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The Political Problems in Mississippi During the Reconstruction Period 1863-1876

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The Political Problems in Mississippi during the Reconstruction Period
1863 - 1876

by

John J. Beckman, S.J.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Vita Auctoris

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CHAPTER I
THE CONQUERED SOUTH

The South which was returned to the native whites when President Hayes withdrew the federal troops, was unable to return to the past that it had known before the war. In half a generation, war and reconstruction had decimated the population, destroyed what was perhaps the chief single type of property, and wrought tremendous social upheavals. As the Southerners regained control of their state governments, they faced two possible alternatives: they might attempt to recreate the social, economic and political structure of the Old South, or they might imitate the North in an effort to bring the South abreast of the national development. Nostalgia beckoned them to the old way of life; the "Yankee" virus of ambition and progress pointed the way to a "New South".

This was in 1876 eleven years after the armies of the Union and the Confederacy had been disbanded. Eleven long years, finally the silver lining was beginning to border the black clouds that had hung over the defeated South. Eleven years, and finally
the South could look to the future with some spark of hope, hope that had all but died in the strongest of hearts during the dark years of reconstruction, years which had embittered for life many a Southerner, years which taught him to hate the "damned Yankee."

The Confederate army was disbanded in 1865 and, as the Confederate soldiers came straggling back to their communities, their hearts were crushed with memories of the lost cause, and by the sight of the deplorable conditions that met them. They found many of their former neighbors missing; they found property destroyed, the labor system disorganized, and the inhabitants in many places suffering from want; they also found the white people demoralized and sometimes divided among themselves, the Negroes freed, bewildered, and disordered for organized government had lapsed with the surrender of the Confederate armies.¹

Around this disorganized society lay a devasted land. The destruction of property affected all classes of the population. The accumulated capital of the South had disappeared in worthless confederate stocks, bonds and currency. The banks had failed early in the war, and two billion dollars invested in slaves had been wiped out. Factories which had been running before the war, or which were developed after 1861 to supply the blockaded country, had been destroyed by Federal raiders, or seized and sold, or dismantled because they had furnished supplies to the Confederacy. The mining industry was paralized. Public buildings which had been used for war purposes were destroyed or confiscated for the use of the army or for the new freedmen's schools. It took months before courthouses, state capitols, school and college buildings could again be made available for normal use.2

As a result, we would hardly expect the economic outlook to be very encouraging at the beginning of reconstruction. In Mississippi, as in the other Southern States, the people were generally impoverished for farms had gone to waste; fences had been torn down or rotted away; fields were overgrown with weeds and bushes; farm implements were rusted and tools broken beyond use; live stock had disappeared, hardly enough animals remained to meet the demands of agriculture. All this spelled the ruin and abandonment of the plantations, once the pride of the South. Even small farms were delapidated; farmers and planters everywhere found themselves "land poor". There was enough land to satisfy the most greedy, but without labor, equipment, seed and money, all was as nothing. "A man with hundreds of acres might be as poor as a negro refugee."

In a desperate attempt to raise money for the necessities of life, so many acres were put on the market at such a low level that the land depreciated to an almost unbelievable price. Poorer farmers rejoiced if they received as little as twenty-five cents for an acre, while the best of the plantations were sacrificed at three dollars per acre. In Mississippi, land depreciation in one county alone reached $10,000,000. And the revenue from the sale of land proved of little help to the needy whites. Stocks of merchandise in the South had disappeared because Northern merchants had sustained a heavy loss with the failure of Southern markets and they were cautious about extending credit. Window glass, furniture, dishes, cooking utensils, pins, needles and thread and other necessities were wanting.

The greatest loss by far was that of the emancipated slaves. For the entire South, the financial loss was estimated at somewhere over two billion dollars.

5. Garner, 135
6. Ibid., 124-125
7. Fleming, 5
8. Adams, 379
Mississippi, the state with the largest number of slaves, suffered tremendously. One county alone, Hinds County, claimed to have lost $11,000,000 through the liberation. Moreover, the negro was not only lost property, he was lost labor; and the readjustment of the labor system to new conditions growing out of emancipation taxed the best minds of the North and South; a problem that even today remains unsolved.

Not one planter in ten believed that free negro labor could be made profitable; if the Negroes were to work, compulsion was necessary. Freed from their bondage, the Negroes reveled in a sort of protracted holiday, and even they knew that this could not go on. Their once fine dreams of "forty acres and a mule" proved to be no more than bubbles bursting in their faces. Disease and starvation drove them to seek help from their former masters, but even then the planters

9. Garner, 125
found themselves hard pressed for suitable labor. To insure steady labor, landowners were willing to contract for laborers, however the Negro refused to contract for a whole year and insisted upon employment by the month, according to the rules of the Freedmen's bureau. This was, of course, a very unsatisfactory method for the cultivation of cotton, because of the almost moral certainty that the Negro would make a change of employers at the end of the month and leave the crop owner with a large investment and scant hope of harvest. Many liberated slaves were so shiftless and so incapable of assuming responsibilities that they and their families were wiped out by starvation or disease.


11. The State census of Mississippi showed in 1866 a decrease of 56,146 in the negro population. Most of these are believed to have "died from disease and starvation resulting from their sudden emancipation." Garner, 124.
Reconstruction in the South might have been managed in spite of the emancipation of the Negro, if the manpower of the whites had not also suffered. In Mississippi, as in other states, there was hardly a home in which there was not mourning for some member of the family who had been killed in the war. Those who had made the sacrifice were the young and vigorous who were now so much needed in the work of economic reorganization. It is no exaggeration to say that in Mississippi one half of the male whites fell in the lost cause, while one half of those remaining bore "unmistakable evidence of severe campaigning."

In desperation, the people of the South turned their attention to the importation of white immigrants from the North and from Europe.

12. Ibid., 123
13. Ibid., 135-136
Associations were formed and agents were sent abroad to solicit the aid of both German and French farmers. These efforts, however, met with little success, and even if importation of labor had proved successful they could not have reached the South in time to save the crops. The soldiers on their return found it too late to plant even what few crops the meager resources permitted.

The virtual failure of the attempt to procure a supply of white laborers by immigration made it necessary to fall back upon the Negro, but how this was to be accomplished was another question. The planters had to safeguard their interests and at the same time make working profitable for the Negro. But several economic elements appeared to facilitate the solution of this problem. The white man owned the land, stock and farming implements; the freedmen could furnish the labor. The relative value of each was a problem to be determined by experiment. Some landowners rented their land for a stipulated sum, but when they realized how difficult it was to collect
the rent from poverty stricken tenants, this plan was soon abandoned. Others, however, rented their land for a stipulated share of the produce, but this did not appeal to the colored folks since they had neither stock nor implements to work a farm. The most common method adopted was the "share system." The freedmen were not able to equip a farm nor secure credit, whereas the planters could. And these planters agreed to furnish the land, seed, farm implements and animals, and, most of all, give security for any supplies the Negro might need. The Negro was to plant, cultivate and gather the crops in return for a certain portion of them, usually one-half, though in some cases only a third.

However successful such a system might have been in other states, in Mississippi, even this system was disastrous to both parties in 1866 and 1867, when, because of floods, drought and insects, the yield was not sufficient to pay for the food and clothing of the
laborers. The failure, however, was not due solely to unfavorable seasons, but in a great measure to the unreliable character of the Negro, whose undertakings nearly always ended in failure. He was peculiarly unfitted for the cultivation of cotton, which demands careful attention for the greater part of the year. "Free to go where he pleased, and to own fire arms, he hunted and fished, attended 'frolics' and protracted meetings, while the grass choked his cotton to death."

Together with the "share system" there developed a system of credit which made matters worse. Poverty stricken planters mortgaged their future crops to a merchant or landlord in exchange for subsistence until the harvest. But as so often happened, even the mortgager was not able to finance his tenant and he had to be supplied by the banker, who having gained control by this means could then dictate what crops were to be planted as well as the time of the sale. As a result,

15. Ibid., 138
"the planter or farmer was held to staple crops, high prices for necessities, high interest rates and frequently unfair bookkeeping." To the thrifty, industrious and intelligent man, such a system was well suited, but it had a disastrous effect upon the average tenant, who had too small a share of the crop to feel a strong sense of responsibility as well as too many "privileges" and too little supervision to make him eager to produce the best results.

In the belief that the Negroes would work better for a Northerner, every planter who could do so secured a Northern partner and manager. Such an offer appealed strongly to many an ex-union soldier, who during his stay in Mississippi had been attracted by great profits in cotton growing. When offers failed, these men bought land of their own, lured by its cheapness and the high price of cotton. It

16. Fleming, 270
17. Dunning, 213-214
18. Adams, 388-389
was the consensus of opinion among these immigrants, that with a bit of ingenuity they could introduce scientific methods and thus revolutionize cotton planting. They also felt that they knew the solution to the negro labor problem, but in both cases they were sadly mistaken. The untiring energy and thrift of the Northern planter, and the exacting nature of the service which he demanded, did not appeal to the slow-going freedman accustomed to the patience and forebearance of the Southerner. No one was so quick to declaim the unreliability of the Negro as those who had helped to emancipate him.

The Northern overseers, too, were so far from revolutionizing the methods of cotton culture, that it is not too much to say that they had failed in their efforts to reclaim the lands of the South, and with the inauguration of the reconstruction

19. Garner, 137-139
policy in 1867, they virtually abandoned the land and became office holders.

Acute distress continued until late in 1867, but after that year the wolf no longer menaced the doors of the common folk. Such were the hardships, that many a poor white man never again reached a comfortable standard of living; some were so demoralized that they lost all hope or desire to better their state, while others were so discouraged that they sought relief in the West and North. But to the credit of the stalwart South, the mass of people "accepted the discipline of poverty and made the best of it."

20. Garner holds that these men are improperly referred to as "carpetbaggers" for "they did not go South to get offices, for there were no offices for them to fill at that time. The causes which led them to settle in the South were purely economic and not political." (Garner, 136) But if we take Randall's definition of "carpetbagger" --"one who went South to make money and seize political power--"then the term is rightfully applied to this class of men. (Randall, 847).

Not only the planters and laborers suffered during these critical days, but much of the burden was shouldered by those who in the pre-war days knew not the meaning of work. The general paralysis of industry, the breaking up of society, poverty on all sides made life onerous. Physicians found no dearth of patients, but could not even depend upon the ordinary fees. Lawyers who had supported the Confederacy found it difficult to get back into reorganized courts because of the test oaths and the law practice was jealously guarded by "legal" attorneys. Education likewise suffered as school masters were very few.

Amid such confusion a change in the Negro character and life was inevitable. His once cheerful spirits were now dampened as he faced the serious matter of providing for himself and his family. Since the discipline which accompanied slavery could no longer keep him in check, the Negro ran into excesses of petty criminality.

22. Ibid., 16.
Theft was frequent, arson was accepted as a means of revenge on the whites, and murder became common in the brawls of the freedmen's quarters. Morals and manners also suffered under the new dispensation. In the crowded and diseased stricken towns and camps, the conditions under which the roving Negro lived were less conducive to morals than to health, for here "there were none of the restraints to which the blacks had been accustomed and which they now despised as being a part of their servitude." What good manners they once may have had were now replaced by impudence and distrust because agitators, who were at work among them taught that politeness to the whites was the earmark of servility.

During these critical times, the demands of the Radicals for social equality fanned the embers that lay smoldering in the hearts of the freedmen. In Mississippi, it is true, intermarriage was legalized,

23. Ibid., 42.
but for the most part the "Jim Crow" theory—separation but equality—was the ruling norm. Charles Sumner, a persistent agitator for equal rights, openly attacked the Jim Crow practice, labeling it "an insult and a hinderance, and a bar, which not only destroys comfort and prevents equality, but weakens all other rights".

25. Fleming, 276
As a final tribute to this rabid reconstructionist, the Radical Congress in 1875 passed the Civil Rights Act which gave the Negroes equal rights in hotels, places of amusement, on public carriers and on juries.

By the fires of reconstruction the whites were fused into a more homogenous society. At first they

26. The text and veto of this Act may be found in Henry Steele Commager's book: Documents of American History, F. S. Croft & Co., New York, 1943, Vol. II, 86-88. Strangely enough such legislation, according to Dunning, (Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction, 365-368), found favor with the Democratic leaders, but for a different reason. They realized full well that it would have little effect except in the border and Northern States, where it would turn thousands into the Democratic fold. They also felt that such legislation would in time be declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. And so it happened. This Act, however, should not be confused with the Civil Rights Act of 1866 which was designed to protect the freedmen from such discriminating legislation as the Black Codes. It was vetoed by President Johnson and passed again over his veto. The Act conferred citizenship upon the negroes, legislation necessitated by the Dred Scott decision. Doubt as to the constitutionality of the measure induced Congress to enact most of its provisions into the Fourteenth Amendment. Commager, 14-18.
excused the Negro, for they knew he was not to be blamed; but as misrule continued there was united opposition against the Negro in politics. The whites were sick and tired of being ruled as a conquered province by the incompetent and dishonest; they felt no gratitude for any so-called leniency on the part of the North; they felt no repentance for the war, nor did they desire humiliation, sackcloth and ashes. They were bitter because of persecution, resentful because of poor education, sullen because of overwork, and despondent because the future offered little hope for betterment. Coming into their own were new political leaders, shrewd, narrow, conservative, honest, parsimonious; but the constant fighting fire with fire scorched all. "In the bitter discipline of reconstruction, the pleasantest side of Southern life came to an end." The material evils of reconstruction were only temporary, for state debts have been paid or cancelled, and wasted resources renewed; but the moral and intellectual consequences of the revolution remain as a lasting blemish on the pages of our history.

