

# BLACK RECONSTRUCTION

AN ESSAY TOWARD A HISTORY OF THE PART  
WHICH BLACK FOLK PLAYED IN THE ATTEMPT  
TO RECONSTRUCT DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA,  
1860-1880

BY

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## XIV. COUNTER-REVOLUTION OF PROPERTY

How, after the war, triumphant industry in the North coupled with privilege and monopoly led an orgy of theft that engulfed the nation and was the natural child of war; and how revolt against this anarchy became reaction against democracy, North and South, and delivered the land into the hands of an organized monarchy of finance while it overthrew the attempt at a dictatorship of labor in the South

The abolition-democracy of the North had been willing to try real democracy in the South because they believed in the capabilities of the Negro race and also because they had passed through war, oligarchy, and the almost unbridled power of Andrew Johnson. Relatively few of them believed in the mass of Negroes any more than they believed in the mass of whites; but they expected that with education, economic opportunity and the protection of the ballot, there would arise the intelligent and thrifty Negro to take his part in the community, while the mass would make average labor. Perhaps they did not expect the proportion of thrift and intelligence to equal that of the whites, but they knew certain possibilities from experience and acquaintance.

The machinery they were compelled to set up, with the coöperation of Northern industry, was a dictatorship of far broader possibilities than the North had at first contemplated. It put such power in the hands of Southern labor that, with intelligent and unselfish leadership and a clarifying ideal, it could have rebuilt the economic foundations of Southern society, confiscated and redistributed wealth, and built a real democracy of industry for the masses of men. When the South realized this they emitted an exceeding great cry which was the reaction of property being despoiled of its legal basis of being. This bitter complaint was all the more plausible because Southern labor lacked sufficient intelligent and unselfish leadership. Some in truth it got—from black men who gave their heart's blood to make Reconstruction go; from white men who sacrificed everything to teach and guide Negroes. But for the most part their leaders were colored men of limited education, with the current honesty of the times and little experience, and Northern and Southern whites who varied from con-

ventional and indifferent officeholders to demagogues, thieves, and scoundrels.

The next step would have been, under law and order, gradually to have replaced the wrong leaders by a better and better sort. This the Negroes and many whites sought to do from 1870 to 1876. But they failed because the military dictatorship behind labor did not function successfully in the face of the Ku Klux Klan and especially because the appeal of property in the South got the ear of property in the North.

After the war, industry in the North found itself with a vast organization for production, new supplies of raw material, a growing transportation system on land and water, and a new technical knowledge of processes. All this, with the exclusion of foreign competition through a system of import taxes, and a vast immigration of laborers, tremendously stimulated the production of goods and available services. But to whom were the new goods and the increased services to belong, and in whose hands would lie the power which that ownership gave?

An almost unprecedented scramble for this new power, new wealth and new income ensued. It broke down old standards of wealth distribution, old standards of thrift and honesty. It led to the anarchy of thieves, grafters, and highwaymen. It threatened the orderly processes of production as well as government and morals. The governments, federal, state and local, had paid three-fifths of the cost of the railroads and handed them over to individuals and corporations to use for their profit. An empire of rich land, larger than France, Belgium and Holland together, had been snatched from the hands of prospective peasant farmers and given to investors and land speculators. All of the national treasure of coal, oil, copper, gold and iron had been given away for a song to be made the monopolized basis of private fortunes with perpetual power to tax labor for the right to live and work. Speculation rose and flourished on the hard foundation of this largess.

Senator George Hoar said: "When the greatest railroad of the world, binding together the continent and uniting the two great seas which wash our shores, was finished, I have seen our national triumph and exaltation turned to bitterness and shame by the unanimous reports of three committees of Congress that every step of that mighty enterprise had been taken in fraud."

William N. Tweed became New York State Senator in 1868 and his candidates for Governor and Mayor were swept into office that year. Tweed became director in numbers of great corporations and regularly bribed the legislature; graft crept into all city business. He and his partners stole something like \$75,000,000. Public opinion was silenced; real estate owners, merchants and the propertied class were

afraid to complain lest they be highly assessed and taxed. Offices were sold and men nominated for what they could pay. Directors of corporations plotted and nominated judges; men were sent to the United States Senate because they were lawyers for railroads, mining companies and banks; Congressional leaders were on the pay rolls of corporations. Great lawyers hired their services to rascals who were stealing, and such persons included distinguished names like David Dudley Field, who was nearly expelled from the Bar Association because of his identification with Fisk and Gould at a salary of \$125,000. Editors of publications received stocks and bonds and railroad passes for publicity. Appointment to cadetships at West Point was on sale and federal offices given in return for contributions to campaign funds. The whole civil service became filled with men who were incompetent and used to paying political debts. It was common for members of Congress to take stocks and bonds in railroad and other companies when they were in position to favor these companies by voting for certain laws. A Western governor was impeached for embezzlement. The President of the United States and his family received gifts and loans from financiers.

Consolidation of railway systems began with fighting, stealing and cheating. The New York Central was financed; the Erie went through an extraordinary series of manipulations in which millions were spent; judges were bought and members of the legislature were bribed. The new method of stock-watering came into use by which actual invested capital was doubled and trebled in face value by issuing stock, and the public was compelled to pay fabulous interest on fictitious investments.

“When the annals of this Republic show the disgrace and censure of a Vice-President; a late speaker of the House of Representatives marketing his rulings as a presiding officer; three Senators profiting secretly by their votes as lawmakers; five chairmen of the leading committees of the late House of Representatives exposed in jobbery; a late Secretary of the Treasury forcing balances in the public accounts; a late Attorney-General misappropriating public funds; a Secretary of the Navy enriched or enriching friends by percentages levied off the profits of contracts with his departments; an Ambassador to England censured in a dishonorable speculation; the President’s private secretary barely escaping conviction upon trial for guilty complicity in frauds upon the revenue; a Secretary of War impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors—the demonstration is complete.”<sup>1</sup> All this was not simply the corruption of the Republican Party, as some writers insist; it ran across all lines of party and geography; it embraced all sections, classes and races. It was the disgrace of a whole nation.

