

Bonadio lays out for us the divided nature of the Republican party in Ohio. . .The party was a congeries of interests and groups that simply could not cohere. . .Because of its fragmented state it was very vulnerable to the attacks from the Democrats. . .

She reduces most of Ohio state Republican politics to the strictly political when it came to reconstruction policy. . .

Contends that the party wanted to keep the South put of reunion with the nation to keep the Democrats from uniting. . .In short, the strategy was to provide the Ohio party with a much time as possible to unify. . .The best defense was to keep the Democracy from uniting--northern and southern elements

3. The Black Hobby

The question of black suffrage proved too hot for the fragile Republican party in Ohio. It cropped up again in 1867 with the Reconstruction Acts and the party was forced to take a position in the state. Forced because of the importunities and the threats levelled by the Democrats to the state voters.

Like the other MW states, Ohio had a record of Negrophobia. . .The Black laws were not repealed in the state until 1849. . .But the franchise was according to the state constitution for white males only even as late as the passage of the 15th amendment. . .

It was certain knowledge that the party would lose the vote of many white men if it came out for Negro suffrage.

Congrary to the position of the Coxes in their article on Republicans and the black franchise--a case of motivations. . .The GOP in Ohio was very aware of the fact that despite white rejection . . .the vote for the blacks would win for the Republicans some 10,000 estimated Negro votes. Many of these votes would be in the so-called doubtful counties in the middle of the state that tittered every election between Democratic and Republican. Bonadio argues that it was strictly a matter of political expediency that alerted party managers to the swap--the sure loss of white anti-black voters for certain victories in these key counties that brought the party over to the side of support for the vote for blacks. . .But to cut their losses among the white population, the party also came out for an amendment to the black franchise bill(after its final passage)disenfranchising all those who gave aid to the Confederacy during the war or were deserters from the army of the Republic. . . In short, it was estimated that this would exclude some 20,000 white males from the ballot box. . .Most of these it was assumed would have opposed the party for supporting black suffrage. So with 10,000 black voters in the fold. . .and the opposition down by 20,000 the party would be way ahead. . .There is little of the risk taking and principle that the Coxes talk about. . .Certainly not in Ohio.

4
Chapter
Back

The next step in ~~Ohio~~ Republican state politics came when the faction of the party that pushed the black enfranchisement amendment dropped all interest in its passage because of intraparty differences over candidates for the governorship. . .

B explains the party breakdown as three separate elements (1) the ex-Democrats (2) the ex-Whigs (3) the collaborationists who were working for party harmony. . . The squabbling between the ex-Democrats and the ex-Whigs was as fierce as between the two state parties. . .

The blacks got the vote in Ohio but only through the auspices of the 15 Amendment. . . Bonadio concludes: The Republicans in Ohio had little concern about the rights of the blacks in the state and in the country. They were mainly interested, as they had been for years, in advancing the cause of one faction of the party over another. The issue of Negro suffrage was merely another question that might be exploited to further the fortunes of one group within the party or to plague and hamper the activities of another, as in the case of 1867 election. When Hayes' faction won the nomination and Hayes was party choice for governor, the ex-Democrats worked against their own party candidate. . . The state party chairman, who supported the opposite faction, tried to skuttle Hayes' chances by holding back speakers to key areas, etc. . .

As a result of the rupture in the party, the Republicans lost both houses of Congress. With the Democrats safely ensconced in both houses of the legislature, they turned around and passed three bills ("purity of election") that sought to disenfranchise potential Republican voters.

Bonadio examines these three measures (1) Student Voting Bill--aimed at denying students who were not residents in the areas where their schools were from voting in state elections. The assumption being that most students were Republicans (3) Soldier voting bill--aimed at denying wounded Union vets in state hospitals from voting if they were not residents of the area. The assumption being that most Union wounded would vote Republican. (3) the Visible Admixture bill--aimed at mulattoes. . .

Ohio politics was so mechanical and cut-throat that the party's simply spent their energies in doing what parties do--pulling out all strings to hold onto office. Republicans and Democrats were interested in disenfranchising any elements, Negro or white, that might vote for the other side. These factional battles that characterized the parties years past did not vanish in the face of the tremendous issues of reconstruction and the protection of civil and political rights of blacks. Rather the factions used this issue as they had used many others for years past, and the pattern of Ohio politics remained as it had. . . These conclusions suggest that much of the so-called debate upon the "cosmic" issues of reconstruction in Ohio was, in fact, a pseudo-debate, engaged in by men who were preoccupied with narrow tactics and squabbling. . . .