27. Fleming, 281
CHAPTER II
THE ADVOCATES OF MERCY
1863 - 1866

The close of the Civil War found the nation, as well as the several sections of the country, facing a variety of complicated and pressing social, economic, and political problems. Vast armies had to be demobilized and re-absorbed into the economic life of the nation; production of materials for war had to give way to production of machinery, to building railroads and tilling the soil. The civil, as well as the social, and economic status of the Negro had to be re-adjusted in the light of the outcome of the war. The federal government also had to face the problem of how to determine the basis on which the lately rebellious states should again become normal units of the nation. These problems had to be solved at a time when prejudices and hatred, enkindled by the war, still ruled the hearts of men. They were met by party conventions and legislatures with all the limitations of partisanship that these terms imply.

In the North there were two schools of thought concerning treatment of the southern states -- the con-
servative and the radical camps. Each group claimed its host of supporters. The radicals desired a stern reckoning with all "rebels", which for them meant imprisonment, and in some cases even the execution of the leaders, and they also hoped to effect an immediate extension of the right to vote to the Negroes. The conservatives on the other hand were inclined toward more gentle measures, since they desired postponement of the heated suffrage question until satisfactory plans could be drawn up. President Lincoln was the champion of this party.

It was Lincoln's firm conviction that, though there had been a rupture of the federation, the southern states had not forfeited their membership in the Union. Consequently, the problem, as he saw it was that of re-cementing the bonds of the union, and he was willing to do this in a fatherly spirit. Late in 1863 his plan was outlined in a proclamation in which he offered pardon to all, with the exception of the leaders of the Confederacy, provided that they would take the oath of loyalty to the Union, and recognize the laws and proclamations
in regard to slavery. It also provided that as soon as the number of citizens thus reinstated in each state reached ten per cent of the number of votes cast in that state at the election of 1860, these citizens might establish a government which he would recognize. It was sincerely hoped that the people of the South would gather around this nucleus of loyal voters and soon the reorganization would be complete.

Such a lenient plan was openly opposed by the radicals because, in general, it left too much power in the hands of the southern states, and, in particular, because the question of negro suffrage was to be decided by each state. It was evident, then, that there would be an open struggle between the conflicting camps.

Upon the rejection of the plan proposed by Lincoln, Congress set about drawing up a policy of its own in the Wade - Davis Bill of July, 1864.

This legislation declared the southern states outside the Union, and outlined the conditions for their re-admission: a majority of the people in any given state would be required to take the oath of allegiance before they would be permitted to elect a constitutional convention for the purpose of inaugurating a new state government. Conditions set down for the assembling of this convention were such that "no person who held or exercised any office, civil or military, state or confederate, under the rebel usurpation, or who voluntarily bore arms against the United States" had the right to vote or was eligible for election as delegate to such a convention. The convention, once convened, was obliged to declare on behalf of the people of the State that, those who had held civil offices, and those confederate military officers above the rank of colonel would be deprived of the right to vote or to hold public office; that slavery was to be abolished, and the confederate debt was to be repudiated. The first provision barred the majority of

3. Commager, 437
4. Ibid., 438
of white men from participation in the reconstruction of their state, and the latter deprived the cream of the southern gentry from holding public office. This policy was so drastic that Lincoln refused to sign the bill and it was eventually killed by the pocket veto. But the cause of the conservatives was doomed with the assassination of their leader on April 14, 1865.

Had Lincoln not fallen at the hands of an assassin his leadership might have welded the structure of the Union. His untimely death was a catastrophe far greater than was realized. Though the standards were gallantly taken up by the new President, Mr. Johnson, it was soon evident that without the leadership and support of his party, the President's good will and practical judgment would come to nought.

On May 29, 1865, President Johnson, issued his proclamation of amnesty and pardon. In the

5. Randall, 699-700
main, it promulgated the same principles as Lincoln had enunciated in December 1863. It differed in the oath it prescribed as a condition of pardon. In all essential points, however, Andrew Johnson furthered the plan of the late president. To the consternation of the radicals, he planned to restrict voting power in the South to the whites, leaving the question of negro suffrage to the discretion of each state. Such benevolence won the support of the majority of the people from the North, and in the South it also met with whole hearted cooperation as men quickly presented themselves for pardon and assisted in establishing new state governments. Also of equal importance was the president's proclamation issued on the same day appointing a provisional governor of North Carolina in which he outlined his plan of restoration for all the southern

states.

The provisional governor was instructed to call a convention to be chosen by the "Loyal" people of the state for the express purpose of making the necessary constitutional changes prior to Federal restoration. Only those who had subscribed to the oath of amnesty were granted the right to vote, and from their number the delegates were to be chosen. Temporary civil governments for the states were to be administered under the authority of the provisional governor, while Federal functions were to be resumed by the proper officials. "Side by side with the military authority of the United States was to be put in operation, as fast as the offices could be manned, the regular processes of civil government so far as these fell within the Federal sphere".

11. Ibid., 39
In the view of later developments it is important to remember that Johnson's plan for reconstruction did not rest upon his own personal authority, but "it was fully discussed in the cabinet, no member of which expressed a doubt of the power of the executive branch of the government to reorganize state governments, which had been in rebellion, without the aid of Congress."

This impetus set the wheels of reconstruction in motion and within a year identical proclamations were issued in favor of the remaining six states of the Confederacy. Mississippi received Judge Sharkey as provisional governor according to a proclamation issued on June 13, 1865. As time was too precious to waste, and no one realized this more than the governor, he exhorted his people to conform to the demands of the President and to prepare for a constitutional convention to be held on August 14, 1865.

The Mississippi convention was the first in the Southern States to convene under the president's policy, so consequently the eyes of the nation were focused upon

its proceedings. The problems that faced that
convention were momentous. Governor Sharkey, after
administering the amnesty oath, laid before the
delegates the program which the president "ardently
14
desired" them to accept. The delegates, however,
had minds of their own, and only after long hours
of debate and bickering did Mississippi adopt the
required bills necessary for restoration. The first
function of the Convention was to signify by formal
acts the acceptance of the results of the war. This
was followed by heated arguments concerning the abo-
lation of slavery. Only after the convincing address
of William Yeoger, "a man of conservative views and
15
one of the ablest lawyers in the state, was a majority
vote obtained in favor of the ordinance which declared
that "slavery, having been destroyed in the state of
Mississippi, neither slavery nor involuntary servitude,

13. Dunbar Rowland, History of Mississippi, S. J. Clarke
14. James Wilford Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi,
15. Ibid., 88
except in punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall hereafter exist in the state.

Thus perished slavery in Mississippi, killed in the house of its friends, and by those who loved the institution most. This was the great work of the convention. After all, it was but an involuntary acknowledge­ment of a fact already existing. 17

In the few remaining days of the convention, the delegates, in accord with the president's wishes, declared null and void the obnoxious ordinances of secession, and repudiated the state debts contracted in prosecuting the war against the United States government. Finally such modifications in the old state constitution were made as would bring it into accord with the new situation. 18

16. Convention Journal, 164, as quoted by Garner, 90
17. Garner, 90
18. Ibid., 82 - 94
This was bitter medicine for the southerners but the thought of restored health helped to make it palatable.

The Convention set October 2 as the date for the election of congressmen, and state, district, and county officers, under the restrictions of the presidential amnesty proclamation. General Benjamin G. Humphreys won the people's choice for the governorship, and the legislature which assembled on October 16, 1865, was the last to be elected by an exclusively white vote. The campaign preceding this election pivoted around the issue of admitting Negroes in the courts as witnesses. The opponents of negro testimony succeeded in electing a majority of the legislature. Consequently the most important and the most delicate subject which this body had to meet was that of the relationship between the whites and the recently freed Negroes. The constitutional

19. Rowland, 113
20. Ibid., 116
Convention had appointed a committee to make a study of this touchy question and its report was duly submitted to the new legislature. That such legislation was necessary no one will question. It was unfortunate, however, that laws had to be passed at a time when the wounds of war were still smarting.

Mississippi met this problem with the passage of the Black Codes which regulated civil rights, apprenticeships, vagrancy, and penal crimes. Such legislation met with violent opposition in the North and proved to be the weak link in President Johnson's chain by which he had hoped to secure Mississippi and the southern states to the Union.

This faux pas of Mississippi's legislature was followed by the rejection of the thirteenth amendment. Governor Humphrey recommended that the first section—the abolition of slavery in all territory within the United States—be adopted, but that Section 2, empowering Congress to "enforce" the article by appropriate

23. Commager, Vol., 92-95
legislation, be rejected. A joint standing committee, however, submitted a report stating that the first and main article of the amendment had already been adopted by the state and that the second article of the amendment "opened the door to further abuses of power by the Federal government and interference with the rights of the state." This report concluded: "Connected as the provisions are, a ratification of the first and a rejection of the second would be inoperative and of no effect; therefore, the rejection of both is recommended." The report was adopted. This was the second step in the defeat of President Johnson's plan of reconstruction.

The effect of "Mississippi's mistakes" were not immediately felt. In fact the events that followed gave no indication that errors had been made at all. By the end of the year the provisional governor of Mississippi, was relieved of his duties and the

24. Rowland, 124-125
25. Garner, 120
26. Ibid. 121
civil government was in full exercise of its functions. On April 2, 1866, President Johnson formally declared the rebellion at an end in all the seceded states except Texas. On August 20, 1866 he proclaimed "the complete restoration of peace, order, tranquillity, and civil authority throughout the United States."

27. Dunning, 41
CHAPTER III
CONGRESS DOMINATES
1866 - 1867

Although Southern ships of state were launched on supposedly peaceful waters, on the very day that President Johnson announced that "peace and tranquility" had been restored, the sky was overcast. The storm which was brewing was soon to break loose in all its fury. The radical Republican members of congress were irate.

Opposition to the Presidential Plan was not unforeseen. There had been opposition while Lincoln lived; later it reached its height under the leadership of Thaddeus Stevens, the guiding spirit of the radical wing of the Union party. This group had its own mind on reconstruction.

Their aims included the proscription of the Confederate leaders, extensive confiscation of plantations in the South, the enfranchisement of the freedmen, and the postponement of political reorganization in the States till the continued ascendency of the Union party could be insured.

1. Cf. Chapter 2, p. 2-4
These planks were completely destroyed as the administration's policy was unfolded. The Proclamation of Amnesty had offset their desire to punish the confederates. Confiscation was stopped short by the attorney-general's decision that the property which had been seized by the Federal authorities under the confiscation acts must be restored to the pardoned owners. Negro suffrage was doomed by the franchise provisions of Johnson's proclamation; and the hasty reorganization of state governments under southern leadership jeopardized the Union party and threatened their control of the national government. Above all this, Congress feared that the extensive power which the executive branch had enjoyed during the war was now being carried over to the period of reconstruction. Congress chose a reconstruction policy of its own as a road back to power.

Since the reconstruction issue would absorb the interest of Congress in December, 1865, the Radicals chose this time to unite in open opposition.

5. Dunning, 42
The Republican members of the House held a caucus at which they decided to refuse admission to the newly chosen southern representatives, and to withhold approval of the executive reconstruction policy until Congress could decide on one of its own. Such a resolution was the call to battle between executive and legislature, between the Lincoln-Johnson policy of clement reconstruction, and the Stevens' theory that the South should be punished and humiliated.

Conditions in the South at this time confirmed the Radicals in their punitive policy and drove many conservatives into the rival camp. With the liberation of the slaves, it was only natural that responsibilities would be thrown upon the shoulders of many a freedman who was not equal to such a burden. For to his mind freedom from slave labor meant freedom from all labor. Victims of illusions of grandeur, the new race, although free, was without status, without leadership, without land, without education.

Vagabondage, then, was the consequence. The southern whites, with their fingers on the pulse of the social, civil, and political dangers gripping the South, rose to meet the situation with the passing of the Black Codes which placed numerous limitations on the civil liberties of the Negro. Such class legislation was looked upon by the northern Radicals as the circumvention of the results of the war, and a disguised attempt to re-enslave the ignorant Negros.