The slime of this era of theft and corruption, which engulfed the nation, did not pass by the South. Legislators and public officials were bribed. Black men and white men were eager to get rich. In every Southern state white members of the old planting aristocracy were part and parcel of the new thieving and grafting. But the South did not lay the blame of all this on war and poverty, and weak human nature, or on the wretched example of the whole nation. No. After first blaming greedy and vengeful Northerners and then holding up to public execration those Southerners who accepted Negro suffrage, THE SOUTH, FINALLY, WITH ALMOST COMPLETE UNITY, NAMED THE NEGRO AS THE MAIN CAUSE OF SOUTHERN CORRUPTION. THEY SAID, AND REITERATED THIS CHARGE, UNTIL IT BECAME HISTORY: THAT THE CAUSE OF DISHONESTY DURING RECONSTRUCTION WAS THE FACT THAT 4,000,000 DISFRANCHISED BLACK LABORERS, AFTER 250 YEARS OF EXPLOITATION, HAD BEEN GIVEN A LEGAL RIGHT TO HAVE SOME VOICE IN THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT, IN THE KINDS OF GOODS THEY WOULD MAKE AND THE SORT OF WORK THEY WOULD DO, AND IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE WEALTH WHICH THEY CREATED.

Throughout the North, reaction followed, directed mainly at two impossible goals; first, to reestablish old standards of honesty in a new field: property was taking new forms and called for a new morality, not a reestablishment of the old. Secondly, an attempt was made to curb production by breaking down tariff walls, the monopoly of raw materials and the privileges of special laws and exclusive techniques. But this was also difficult if not impossible so long as the rewards of monopoly and privilege were so spectacular and the powers bestowed so tremendous.

Thus the old dictatorship carried on by property interests failed, while at the same time a new super-dictatorship arose. The dictatorship of property, as represented by the wild freebooting from the close of the war to the panic, had proven to many minds that free competition in industry was not going to bring proper control and development.

Far from turning toward any conception of dictatorship of the proletariat, of surrendering power either into the hands of labor or of the trustees of labor, the new plan was to concentrate into a trusteeship of capital a new and far-reaching power which would dominate the government of the United States. This was not a petty bourgeois development, following the overthrow of agrarian feudalism in the South. It was, on the contrary, a new feudalism based on monopoly—but not monopoly of the agricultural possibilities of the land so much as of its wealth in raw material, in copper, iron, oil and coal, particularly monopoly of the transportation of these commodities on new public iron roads privately sequestered, and finally, of the manu-

facture of goods by new machines and privileged technique. This new feudalism was destined to crush the small capitalist as ruthlessly as it controlled labor, and even before the panic of 1873, it was beginning to consolidate its power.

The copper of Michigan, the coal, steel and oil of Pennsylvania, came under control, and at the same time the bankers and financiers began to bend the manufacturers and the railroads to their will by their monopoly of investment capital and direction of its distribution which they secured by guaranteeing income to small investors.

Great corporations, through their control of new capital, began to establish a super-government. On the one hand, they crushed the robber-barons, the thieves and the grafters, and thus appeased those of the old school who demanded the old standards of personal honesty. Secondly, they made treaty with the petty bourgeoisie by guarantying them reasonable and certain income from their investments, while they gradually deprived them of real control in industry. And finally, they made treaty with labor by dealing with it as a powerful, determined unit and dividing it up into skilled union labor, with which the new industry shared profit in the shape of a higher wage and other privileges, and a great reservoir of common and foreign labor which it kept at work at low wages with the threat of starvation and with police control.

This control of super-capital and big business was being developed during the ten years of Southern Reconstruction and was dependent and consequent upon the failure of democracy in the South, just as it fattened upon the perversion of democracy in the North. And when once the control of industry by big business was certain through consolidation and manipulation that included both North and South, big business shamelessly deserted, not only the Negro, but the cause of democracy; not only in the South, but in the North.

To the leaders of the Republican revolt of 1872, big business offered law and order, greater efficiency of the "business man in politics" and security of salaries and investment. To the insurgent West, it offered combinations which would give lower railway rates, wider and better markets and rising land values. To the South, it offered the withdrawal of the national army and the restoration of political control to property. Before this dominant power the meaning of party designations faded. When the old Democratic party secured a majority in Congress in 1874, the majority sat under the dictatorship of big business. When the Republicans were seated in 1876, the Empire of Industry was completed.

To the student of government who fastens his attention chiefly on politics, the years 1866 to 1876 were years when the power of the na-

tional government remained exclusively democratic, with ultimate control in the hands of the mass of citizens who had the right to vote. But the student who realizes that human activity is chiefly exercised in earning a living and, thus, particularly in the present industrial age, the actions of groups and governments have to do mainly with income—this student will see that the Civil War brought anarchy in the basic economic activities which were gradually hammered and forced into a new and vast monarchy of tremendous power and almost miraculous accomplishment.

Forms of democratic government went on but they were almost fantastic in their travesty on real popular control. Industrial freebooters and bandits, now as lone and picturesque masked highwayman, now hunting in packs and mercenary armies, gripped and guided the efforts of a vast nation to get rich after the indiscriminate murder and destruction of four years' war. All this led to disaster which threatened the industrial machine. Those who still believed in democracy came to the rescue and saw salvation, in the North as in the South, in universal suffrage.

In the South universal suffrage could not function without personal freedom, land and education, and until these institutions were real and effective, only a benevolent dictatorship in the ultimate interests of labor, black and white, could establish democracy. In the North, democracy ceased to function because of corruption and bribery, the open buying of elections, low and selfish ideals, and officials chosen to misgovern in the interest of industrial freebooters. The party of democracy saw salvation in increased freedom of industrial competition through the uprooting of tariff-nurtured monopoly and civil service reform which would replace knavery and selfishness by character and ideal in public office; then, with an electorate of growing intelligence, democracy would truly function.

But the electorate, despite schools and churches, was not intelligent; it was provincial and bigoted, thinned by poverty-stricken and ignorant peasant laborers from abroad, and impregnated with the idea that individual wealth spelled national prosperity and particularly with the American assumption of equal economic opportunity for all, which persisted in the face of facts. Only a vast and single-eyed dictatorship of the nation could guide us up from murder in the South and robbery and cheating in the North into a nation whose infinite resources would be developed in the interest of the mass of the nation—that is, of the laboring poor.

