

History 225

Re: Notes/Outline w/ Chpt. 10

## End of an Era

### I. Stage One in Withering Away of Northern Support(1868-1872)

#### A. Gilded Age Politics/North and South

1. North as a contentious pluralistic society.  
Period after Grant election in 1868 gives way to a spate of issues that preoccupy and divert the North from reconstruction in the South.

a. Railroad revolution/industrialization in the North--retarded by the war--proceeds apace. The rise of an entrepreneurial class of venture capitalists--or Robber Barons as they have also been characterized. Many were men like Rockefeller, TR's Father, Vanderbilt("The Public Be Damned"), Jay Gould, etc. All of them had bought substitutes to fight for them in the Civil War while they satyed home to profit off the war. Some like Vanderbilt made a wartime fortune by selling "Shoddy."

b. The Great American Norse Sage or Odyssey--the Conquest of the West or The Final Solution of the Plains Indian problem (1870s--1890). From Little Big Horn to Wounded Knee.

This was a politics of racism and cultural genocide.

c. Womens' suffrage. After the war the feminist/abolitionist alliance crumbled. Women now fixed on the single issue of the vote--w/ the more extremist wing of the movement demanding free contract in marriage(right to dissolve at will), right of wives to a claim to their earnings, birth control--issues that would preoccupy women activists up to WW I.

This was a politics of gender.

d. Beginning of the emergence of industrial unionism. Labor's demands for union recognition to offset the power of the new industrial corporations and the 8-hr. day.

This was a politics of class.

e. MW farmers and the Grange Movement to control the power of the railroads by using state govts. to control storage and freight rates.

*P. Murray*

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## 2. White south

While the North was diverted and distracted by a multiplicity of issues the South was united around one agenda item--the return of Home Rule.

### B. Changing Profile of the Republican Party

During this period the party of Lincoln went through a dramatic transformation. The party's postwar center of gravity shifted from an ideological focus (democratization of the South) to "managerial politics"--or the politics of the spoilsmen. The politics of idealism gradually gave way to the politics of self-promotion and self-aggrandisement. Don't ask what you can do for your party and country? Ask what can your party and country do for you!

The older generation of Radicals and party moderates who were dedicated to the second War Aim of the Union--emancipation and securing the civil and political liberties of newly emancipated slaves were either dying off or pushed to the fringes of the party organization by a new breed calling themselves the Stalwarts.

*Stewart -  
Sumner  
Chase*

[Emergence of figures like Roscoe Conkling, US Senator for NY. His main ambition was to enjoy the benefits and perks of office and not struggle with great moral and ethical issues of reconstruction. Conkling was the Beau Brummel of the Senate. A fastidious dresser. A man lute, draped, and set to music. A thing of beauty to behold. His main ambition was to control the NY Customs House, hire an army of customs agents, and make businessmen pay through the nose if they wanted the Customs House to cooperate in their business enterprises. Conkling built up a powerful political machine in NY by using "kickbacks" from the CH racket.

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## II. Liberals Dissert the Republican Party

### A. Politics of resentment

Many liberal reformers in the republican party had been advocates of emancipation and black suffrage. In part their break w/ the Party was a politics of resentment--they felt displaced by the spoilsmen of the Grant era.

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### B. Grantism--crruption issue

The 1870s are a deja vu of sorts for the 1920s and the 1980s in the sense that corruption seemed to be the norm.

Whiskey Ring scandal — *Orville Babcock - Grant's secretary*

Credit Mobilier scam--(reminds of the insider trading scandal on Wall Street w/ Ivan Bosky in late 1980s). In this case an inside clique of the Union Pacific Railroad bid up the price of shares in the RR and influenced Congressmen by generous distribution of shares to the lawmakers. The scandal involved the Speaker of the House(Blaine) and Grant's VP, Schyler Colfax.

Cuban war bond scandal--involving one of Grant's advisers and former staff officer during the Civil War--John Rawlins.

Dominican Republic capper--plan to annex DR negotiated by Grant's private secretary Orville Babcock who end-ran the Secretary of State Hamilton Fish.

### C. Election of 1872

The reformers bolt the Republican party and set up a third party to oust Grant and return Good Government to the Republic. There prtescription for reestablishing honest governemnt was to return the "best men" to political leadership.

The Liberal party took the same view about the South. That what was needed there too was a return of the cultured and intelligent white Southerners to political control in that region to bring about good government and the end the corruption associated with the Reconstruction governments.

The fact that a large number of Radicals voted for the Liberal part ticket and Greeley demonstrated that Republican Radicalism as a movement and ideology was dead. While Grant swept Greeley from the electoral field in 1872, this was small solace for the Reconstruction govts. in the South. They would be on the defesnive in both the North and South.