Determined now to be the champion of the liberated slaves, and realizing the possibilities of the colored population in strengthening southern representation in the House, the Republican Party decided to win the support of the Negroes. They attempted to accomplish this by continuing and increasing the power of the Freedmen's Bureau. This bureau,

7. For a summary of these ante-bellum laws cf. Randall, 728
8. Ibid., 724-728
9. Ibid., 731
organized in 1865 as a war-time measure, was to be divested of its power one year after the close of the war. It was the hope of the Republicans, however, to continue the organization for two years in order to gain enough time to win the support of the Negroes and gain control of the South. Therefore, to extend the life and power of this bureau a bill was introduced and passed in Congress, but only to be met by the veto of the President; yet six months later it became law when Congress re-passed the bill.

This piece of legislation did more than merely provide for the freedman. Officers of the bureau were invested with "sweeping jurisdiction" and their power extended over many functions formerly reserved to state magistrates. This act, of its very nature provided the "obvious evils of patronage and bureaucracy and the opportunities for building up a party machine" But the most striking provision of this

11. Randall, 731
12. Ibid.
bill lay in the establishment of military jurisdiction "under regulations issued through the Secretary of War over all cases concerning the immunities and rights of freedmen." This was usurpation by military courts of civil and criminal jurisdiction "formerly belonging to the state courts".

President Johnson vetoed the bill, and criticized it severly on the score that it was unnecessary, unconstitutional and "designed for a state of war which no longer existed." Other potent reasons for not approving such legislation were that, it was far too wasteful at a time when severe retrenchment should be the rule, and that it would "coddle the Negro to his own detriment", to say nothing of the fact that the bill was passed by a Congress which had excluded eleven states from its midst. Despite the opposition on the part of the President, the bill, as noted above, was passed over his veto.

13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Commager, Vol II, 12-14
16. Rhodes, Vol V, 571-572
17. Dunning, 68.
This, unfortunately, was not the only point of conflict between the executive and the legislative branches, for at the same time Congress introduced and passed the Civil Rights bill which declared "Negroes to be citizens of the United States", and gave them "rights equal to those accorded other citizens, notwithstanding local or state laws or ordinances". The President, after long deliberation, "regretfully" vetoed this bill, claiming it to be an "invasion of the rights of the states". The breach between the two branches of government was now complete, and Congress passed the bill over the veto of the President in the conviction that they owed protection to the freedmen against the black codes, an opinion in which many

19. Ibid., 15-18
20. It is interesting to note the significance of this veto.
a northerner concurred.

After securing the backing of the northern people as well as that of Congress, Stevens and Sumner began in earnest to further their stern reconstruction policy which was inspired by personal grievance rather than by the public good. Their first step was to introduce a measure which ultimately took shape as the Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution. The amendment contains four sections: (1) it made citizens all persons born or naturalized in the United States

According to Rhodes, the passage of the Civil Rights Bill over the President's veto "opened a new chapter in the constitutional practice. Since Washington there had been many vetoes, but never until now had Congress passed over the President's veto a measure of importance; and the country had been wrought up to the highest tension." (Rhodes - 586.)

and forbade states to abridge their rights;
(2) it provided for the reduction of the representation in Congress of any state that denied the vote to any male citizen of voting age except those guilty of crime; (3) it disqualified confederate leaders from holding political office except with the permission of Congress; and (4) it prohibited the payment of confederate debts.

22. This section of the Fourteenth amendment has become the crux of many Federal problems. After defining citizenship—"All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the States wherein they reside,"—then follows the much controverted clause—"No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The scope and purpose of this amendment was finally handed down by the Federal Supreme Court in 1873 when deciding on the constitutionality of the Illinois State legislation regarding grain elevators, and the Louisiana State legislation regarding slaughter houses. (Randall 735-736.)

The first provision placed the civil rights of the Negro under the protection of the Constitution and safeguarded them from hostile state legislation. The second secured for them the right to vote, and the third took the "pardon ing power" out of the hands of the President.

This amendment was regarded in the South as an insult and every state except Tennessee defeated it. Such lack of cooperation incensed the radically dominated Republican Congress, and they then drafted and passed measures supporting a more extreme plan of reconstruction. They succeeded in their plans because they had gained a two-thirds majority in the Congressional election of 1866, which gave them power to over-ride all vetoes, and assured them of public backing.

The program unfolded in the winter of 1866-1867 consisted of two parts which were developed simultaneously. The first was devoted to the effective assertion of Congressional supremacy over the executive

24. Dunning, 83
25. Ibid., 85
branch of the government; the second consisted in the effective assertion of this supremacy in the conquered South. The first measure limiting the power of the President came in the form of the Tenure of Office Act which made it impossible for the President to remove from office, without consent of the Senate, any civil officer, including members of his own cabinet. Another curtailment was the Command of the Army Act, according to which the President was forbidden to issue military orders except through the General of the Army; or to relieve the General of his command except at the General's own request. Violations of these acts were also declared to be misdemeanors punishable by fine and imprisonment. This legislation was also met by Johnson's veto, but to no avail, for Congress was now powerful enough to over-ride the veto.

Congress now turned its attention to the South and enacted a group of laws known as the Reconstruction Acts, the most important pieces of

26. Commager, II, 35-36
27. Ibid., 37-38
legislation during the decade after the war. The first of these acts declared governments of the existing southern states illegal and inadequate, and divided the South into five military districts. Over each district a commanding general was appointed who should preserve order, and uphold civil officers and civil courts, or replace them with military tribunals as he wished. Under his direction each state was to frame and adopt a new constitution which must provide for negro suffrage. Only after Congress should approve the constitution, and when a legislature, elected under its provisions, should adopt the Fourteenth Amendment, the state might be re-admitted to the Union.

This Act, when regarded from the military and the suffrage aspects, leads one to doubt the purity of intention of the Republican party. Its leaders were determined that the Negro should be enfranchised in order to insure themselves a foothold in the South, a foothold from which the Republican

party could climb to power. But the military character of the Act is even more bewildering. On August 20, 1866, the President declared the country at peace, and three months later the Supreme Court, in the famous Milligan Case, declared all military tribunals unconstitutional except where the war made the operation of civil courts impossible. Now, however, the Republican Congress passed a bill creating military tribunals to supplant the civil courts, a "direct and contemptuous disregard of the Supreme Court's decision."

It would seem, then, that Congress was ready to go to any length to insure the adoption of its reconstruction policy and to organize the South under the Republican banner.

This act was further supplemented by three other acts of Congress, two of which were passed over the President's veto, while the third became

30. Dunning, 94.
law by the operation of the ten-day rule without the President's signature. The cards were stacked. The Radicals were now empowered to enforce their type of government upon the South. Their entire plan may be summed up as a plan "to put the Negro in power over the white race in all the States in the South and to keep him there."

32. Randall, 760
33. Words of Senator Doolittle as quoted in Randall, 760.
Mississippi, like all the other Southern States, found herself outside the Union after the passage of the Congressional Reconstruction Acts. If the conditions for the re-admission had been somewhat tempered to meet the situation, the blow might have been softened, but such was not the purpose of the northern Radicals who demanded the "pound of flesh" instead of mercy. If Congress thought that the problems of reconstruction were ended with the passage of the acts, it was sadly mistaken; they had only begun.

Conditions in the South caused by this Congress can be summed up as follows: The states were declared to be outside the Union and their existing State governments were declared to be inadequate as well as illegal; military rule was imposed upon the "rebels" until a satisfactory government could be arranged for each state; and, the right of suffrage was conferred upon the freedmen, but withheld from a large class of whites.

Shortly after the enactment of the reconstruction measures, the President assigned General Ord to the command of the fourth military district, embracing the states of Mississippi and Arkansas. It was the General's duty to maintain order and to register the loyalists for the new electorate, and since the latter was by far the more important duty, it was undertaken at once. Registration boards were formed of those who could swear that they had not voluntarily borne arms against the United States, which automatically eliminated almost all of the native shites, "and the posts were subsequently filled by freedmen, military officers, and ex-union soldiers who had settled in the South after the war". These boards, beginning their canvass early in June, were empowered to register as legal voters only those male citizens who were twenty one years of age and who could claim one year residency in the State. By law, each applicant had to swear that he had not been

3. Ibid., 172.
a member of any state legislature, nor held any executive or judicial office after which he had engaged in rebellion against the United States, or given aid or comfort to its enemies; that he had never taken an oath as a member of Congress or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any state legislature or as an executive or judicial officer of any state, to support the Constitution of the United States, and afterwards engaged in insurrection against it, or given aid or comfort to its enemies. In effect these stringent requirements disqualified most of the prominent and influential white citizens, and when the registration was completed the Negroes were found to have a majority of 20,000.

This survey of the voters revealed, as nothing else had done, the real political situation into which civil war and reconstruction were fast forcing the whites. It was now plain that the management of their political affairs, which they had formerly

4. Commager, 38
5. Garner, 175
looked upon as theirs by right, must soon pass to their late slaves, together with strangers from the North. Many declared that the state was no longer fit for white men, and some even prepared to migrate to other states.

The ground work was completed, and now General Ord made plans for an election to determine whether the electorate was in favor of a constitutional convention, the preliminary step necessary for the establishment of civil government and readmission of the state to the Union, or whether they preferred to remain under military rule and without representation in Congress. An election to settle this question was ordered for the first Tuesday in November, 1867, and at the same time delegates to the convention were to be elected.

6. It is interesting to note in this connection the political status of the negro in the Northern States: In only six states was he given the right to vote, and any participation in state or civil administration was, for the most part, simply denied him. But now the North was forcing not only negro suffrage, but also negro rule upon her sister states. James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States, The Macmillan Company, London, 1909, Vol, VI, 89.

Pre-election days say much activity on the part of the whites as they earnestly tried to decide upon the most favorable course of action to follow during the coming election. Two plans were furthered. There were those who thought that the government was being re-established on principles abhorrent to their traditional ideas of popular government, and that those who favored such reconstruction had little consideration for the welfare of the Mississippians. They were convinced that the best way to show their disapproval was to decline all participation in the work of reconstruction and by their protest to defeat the reconstruction convention. This they could easily do by refusing to vote, because the approval of a majority of the registered voters had to be secured before the convocation of such an assembly. These men, few in number, maintained that Congress had reduced the people to utter ruin, and had contrived the perpetuation of negro rule, which meant that the Southern States were

8. Ibid., 178
foredoomed to become African provinces. They and their children were to be held in negro subjection. It is to the credit of the Mississippians that very few rallied around this standard.

Another view, entertained by a respectable minority of the leading politicians and editors, maintained that it was the duty of the whites to register, vote for a convention, and in every possible way assist in the reconstruction of the state. They saw clearly that there was no escape from negro domination, and that a policy of sullen inactivity would increase the prejudices of the Radicals in Congress. To accept the reconstruction policy as cheerfully as their pride would permit could not make their situation any worse, and it would perhaps be the means of securing concessions from the radicals in Congress. Their support was, of course, not outspoken advocacy of the reconstruction measures, but mere acquiescence.

Still another party, the Republican party, came

into being during these months of reconstruction. In September the first Republican convention in the state was held at Jackson, and its roster included about one third freedmen, and the rest were election registrars, bureau agents and Northerners who had recently taken up residence in the State. They adopted a platform endorsing all the principles of the national party and declared that the Mississippi Republicans would keep step with it in all the progressive political reforms of the age. They endorsed the congressional plan of reconstruction and promised to use their best efforts in extending the benefits of free education to every child in the state, and to give the ballot to every man not disfranchised for crime, including treason; they declared that they would never recognize any distinction based on race or color.

10. Ibid., 180
11. Ibid.,
Support for the newly founded party was solicited through the efforts of the secret political organization, The Loyal League. Unscrupulous military authorities and northern politicians used this society as a lever by which they were to bring the entire colored vote into the Republican party. The organization was introduced into the South by the Whigs and ex-soldiers of the Union Army. Negro councils were formed, and the increase of membership soon gave the colored people a monopoly of the league in the South. Though the majority of the members were Negroes, the League was guided in political matters by the carpetbag element.

The popularity of this organization was due in large measure to the Freedmen Bureau. By the use of such instruments it was not hard for the Republican leaders to corral the negro votes. "It was this order, dominated by a few radical whites, which organized, disciplined, and controlled the ignorant negro masses and paralyzed the influence of the conservative whites." The power of this Loyal League knew no bounds and its mandates were law to the Negro. Death was the extreme punishment for any member repeatedly voting the Democratic ticket. All candidates were nominated by the League and no member could vote for a candidate not endorsed by the secret society without incurring the wrath of the League.

