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Re: Notes w/ Congressional or Radical Reconstruction

I. Republican Party and Government in the Postwar South

Unprecedented challenges faced the new Southern coalition governments in the Reconstruction South. Inheriting few accomplishments by the former southern state governments in terms of social and economic programs, nearly empty treasuries by their predecessors, they faced the mammoth problems of a society devastated by warfare, new public responsibilities entailed by emancipation, and the task of consolidating an infant political organization. Recall that these coalition governments of blacks, carpetbaggers, and scalawags were "shake and bake" arrangements that were put together over a six month period.

The major issue was legitimacy. Governments in American political history take for granted the authority of government once elected and the integrity of their political foes (they do not expect to be shot out of office by rampant terrorism). But during Reconstruction this was not "normal politics" or "politics as usual." Most white southerners regarded the southern Republican govts. as an alien force not entitled to the benefit of legitimacy.

[The characterization of these governments is best seen in the Tragic Legend School view. This was the way they were regarded by most white southerners whether or not their perceptions were accurate or not].

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Source: Foner, Reconstruction

Re: Notes w/ Radical Governments

*Acid*  
A. The disease of factionalism: This only served to weaken these governments.

Northern Republicans urged their southern "brethren" to build political strength by wooing southern whites into the party. As a consequence southern Republican governors set out to court their political foes.

In practice this meant extending patronage to former Confederates at the sacrifice of office to blacks and scalawags. This was not appreciated by the latter groups. Blacks specifically were cut off from the "loaves and fishes" of party controlled jobs and places on the ballot to attract white southerners to join the Republican ranks.

This showed how vulnerable this new party was from the outset.

Blacks in the beginning generally stood aside when patronage jobs were handed out not only to allow white Republicans to reap the rewards but because many black leaders did not wish to embarrass the party, heighten internal contention, or give credence to the Democratic charges of "black supremacy."

[Disagree w/ McPherson]. For many white Republicans of the carpetbagger variety, political office was a means of livelihood. Once Northern whites had committed themselves to Republican politics there was no turning back. Even if they were professional people--physicians, lawyers, educators, etc--once they lost office they were no longer able to make a living in the South. They were economically "blackballed." Their only alternative was to return North.

During Republican rule in the South blacks held only a small handful of offices at the national and state levels. Their greatest political concentration was at the local levels. But even here where they represented 80% of the Republican vote they never shared anywhere proportionally [political offices].

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Re: Notes w/ Republica Rule in the South

Moreover, white Republicians made most of the important political decisions. As Reconstruction progressed blacks made more demands for political office. Gave some indication of this w/ Profile of black officeholders last period.

Black officeholders even more than carpetbaggers also paid a heavy price for political activism during this period. Economic coercion and violence was the lot of many of these blacks. Turnover among black officeholders during Reconstruction was about 50 from one election to the next.