

History 225

Re: Outline/Notes w/ Chpt. 8

## I. Not-So-Black-Reconstruction

A. Built-in dilemma facing blacks during this time. They had to, at least initially, tread very carefully under the circumstances.

(1) White Southern opposition to the Radical governments. Republicans were trying to build a party in a region where most of the white population was in entrenched opposition to this "foreign political force" in its midst. That opposition would not be shy over time in launching a conspiracy of terror to overturn these govts.

(2) Republicans in the South--white and black--were constantly reminded that in order to survive in this hostile climate that they had to be assured of the unwavering support of the North.

In short, the Republicans were on very thin ice in this experiment to remodel the postwar South.

(3) This situation was complicated even more by the internal bickering and infighting over patronage jobs distributed by the party. In this constant maneuvering and factionalism the white Republicans were also trying to win support for the party by encouraging native white Southerners to join the Republican ranks with the promise of party patronage.

This meant there were fewer jobs for blacks. It was also true that at the beginning of Congressional reconstruction blacks had a tendency to hold back and not demand party positions for fear of stirring up Democratic claims of "black supremacy."

Effectively, blacks were junior partners in the Republican coalition

See Foner, pp. 353/354, He provides a breakdown of the numbers of blacks holding the highest positions at the state and national levels.

Some 16/20 served in the US House of Representatives

Two served in the US Senate (Revels and Bruce)

More than 600 served in the state legislatures of the reconstructed states. This was a rather remarkable figure for the times.

*focus of*  
B. Black power

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If there was a focal point of black power it was at the local level-- smaller cities and especially at the county levels. Here blacks built grass-roots organizations and elected local leaders to posts like sheriff, chief of police, JPs, and magistrates.

But the costs were high for black political activists. Those serving at the local levels faced ostracism and economic blacklisting and boycotting from the majority white population. When these forms of coercion were not enough to force local black politicians to get out of politics then physical threats were used. [Note Vernon Wharton, Reconstruction in Mississippi notes that many of the local blacks leaders in that state were simply assassinated.

Foner points out that throughout the South the turnover from one session to the next often exceeded 50% of the black office holders.

C. *So. Groveland - A Test Case.*

II. Social Democratization

A. Rehearsal for Jim Crow

*Rep. Party never came out in  
official support for Social or Radical  
agencies.*

*Civil Rights Act 1964*

1. reminder of Jim Crow as sanctioned by law in the 1890s. (Especially w/ Plessy vs. Ferguson case before S. Court in 1895).

Jim Crow or segregated public facilities without the sanction of law begins during the reconstruction era. Seen in public schools and in public transportation systems in the postwar South. It did not go without challenge by black leaders--especially those of the black elites or urbanized classes of blacks. But their success in beating back social discrimination was limited and fleeting. Not much support on this from white Republicans.

III. Economic Reconstruction

A. Land and the Freedman

Surprisingly little accomplished in the South during Radical rule for making land available to former freedmen. Limited black political power was not capable of translating that power into economic gains as far as making land cheaper and more accessible to blacks.

Was this Radical Reconstruction greatest failure? A taste of the debate on this question in the literature.

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## B. Bright Hopes/Grim Realities

### 1. Republican "Gospel of prosperity"

One of the reasons for the Republicans--carpetbaggers/scalawags--failure to respond to the top priority item on the blacks economic agenda--accessability to land--was the party's preoccupation with the program to remodel the South's economic infrastructure along lines of the North.

Part of this was the vision of industrialized Southland. This vision was to be implemented by state-sponsored capitalism, especially the introduction of railroads and factories in the South.

The Radical Govts. hoped to attract northern capital investment into the South by providing a free taxing policies on corporations.

Foner details how these policies increased the taxing burden on all southerners, raised the indebtedness of the whole South(especially remembering that social democratization of the South had a pricetag--public education, expansion of the welfare services,etc), and encouraged a season of sleazy corruption in every state govt.

### 2. Corruption issue. Make some points about this:

--Corruption after the Civil War replicates a pattern we have seen in our history after every major war. Morality goes on a holiday. Certainly true after the Civil War. Although one can argue persuasively that corruption in government, at least beginning w/ th Jackson Presidency in the late 1820s and 1830s was an American as cherry pie. There was also an epidemic of governmental corruption in state and national politics in the 1850s--the decasde preceeding the Civil War.

--corruption in the Reconstrcution Era was biracial, bipartisan, and bisectional(as you will see when we get to Grant and Grantism).

--this corruption will continue when the South is redeemed and will be even more blatant and ugly.

But a major point here referring to corruption with the Radical Govts. is that evidence of this in the South will be a factor in the waning of Northern support for these governments.

*Reconstruction  
years*