The Loyal League was a secret, oath-bound organization, and its roster embraced every male

15. Cook, 18-19
Negro from 18 to 70 years, and every white man who would take the oath. While only a few whites joined the League, nearly all the male Negroes eligible for membership were initiated into its mysteries. After the initiation ceremonies, the new member was obliged to swear on the holy bible the following oath:

I, . . . ., do solemnly swear on the holy bible, in the presence of God and these witnesses, that I will ever remain true and loyal to the Republican party; that I will always vote the Republican ticket; that I will keep secret all the signs, pass words and grip of the Loyal League; that I will obey all the laws, rules, resolutions and commands of the League of which I am a member; that I will forever reverence the name and memory of Abraham Lincoln, the author and father of my freedom, that I will observe and keep holy remembrance each anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, and that I will teach my children to do so....

That I will never knowingly vote for any Democrat, for any office, lest I be put back into bondage and slavery....

For a violation of this oath, or any part of it, for the first offense I agree to receive fifty lashes on my bare back, and one hundred lashes for the second offense; and for the third, to be secretly shot to death by any member of the League appointed for that purpose. So help me God. 17

16. Rowland, 144
17. Ibid., 145
Such were the political trends as November drew near, and in the election the question was decided when the reconstructionists carried the state by a large majority. The great mass of whites took no part in the election, but chose to let it go by default. In pursuing this course they made a great mistake, one that bore bitter fruit in the subsequent months; by their lethargy they allowed the Radicals to secure a large majority of the delegates in the convention.

The stage was set and on January 9, 1868, the curtain was drawn on the reconstruction convention known as the "Black and Tan Convention". This was the first, and by no means the last, political body in Mississippi in which the negro race was represented, and a poor representation they made, for most of them were without education, and none of them had ever held public office. The colored, together with the carpetbag element and the white republicans, derisively called "Scalawags", by far

18. Rhodes, 90.
outnumbered the conservatives, and naturally
ruled the sessions.

The keynote of the convention was struck by the chairman in the introductory address in which he reminded the delegates that the long-looked for hour had come at last, and that to the victors belonged the spoils. That it was not hard to convince the assemblage of this fact is quite evident for as the first item on the agenda was compensation for the convention delegates and employees. Excessive salaries were agreed upon as if in confirmation of their belief that they had a legitimate right to exploit the taxpayers to any extend they pleased. Of those voting for this measure less than twelve were owners of property in Mississippi, and therefore

20. Thirty two of the sixty one counties of the state had negro majority and were given seventy delegates, while the twenty nine white counties were given but thirty. There were seventeen colored delegates, nineteen conservatives, twenty from the carpetbag element, and twenty nine native white republicans. Rhodes, 90.
subject to the tax. But this was not the only golden egg that the goose was to lay. Other bills were introduced and passed which allotted fabulous amounts to individuals and committees for traveling expenses, stationery and other such "necessities". To defray the enormous expenses incurred by the convention the finance committee was instructed to frame an ordinance for levying a tax upon real and personal property in the state. Naturally the burden fell upon the shoulders of those who received so little consideration at the hands of the convention - the rebel whites, while the so called loyalists hardly contributed enough to pay the door-keeper and pages of the convention.

It was inevitable, under the circumstances of the situation, that the radical ideas, social and economic as well as political, should be strongly represented among the members of the convention. Southern Unionists, in whom rankled the memories of long oppression and ostracism, ambitious Northerners, filled with ideals of a new South modeled on the lines of New England, and negroes, less than three years out of slavery, were the classes numerically most

21. Garner, 189
22. Ibid., 197
important in the conventions. Moderation was hardly to be anticipated from any of these. 23

Drunk with power, the convention made a bold attempt to control all the state offices. By a bill, the convention was to be given full power to "declare all civil offices vacant" and co-extensive with this, the power to make all appointments so that "offices might be filled by men of known loyalty." It was out and out radicalism the test of loyalty. Fortunately the Democrats were able to muster enough strength to defeat the measure, but their attempt to block such legislation in the future was vehemently voted down.

So engrossed were the rulers of the convention in grabbing all they could, that it was several weeks before the formation of a state constitution, the real work of the convention, was taken up. A committee was then appointed to prepare a constitution, and a report was made in three days, but it was several

25. Ibid.,
months before agreement was reached on the disputed points. The main bone of contention concerned qualifications for suffrage and office. A strong effort was made by the minority to secure the adoption of a provision that would exclude from the franchise the great mass of the ignorant blacks, but, however strong their arguments may have been, they made little impression upon the delegates. When the franchise article was passed by a large majority, twelve of the white delegates withdrew from the convention.

The franchise article, as finally adopted, required applicants for registration to subscribe to the test oath laid down by the reconstruction act of March 23, and swear further that they accepted the civil and political equality of all men. Candidacy for public offices was restricted to those who had neither voted for the secession convention nor in any way aided the cause of the confederacy. This was

26. Randall, 790
27. Garner, 201
28. Commager, 38
meant to be the death warrant of the democratic party. Before adjourning, the convention made elaborate plans for submitting the constitution to the people for ratification. At the same time provision was made for the election of state officers as well as members of the legislature and members of Congress. A committee of five was also appointed to whom was granted the authority to enforce the reconstruction acts until such time as the state legislature should assume control. In the event that the constitution were defeated this committee was empowered to reassemble the convention.

The program of the convention had hardly been determined when the friends and opponents of the constitution began to marshal their forces for the contest that was evidently brewing. The republican state convention was held and in the nominations the colored race was completely ignored since all the places were taken by Northerners. In loud protest against such treatment of the Negroes who constituted ninty-nine one-hundreths of the republican votes, a

30. Ibid., 208
well educated negro leader, Rev. Fitzhugh, urged his fellows to join hands with the Southern whites and bid defiance to the carpetbaggers. Such men, he claimed, "garged in the disguise of friends to us are imposters..." He withdrew from the party declaring it to be "ruinous to the Union and an enemy of the black." His cry, however, fell on deaf ears.

The Democrats, faced with utter extinction made a desperate attempt to unite the whites in opposition to the constitution. Meetings were held until finally a unified program was adopted. They denounced the radicals and declared that the only hope for the restoration of their constitutional rights lay in the defeat of the state constitution. A state ticket was nominated but only as a matter of form. They knew that their men would never hold office for if they won the election, the constitution would be defeated and military rule would continue, and if they lost the election, the Republicans would continue to rule. The cause of the Democrats was greatly helped as the proscriptive character of the constitution became more

31. Ibid., 208
generally understood.

The election of June 22, 1868, brought joy to the whites, but consternation and gloom to the radicals; to both parties, in truth, it was a surprise for the constitution was overwhelmingly defeated. The Republicans moved quickly to save face and to have the election declared a Republican victory in spite of the election returns. The committee appointed by the convention now became an investigation committee, and after months of feigned investigating, declared that the constitution had been ratified and adopted by the majority of the legal votes cast, and that the Republican state ticket was duly elected. They were able to make such a decision

32. "Only in Mississippi was ratification of the new constitution defeated by a majority of the votes cast." William Archibald Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economics, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1907, 118.

33. The election results showed that the constitution was defeated by seven thousand votes, and that the Democratic candidates had secured four out of the five seats in Congress, and that the Democratic Governor had won by an eight thousand majority. Garner, 216.

34. Randall, 791.
because they rejected the votes from "white counties" on the score that they were the results of fraud and intimidation. "The audacity of the proclamation shows the desperation to which they (the Republicans) were reduced. There was not a shadow of authority for the extraordinary action of the committee."

A Republican convention was quickly assembled and a committee appointed to proceed to Washington to lay before Congress the problem of Mississippi, and urge the reasmission of the state. In all their dealings, it was taken for granted that the state constitution was duly ratified. It was not until after the inauguration of President Grant in 1869 that definite action was taken to end the existing situation. The Mississippi problem was taken from the hands of the state committee and placed in those of the National Reconstruction Committee. A bona fide investigation was then launched and the results soon placed in the hands of the President. It was

35. Garner, 220.
unanimously agreed that the election had been conducted fairly and that many Negroes had voted voluntarily with the whites. It was the opinion of the National Committee that the constitution was defeated fairly, and if another were submitted with the proscriptive clauses omitted, it would be ratified. The president concurred in this opinion and Congress authorized the submission of the constitution to the popular vote.

In preparing for the fall election, the political parties in Mississippi broke asunder. The Republican party was now divided into conservative and radical elements, with the Negroes for the most part adhering to the latter. Separate conventions were held and separate platforms adopted expressing the two extreme opinions. The outlook of the Democrats was anything but encouraging, as it was evident that they had not the strength to win the election.

In a last attempt to defeat the radical program a movement was set afoot to unite the Democrats with the conservative Republicans. In this arrangement lay the salvation of the state, but too many Democrats

with the conservative Republicans. In this arrange-
ment lay the salvation of the state, but too many
Democrats were too proud to join forces and they
broke from the apron strings of the mother party.
37 This was a disastrous mistake.

In the election on November 30, 1869, the
constitution was ratified almost unanimously, but
the so-called proscriptive clauses submitted sepa-
rately were rejected by an overwhelming majority.
The Republican party made a clean sweep of the
national as well as the state offices, since the
colored vote was cast almost solidly for the radical
program. Throughout the election was controlled
by the Republicans. In spite of the fact that the
Republican ticket was backed by the National Adminis-
tration, that a large number of the whites were dis-
franchised-- two potent factors which all but guaran-
teed Republican landslide-- the leaders of the rad-
cal party resorted to underhanded methods to win
their election. Election laws were deliberately

37. Garner, 237-244.
38. It has been estimated that about 15,000 whites
had been disfranchised by the Reconstruction
framed to open the way for manipulation and fraud; the number of Negroes registered at the polls far outnumbered those eligible for voting; votes were bought and sold; the Democratic vote of a Negro was contested; fraudulent votes were placed in the ballot boxes before the polls were opened; the Republican returning board "juggled election returns...and in some cases merely estimated what the votes ought to have been". The entire election was characterized as a "comedy of blunders and frauds".

39. Randall 847-848
40. H. C. Warmoth, War, Politics and Reconstruction, 225, as quoted by Randall, 848. For other election abuses in the Southern States, cf. Walter Lynwood Fleming, Documentary History of Reconstruction, The Arthur H. Clark Company, Cleveland, 1907, Vol. II 44-46, 81-93. Though the articles listed in this account do not pertain explicitly to Mississippi, yet in general the methods adopted in one state were likewise employed in the others.
But Congress had at last won the day, much against the will of the Mississippian. Bitter though the scheme had been, salvation was at last in sight, for the state would be admitted to the Union, and the people would again have the right to hold their own elections. The right of self government was in sight, but the intervening years before Democratic supremacy could be established were bitter ones for the white men as well as for the Negroes.

On the 23rd of February, 1870, by act of Congress, Mississippi was officially restored to the Union and military rule was withdrawn. Mississippi had in every way complied with the demands of Congress, but in so doing the welfare of its citizens was sacrificed to the whims of the carpetbaggers. The tree of civil strife was bearing bitter fruit. This was Congressional Reconstruction.

CHAPTER V

ALCORN AND POWERS

Secession and four years of war destroyed the government of the Southern States. Two years of presidential effort failed to restore them. Three years of Congressional Reconstruction brought into being, by the summer of 1870, governments at last acceptable to National authority in all its branches.¹

To all intents and purposes, Congress was at last satisfied. But the new structure of Mississippi's government was built upon ill-will, greed and corruption, and no sooner had the finishing touches been given than the magnificent edifice began to crumble.

In truth, there was in the government small strength of its own— a few men, white and black, who saw in it the hope of a new day; many men who saw in it fairer opportunities than they had known before of political preferment or public plunder; a vast mass of ignorant voters, grateful to "the government" for what it had done for them, and disposed to follow those who could connect themselves with the great dispenser of good gifts.²

The strength of the reconstructed government came from without, not from within. The Congressional plan was not devoid of weakness, and it was not able to withstand the political stress of the next few years.

². Ibid.
With much ado, General Ames announced the results of the fall election: James L. Alcorn and his Republican cohorts rode into power on a 30,000 majority. Accompanying this announcement an order was issued making the election effective immediately. But as Governor Alcorn refused to assume office until the following March, the time appointed by Congress, General Ames called for a provisional legislature to meet in January, 1870, to complete once and for all the reform required for final restoration.

The legislative assembly of January 11, 1870, was unusual in many respects. In this once Democratic controlled state, only seven of the thirty-three senators and twenty-five of the one-hundred-and-seven representatives were Democrats. The remaining seats were filled by Republicans of various factions and cliques - Negroes, 3 "carpetbaggers" and "scalawags". The "scalawags" - those native whites who from principle or policy had allied themselves with the Republican party - were the most abhorred by the people - Governor Alcorn being no exception. The "carpetbaggers" - the leeches from

the North who came to bleed the South - were the most distrusted. The Negroes - slaves of a few years back - were most unequal to the authority invested in them. These unwelcomed and dreaded elements constituted the majority, and they controlled the organization of the legislature, shaped the legislation, and established the public policy of the state".  

