

History 225

Re: Notes w/ Chpt. 28

Notes/ Outline w/ the Third Turning Point (the 1864 election)

I. Toward the 1864 Election

A. The Buzz of "Peace Feelers"

B. The Simon Chase Boomlet

Chase was Lincoln's Secretary of the Treasury. Of all the Cabinet members Chase was the most radical when it came to what to do with the South after the war and on the so-called "Negro Question."

To his credit Chase was an advanced egalitarian. His view was that Lincoln was being too soft of the South. There was Lincoln's Ten Per Cent plan for Louisiana. Lincoln accepts the Louisiana government under Hahn that made no provisions for black enfranchisement. Equally important, Lincoln supported the Louisiana Constitution and statehood without the enfranchisement guarantee and without insisting upon a redistribution of the former Rebels' land to be turned over to the former slave. Chase saw (and correctly) that for the former bondman to be secure in his newfound freedom that he would have to enjoy economic independence. In the South that meant land.

Lincoln's view in 1864 (he could have changed his view) was the view from the White House, as President and C-in-C of the Union Army, that talk about full equality was politically premature. That the racial atmosphere in the North and certainly the South was not ready for any more radical changes in race relations. As w/ La. he wanted to cultivate Southern Unionist support and get these former Confederate states back in the Union and then they might bend to taking larger steps. To raise the issue of land for the blacks was to his mind too radical and would only work against his policy of trying to woo occupied Southern states back into the Union under the generous 10% plan.

Lincoln was also not ready to give the Northern Democrats additional ammunition against him and his party in the imminent 1864 presidential elections.

Chase had support from some abolitionists in the North and from radicals in the Republican party. The same radicals who supported the Wade/Davis bill in 1864. A general consensus among them that a stronger president should occupy the White House when it came to deal w/ the issues of reconstructing the Union after the war was over.

The Chase boomlet collapsed when one of Chase's supporters began to publicly solicit support for Chase in 1864. As a Cabinet officer Chase could either leave the Cabinet and run openly or

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disavowell this challenge once it was out in the open. Chase choose the later course.

C. McClellan and the Democrats

What the Democratic position in 1864? (Ask the class)

According to McPherson: The party was split between the Peace faction. That is "Peace at Any Price"(throw-in-the-towel wing) end the war and allow the South to return to the Union or go her separate way.

The other faction, the War Democrats who stood for Union but were ready and willing to play the race card: Union with the restoration of slavery once the South reentered the Union. (It was really a restoration of the Old Union despite all the sacrifice and carnage).

What were they banking on? War weariness just as in 1863. Although in 1864 the war was one year older and was more savage. It was costing the Union \$4 million a day to prosecute the war, especially Grant's campaign along the Richmond-Petersburg Front. By the Fall Grant had lost half his Army of the Potomac at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor. And the war in the East appeared stalemated.

And until September, Sherman had still not taken Atlanta.

Were things deperate? Was Lincoln's re-election in serious trouble in 1864? While McClellan could never carry the day while he was a Union commander would he tumble into the White House on the reaction of a disillusioned Northern electorate that had lost the will and perseverance to continue this war of attrition?

This certainly was what Richmond was counting upon. This was the political thinking that kept Lee going in the South despite the tremendous destruction of the war. (See Sheridan's Valley Campaign).

II. Atlanta Falls (Sept. 1-2, 1864)

Lincoln's deep moroseness about his deferat in 1864 is turned around in the West with the Battle of Atlanta. Sherman applies the old Anaconda Plan and tightens the noose around the Confederacy. By taking Atlanta he annihilates the Confederacy's extensive railroad hub; goes on the destroy the Augusta arsenal, and denies critical foodstuffs to Lee's army. (and to Union POWs at Andersonville). And saves Lincoln's victory!!!! Right?

A. A Reevaluation: *of A201*

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To begin with 90% of the electorate in the mid-19th century were party loyalists. That is, very few changed their party allegiance regardless of any circumstances. This was just as true during the Civil War as it was prior to the war itself.

*Union victory
Carter
A. Mitchell*

Most Democrats in 1864 were War Democrats not Peace Democrats. The peace-at-any-price wing of the party was small to insignificant. There was little real promise either for the Democrats that Republicans were going to abandon the shrine of the Republican party and move into the Democratic camp regardless of how they felt about the war.

Had McClellan managed to win in 1864 he would never have settled the war on the basis of Confederate independence. He would have tried negotiations with the sweeter that if the South returned to the Union they could keep their slaves. Richmond's response would have been return to the Union was nonegotiable. It was Southern independence or war to the death.

Had McClellan won he would not have taken over the presidency until March of 1865. What would Lincoln, alberit a lame duck president, have done in the interval? He made that clear in a "blind memo" of August 1864 to prosecute a more ferosious war during his final months in office. Would Atlanta have fallen by then even assuming that the Confederate defense was more masterful. That is, if Jeff Davis had not removed Johnston for the more aggressive and foolhardy Hood. It is almost certain that before McClellan entered the White House that Atlanta would have fallen and we can only speculate about the terrible war of attrition waged by Grant against Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in the East.

The only thing that could have prevented Sherman from taking Atlanta would have been more insane headlong assaults against Johnston's fortified troops until he decimated his army of 100,000 men. Sherman was not an idiot. He would have laid seige to Atlanta and kept the city under seige until it fe~~d~~l. Only Hood's reckless assasults against Sherman saved him from this option.

What kicks in here is the factor of the war-weariness on the part of the Confederacy. The point that Reid Mitchell makes about the perseverance of the soldiers. Union soldiers were calld upon to fight a war different from the war that Johnny Reb had to fight. His war was made more complicated and more unendurable because it was being fought in his own backyard and impacting with devastating effect on the South's nonmilitary social structure.

That should be as this point very clear to you. It is to say that Richmond's holding onto the outcome of the 1864 election as the last remnant of hope for their cause was a very desperate and unwise hope.

III. Still Bars — to an ugly war

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Addendum to Election of 1864

There was pressure on Lincoln from some Republicans to back down on emancipation., He wavered a bit but he did not buckle.

He reminded these weak-kneed Republicans that more than 100,000 black soldiers and sailors were fighting for the Union. They would not have stood for the Union if they thought the North intended to betray them. . . .If they stake their lives for us they must be prompted for the strongest motive. . . the promise of freedom. And the promise being made must be kept. . . . There have been men who proposed to me to return to slavery the black warriors who have fought for the Union. "I SHOULD BE DAMNED IN TIME & ETERNITY FOR SO DOING. THE WORLD SHALL KNOW THAT I WILL KEEP MY FAITH TO FRIENDS AND ENEMIES, COME WHAT WILL."

When Lincoln said this he was certain he would lose the election. In effect, he was saying he'd rather be right than president. This was his finest hour.