874 the Conservatives, on the other hand, elected to the

\textsuperscript{48} For instance, in Mississippi state taxes in 1875 under the Republicans were 9 1/4 mills and county taxes 10 3/4 mills. In 1877 under the Democratic restorationists the state taxes were reduced to 5 mills, but the county taxes were raised to 16. This meant that actually the Democrats increased the total state and county tax burden from 20 to 21 mills and yet, according to Wharton, gave no better government. Wharton to H. K. Beale, Oct. 23, 1939.

\textsuperscript{44} Pp. 322-23.

\textsuperscript{45} Wharton, pp. 329-30. Without specially seeking them, Wharton has run across several other cases of "Bourbon embezzlement". Wharton to H. K. Beale, Oct. 23, 1939.
superintendency Stephen D. Pool, who stole Peabody Fund money. The Conservative governor, Brogden, then chose another political appointee, a cousin of the defaulter.  

Was the Southern dislike of Radical rule caused by bad government or rather by dislike of Northern and Negro participation in it whether good or bad? Many Southerners would not have liked even ideal conditions of life so long as they owed them to Northern imposition or to Northern generosity. To what extent was dislike of Northerners who had beaten them in war a cause of Southern opposition to Radical rule? How important were the factors usually portrayed in criticism of Radical rule, and how important was unadulterated racial prejudice that would have resented Utopian conditions if Negroes had played an important part in them? These emotional factors need measurement and analysis.

There are no adequate unbiased studies of education under Reconstruction. Many blunders were made. The upheaval of civil war had already injured such ante-bellum systems as there were. At best the task was difficult. It took experience to teach friends of the Negro that for the average Negro vocational training was more valuable than cultural. One often gets the impression that Radicals imposed mixed Negro and white schools everywhere. How often outside of one or two states was this actually done? Educational accomplishment fell far short of the theory of the laws. Yet the Republicans in their constitutions did give many white men their first assurance of a free school system. How much benefit to the Negro was the Republican writing of Negro education into the fundamental law? We need to restudy education to see how often the new theories became realities. To what extent did Radicals improve school administration? How many schools

47 Shugg believes that in Louisiana “at first neither race was solidly united against the other, nor were the spoils of office their only concern”. He writes: “Carpetbaggers fought planters and merchants for the possession of rich natural resources and the control of black and white labor. The carpetbaggers were defeated because they turned from economic to political exploitation, preyed upon whites more than blacks, and arrayed all classes of the former race against the latter. The final triumph of planters and merchants, with the essential support of white farmers and laborers, was a counterrevolution which crushed the bewildered and abortive attempts, first of white, and then of black, labor, to rule the state and mold society in their own images” (p. 197).
48 The author cannot except Edgar Wallace Knight’s Influence of Reconstruction on Education in the South (New York, 1913). What we need, both before and after the Civil War, under Radicals and Bourbons, is a study of actual educational conditions, not a listing of arguments based on statutes enacted.
did they build? How many teachers did they hire? How many men did they begin educating who had not had schools before? It is upon the answers to such questions that they must be judged. Bourbons cut school expenses. How much injury to the schools was wrought by Bourbon "economy"? We have evidence that in at least one state it was twenty years before schools began to recover from Bourbon neglect.\(^4^9\)

In how many other states was this true? It is interesting that in North Carolina, where their school record was not good, the oft denounced Radicals tried to restore the ante-bellum school system and extend it to Negroes; schools suffered grievously under the Bourbons; another Republican governor, Russell, twenty years later, championed the schools.\(^5^0\) Did the Radicals or their Bourbon successors do greater injury to the schools? Was it the Radicals or the Civil War that destroyed ante-bellum accomplishment? To what degree did Radical legislation lay the foundations of future educational advancement?

Finally, some of the Republicans tried to establish a more democratic political system. Again they blundered. It took more than the ballot to make intelligent citizens out of ignorant Negroes and whites. Negro voters were ignorant, childlike, and inexperienced. In slavery they had been kept so by the Southern slaveowners who now criticized them for these very qualities when Negroes did their not very able best to play the role of citizens. But many whites also were ignorant and inexperienced in democracy. Some of the most condemned aspects of Radical Reconstruction were merely the manifestations of a democratic revolution in a region habituated to aristocratic control. There are striking similarities between scenes enacted in Southern capitals and that in Washington at Jackson's inaugural. In both cases "the people came into their own". The experience with sudden democratization was not a happy one. It could not have been happy even had the Negroes been excluded from it. It should be remembered that the Southerners who overthrew the Radicals showed themselves as unwilling to share

\(^4^9\) For instance, Stuart Grayson Noble, who, according to Wharton, has made the only intelligent study of Mississippi schools, concludes: "The school laws, passed by the legislature of 1876, had in view the curtailment of expenses. They certainly did not have in view the wrecking of the public school system and the abandonment of Negro education. Yet, as a result of these laws, the efficiency of the system was greatly reduced" (Forty Years of the Public Schools in Mississippi, New York, 1918, p. 48). Noble points out that the schools for whites resumed progress again only after 1890 and that the progress did not become important until after 1900.

\(^5^0\) It was Aycock, of course, successor to Russell, who firmly established North Carolina's school system. But it should be remembered that Russell fought for schools as one of the chief aims of his administration when schools were not a popular cause.
power with poor white men in Populist days as with poor Negroes and white men in Radical days. Was not a part of the offense of the Radical leaders that they sought to serve the interests of poor men? One of the most persistent evidences of unfitness for office raised against the Radicals by historians, even by Simkins and Woody, is the fact that Radicals were men who did not pay taxes and did not own property; in short, that they were poor. The Populists tried for years to establish democratic institutions and succeeded only slightly better than the Radicals. No, the Radical attempt to establish democracy was not a success. But the Conservative white solution has been little better, save for property owners. It has kept the Negro in his place by creating a caste system. It has kept millions of whites dependent and docile politically by keeping them dependent economically as mill workers and tenant farmers. But it has not, through schools and economic competence, yet made the poorer white men adequate citizens of the democracy we all like to feel we believe in. Here in the Bourbon-Radical conflict is the dilemma of democracy or, indeed, of any form of government. One alternative seems to be rule by non-tax-paying, non-property-holding men who seek to serve the interest of a majority but through inexperience or ignorance serve it badly. The other alternative seems to be rule by men of property who have the experience and knowledge necessary to serve the majority efficiently, but whose interests make them choose to serve their own minority group instead. Through thoughtful study of the conflict of ideals under the Radicals and Bourbons we might attain the wisdom to discover a third democratic technique that would avoid both of the usual alternatives.

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51 So little did Bourbon policies serve poor men's interests that a few years of their rule led to a great revolt of Populists and Alliancemen against them in behalf of small farmers and poor men.