

## Reconstruction: The Traditional View

\*\*\*\*The **Dunning School** felt that the period of Reconstruction was oppressive toward the South because Radical Republicans from the North wanted to take over the South and raise the freedmen above the traditional leadership elite in the south.\*\*\*\*

### A.) North was oppressing the South

#### 1.) Confiscated land from ex-confederates

a.) *"The great mistake committed by the North was giving the Negroes the franchise so soon after their emancipation, when they were not the least prepared for it. In 1865, slavery was abolished, and no one even among the Southerners...would wish it back."*

-The Ordeal of Reconstruction, 1865-1877

#### 2.) Allowed carpetbaggers from the north to take political & economic control of the south

a.) *"The Negroes have it all their own way, and rob and plunder as they please. The Governor of South Carolina lives in luxury, and treats his soldiers to champagne, while the miserable planter have to pay taxes amounting to half their income, and if they fail to pay, their property is confiscated."*

-The Ordeal of Reconstruction, 1865-1877

b.) Went south to use their influence to do what they wanted

c.) Went to South to advance their economical and political advantages.

1.) taxes were raised in the South during Reconstruction

d.) "Ransacked" state treasuries and corrupted local governments.

e.) Carpetbaggers harmed the South

*"Carpetbagger," a derogatory term used to describe Northern-ers who relocated to the South after the Civil War, implied that these Northerners only owned enough possessions to carry in a carpetbag and had moved to the South for personal gain and enrichment. Largely despised in the South, carpetbaggers were accused of ransacking the state treasuries and blamed for the widespread corruption that followed the war. The Fourteenth Amendment and Reconstruction Acts of 1867 restricted ex-Confederates (the majority of white Southerners) from holding political office and even voting. Carpetbaggers often filled this political vacuum, but many Southerners chafed under northern rule. Other carpetbaggers were teachers or clergy who had come South to educate and aid the ex-slaves, an objective that was resented and feared by much of the white South. Those native Southerners who supported Radical Reconstruction measures were often referred to as scalawags (good for nothing rascals).*

-William Manning Lowe (1842- 1881)

f.) Government of the South was corrupted and dominated by the North

*South Carolina and Louisiana were in 1873 the spectacular illustrations of the workings of Reconstruction. The states were thoroughly "Africanized." A native white man, Franklin J. Moses, Jr., of notoriously bad character, succeeded the carpet-bagger Scott as governor, but most of the other elected executive officers, two-thirds of the legislature, and four out of the five congressmen were Negroes. The shameless caricature of government which had prevailed at Columbia since the blacks came to power was now known in its general features throughout the North. The disgust which it might have been expected to inspire was subdued, however, by the feeling that the original secessionists were meeting "deserved retribution." Appeals of the small body of decent white men who were still striving to maintain their rights and their property against the flood of barbarism went unnoticed. President Grant, who found abundant ground for interfering in other states, ignored their claims and allowed the situation to fester.*

*The situation in Louisiana was more dramatic than that in South Carolina.*

*Henry C. Warmoth, the carpet-bagger who was elected governor in 1868, became involved during his term in a violent faction fight with adversaries in his own party headed by Packard, the United States Marshal. In the election of 1872 Warmoth became a Liberal and supported the conservative state ticket against the radicals, who had the favor of President Grant. The result of the election depended chiefly on the returning board, and the legal composition of this body was in dispute. Warmoth, in*



an exceedingly bitter and unscrupulous conflict in the state courts, clearly out pointed his adversaries and secured a canvass of the returns by his own board, giving the presidential electors, the governor ship, and the legislature to the United States district judge, Durell, who, in a grossly irregular way, prohibited the conservative (non-Radical Republican) legislature to meet, ordered Federal troops to occupy their hall and prevent their meeting, and directed a canvass of the returns for the election by a board which he said as the legal one. Warmoth took care that this board should not get possession of the actual returns.

B.) Northern Motives for Reconstruction were Selfish

- 1.) Sought to take economic advantage over the defeated southern states
  - a.) Blacks still found themselves living in an increasingly segregated society fostered partially by the white carpetbaggers
- 2.) Radical Republicans sought to keep the southern states out of the Union because they would likely elect Democrats who would challenge Republican leadership of the congress.
  - a.) Wanted to establish a strong Republican party in the South
  - b.) "The registration of voters was so directed as to insure beyond all peradventure the fullest enrollment of Republican supporters and the completest exclusions of disenfranchised whites."

C.) Political control of the south was inefficient and unfair

- 1.) 5 Military districts
  - a.) Confederate generals were pardoned in the South but in retribution many states political leaders were not.
- 2.) Uneducated and vindictive black freedmen received an unfair amount of political authority.
- 3.) Freedmen were not even prepared to run their own lives

In Henderson Donald's comprehensive work on the South in Reconstruction, *The Negro Freedmen*, Donald argues that the freedmen were without sufficient understanding of the free enterprise system to economically prosper in freedom, bought impractical clothing, had high mortality rates, did not understand civil law, and had a tendency towards petty theft.

- a.) Blacks had to farm by sharecropping. They lived on the credit of whatever their crops sold.