Dictatorship came, and it came to guide the industrial development of the nation by an assumption of irresponsible monarchical power such as enthroned the Caesars, by methods of efficiency of accomplish-

ment and control never surpassed among so many millions of men.

But the object of this new American industrial empire, so far as that object was conscious and normative, was not national well-being, but the individual gain of the associated and corporate monarchs through the power of vast profit on enormous capital investment; through the efficiency of an industrial machine that bought the highest managerial and engineering talent and used the latest and most effective methods and machines in a field of unequaled raw material and endless market demand. That this machine might use the profit for the general weal was possible and in cases true. But the uplift and well-being of the mass of men, of the cohorts of common labor, was not its ideal or excuse. Profit, income, uncontrolled power in *My Business for My Property and for Me*—this was the aim and method of the new monarchical dictatorship that displaced democracy in the United States in 1876.

Part and parcel of this system was the emancipated South. Property control especially of land and labor had always dominated politics in the South, and after the war, it set itself to put labor to work at a wage approximating as nearly as possible slavery conditions, in order to restore capital lost in the war. On the other hand, labor was in open revolt by army desertions, by the general strike and arming of black labor, by government employment through the army and the Freedmen's Bureau; but its revolt could only be shown by refusal to work under the old conditions, and it had neither permanent organization nor savings to sustain it in such a fight.

Into this situation, Northern capital projected itself through the agency of the so-called carpetbagger. The carpetbagger tried to stimulate production on the Northern model. He offered the laborer higher wages and yielded him political power. He tried to establish wide systems of transportation and to exploit new raw materials. His efforts involved the same overthrow of old standards of honesty and integrity prevalent in the North, and this was emphasized in the South by the post-war bitterness and war losses of capital. The orgy of graft, dishonesty and theft, North and South, was of the same pattern and involved the same sorts of people: those scrambling to share in the distribution of new goods and services which the new industry in the North and the restoration of the old agriculture in the South poured out, and those trying to get legal titles to the new forms of property and income which were arising.

The South, however, had two peculiar elements: a capitalist class deprived of most of its capital except land; and a new class of free black labor with the right to vote. Into the hands of this body of labor, the North had been compelled by the intransigence of the planters



themselves to place a tremendous dictatorship, and this dictatorship of labor was gradually being set to change the whole pattern of distribution of wealth. But Southern labor was thinking in terms of land and crops and the old forms of wealth, and was but dimly conscious of the new industry and the new wealth.

The landholder, therefore, in the South, was caught in a curious vise: impoverished by the war, he found labor in control of the remaining parts of his wealth and determined to distribute it for the uplift of the mass of men. He found carpetbaggers encouraging this by yielding to the political power of laborers, and manipulating that power so as to put into the hands of carpetbaggers the new wealth arising from corporations, railroads, and industries. He found the carpetbagger trying to raise the capital necessary for new investment through spending money borrowed by the state, and thus increasing the taxation on him which already new social legislation on behalf of the laborers had increased. The result was that a scramble ensued in the South as mad as that in the North, but different, more fundamental, more primitive.

It had been insistently and firmly believed by the best thought of the South: (1) that the Negro could not work as a free laborer; (2) that the Negro could not really be educated, being congenitally inferior; (3) that if political power were given to Negroes it would result virtually in the overthrow of civilization.

Now, it is quite clear that during the period we are studying, the results failed to prove these assumptions. First of all, the Negro did work as a free laborer. Slowly but certainly the tremendous losses brought on by the Civil War were restored, and restoration, as compared with other great wars, was comparatively rapid. By 1870, the Cotton Kingdom was reestablished, and by 1875, the South knew that with cheap labor and freedom from government control, it was possible for individuals to reap large profit in the old agriculture and in new industry.

The restoration of Southern industry varied according to crops and conditions. The cotton crop, for instance, which was 2,469,093 in 1850 and leaped to the high mark of 5,387,052 in 1860, dropped to 3,011,996 in 1870, but had surpassed by 1880 the high mark of 1860 by reaching 5,755,359 bales and then went on to ten, twelve and fourteen million bales. The sugar production did not recover as quickly, but its decline began before the war. There were 247 million pounds raised in 1850, 230 million in 1860, and only 87 million in 1870; but by 1880, it had reached 178 million and from then kept on its path of recovery. Tobacco was at 434 million pounds in 1860 and 472 million pounds in 1880. The production of corn had recovered by 1880 and the average value of live stock on farms had very nearly recovered by 1870.

The production of wool in the South did not greatly decline and had rapidly recovered by 1880. Rice continued a decline begun before the war from 215 million pounds in 1850 to 178 million in 1860, 73 million in 1870, and up to 110 million in 1880.

It is true that after the war a larger and larger proportion of white laborers was in part responsible for the increased crops. But this simply proved that emancipating one class of laborers emancipated all and was to the credit of abolition. Nevertheless, the free black laborer was the main constituent labor force in the South and as such, largely responsible for results.

The land holdings in the South decreased, showing a tendency toward peasant proprietorship. The average acreage of 335 acres in 1860 fell to 214 acres in 1870 and 153 acres in 1880. The increase in the value of machinery and implements per acre, while not as great, showed gradual progress.

The average value of farm land did not recover from its high speculative value of 1860 until thirty years later; but on the other hand, its decrease in value, 1860-1870, was not large. The land, for instance, in 1870 in the South, was worth more in average value per acre, including improvements and live stock, than in 1850.

The testimony of unprejudiced visitors as to the work of the Negro as a free laborer during these days is practically unanimous. Nordhoff said in 1875: "The Negro in the main is industrious; free labor is an undoubted success in the South. . . . The Negro works; he raises cotton and corn, sugar and rice, and it is infinitely to his credit that he continues to do so, and according to universal testimony, works more steadfastly and effectively this year than ever before since 1865, in spite of the political hurly-burly in which he has lived for the last ten years."<sup>2</sup>

Somers said: "The testimony generally borne of the Negro is that they work readily when regularly paid. Wherever I have consulted an effective employer, whether in the manufacturing works of Richmond or on the farms and plantations, such is the opinion, with little variation, that has been given.