General Ames requested of this assembly in no uncertain terms the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments - pre-requisites for final restoration. No choice was given the delegates because by Congressional action slavery had already been abolished and the civil rights of the negroes guaranteed. The ratification of the amendments,

6. Ibid, 270-271
strangely enough, was sweet revenge for the Democrats. They gloried "in seeing the poisoned chalice carried to the lips of those who had forced it on the South." Those Northern states, which as yet refused to recognize the civil and political rights of the Negroes, were made the victims of their own scheming.

The other important accomplishment of the provisional legislature was the appointment of their own United States Senators. Governor Alcorn was chosen to fill the full term beginning March 4, 1871, while General Ames and Rev. Hiram Revels, a negro, were chosen for the unexpired terms. The legislature could now adjourn and await congressional action.

Mississippi was now a broken state. Her citizens had been forced to swallow their pride and submit to negro rule. If this were not enough, Congress demanded that every requirement be strictly complied with before admission to the Union. The conditions imposed were

7. McNeilly, 383
like salt on an open wound, but Mississippi conformed. Notwithstanding, there were men in Congress who demanded still more. These men would not accept Mississippi until the members of the new legislature had taken the oath prescribed in the Virginia Bill. Furthermore, the Butler Bill was introduced which deprived Mississippi of equality with the other states in the Union, and even went so far as to deny the state the right to change its organic law in certain respects. For weeks Congress debated, and when a more lenient bill failed to please the Radicals, the Butler Bill was finally passed in utter desperation. On February 23, President Grant signed the bill and Mississippi was no longer on the outside looking in.

10. Ibid.
At long last civil government was restored. General Ames, before resigning his command in favor of a seat in the United States Senate, turned over the reins of the government to Governor Alcorn and the state legislature. On March 10, 1870, the governor was sworn into office before the assembled delegates, and in his inaugural address he promised peace and prosperity to the Mississippians. How sadly mistaken he was—there was to be neither peace nor prosperity.

The delegates to the new state Congress faced important and difficult tasks. The state government had to be reorganized thoroughly; a new judiciary had to be inaugurated, consisting of three Justices of the Supreme Court, fifteen Judges of the Circuit Court and twenty Chancery court Judges, all of whom were to be appointed by the new Governor with the consent of the Senate. Needless to say, the lion's share of these offices was given to southern men who

12. Ibid., 277-281
13. Garner, 283
were affiliated with the Republican party—in other words, to "scalawags".

Following this adjustment much time was spent in establishing a new public school system which would care for the children of both races. The few school buildings that remained after the destruction of the war were badly in need of repair. The initial financial outlay to repair and build schools was great, and taxation soared. But the constitution had provided for such an elaborate schooling system, and, of course, the work had to be done. Finally action was taken to preserve the civil rights of the Negro. The Black Code and the code of 1857 were repealed; Negroes were recognized as eligible for jury service, and it was declared illegal to discriminate against the colored in any public conveyance or in any public gathering.

Though the first session of the new legislature lasted over six months, there was not time enough to

15. Lynch, 33-34
reorganize the state government. The second session was called for January 3, 1871. The financial report of the first assembly overwhelmed the poor taxpayers. Pay and expenses of the legislature that year were over two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, considerably more than three times the highest figure recorded by any ante-bellum legislature. And this item was considered minor. In 1870 Mississippi had only six hundred dollars of dependable assets in her treasury and nearly eight hundred thousand dollars in worthless paper, but this was of no consideration to the over generous legislature. Their program of expenditure "would have done credit to a commonwealth of assured wealth and prosperity". For the year 1870, only $436,000 were collected by the state treasurer yet the disbursements exceeded the million mark. This was a period of economy! January 3, 1871, saw the beginning of a new legislature. Six months had now elapsed, yet the business at hand had not changed. An attempt was made to control taxation

19. Ibid., 164
and to lighten the burden shouldered for the most part by the Democrats. The proposal to revise the assessments met with no success because it was declared unconstitutional and therefore abandoned.

Since the Apportionate Act of Congress entitled Mississippi to a sixth representative, a revision of the Congressional districts was necessary. Two plans were proposed, one to arrange the districts so that all would have a Republican majority, though in two of them the difference would be slight and election doubtful. The other to arrange the districts so that five would be solidly Republican and one Democratic. The latter plan was adopted in order to assure Republican victory in five out of the six districts.

Financial matters were not helped by the new legislature, for instead of retrenching, more money was appropriated. Higher education received an impetus at the cost of over one hundred thousand

dollars, while the railroads also received a liberal allotment. State taxation to meet the expenditures had increased four times over that of 1869 and was to increase still more. Such in brief was the financial legislation. When on May 3 the legislature adjourned, the Republicans were in favor of longer and more frequent sessions, declaring that the legislative needs demanded them. The Democrats, however, claimed that "the per diem method of compensation was the true reason".

The Federal government at this time was not inactive either. Racial disorder in the early part of 1871 led the Northerners to doubt the sincerity of the Southern Whites. The secret organization,

22. Rowland, 166
24. Flemming, 71
25. Garner, 289
the Ku Klux Klan, was "an answer to the Union 
League, a foil to the carpetbaggers and a means of 
suppressing the negro militia." It was unfortu-
nate, though, that the Klan was controlled by nefar-
ious men who resorted to cruel and terrorizing activ-
ities. Had it been properly governed, it could have 
been a fair instrument to protect the whites against 
negro aggression. As it was, however,

Whatever credit the Klan may have had 
as a champion of the southern white 
was marred by the irresponsible and unscrupulous methods which it used.

But to the credit of the South it must be said that 
the Klan by no means had popular support. In Mississ-
ippi the activity of the hooded riders was centered 
along the eastern boarders, and in the other parts of the state little was known of it. The racial

28. Ibid., 855
29. For the activity of the Ku Klux Klan, of Garner, 338-353.
boil came to a head in Mississippi on March 6, 1871, the day of the Meridian riot. Though quickly lanced, the soreness remained. The threat of recurrence gave the northern radicals and carpet-baggers an effective tool whereby they tightened their control of the South.

The racial situation was referred to President Grant in a somewhat exaggerated report. When he concluded that Mississippi, as well as the other Southern States, was not able to cope with the problem he directed Congress to intervene. Congressional action took form in the Ku Klux Klan Act of April 20, 1871, the third of the so called Enforcement Acts. Congress passed the first and second acts of this series to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment by guaranteeing the right of the negroes to vote and provided heavy penalties where anyone "by force, bribery or intimidation" should hinder or prevent a citizen from fulfilling his duty. The third act

31. Flemming, 123-128
32. Ibid., 102-111, 112-123.
was directed against the activities of the Ku Klux Klan. Its method of operation was declared criminal and severe penalties were levied against anyone who would henceforth participate in any Klan disturbance. The President was given the power to suspend the *habeas corpus* privilege, and the right to intervene with federal troops. Thus the death knell was sounded for the Klan, and in the middle of 1871 its existence virtually came to an end.

Though southern whites agreed that drastic action had to be taken, they could not understand the manner in which it was done. The Act was passed on April 20, 1871, but Congressional investigation did not begin until June 8, and was not completed until August 4 of the same year. This surely was putting the cart before the horse.

34. Rowland, 174.
Logically the Congressional investigation should have preceded the enforcement act, the reverse of the order was equivalent of hanging first and trying afterwards. Logically, after the act was passed, on the presumption of guilt of the late insurrectionary states, there was no reason for the investigation. Logic, 35 however, gave way to partisan strife.

Eleven years after the passage of this act it was declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court, but before this decision, Mississippi had felt the full force of the legislation.

By the end of 1871 state and federal troops succeeded in maintaining good order apart from occasional outbursts. It became evident at last that the hostility of the people was not directed against the Federal Administration, but the state government. Even in Washington the fair minded Republicans began to see through the smoke screen.

The light was breaking upon the Republican leaders whose souls were not steeped in partisan passions, and they were commencing to see that the Southern States ridden by carpetbaggers and ignorant negroes, were rebelling against intolerable state rule rather than against the government of the United States. 37

The growing discontent among the northerners came to a climax with the congressional debacle. Political pressure was brought to bear upon President Grant and he promptly asked Congress on December 4, 1871 to remove, with a few exceptions, the disabilities imposed by the fourteenth amendment.

Congress would have complied with the wishes of the Chief Executive had it not been for the radical Sumner, who agitated against the Amnesty bill. The Bill, as submitted, was rejected because of the Civil Rights rider tacked on by Sumner. In January 1872 it was again proposed, and rejected for the same reason. It was not until the May session that the bill was submitted without the odious amendment, and it was passed immediately by an almost unanimous vote. 38

37. Rowland, 175.
The Amnesty Act of 1872 is a bright light in the reconstruction legislation of Congress and marks an advance toward a sounder policy than that which had prevailed. It provided:

That all political disabilities imposed by the third section of the fourteenth article of amendment of the constitution of the United States are hereby removed from all persons whomsoever, except Senators and Representatives of the 36th and 37th Congresses, officers in the judicial, military and naval service of the United States, heads of departments, and foreign ministers of the United States. 39

Before this act, over 150,000 Southern whites had been excluded from state and federal offices; the Amnesty Bill reduced that number to less than 500. Though these figures embrace all the confederate states, nevertheless they shed an important light on Mississippi's politics.

Prior to the passage of the Amnesty Act, James Alcorn had resigned as governor of Mississippi to serve as United State Senator. Ridgely C. Powers, then lieutenant governor, piloted the ship for the

40. Rhodes, 329.
three remaining years. He assumed control on November 30, 1871. It has been said of him that of all the carpetbaggers in Mississippi he was "the most popular and most respected". His task was a difficult one, and though he was a perfectly honest and just man, nevertheless he was walled in on every side by corruption. The State Congress at this time was busily engaged in promoting costly railroad plans. The pages of its journal are marred also by the Printing Bill of 1872, both examples of greed and open fraud.

The election of 1872, however, manifested the sincerity of the new Governor. The popular vote for the presidency gave Grant a 35,000 majority, and the Republicans swept all the representative offices except one. Lucius Q. C. Lamar, a Democrat, was elected to the United States Congress by a 5,000 majority.

41. Rowland, 176.
42. Donald, 27-29.
43. Rowland, 178.
At the time of the election, Lamar was not eligible for the office, since he was a former member of the Congress of the U. S. and the Confederate States, colonel in the Confederate Army, and diplomatic representative of the Confederacy abroad. Nevertheless Governor Powers and other Republican leaders petitioned Congress to reinstate Colonel Lamar by having his political disabilities removed. The qualifications established by the Fourteenth Amendment were set aside in his regard by a special act of congress and Lamar was seated without objection.

The year 1873 brought to Mississippi a long and bitter political campaign. The November election was to determine the incumbents of State, district and county offices. The beginning of trouble came when the constitutionality of the November election was contested. The Attorney General of Mississippi claimed that since the state was not admitted to the Union until February, 1870, and since the tenure of office was four years, the general election was not due until

44. Henry, 472.
November 1874. Governor Powers addressed a special session of congress to this effect, but the delegates decided that the first political year after the reconstruction was inaugurated by the provisional legislature of January 1870. This meant that the election of state officials for 1874 was to be held in November, 1873. The State Supreme Court upheld this decision.

The battle field was dominated by two staunch Republicans, the former military Governor, General Ames, and ex-governor Alcorn, the former a carpet-bagger, the latter a scalawag. Both men represented Mississippi in the United States Senate and jealousy kept them at arms length. Both claimed the headship of the Republican state party and both sought its nomination for the governorship. The pendulum swung in favor of General Ames and with great ease he secured the nomination at the state convention. Alcorn and his colleagues immediately bolted the party and nominated a state ticket of their own. Both candidates knew that the door to the governor's mansion

45. Rowland, 180.
hinged on the negro vote. Each ticket, consequently, included three negro rivals for the same offices—that of Lieutenant governor, Secretary of State and Superintendent of Education. This colored element felt that they were not properly represented and demanded what was later to be known as the "color line". Numerically they were strong enough to enforce their demands, but unfortunately competent men could not be found to accept the nomination. The outstanding example of their rashness was to replace the competent Superintendent of Education by a colored man "whose chief qualification was the color of his skin."

The Democrats were still too weak to offer much opposition. At the state convention held at Meridian, it was deemed inexpedient to nominate a ticket of their own, and after much deliberation, the majority chose to support Alcorn, the lesser of two evils, but contrary to expectation, Alcorn lost popularity because of Democratic endorsement.

47. Lynch, 70-76.
Thousands of Republicans who were in sympathy with the movement, and who would have otherwise voted the Alcorn ticket, refused to do so for the reason that if it were elected the Democrats could claim a victory for their party.

Nor did all the Democrats concur in the decision of the convention. Many of that party refused to vote for any Republican, while others, dissatisfied with Alcorn's middle-of-the-road policy, cast their vote for Ames.

