

History 323

Re: Outline Notes for Chpt. 12 on Postwar South

Raises question about the postwar South's economic status. What produced this economic decline after the Civil War?

(1) Was it the war's impact on the South? The fearsome destruction of 4 years of war?

(2) Was it, instead, the "flawed institutions" that were erected in response to market demands after the war. For example sharecropping, crop-lien, etc. And the racism of the South?

The net result of these institutions was the stagnation of Southern economic growth by impeding capital formation, by forcing a concentration on cotton when diversification would have been more economically productive, and the erecting barriers to interregional mobility.

Omissions. Expected avoidance by neo-classical authors of the text. . . They avoid any discussions in terms of classes. For example, do we know whether or not the local merchants were in time the former planters. Certainly the former planters would have objected to the local merchants taking control over the black laboring population.

Basic point about Chpt: The price of freedom? How free were the blacks after emancipation?

Text tried to account for this postwar retardation. Keeping in mind the economic read-out on the pre-war South (Conrad, Meyer, Fogel and Engerman), the postwar south generates an entirely different picture in terms of economic viability and good health. Why? Was it the War?

✓ Most useful explanations in the text seem to be Wright and Sutch and Ransom.

(1) Wright simply reminds us that the "good times" for cotton (1830-1860) were fated to come to an end. The saturation of the textile markets around the world occurred by the 1880s. . . Actually, the Civil War retarded this development. Had it not been for the war the plantation system would have been forced to face this economic challenge before the 1880s.

(2) Ransom-Sutch argue that productivity decline was due to newly emancipated blacks withholding their labor from the ~~new~~ labor market after the war.