"The testimony borne of the Negroes by candid and substantial people is that, while they do not afford the supply of steady labor necessary, and there is room for more of them, or of more efficient laborers, they are doing much better than was expected before emancipation.

"That the Negroes are improving, and many of them rising under freedom into a very comfortable and civilized condition, is not only admitted in all the upper circles of society, but would strike even a transient wayfarer like myself in the great number of decent colored

men of the laboring class and of happy colored families that one meets." <sup>3</sup>

Manufactures began to develop in the South. The manufacture of pig iron assumed importance in Alabama in 1874 and the output arose from \$64,000 to \$1,405,000 in 1875. The manufacture of cotton goods increased in North and South Carolina. The number of mills in South Carolina was 270 in 1860 and 720 in 1880.

The railroad mileage southeast of the Mississippi was 8,838 miles in 1860 and 11,501 in 1870. West of the Mississippi the growth was even larger. In every Southern state, 1860-1866, the railroad mileage increased, sometimes only slightly, as from 973 to 1,007 in South Carolina and from 1,420 to 1,502 in Georgia; but all these figures include the rebuilding of railroads destroyed during the war. White labor was of increased importance in these lines, but colored labor was never negligible.

With regard to education, the testimony is equally clear. Grant that the Negro began as almost totally illiterate, the increase in schools and education, largely by his own initiative, is one of the most extraordinary developments of modern days and will be treated more in detail in the next chapter. It is enough to say here that the question as to whether American Negroes were capable of education was no longer a debatable one in 1876. The whole problem was simply one of opportunity.

The third problem, of the Negro's use of his political power, was not so clear because it involved matters of norm and ideal. Whose civilization, whose culture, whose comfort, was involved? The Negro certainly did not attempt to "overthrow civilization" in the sense of attacking the fundamental morals and habits of modern life. Sir George Campbell said in 1879: "During the last dozen years the Negroes have had a very large share of political education. Considering the troubles and the ups and downs that they have gone through, it is, I think, wonderful how beneficial this education has been to them, and how much these people, so lately in the most debased condition of slavery, have acquired independent ideas; and, far from lapsing into anarchy, have become citizens with ideas of law and property and order. The white serfs of European countries took hundreds of years to rise to the level which these Negroes adopted in America." <sup>4</sup>

"Before I went South I certainly expected to find that the Southern States had been for a time a sort of Pandemonium in which a white man could hardly live. Yet it certainly was not so. . . . When I went to South Carolina I thought there at least I must find great social disturbances; and in South Carolina I went to the county of Beaufort, the blackest part of the State in point of population, and that in which

black rule has been most complete and has lasted longest. It has the reputation of being a sort of black paradise, and *per contra*, I rather expected a sort of white hell. There I thought I should see a rough Liberia, where blacks ruled roughshod over the whites. To my great surprise I found exactly the contrary. At no place that I have seen are the relations of the two races better and more peaceable. . . . All the best houses are in the occupation of the whites—almost all the trades, professions, and leading occupations. White girls go about freely and pleasantly as if no black had ever been in power. Here the blacks still control the elections and send their representatives to the State Assembly. . . .

“In Mississippi alone did I find politicians silly enough to talk about the superiority of the Caucasian race, and the natural incapacity of the Negro for self-government; but even there the best Republicans told that these noisy Democratic demagogues were but a small, though aggressive and not unpowerful, minority.”<sup>5</sup>

Sir George Campbell, however, makes one interesting observation: “Not only is the Negro labor excellent, but also there is among the Southern proprietors and leading men accustomed to black labor, and not so used to whites, a disposition greatly to rely on black labor as a conservative element, securing them against the dangers and difficulties which they see arising from the combinations and violence of the white laborers in some of the Northern States; and on this ground the blacks are cherished and protected by Democratic statesmen, who now hold power in the South.”<sup>6</sup>

If we include in “morals” and “culture” the prevailing manner of holding and distributing wealth, then the sudden enfranchisement of a mass of laborers threatens fundamental and far-reaching change, no matter what their race or color. It was this that the South feared and had reason to fear. Economic revolution did not come immediately. Negro labor was ignorant, docile and conservative. But it was beginning to learn; it was beginning to assert itself. It was beginning to have radical thoughts as to the distribution of land and wealth.

If now it is true that the enfranchisement of black labor in the South did not crush industry but gave the South a working class capable of being trained in intelligence and did not disturb the essential bases of civilization, what is the indictment—the bitter and deep-seated indictment brought against the Negro voter?

The indictment rests upon this unquestioned fact: Property in the South had its value cut in half during the Civil War. This meant that property was compelled, after the war, not simply to attempt to restore its losses, but to bear a burden of social expense largely because of the widened duties of the state and the greatly increased citizenship

due to emancipation and enfranchisement. The bitter conflict, therefore, which followed the enfranchisement of Negro labor and of white labor, came because impoverished property holders were compelled by the votes of poor men to bear a burden which meant practically confiscation of much of that property which remained to them and were denied opportunity to exploit labor in the future as they had in the past. It was not, then, that the post-bellum South could not produce wealth with free labor; it was the far more fundamental question as to whom this wealth was to belong to and for whose interests laborers were to work. There is no doubt that the object of the black and white labor vote was gradually conceived as one which involved confiscating the property of the rich. This was a program that could not be openly avowed by intelligent men in 1870, but it has become one of the acknowledged functions of the state in 1933; and it is quite possible that long before the end of the twentieth century, the deliberate distribution of property and income by the state on an equitable and logical basis will be looked upon as the state's prime function.

Put all these facts together and one gets a clear idea, not of the failure of Negro suffrage in the South, but of the basic difficulty which it encountered; and the results are quite consistent with a clear judgment that Negro and white labor ought to have had the right to vote; that they ought to have tried to change the basis of property and redistribute income; and that their failure to do this was a disaster to democratic government in the United States.

To men like Charles Sumner, the future of democracy in America depended on bringing the Southern revolution to a successful close by accomplishing two things: the making of the black freedmen really free, and the sweeping away of the animosities due to the war.