The election went in favor of General Ames, who received almost the unanimous vote of the Negroes because as military governor he had befriended them. This support secured for him a majority of almost 20,000. Of the governor elect it was said:

Neither in character nor in debate was Ames a match for Alcorn, but the results was a forcible demonstration of the power of the radical machine which was then so solidified and ruthlessly managed.

The Governor-elect had as a working partner a Republican dominated legislature for the party was able to maintain its two to one majority because it controlled the negro votes. In the Senate, the Negroes held one fifth

49. Lynch, 76
50. Rowland, 179.
of the seats, while in the House they held one half. This was just the beginning of the carpet-bag regime which was to dominate Mississippi until the Revolution of 1875.

51. Henry, 503
CHAPTER VI
THE CARPET-BAG REGIME
1874 - 1875

January 22, 1874, saw the inauguration of Mississippi's new governor. Governor Ames in his address to the new delegates, pledged "retrenchment in expenditures and rigid economy". His evident sincerity won for him the support of a large number who had formerly looked upon him as nothing more than a "damned yankee". Though he promised to do all in his power to reform the abuses existing in every branch of the state and county government, what he did not stop to consider was the temper of the new legislature, which has been described as "the culmination of negro representation". Lieutenant Governor A. K. Davis, a Negro, presided over the senate, and L. D. Shadd, also a negro, was chosen speaker of the house. The Republicans enjoyed a majority, and foremost in their minds was financial compensation and personal aggrandizement. It was they who were to set

the tempo of legislation and thereby nullify the good will of the Governor.

Governor Ames drew up a wise and practical plan whereby state expenditures would be curtailed and state taxation would be reduced in proportion to the ability of the people to pay. He advocated retrenchment in every branch of the government, and he insisted especially that the cost of the legislature be reduced. At that time the average cost per day of that body was $1,800, and the annual sessions cost the state over $100,000. Governor Ames urged a reduction in the per diem rate, and, in place of the semi-annual sessions, he urged bi-ennial sessions. This proposal so effected the pocket book of the legislators, with the result that "the legislature to which these recommendations were addressed did not seem to favor reform".

Instead of retrenchment, excessive disbursements were the immediate result. To meet their needs, taxes were increased until they reached

the highest ever to be levied in the state of Mississippi. In 1874, taxation was fourteen times as great as it was in 1869. In protest to the heavy burden of taxes, the citizens formed the State Grange and the Taxpayers' League whose avowed purpose was to secure "equal and moderate taxation; economical and lawful expenditures of the public funds." These organizations grew apace with increased taxation and proved to be deciding factors in the final overthrow of the greedy carpetbaggers. The former organization at the state convention held in January, 1874, resolved that:

Taxation in Mississippi has become a burden so large and excessive that the vital energies and industries of our state are becoming sapped, paralyzed and destroyed, and ruin inevitable and irretrievable stares us in the face.6

At the taxpayers' convention, December 2, 1874, a protest was drafted and sent to the legislature wherein it was noted:

A careful estimate shows that during those years of increasing and most extravagant tax-levies, the public debt was increased on an average annually over $664,000, a sum sufficient to defray the entire expenses of the government, economically administered. That is, the state spent on an average this large sum each year, over and above the amount collected on those monstrous tax-levies.

These organized movements and formal protests, however, had little effect upon the state legislature. Expenditures continued to increase, the most outstanding of which were the $132,000 allotted to the penitentiary, $82,000 for public printing, $153,000 for the lunatic asylum, $300,000 for education, and $117,380 for the legislature of that year.

7. Flemming, 71.
Finances, unfortunately, was not the only major complaint against the misrule. When Governor Ames determined to seek the gubernatorial office, it was his desire to later resign the honor and to resume his place in the United States Senate. His plan was thwarted by the election of A. K. Davis, a negro, as Lieutenant Governor, and good sense and practical judgment prevented him from abandoning the administration into the hands of such a man. Even so, Davis made every attempt to control the government and assumed full authority the moment Governor Ames went North on vacation.

Twice in 1874 Davis seized such an opportunity to act, and both times he "indulged in grotesque extravagance and corrupt practices that fitly preluded the close of this dark chapter of the State's history". Shortly after adjournment of the legislature in Spring, 1874, when Davis for the first time assumed control, his first act was to discharge the governor's private secretary, and then many of the employees of the government in order

9. Ibid.
to accommodate his own friends. In positive disregard of the appointments made by Governor Ames, Davis made his own appointments of Chancellors for several districts. He did not stop here. He issued sixty-five pardons to his colored friends in less than three months in which he enjoyed authority. That Governor Ames should place his people at the mercy of the vicious and corrupt negro, was appalling to all good citizens, and led them to doubt the sincerity of the man they had trusted.

This was not the only instance in which Governor Ames betrayed the trust of his people. His determined action in regard to the judiciary was criticised by friend and foe alike. The Judiciary of Mississippi was made up of twenty circuit judges and as many chancellors, the former holding office for a period of six years, the latter for four, by virtue of appointment by the Governor with the consent of the senate. Governor Alcorn had made these appointments in 1870, consequently by the

spring of 1874 the offices of the chancellors would be vacated and new appointments would be in order. Governor Ames refrained from nominating their successors until after the adjournment of the senate, and by so doing, those whom he eventually appointed, held office by virtue of the Governor's consent alone. Since he was solely responsible for their appointment, he could likewise remove them from office without the consent of the senate. This was an effectual means of controlling the judiciary, of making it subservient to his own will, and thereby destroying its independence.

There are two outstanding cases in which Governor Ames used his power to control court decisions. The first instance was that of A. T. Morgan, a personal friend of the governor, who charged with murder and arraigned before a chancellor, was committed to jail and held without bail. This was not in accord with the governor's wishes. Ames straightway dismissed the chancellor, as he could do this since the appointment had not been confirmed by the senate, and appointed

11. Ibid., 299-300
another man to fill the vacancy. Morgan was forthwith released on bail. The second instance was just as outstanding. Chancellor Peyton held office without confirmation, and when he rendered a decision at variance with the governor's wishes, Ames refused to submit his name to the senate for confirmation, though Peyton had held office for almost a year.

By far the most serious and well founded charge against the governor in regard to the judiciary was the appointment of incompetent men to judicial positions. Some appointees were not even members of the bar and were ignorant of both law and practice. One such person was so notoriously unfit for the position, that the senate refused to confirm his appointment even though he was a member of their party.

In all appointments Governor Ames was guided by partisanship, which more than restricted his choice. In a state, where the bar was dominated almost entirely by Democrats, few others could be found to fill the role of Judge. His choice was

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12 - Ibid., 301-302
13 - Ibid., 302.
14 - Ibid., 304.
further limited by his refusal to appoint anyone who might have any connection with the Alcorn wing of the party. At a time when the office of chancellor needed men of judicial training and integrity because of its important and extensive jurisdiction, failure to meet the requirements reflected badly upon the administration.

The tune of the carpetbaggers was soon being whistled by the Negroes. As the former sought their "pennies from heaven" in the more prominent state offices, the latter were content to make the most of the county offices. Of the seventy three counties in Mississippi in 1874, thirty four had a Republican administration, and many of these were governed only by Negroes. The office most coveted was that of sheriff, because it offered the greatest opportunity for pecuniary gain, and at the same time wielded the most power. The compensation for this office was, on an average, $5,000, but it was not uncommon for the

15. Ibid., 304
16. Ibid.;
17. Rowland, History of Mississippi, 183.
fee to soar as high as $20,000 through bribes and illegal transactions. In the Republican controlled counties this office was filled by white carpetbaggers, but where the colored voters maintained a majority, one of their own was elected. In some cases the sheriff was sheriff in name only because he had neither the ability nor the knowledge to administer the office. Under such circumstances, the office was farmed out and the emoluments shared.

In these same counties the important office of Justice of the Peace and the boards of supervisors were filled by the unwanted element. The former was a law unto himself in the numberless cases of petty offences; the latter were responsible for the rebuilding of the wasted buildings, bridges and land. It was the county boards who controlled the assessment and disbursement of taxes, supervised the roads, selected juries, awarded county contracts, examined and determined upon the sufficiency of official bonds,

18. Ibid., 182
and negotiated loans. These positions of so great importance should have been administered by men of unusual business ability, but instead, they fell into the hands of the incompetent Negroes who were guided by the Republican machine.

To meet the expenditures of the counties, the people were taxed to the extreme in both Democratic and Republican controlled districts. Mississippi had been impoverished by the war, its crops ruined or damaged by floods and droughts, so that many men were not able to meet the financial assessments. In many cases the taxpayers were forced to yield their property to confiscation:

Over six million acres of land - one-fifth of the area of the state - were forfeited during this period, on account of the inability of owners to pay the taxes.

As the burden had to be shouldered almost entirely by the whites, this was an added grievance. Almost one half of the voters in 1874 were free from taxation because they owned no real estate at that time. The

22. Rowland, Encyclopedia History of Mississippi, 88
Negroes, especially, were for the most part tax exempt. Many if those who shared in the honor and wealth of the lucrative state and county offices contributed nothing to their own support.

There were many counties in which the blacks did not pay $1,000 in taxes, yet they held the majority of the offices and administered the government. 24

What was true of the counties was also true of the state. The Republican controlled legislature was bitterly resented, not so much because of what it was, but because of what it did. In five years there had been nine sessions of the legislature contrary to the pledge of the Republican party. Instead of bi-ennial sessions promised, the legislature met semi-annually, a practice which cost the state over $100,000 a year. The effort of the taxpayers' league to introduce be-ennial sessions was blocked by the colored vote. As a compromise, however, the delegates voted to limit the compensation to $500 a year instead of the per diem rate of $7.00 and 80¢

24. Ibid., 314
25. Ibid.; 325
per mile traveling expense. This allowance was still fantastic when compared with the compensation granted in the northern states.

The time for a showdown had come, and the men of Vicksburg were the first to act. Vicksburg and Warren County were dominated by Negroes and into their hands fell the majority of the political offices. These illiterate officials were mere "satellites" under the control of corrupt and scheming men. Vicksburg especially was subjected to the "corrupt and incompetent" administration.

The senators and representatives in the legislature were colored, the sheriff could not write a simple return and he was believed to be dishonest; the chancery clerk was corrupt beyond doubt, and not intelligent enough to enter a plain continuance on the records; the circuit clerk and every member of the board of supervisors except one were colored, and scarce one of them could read or write; and four of the eight councilmen of Vicksburg were colored. In fact, there were only three white officers in the county.28

26. Ibid., footnote
The city government was sustained politically by appeals, on the color line, to the non tax-paying negroes, and supported financially by tax-paying whites. 29

The resources of the whites were drained by the heavy taxation which had increased during the Reconstruction period from $13,000 to $1,400,000, and this in a city of only 11,000. Ninety-nine percent of the taxes were paid by the whites while the taxes were "assessed, collected and disbursed by colored officials."

Determined to put an end to the outrages once and for all, the whites organized a tax-payers league whose avowed purpose was to win the city election in the fall of 1874. The taxpayers who nominated responsible men under the name of the People's party, were whole-heartedly supported by all the whites, carpetbaggers and scalawags alike, and even by a few Negroes. Although the Republicans for their part nominated a white man for mayor, a worse choice could hardly have been made. This nominee at the time was under indictment for twenty three offences.

30. Ibid.,
31. Garner, 328
32. Henry, 519-520.
The remainder of the ticket was equally bad. Of eight candidates for aldermen, they nominated seven Negroes, while six of the eight school trustees, and the city marshal were likewise colored. The whites representing the ticket were of the "rank carpetbag variety." Such a ticket was revolting to even hardened Republicans. The ticket was so objectionable that eventually "but three white men in the city voted for it". The die was cast and the August election was to be the acid test of strength between the contending parties.

Weeks before the polls were opened, Vicksburg lived in deadly fear of a riot. White and black militia made themselves very much in evidence, but cool judgment kept them from acts of violence and blood shed. Governor Ames at this time was enjoying the cool breezes of the East Coast, and Lieutenant Governor Davis who was faced with the problem petitioned the United States Government for troops, but was refused. Governor Ames upon

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34. Ibid.,
his return renewed the petition, but to no avail. His second appeal received the same reply. The administration was left to its own poor resources.

Nothing illustrates better the imbecility of the state government than the fact that within three months after its inauguration it is found calling for United States troops to maintain the peace in a town of 11,000 inhabitants. 36

The election of August 4 was "exciting but peaceful", and the reform ticket was elected almost to the man.