Early in the twentieth century Professor William A. Dunning, also of Columbia University, and a group of talented graduate students wrote a series of monographs that presented a crushing indictment of the Republican reconstruction program in the South--a series that made a deep and lasting impression on American historians...The central emphasis of most historical writing about reconstruction has been upon sordid motives and human depravity. Somehow, during the summer of 1865, the nobility and idealism of the war years had died. A synopsis of the Dunning School's version of reconstruction would run something like this: Abraham Lincoln, while the Civil War was still in progress, turned his thoughts to the great problem of reconciliation; and, "with malice toward none and charity for all," this gentle and compassionate man devised a plan that would restore the South to the Union with minimum humiliation and maximum speed. But there had already emerged in Congress a faction of radical Republicans, sometimes called Jacobins of Vindictives, who sought to defeat Lincoln's generous program. Motivated by hatred of the South, by selfish political ambitions, and by crass economic interests, the radicals tried to make the process of reconstruction's humiliating, as difficult, and as prolonged as they possible could...

If northern brutality is a myth, the scandals of the Grant administration and the actions of some of the southern reconstruction government are sordid facts.

- b.) Lost money due to sharecropping. Money made went to pay off debts for tools and supplies.
- c.) Ex-slaves were completely confused about the voting process and without a clear comprehension as to what it meant the mass of freedmen were sure they must be union men and republican.
- 4.) Southern whites wanted black voting to be monitored under white authority, but blacks wanted political equality.
  - a.) Blacks resented their threatened lack of political freedom and took it out on the whites



5.) Blacks codes - regulated the freedom of the newly "freedmen"

a.) Southerner's believed that *"The freedmen were not, and in the nature of the case could not for generations, be on the same social, moral, and intellectual plane with the whites; and this fact was recognized by constituting them a separate class in the civil order. As in general principles, so in details, the legislation was faithful on the whole to the actual conditions with which it had to deal. The restrictions in respect to bearing arms, testifying in court, and keeping labor contracts were justified by well-established traits and habits of the Negroes; and the vagrancy laws dealt with problems of destitution, idleness, and vice of which no one not in the midst of them could appreciate the appalling magnitude and complexity."*

-William A. Dunning, **Reconstruction: political and Economic, 1865-1877**

b.) The "black codes" were falsely represented in the North to be the expression of a deliberate purpose by the southerners to nullify the result of the war and reestablish slavery, and this impression gained wide prevalence in the North.

-William A. Dunning, **Reconstruction: political and Economic, 1865-1877**

i.) This provided a false pretense by which the north could govern the south

D.) Results were devastating to the south:

1.) Violence escalated

a.) KKK groups and other terrorist organizations formed to protect white interest that were threatened by northerners

i.) In fact the north can be blamed for the growth of the KKK and its violent actions by creating an unfair environment for ex-Confederates in the south which encouraged para-military organizations to grow up to protect southern interests.

2.) South was repentant after the war, and willing to co-exist with the north on equal terms

i.) only after a series of humiliations did the south fight back

The Southern States after the Civil War were forced to experience humiliations after the war. Such as:

\* CONTINUE UNDER MILITARY OCCUPATION BY THE UNION ARMY

\* WRITE NEW STATE CONSTITUTIONS GUARANTEEING EQUAL RIGHTS TO BLACKS

\* GIVE THE VOTE TO BLACKS

\* RATIFY THE 14<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT





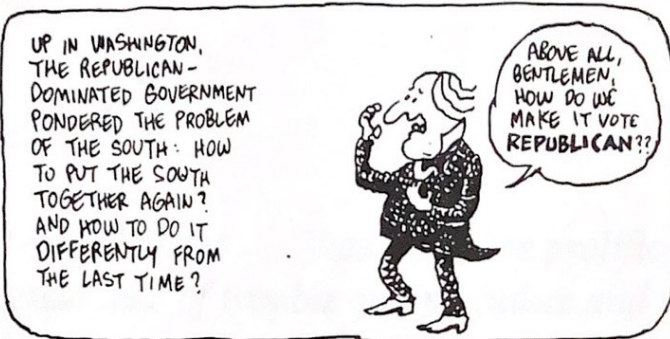


TABLE 9. EVENTS OF RECONSTRUCTION, 1863-1877

Date	General tendency	National events	State events
1863	Presidential	Lincoln Plan announced.	Governments set up in Louisiana, Arkansas.
1864	Reconstruction	Wade-Davis Plan pocket-vetted by Lincoln.	
1865		Lee surrenders. Lincoln shot.	Governments partly functioning in Virginia, Tennessee.
1866		Johnson Plan announced. Freedman's Bureau bill and Civil Rights bill vetoed. Fourteenth Amendment submitted to states. Congressional elections: Radical gains.	All remaining states reorganized under Johnson Plan. Tennessee readmitted.
1867	Height of Radical	Reconstruction Acts. Tenure of Office Act.	Military Rule in effect.
1868	Reconstruction	Impeachment of Johnson. Fourteenth Amendment in effect. Grant elected.	North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas readmitted under Radical governments.
1869			Conservative government restored in Tennessee.
1870	Conflict	Fifteenth Amendment in effect. First Enforcement Act. Congressional elections: Republican majorities reduced.	Virginia readmitted under moderate government. Moderate government restored in North Carolina. Mississippi, Texas, Georgia readmitted under radical government.
1871		Second and third Enforcement Acts	Conservative government restored in Georgia.
1872		Grant re-elected.	
1873			
1874	Restoration of White Rule	Congressional elections: Democrats gain control of House.	Conservative government restored in Arkansas, Alabama, Texas.
1875		Civil Rights Act (declared invalid 1883)	
1876		Haves-Tilden disputed election.	Conservative government restored in Mississippi.
1877			Federal troops removed from Louisiana. South Carolina. Conservative government restored in Florida. South Carolina. Louisiana.