What liberalism did not understand was that such a revolution was economic and involved force. Those who against the public weal have power cannot be expected to yield save to superior power. The North used its power in the Civil War to break the political power of the slave barons. During and after the war, it united its force with that of the workers to uproot the still vast economic power of the planters. It hoped with the high humanitarianism of Charles Sumner eventually to induce the planter to surrender his economic power peacefully, in return for complete political amnesty, and hoped that the North would use its federal police power to maintain the black man's civil rights in return for peaceful industry and increasing intelligence. But Charles Sumner did not realize, and that other Charles—Karl Marx—had not yet published *Das Kapital* to prove to men that economic power underlies politics. Abolitionists failed to see that after the momentary exaltation of war, the nation did not want Ne-

goes to have civil rights and that national industry could get its way easier by alliance with Southern landholders than by sustaining Southern workers. They did not know that when they let the dictatorship of labor be overthrown in the South they surrendered the hope of democracy in America for all men.

Doggedly to the end of his days and with his dying breath Charles Sumner strove for his peaceful revolutionary ideal. As early as 1870, he had tried to have the names of Civil War battles taken from the army register and the regimental colors. He introduced the matter in Congress again in 1872. He was unsuccessful, and not only that, he was publicly censured by his own Massachusetts legislature.

When Congress met in the fall of 1871, Sumner made his last effort to carry his civil rights bill. The first civil rights bill of April 9, 1866, after varied experience in the courts, was superseded by the first section of the Fourteenth Amendment. The present bill was aimed at the North as well as the South, and Sumner proposed to secure equality of civil rights to colored people and prohibit discrimination against them in railroads, theaters, hotels, schools, cemeteries and churches and in serving as jurors. He presented a series of petitions favoring the bill and tried to make action on the bill a condition of adjournment. Finally, he sought to make the pressure for reconciliation with the South a part of his movement for civil rights. He therefore moved his civil rights bill as an amendment to the amnesty bill which had been passed in the House.

"He thought the two measures should be associated in history—the one an act of justice, and the other an act of generosity; and it was his opinion, not however, justified by the result, that the desire for amnesty was so strong that when once his civil rights measure had been incorporated in it, the bill thus amended would pass by a two-thirds vote. His amendment was lost in committee of the whole by a single vote; and moving it again after the bill was reported, he said: 'I entreat Senators over the way [the Democrats] who really seek reconciliation now to unite in this honest effort. Give me an opportunity to vote for this bill. I long to do it. Gladly would I reach out the olive branch; but I know no way in which that can be done unless you begin by justice to the colored race.'"<sup>7</sup>

Colored people held meetings to popularize the measure but there was no wide interest in it. After the Christmas recess, Sumner made his final appeal: "I make this appeal also for the sake of peace, so that at last there shall be an end of slavery, and the rights of the citizen shall be everywhere under the equal safeguard of national law. There is beauty in art, in literature, in science, and in every triumph of intelligence, all of which I covet for my country; but there is a

higher beauty still—in relieving the poor, in elevating the downtrodden, and being a succor to the oppressed. There is true grandeur in an example of justice, making the rights of all the same as our own, and beating down prejudice, like Satan, under our feet. Humbly do I pray that the republic may not lose this great prize, or postpone its enjoyment.”<sup>8</sup>

He read documents, letters and newspaper extracts to show the necessity for the bill; the galleries were filled with colored people. But industry and the new finance looked askance. Their attitude toward the abolition-democracy was plainly expressed in 1876 by Henry Cooke, brother of Jay Cooke, the great banker:

“You know how I have felt for a long time in regard to the course of the ultra-infidelic radicals like Wade, Sumner, Stevens et id omne genus. They were dragging the Republican Party into all sorts of isms and extremes. Their policy was one of bitterness, hate and wild agrarianism. These reckless demagogues have had their day and the time has come for wiser counsel. With Wade uttering agrarian doctrines in Kansas and fanning the flames of vulgar prejudices, trying to array labor against capital and pandering to the basest passions; with Butler urging wholesale conscription throughout the South and wholesale repudiation throughout the North . . . ; with Stevens . . . advocating the idea of a flood of irredeemable paper money . . . ; with Pomeroy and Wade and Sprague and a host of others clamoring for the unsexing of woman, [the load] was too heavy for any party to carry.”<sup>9</sup>

Even Schurz did not sympathize with Sumner and said little during the debate. Sumner pushed the bill throughout the session, but despite his efforts the bill failed. Another bill came from the House three months later but was lost by a Senate vote. Just after that, Sumner again sought to attach his civil rights proviso to the amnesty bill. He lost in the committee of the whole by a single vote.

He placed the civil rights bill on the calendar with the amnesty bill but his strategy was finally defeated by a ruse, and the amnesty bill passed without the civil rights bill.

On the first day of the new Congress, December, 1873, Sumner pressed two measures: a national civil rights bill and a bill for equal rights in the schools of the District of Columbia. He traced, in debate, the history of the civil rights bill from 1870 to 1874, when he made his last appeal. The bill was not reported until after his death and then Senator Frelinghuysen said:

“Would that the author of the measure were here to present and defend it! To our view it would have been becoming that he, who was in the forum the leader of the grandest victory of the nineteenth century in the western hemisphere—the victory of freedom over slav-

ery—should have completed the work he so efficiently aided. But it was otherwise decreed.”<sup>10</sup>

It passed the Senate but was not voted on in the House. In February, 1875, a new House bill omitting schools and cemeteries became a law. In 1883, the Supreme Court pronounced this law unconstitutional.