The election proved one point conclusively: the strength of the negro rule rested upon federal support, and once this was removed the regime would crumble. The important lesson was never to be forgotten in Mississippi, and it was the sole reason why race riots were not the order of the day. Logically they figured that riots would bring federal troops and federal troops would prolong the misrule; consequently they did all that was within their power to avoid acts of violence. 38

36. Ibid.,
37. Henry, 530.
Before this lesson was learned by the majority, however, there was trouble in Vicksburg and Warren county. The Reformers of the city government would not rest satisfied until the county offices were also purged. Their immediate attention was drawn to the most important office in the county, the sheriff. Investigation showed the extent of the corruption. Bonds that had been posted were ridiculously insufficient; fraudulent jury and witness certificates abounded; county warrants had been forged and circulated, and embezzlement were outstanding. Before the defendants could be brought to court, evidence against them was stolen from the court house, but was later found hidden away in the house of the chancery clerk.

The taxpayers gathered in December to determine a course of action. Taxes amounting to $160,000 were due and were to be collected by Crosby, and they demanded his resignation and that

40. Henry, 530.
of the chancery clerk coroner, and other county officials. When Crosby refused to resign, he was at once confronted by a mob of five hundred who forcibly secured his resignation. Crosby protested and fled to Jackson to enlist the aid of the Governor. A white man was immediately appointed to fill the vacated office, and business continued. Governor Ames declared the resignation null and void and promised to reinstate Crosby by state troops if necessary, and subsequently issued a proclamation stating:

That riotous and disorderly persons had combined to deprive colored men in Vicksburg of their civil and political rights. All such persons were warned to disperse immediately. 43

The Negro militia was ordered by the governor to accompany Crosby to Vicksburg, to reinstate him and to suppress the riot. No appeal was made to the white militia which was then in the city; in fact the commander of the negro unit, though of inferior rank, was directed not to take orders from white officers.

41. Ibid., 42. Garner, 332-333 43. Ibid., 333 44. Ibid.,
Crosby was intent upon regaining his office and feared that the negro militia would be too weak to enforce the will of the governor, so circulars signed by him were distributed throughout the country, and appeals were made for negro support in all the country churches. The march on Vicksburg had begun. The armed mob appeared outside of the city on Monday, December 7, but the citizens were not unprepared. Martial law had been declared by the Mayor and the supreme command delegated to an ex-Confederate officer. An attempt was made to settle the dispute without bloodshed. The leaders met in a parley and the Negroes agreed to withdraw. Nobody knows why, but firing began on both sides. In the riot that followed two whites and a score of Negroes were killed. Crosby, the ultimate cause of the riotous gathering, deserted his followers when the shooting began. This was the Vicksburg riot.

45. Although Crosby denied writing such a proclamation, it was later discovered that the circular was written for him by a clerk in the office of the Secretary of State. Rowland, History of Mississippi, 189.


47. Henry, 531; Garner, 328-334; Rowland, 185-190.
The riot, however, was short lived. After December 7 there were no more hostilities, and peace was restored. Nevertheless, the Governor continued his demands for federal aid, and when his requests were constantly refused, he called a special session of the legislature to investigate racial condition. A joint resolution was introduced which disregarded the power of the governor, and petitioned the President for troops to "suppress domestic violences and restore peace in the state". The resolution was passed by the Republican majority, while the minority vigorously opposed it, protesting that it was a Republican ruse to introduce martial law in the state for political purposes. Protest, however, was useless. On January 5, troops dispatched from New Orleans by General Sheridan, marched on Vicksburg and ousted the sheriff chosen at a special election and reinstated Crosby. Though the attempt to purge the government was futile, nevertheless the lessons learned were the A,B,C's of ultimate victory.

48. Rowland, History of Mississippi, 191
49. Garner, 335
50. Henry 542.
The regular session of the state legislature was scheduled to convene on the 5th of January 1875. Knowing this, the taxpayers from fifth-two counties gathered at Jackson on the 4th to adopt resolutions to be submitted to the legislature. After listing in detail the grievances of the taxpayers, their protest concluded:

Our present appeal amounts to this - shall the few officials, the mere servants of the people, be permitted to fatten and grow richer, whilst the people grow poorer and starve? Shall these public servants be privileged to enjoy an extravagant waste of money of the people, to the destruction of the property of the state, or will the legislature interpose immediately, and by vigorous system of wise reforms enforce rigid economy of expenditures in all departments of the government - legislative, executive and judicial, in counties, cities, towns, and districts? 52

The legislature convened on January 5 and remained in session until April 6, 1875. Its answers to the demands of the taxpayers were a series of bills more burdensome than ever before to the anemic taxpayers.

51. Rowland, History of Mississippi, 191
52. Ibid., 193
Governor Ames and his tribe were to have one more fling before the native forces of law, order, and decency were to drive them from the state. 53

The first of the series was the District Printing Bill passed by the recommendation of the Governor, by which the governor aimed "to support a partisan press and control it in his interests". The Pearl River Bill, signed by the governor, was still more odious because of the swindle it embraced. Still another was a bill empowering the governor to appoint county tax collectors, a function heretofore reserved to the sheriff, and hence controlled to some extent by county vote. This new bill removed popular control and placed the appointing power in the hands of the governor. The State Supreme Court declared this law to be unconstitutional, and thus saved the state from the abuses that would naturally have followed. The Metropolitan Police Bill, still another in the series, conferred upon the governor the power to maintain a militia to

53. Ibid., 193
54. Garner, 325, 326
55. Ibid., 326-327
56. Ibid., 327
police the state. It also gave him absolute control over the police system in Warren County and Vicksburg. For this he was granted $2,000,000 for the state militia and $200,000 for his "Warren County Police Force". Another measure legislated for the appointment of special revenues inspectors for each district. This should have provided for honest collections and returns, but in reality it was a measure to provide for the "hangers-on" of the administration. The last and perhaps the greatest abuse of the legislature was authorizing the lease of state convicts to its own members without compensation to the state, though the convicts were subsequently sub-leased for a large sum.

The appropriation of the legislature was somewhat reduced in comparison to former sessions, but this was accomplished only by the defeat of the Police Bill. Such legislation proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

57. Rowland, History of Mississippi, 193
58. Ibid., 194
60. Ibid.
CHAPTER VII

DEmOCRATIC HOME RULE

1876

The year 1875 opened with an active protest against Republican rule. The Taxpayers' Convention held early in January of that year was an organized effort to unite all men, white and colored, Democrats and Republicans, in opposition to the ever increasing rates of taxation. At the outset this organization was not political, but as the November election approached the members had no alternative but to unite with the Democratic party whose platform enunciated the very principles for which they were fighting. The election of 1873 proved conclusively that the so called Conservative party, which had appealed to all whites irrespective of political affiliations, was dead. The overwhelming Republican victory in that year smothered all hope of reorganization. It became clear, then, that if the Republican party was to meet with any opposition, that opposition must come from the Democratic party.

With the advent of the Republican party in 1862, and their immediate rise to power, the Democratic
party was virtually crushed. It was so disorganized that in 1873 they deemed it inexpedient to nominate their own ticket. Not now all that was past; and they faced a new crisis, to save Mississippi from the rule of the Republicans.

As early as March 3 the initial step was taken to unify all opposition. On that day the reorganization of the Democratic party was entrusted to John M. Stone and a committee of forty-two members, to whom fell the onerous task of preparing for the state convention to be held at Jackson, on August 3. The hopes of the leaders were high, because of Democratic victories in the North which returned a Democratic majority to the House of Representatives. Conditions in the state, likewise, were encouraging, for internal disputes were rending the Republican party, and, though that party claimed to embrace twenty-five or thirty percent of the Mississippi's whites, it was evident that, unless there were

2. Ibid.
drastic changes in the Radical policy, these votes could easily be won by the Democrats.

That the Republican party was fast coming under the control of the negro element, the politics of Warren county gave ample proof and warning. The adoption of the "colored line" in many counties forced white men to desert the Republican fold for the Democrats, a clear example of which was in the defeat of the Metropolitan Police Bill. When the Bill was introduced in the Senate after its passage by the house, the white Republicans joined with the Democrats to bring about its defeat.

This defeat may be said to symbolize the failure of the Ames administration, for besides depriving the governor of a powerful weapon in combating white guerrilla tactics, it showed that when the color-line was drawn party loyalties were forgotten. 4

With this in mind, the Democrats met at Jackson prepared to do all that was possible to unite both races "in a determined effort to secure the blessings of an honest, economical government administered by

able, efficient, and competent public officers".  

The platform adopted was of such a nature so as to appeal to all well meaning citizens. Promises of reform were followed by a scathing denunciation of the carpetbag rule:

Building up partisan newspapers by legislation, arming militia in time of peace, unconstitutional attempts to take from the people the election of tax collectors, the attempted passage of the Metropolitan Police Bill, attempted corruption of the judiciary by the use of executive patronage, we denounce as gross outrages upon constitutional liberties. While as evidence of the utter incapacity of our present rulers to administer the affairs of the state, we point to the mass of confusion in which the revenue and registration laws of the state have become envolved, the necessity of extraordinary sessions of the legislature to cure the blunders and follies of the regular sessions and to the repeated executive and legislative acts which have been by the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional and void. 

This was an ultimatum to the citizens. The choice was left to them, but the Democrats left the convention with one resolve to win the election "by ballots if possible, by bullets if necessary".

8. Donald, 103.
The Democrats campaigned with utmost vigor. Men left their fields, shops and stores to take part in a state wide canvass. Local clubs were formed to make sure that every white voter had registered. Elaborate displays were in order; men women and children paraded day and night; barbecues and political rallies were held everywhere in an attempt to win over all honest citizens. There was a great display of arms and munition, so much so that it prompted the colored Representative in Congress to write:

> Nearly all Democratic clubs in the state were converted into armed military companies. 10

But even though the clubs were semi-military in character, the one thing the Democratic leaders feared was armed conflict. Every effort was made to avert any riot, for they did not wish the recurrence of the Vicksburg aftermath. By experience the Democrats had learned that Negro-Republican majorities could be nullified by an armed and resolute band of whitemen, but on the other hand they

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9. Garner, 373-374
10. Lynch, 141.
knew that federal intervention would automatically cancel any Democratic success.

The Republicans, for their part, equalled the preparations of the Democrats. Clubs were formed, and at weekly meetings the members were harangued by white leaders. The colored were instructed how to register and how to vote. They were indoctrinated by Republican politicians and came to believe that a Democratic victory would bring re-enslavement of the Negroes. Armed demonstration were also made by the colored who were told that they had to fight to maintain their freedom.

With two camps fighting for the same goal, conflicts were bound to occur despite the warnings and exhortations of the Democratic leader, General George. The surprising fact is not that there were riots, but that there were not more of them. Yazoo city was the scene of the first racial disorder, caused it seems, by the speech of A. T. Morgan, sheriff and

11. Donald, 102.
12. Garner, 374
13. Rowland, 198
"boss" of the county. Three Negroes and one white lost their lives as guns fired and knives flashed. More serious than the riot, though, was the fear of Negro revenge. It was rumored that the plantation Negroes were arming to sack the city. Political differences were quickly forgotten as all the whites prepared to meet the mob. Fortunately disaster was averted by Morgan, who appealed to the governor for support, rather than to the mob. Though promised reinstatement by the governor with the help of three hundred negro militia, Morgan wisely declined in face of certain defeat and bloodshed.

The most serious riot during the campaign was the one which terrorized the town of Clinton in Hinds County. At a joint political rally tempers became too hot to control, and from an unknown source the firing began, with the handful of whites outnumbered by the thousands of colored. The Negroes were the aggressors, and for a time the whites resisted, but soon they fled for their lives. In

14. Henry, 546
In the chase that followed two of the whites were horribly killed and mutilated. A general alarm was sent out and a citizen soldiery of two hundred whites was formed, and re-enforcements were rushed to Clinton from Jackson and Vicksburg, for it was believed that there was to be a general massacre. In the days that followed a reign of terror existed in the community, during which Negroes were hunted like beasts and some twenty or thirty were killed. 16

Three days after the outbreak of the riot, Governor Ames, issued a proclamation demanding the immediate dispersion of all armed mobs who defied the laws and disturbed the peace. The whites refused to disband, but instead offered to place white military companies at the disposal of the governor to maintain order should occasion arise. Governor Ames feared rather than trusted the white militia, and all too quickly sent an urgent plea to President Grant for federal troops. His request, however, was curtly refused. 17

16. Ibid., 378
17. Ibid., 379-381
Denied Federal assistance, Governor Ames proceeded to organize and enlarge the state militia. The recruits were for the most part colored since the Governor declared that "none but the colored people had respect for the state government or would support it". It was rumored that Governor Ames was determined to taunt the whites with negro troops and thus to provoke race riots, for such major conflicts would insure Federal aid; with Federal aid and the negro troops, the governor could control the approaching election in the interest of the Republican party. As company after company was organized and equipped, the resentment of the whites became almost uncontrollable. Only the urgent appeals of the Democratic leaders and the timely intervention of the Federal agent, C. K. Chase, prevented a bloody conflict between the whites and the blacks, and perhaps a violent overthrow of the state government.