Sumner passed before the effect of the new alignment of big business on the Southern situation was clear. He was taken ill in March, 1874; at his death-bed stood three Negroes: Frederick Douglass, George T. Downing and Sumner Wormley, together with distinguished senators and officials. Three times he said hoarsely and in a tone of earnest entreaty: “You must take care of the civil rights bill—my bill, the civil rights bill—don’t let it fail!” This was his last public message.<sup>11</sup>

Frederick Douglass led his funeral procession and colored soldiers guarded his body at the State House in Boston. So died, as Sherman said, “the foremost man in the civil service of the United States.” William Lloyd Garrison had written: “Your blood staining the floor of the Senate Chamber, was the blood of a martyr; now it is given to you to wear a martyr’s crown! This is no human, but divine triumph; this is not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.”<sup>12</sup>

The dream of democracy died hard. The final ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment brought a special message from President Grant, March 30, 1870, which has a curious historical significance:

“Such notification is unusual, but I deem a departure from the usual custom justifiable. A measure which makes at once four millions of people voters, who were heretofore declared by the highest tribunal in the land not citizens of the United States, nor eligible to become so (with the assertion that, ‘at the time of the Declaration of Independence, the opinion was fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race, regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics, that black men had no rights which the white man was bound to respect’), is indeed a measure of grander importance than any other one act of the kind from the foundation of our free government to the present day.”

Blaine, who preëminently represented that Northern plutocracy which was throttling democracy, still spoke with the voice of wisdom: “The Fifteenth Article of Amendment to the Constitution, now pending and about to be adopted, would confirm the colored man’s elective franchise and add the right of holding office. One of the Senators just admitted from Mississippi in advance of the ratification on the amendment [Hiram R. Revels] was a colored man of respectable character and intelligence. He sat in the seat which Jefferson Davis had wrathfully deserted to take up arms against the Republic and become the ruler of a hostile government. Poetic justice, historic revenge, personal



retribution were all complete when Mr. Revels' name was called on the roll of the Senate. But his presence, while demonstrating the extent to which the assertion of equal rights had been carried, served to increase and stimulate the Southern resistance to the whole system of Republican reconstruction. Those who anxiously had studied the political situation in the South could see how unequal the contest would be and how soon the men who organized the rebellion would again wield the political power of their states—wield it lawfully if they could, but unlawfully if they must; peaceably if that would suffice, but violently if violence in their judgment became necessary.”<sup>13</sup>

The Reform movement in the North which Sumner joined was abortive. First it split the combination of industry and abolition-democracy which had won the Civil War and reconstructed the South, and it threatened to put the Copperhead-Democratic party back in power. This latter party had not only supported the South against the East in the Civil War, but had fought the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, and now was seeking to unite with the radical West.

The abolition-democracy itself was largely based on property, believed in capital and formed in effect a powerful petty bourgeoisie. It believed in democratic government but only under a general dictatorship of property. Most of the leaders of the revolt of 1872 in the North lived on investments or received salaries from investments. They did not believe in a democratic movement which would confiscate and redistribute property, except possibly in an extreme case like slavery. But even here, while they seized stolen property in human bodies, they never could bring themselves to countenance the redistribution of property in land and tools, which rested in fact on no less defensible basis. Not only, then, did the property complaint of the South fall on their sensitive and responsive ears, they were the more aroused at familiar complaints of theft and corruption in public office because this was precisely the thing they were fighting in the North. They found themselves in dilemma; they could not join the ex-slave Democratic party and repudiate their own investments in government bonds and industry. They could not maintain further political alliance with the industrial and political order eventually responsible for the *Crédit Mobilier*, the Whiskey Ring and the gold corner. Their logical path lay toward organized labor, leading to a combination of Eastern intellectuals, Western peasant farmers and the great army of labor. But the panic of 1873 altered the face of society; the era of business depression which followed helped this consolidation of industrial control in a few hands.

The panic of 1873 changed, too, the history of the South. Already, in 1870, the Republicans had lost their two-thirds majority in Congress, and in 1874, for the first time in twenty years, the Democrats had a majority in the House of Representatives. They looked forward confidently to controlling the nation in 1876.

Even in the face of catastrophe, the North had moral courage and the spirit of faith among large numbers of its best citizens. The history of abolition is full proof of this. But Sacrifice must build on Faith. A saving nucleus of the North believed in the Negro from experience and study—but this same class had lost faith in democratic methods in the North. The experience with the Irish in Massachusetts and New York, misgovernment, crime and dirt in the great industrial cities, were attributed to the laboring masses. How could they rightly exercise the power to rule? New England lost faith in democracy and cherished something like a race hatred for the Irish. Her Puritan past kept her just—she gave them schools, she refused discriminatory laws in religion; but she doubted; and even if she knew the end was mass rule, it was a long, long, bitter way, and a crisis was already here.

The system of capital and private profit smashed in 1873, and all property and investment were in dire danger; labor was at the edge of starvation, and democracy and universal suffrage could function only through revolution. But a new savior appeared. Already Industry had been undergoing a process of integration, alliance and imperial domination. Instead of lawless freebooters, there were appearing a few strong purposeful kings with vast power of finance and technique in their hands. They promised law and order; they promised safe income on a sure property base with neither speculative bubbles nor criminal aggression. In other words a new Empire of Industry was offering to displace capitalistic anarchy and form a dictatorship of capital to guide and repress universal suffrage.

The conquest of the new industry in the ranks of labor was quick and certain. The growth of the National Labor Union into a labor party along Marxist lines, which had been developing from the close of the war, began to become petty bourgeois. It began to fight for capital and interest and the right of the upper class of labor to share in the exploitation of common labor. The Negro as a common laborer belonged, therefore, not in but beneath the white American labor movement.

Craft and race unions spread. The better-paid skilled and intelligent American labor formed itself into closed guilds and, in combination with capitalist guild-masters, extorted fair wages which could

be raised by negotiation. Foreign-born and Negro labor was left outside and tried several times, but in vain, to start a class-conscious labor movement. Skilled labor proceeded to share in the exploitation of the reservoir of low-paid common labor, and no strikes nor violence by over-crowded competing beggars for subsistence could move the industrial machine so long as engineers and skilled labor kept it going. To be sure the skilled labor guilds and capital had bitter disputes and even open fighting, but they fought to share profit from labor and not to eliminate profit.