18. Henry, 547
19. Garner, 383
20. Ibid., 388
Between the persuasive efforts of Mr. Chase, the genuine desire of the Democratic leaders for a peaceable election, and the anxiety of the Governor to avoid the threatening war, it was possible to make a treaty of peace, by the terms of which the militia was to be disarmed and their arms stored under guard; the Democratic committee was to guarantee order, and both sides were to guarantee a fair election.

Both parties to the Peace Agreement were faithful to their promises, and as the election day approached verbal conflicts supplanted bloody riots. General George was ever on the alert to cool the tempers of the hot-headed Democrats, and for the most part he was successful. November 2, the election was held amid great excitement. In several counties passion overcame reason and riots broke out. This was true of only ten or twelve of the seventy-four counties. For the most part, therefore, an honest and peaceful election was held.

Under the stress of violent excitement there were undoubtedly cases of intimidation both by the Democrats and Republicans; but it was nearer the standard of a fair election than the state had witnessed for six years.

22. Garner, 394-395
23. Rowland, 200
The election returned to the state and county offices an overwhelming Democratic majority. Of the 165,000 popular votes the Democrats received more than a 30,000 majority. The Republicans won only two of the six seats in the United States Congress, while in the state legislature the Democrats won twenty-four of the thirty-seven in the Senate and ninety-six of the hundred-and-seven seats in the house of representatives. In sixty-two of the seventy-four counties, Democratic officials were likewise elected. The election was hailed by the Democrats as the great day of political emancipation, and the bells which were rung for the Democratic victory were the death knell of the Republican party.

President Grant saw in the Mississippi election only fraud and violence, and would have taken steps to overturn the results but national affairs demanded his attention instead. The cause of the government was defended by Hiram Revels, the first negro senator of the United States. His appeal to the president was an important factor in maintaining the status quo.

24. Ibid., 201
25. Ibid., 200-201
26. Garner, 395
He wrote:

At the late convention, men, irrespective of race, color, or party affiliation, united and voted together against men known to be incompetent and dishonest.\(^{27}\)

The legislature chosen in the November election assembled at Jackson, January 4, 1876. By common consent of the Democratic majority the order of business was to be headed by the impeachment of Governor Ames, his running mate, Lieutenant Governor Davis, and the Superintendent of Schools, Cardoza. This action of the legislature was expected by the Governor and he wrote that their purpose was "to complete the revolution" by clearing the state offices Republicans and to "restore the confederacy by voting in Democrats".

Investigations looking for certain grounds for impeachment was undertaken immediately. Lieutenant Governor Davis was the first to feel the strong arm of the body. On February 14 he was impeached for accepting bribes in a pardon case, and on March 13 he was convicted by an overwhelming vote, with six Republicans voting for his conviction. On February

\(^{27}\) Henry, 549. \(^{28}\) Garner, 401-402 \(^{29}\) Ibid., 404
a resolution which directed the impeachment of Cardoza was adopted, and received the affirmative vote of eleven Republicans, eight of whom were colored. Rather than be convicted the Superintendent of Schools resigned on the 22nd and the impeachment proceedings against him were dropped.

Action to secure the impeachment of Governor Ames was begun on March 2, and the trial was set for the 28th. On the day of the trial the counsel for the defendant proposed that if the charges against the governor were dismissed he would resign his office in honor. This proposal was accepted by the legislature. The House withdrew the charges and the Senate dismissed them. In both cases the vote was almost unanimous. On the following day Governor Ames formally sent his resignation to the people of Mississippi. John M. Stone, president of the Senate was thereupon ushered into the Governor's office and the Reconstruction government in Mississippi was at an end.

32. John Seymour McNeilly, "Climax and Collapse of Reconstruction in Mississippi," as quoted by Rowland, 204.
And thus was severed the last strand of the Gordian knot binding Mississippi to the abomination of Carpetbag and negro domination. 33

After the removal of the Republicans from the high offices of the state, the legislature corrected item by item the flagrant abuses of Radical misrule. Although there were no more impeachments, the blood sucking offices and agencies were abolished directly or indirectly. State publications were reduced in number, and the district printing bill repealed, thereby abolishing a large number of partisan papers. The Gatling Gun Bill was repealed, and the militia was paralyzed by the reduction of pay. The salaries of all officials and state employees were substantially reduced. Nor did the judiciary escape the purge, for the number of chancellors and circuit judges was considerably reduced. The elaborate and expensive school system established by the Republicans was converted into one of practical economy. Revision of finances reduced state taxation from 9 and 1/4 to 6 and 1/2 mills on the dollar within the first month of the new regime.

33. John Seymore McNeilly, "Climax and Collapse of Reconstruction in Mississippi", as quoted by Rowland, 204. 34. Garner, 410-413. 35. Ibid., 410-413
The sweeping reform of the financial and administrative system netted immediate results. At last the budget was balanced; total receipts for 1786 amounted to $981,393; total disbursements $820,002. The period of economy had come and once again Mississippi was to be given the opportunity to make her own way in the world.

The end of the carpetbag chapter in Mississippi's history was not, however, to be written until late in 1876, when the Republican Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Peyton, and his associate Tarbell, retired in November, and Democratic successors were subsequently appointed. In the same month, a solid Democratic ticket was elected to represent Mississippi in the United States Congress. Democratic victory was now complete, for as they became entrenched in all the offices, it was evident that the Republican party was dead beyond all hope of revival. But this was in 1876, eleven years after the horrible fratricide had ended; eleven long years of forced rule, fear and hate.

36. Rowland, 207-208
37. Garner, 413.
CHAPTER VIII
A SKELETON IN OUR CLOSET

From time to time the old bones which are hidden deep in our nation's closet rattle and in so doing remind us of a dark period in our country's history. Had the evil effects of the tragic era been only temporary, we might have been able to forget; had the wounds not been so deep, time might have healed them, but so bitter was the resentment in the hearts of southerners that even today they hate the "damned yankee".

Mississippi and the southern states were faced with social, economic, financial, and political problems which, unfortunately, they themselves were not permitted to meet until irreparable damage had been done. Only after the Radical Republican leaders had spent themselves in avenging private grudges, only after a Republican Congress had made such an utter mess of things, only after the Republican party had wholly alienated the southern whites, were the southerners able, through sweat and blood, to win the right to solve the problems themselves. It is
It is little wonder today that that party has such a small following in the South. Do what they may, the Republicans cannot undo what has already been done; they cannot erase the picture they themselves have imprinted on the memories of the southerners nor the fact from the pages of our history.

By 1876 home rule was finally restored in the majority of the southern states. Meanwhile in Mississippi, as well as in her sister states, the entire super-structure of life had been undermined. Political, social and economic problems had to be faced after Appomattox, but unfortunately they were faced at a time when greed, hatred and vengeance ruled the hearts of men. Had there been time for tempers to cool and wounds to heal, the story might have been different. But time waits for no man. The problems were met, but not solved. What the Republicans considered a panacea for all southern trouble, proved to be acid upon open wounds that would ache and torment for eleven long years.
The southern states, Mississippi especially, were left destitute after the war. The accumulated capital invested in Confederate stocks, bonds and currency, was now worthless, their banks had collapsed and the largest investment, two billion dollars in slaves, had been wiped out. Factories had been destroyed or dismantled; mining had been paralyzed. Their only hope lay in the land, but here too they were baffled. Farms had deteriorated during the war, equipment had worn out, fences rotted, fields became overgrown, stock destroyed. Laborers were few. Besides the loss of Negroes, Mississippi suffered the loss of one half of the male whites, and of those returning one half bore scars of battle. Land value tumbled; almost everyone was poor. Readjustment, under the most favorable conditions, would have been a very difficult task. Tact, firmness and good will were required in full measure, but, sad to say, the Radical Republicans were gifted only with firmness.

What might have proven to be an acceptable plan of reconstruction, the merciful program of Lincoln and Johnson, was scrapped in favor of the hard,
revengeful policies of Congress. The Presidential program had been inaugurated and had been acceptable to the South as well as to many northerners, but it was not to withstand the opposition of Charles Sumner in the Senate, and Thaddeus Stevens in the House. They attacked the work of the administration on two points: first, if this reconstruction work should be accepted as final, presidential supremacy would be continued; and secondly, it let the South off without public confession of sin and without due punishment. Undoubtedly the Radicals represented a minority when they set out to undo what had been done, but they had the untold advantage of a smoothly working organization under the leadership of Sumner and Stevens.

At first this element had no definite program, but it did have a general idea of what it wanted: Stevens avowedly hated the average southern whites and wanted to see them punished; Sumner desired to see the work of the war rounded out by elevating the freed Negro to a position of social and political equality with the white. Opposed to the Radicals
were conservative Republicans who, unfortunately, had no clear cut program or leader of their own, and Democrats, still under a cloud because of the Copperhead element in their ranks. Had there been some one to coalesce this anti-Radical strength, as Lincoln possibly might have done, the story of reconstruction might not have been so sordid.

When the first post-war congress assembled, the Radicals were busily engaged in undermining the presidential plan. Those southerners who presented themselves as senators and representatives were refused seats in the respective houses lest they have a voice in determining their own fate. Capitalizing on, and over-emphasizing the conditions in the South, the Radicals were successful in capturing public opinion, and so placed President Johnson on the defensive. In short order Congress passed a new Freedman's Bureau Act and a Civil Rights Bill which came to be law despite the president's veto. Johnson's ill advised condemnation of the latter lost for him the support of many moderate Republicans in congress and in the country at large. Victory at the polls
in 1866 was interpreted as a vote of confidence by the Radicals, and with their strength augmented by some fifty votes, it was only a matter of time till their entire program was actualized. In rapid succession reconstruction bills and constitutional amendments were introduced and passed by congress, the sum and substance of which was to curtail the powers of the chief executive and to humble the South.

Military commanders and subordinate officials were appointed by congress and the former was made supreme. The major portion of southern whites was disfranchised, and in the reconstruction conventions throughout the South the Carpet-baggers, Scalawags and Negroes were dominant. Members of these unwanted classes met with little opposition and were elected to state as well as national office. As a result lawlessness and disorder prevailed to an alarming degree; reckless extravagance and almost unparalleled venality on the part of officials meant tremendous increase of state and local debt as well as taxation.
Radical control of state and national governments depended on the suppression of the political powers of the southern whites and the control of the Negro votes. Locally the control of offices meant the perpetuation of authority so long as the protecting arm of the national government was not withdrawn, and it would not be withdrawn as long as the Radicals steered the ship. Consequently the Freedman's Bureau, the Union League and, oftentimes, educational works and even churches, were little more than political tools used to maintain the political machine by securing a straight Republican vote. The few whites among their ranks gradually deserted the party as they became disgusted with the methods used and the results produced. Consequently to the southerners, Republicans came to mean Negroes, northern carpet-baggers and federal office holders leaning all the time more heavily upon the Washington government.

As early as 1868 the structure erected by the Radical leaders had to be reenforced. In the presidential election of that year Grant was carried into office on the Negro vote, but in several states
Republican control wavered. Congress therefore rushed to aid the tottering structure by passing the Fifteenth amendment and the Enforcement Acts which were designed to place election under federal rather than state control. But the Radicals had overplayed their hand. The South was lost to the Republicans as the whites united to form a "solid South". In the North, too, men were tired of trying to reform the South by outside agencies, and more and more were convinced that the South should be left to deal with its own problems. Consequently the Republican party was split into the Liberals and Radicals, and although the former were not strong enough to carry the election of 1872 nevertheless their views and objectives had to be reckoned with. Consequently, by an act of Congress, the political disabilities were removed from almost all but a few hundred of those originally proscribed.

In 1874 the Republican majority in the house was finally overturned, the first time since 1861, and the Democrats had a voice in national legislation. One by one the southern states succeeded in ousting
the Negroes, carpetbaggers and scalawags from local, state and national offices. Thus by the fall of 1876 when Mississippi re-established home rule, the reconstruction governments in all but Florida, South Carolina and Louisiana had come to an end. The newly elected state governments lost no time in righting the wrongs of the past eleven years.

The Republicans who had once envisioned a solid political power in Mississippi and in the other southern states saw their elaborate system crumble; the carpetbaggers who had come to prey on the conquered found themselves without friends, influence or wealth. Outcasts of southern society, both were forced out of the state, out of the South. What could have been theirs was now gone, and they had only themselves to blame. It was not the fact of the emancipation of the slaves that had turned Mississippi and the South against them, it was the tragic era of reconstruction. In 1876, when Mississippi finally became a state for the Mississippians, the door was firmly closed against the
Republican Party, and to this day it has not been re-opened, because written on the pages of its history is a story the South cannot forget - the story of reconstruction.
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Thesis:

The thesis submitted by John J. Beckman, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

August 11, 1949
Date

Charles H. Metzger
Signature of Advisor