Big business with high-salaried engineers, well-paid skilled labor and a mass of voiceless common labor then offered terms to the nation. Profiteering, graft and theft had run wild in the North under the extreme individualism of post-war industry. Northern business had protected its monopoly by high tariff, profit from investments in railroad and government bonds, and new ventures. It had held its political power by the Fourteenth Amendment and Reconstruction Acts. But its dominion and advance were threatened by loss of all moral standards, cut-throat competition; political revolt threatened, which might result in lowering the tariff, attacking the banking and money system, and strengthening government control of business freedom. One way to forestall this was to effect inner control and coördination of business by centralizing the control of the power of capital, regaining the confidence of investors by sure and steady income, and driving from power the irregular banditti and highwaymen of industry.

Fortunately for them, the panic of 1873 checked the reform movement of 1872, and delivered the country into the power of the great financiers without seriously breaking the power of capital. Reform became liberal, attacking theft and graft, and calling for freedom of the South from military control. Thus, the radical revolution of controlling capital and forcing recognition of the rights of labor by government control was lost sight of. Labor war ensued in the North, and serfdom was established in the South.

But what of the South in this development? The planters had expected Negro governments to fall in confusion at the very beginning of the attempted dictatorship of labor. This did not happen.

Writing in the *American Historical Review* I said, "In legislation covering property, the wider functions of the state, the punishment of crime and the like, it is sufficient to say that the laws on these points established by Reconstruction legislatures were not only different from and even revolutionary to the laws in the older South, but they were so wise and so well suited to the needs of the new South that in spite of a retrogressive movement following the overthrow of the Negro

governments the mass of this legislation, with elaboration and development, still stands on the statute books of the South.

“Reconstruction constitutions, practically unaltered, were kept in

Florida .....	1868-1885.....	17 years
Virginia .....	1870-1902.....	32 years
South Carolina.....	1868-1895.....	27 years
Mississippi .....	1868-1890.....	22 years

“Even in the case of states like Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Louisiana, which adopted new constitutions to signify the overthrow of Negro rule, the new constitutions are nearer the model of the Reconstruction document than they are to the previous constitutions. They differ from the Negro constitutions in minor details but very little in general conception.

“Besides this there stands on the statute books of the South today law after law passed between 1868 and 1876, and which has been found wise, effective, and worthy of preservation.”<sup>14</sup>

This compels us to begin with the fact that the basic difficulty with the South after the war was poverty, a depth of grinding poverty not easily conceivable even in these days of depression. In the first place, it goes without saying that the emancipated slave was poor; he was desperately poor, and poor in a way that we do not easily grasp today. He was, and always had been, without money and, except for his work in the Union Army, had no way of getting hold of cash. He could ordinarily get no labor contract that involved regular or certain payments of cash. He was without clothes and without a home. He had no way to rent or build a home. Food had to be begged or stolen, unless in some way he could get hold of land or go to work; and hired labor would, if he did not exercise the greatest care and get honest advice, result in something that was practically slavery. These conditions, of course, while true for the mass of freedmen, did not apply to workers in the army, artisans or laborers in cities and others who had exceptional chances to obtain work for cash at something like decent rates.

The white worker, in the mass, was equally poverty-stricken, except that he did usually hold, as a squatter, some land, and Emancipation gave him better chance to hire his labor in cities. Finally, there were the impoverished planters, merchants and professional men who came out of the war with greatly reduced income and resources. In this setting of poverty, as nearly universal as one could have under modern conditions, must come the effort to set up a new state, and it is clear to the unprejudiced observer that no matter who had conducted that state, if there had been no Negro or other alien elements in the land,

if there had been no universal suffrage, there would have been bitter dissatisfaction, widespread injustice, and vast transfer of wealth involving stealing and corruption.

The freedman sought eagerly, after the war, property and income. He believed that his condition was not his own fault but due to Theft on a mighty scale. He demanded reimbursement and redress sufficient for a decent livelihood. This came partially from the Federal government, from religious bodies; and in one lamentable case, the new industry reached forth a careless helping hand, expecting profit from the venture. No more extraordinary and disreputable venture ever disgraced American business disguised as philanthropy than the Freedmen's Bank—a chapter in American history which most Americans naturally prefer to forget.

The organization of the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company has been called "one of the few sensible attempts made at the close of the Civil War to assist the ex-slave."<sup>15</sup> During the Civil War, and when colored soldiers became numerous, the matter of their savings became of importance and military savings banks were created at Norfolk, Virginia, and at Beaufort, South Carolina. At the same time there were various sums of money held by the Departments of Negro Affairs in the different army headquarters of the South.

General Banks established a bank for Negroes at New Orleans in 1864, and General Butler and General Saxton in South Carolina established banks. Several efforts in 1865 were made to organize permanent savings banks; an army paymaster, A. M. Sperry, hoped to absorb the banks at Norfolk, Virginia, and Beaufort, South Carolina; and in New Orleans, Negroes planned a labor bank. In January, 1865, Alvord arranged a meeting of a number of interested persons and business men in New York, and the result was a bill to incorporate the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company introduced into the Senate, February 13, 1865. Another bill was introduced into the House and the name of Chief Justice Chase added as a trustee. These bills were combined and passed and Lincoln signed the law, March 3. He said, "This bank is just what the freedmen need," at the same time that he signed the bill creating the Freedmen's Bureau.

The incorporators and trustees of the bank included Peter Cooper, William Cullen Bryant, A. A. Lowe, Garrett Smith, John Jay, S. G. Howe, George L. Stearns, Edward Atkinson and Chief Justice Chase. The business was confined to the Negro race and at least two-thirds of the deposits must be invested in United States securities. For a while, the success of the Freedmen's Savings Bank was phenomenal and the deposits extraordinarily encouraging. They came from day laborers, house servants, farmers, mechanics and wash-

erwomen, and the proverbial thriftlessness of the Negro seemed about to be disproven. North as well as South, the whites were agreeably surprised.

Gradually difficulties developed; on the one hand, in the North, the bank was regarded as a philanthropy and not worth the careful control and oversight of those who had loaned their names to it. The Southern state governments began to oppose the branch banks because they were a sort of national system not under local control and took money away from local communities. The white banks were not disposed to cooperate, and were often unfair, while the white planter regarded the Freedmen's Bank as part of the Freedmen's Bureau and did everything possible to embarrass it and curtail its growth.

Before 1871, there had been errors in the conduct of the bank and disregard of law. Indeed, it is not quite clear whether in the original charter the bank had any right to establish branches outside the District of Columbia. Soon the speculators of Washington were attracted by the assets of the bank and discovered how they were growing. These assets were, however, amply protected by provisions requiring investment mainly in government bonds. An amendment to the charter was introduced into Congress in 1870 which provided that one-half of the deposits invested in United States bonds might be invested in other notes and bonds secured by real estate mortgages. Immediately the pennies of poor black laborers were replaced by worthless notes. Money was loaned recklessly to the speculators in the District of Columbia. Jay Cooke and Company, the great bankers, borrowed half a million dollars, and this company and the First National Bank of Washington controlled the Freedmen's Bank between 1870 and 1873. Runs were started on the bank and then an effort was made to unload the whole thing on Frederick Douglass as a representative Negro. This was useless and the bank finally closed in June, 1874. The Commission of Three which liquidated the Freedmen's Savings Bank paid depositors 30% and charged for their services \$318,753.

At the date of closing, so far as is known, there was due to depositors \$2,993,790.68 in 61,144 accounts; this was never paid. The assets amounted to \$32,089.35. The rest was represented by personal loans and loans on real estate which were practically uncollectable.

The total business transacted by the Freedmen's Bank was extraordinary, considering that the bulk of its clientele had just emerged from slavery; its total deposits at one time reached \$57,000,000.

Thus, the most promising effort to raise the financial status of the best and thriftiest of Negroes went down in the maelstrom of national corruption. It is difficult to over-estimate the psychological effect of this failure upon Negro thrift.

But after all, the amount of cash handled by the freedman was small and by far the most pressing of his problems as a worker was that of land. This land hunger—this absolutely fundamental and essential thing to any real emancipation of the slaves—was continually pushed by all emancipated Negroes and their representatives in every Southern state. It was met by ridicule, by anger, and by dishonest and insincere efforts to satisfy it apparently.

The Freedmen's Bureau had much Confederate property in its possession. But the seizure of abandoned estates in the South came as a measure to stop war and not as a plan for economic rebirth. Just as the slaves were enticed from the South in order to stop the aid which they could give to rebels, in the same way the land of masters who ran away or were absent aiding the rebellion was seized; and this large body of land was the nucleus of the proposal to furnish forty acres to each emancipated slave family. The scheme was further advanced when Sherman, embarrassed by the number of Negroes who followed him from Atlanta to the sea and gathered around him in Savannah and South Carolina, as a war measure settled them upon the abandoned Sea Islands and the adjacent coast.

Confiscated property was in some cases condemned or sold on order of the Federal courts for unpaid taxes, and the title vested in the United States. Thus the Freedmen's Bureau came into possession of nearly 800,000 acres of farm land with control over it, except the right of sale. This land was in Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee. There was very little in Alabama and Florida and none in Texas. The Bureau intended to divide up this land and allot it to the freedmen and the white refugees, but much of it was tied up with leases, and, after all, despite the large amount, there was never enough to give the freedmen alone an acre apiece.

A million acres among a million farmers meant nothing, and from the beginning there was need of from 25 to 50 million acres more if the Negroes were to be installed as peasant farmers. Against any plan of this sort was the settled determination of the planter South to keep the bulk of Negroes as landless laborers and the deep repugnance on the part of Northerners to confiscating individual property. Even Thaddeus Stevens was not able to budge the majority of Northerners from this attitude. Added to this was the disinclination of the United States to add to its huge debt by undertaking any large and costly social adjustments after the war. To give land to free citizens smacked of "paternalism"; it came directly in opposition to the American assumption that any American could be rich if he wanted to, or at least

well-to-do; and it stubbornly ignored the exceptional position of a freed slave.

Indeed it is a singular commentary on the attitude of the government to remember that the Freedmen's Bureau itself during the first year was financed not by taxation but by the toil of ex-slaves: the total amount of rents collected from lands in the hands of the Bureau, paid mostly by Negroes, amounted to \$400,000, and curiously enough it was this rent that supported the Freedmen's Bureau during the first year!

Surprise and ridicule has often been voiced concerning this demand of Negroes for land. It has been regarded primarily as a method of punishing rebellion. Motives of this sort may have been in the minds of some Northern whites, but so far as the Negroes were concerned, their demand for a reasonable part of the land on which they had worked for a quarter of a millennium was absolutely justified, and to give them anything less than this was an economic farce. On the other hand, to have given each one of the million Negro free families a forty-acre freehold would have made a basis of real democracy in the United States that might easily have transformed the modern world.

The law of June 21, 1860, opened public land in Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas and Florida; but comparatively few of the freedmen could take advantage of this offer. The Bureau gave some assistance in transporting families, but most of the Negroes had neither stock nor farm implements, and the whites in those localities bitterly opposed their settling. Only about 4,000 families out of nearly four million people acquired homes under this act.

The Sherman order gave rise to all sorts of difficulties. The Negroes were given only possessory titles. Then the owners came back and immediately there was trouble. The Negroes protested, "What is the use of giving us freedom if we can't stay where we were raised and own our own house where we were born and our own piece of ground?" It was on May 25, 1865, that Johnson in his Proclamation of Pardon had provided easy means whereby all property could be restored, except the land at Port Royal, which had been sold for taxes. General Howard came to Charleston to make arrangements, and the story is characteristic—"At first," said a witness, "the people hesitated, but soon as the meaning struck them that they must give up their little homes and gardens and work for others, there was a general murmuring of dissatisfaction."<sup>16</sup>

General Howard was called upon to address them, and to cover his own confusion and sympathy he asked them to sing. Immediately an old woman on the outskirts of the meeting began "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." Howard wept.<sup>17</sup>



The colored landholders drew up an illiterate petition to Andrew Johnson, the poor white, expressing "sad feelings" over his decree, and begging for an acre and a half of land each; but naturally nothing came of it; for President Johnson, forgetting his own pre-war declaration that the "great plantations must be seized, and divided into small farms," declared that this land must be restored to its original owners and this would be done if owners received a presidential pardon. The pardoning power was pushed and the land all over the South rapidly restored. Negroes were dispossessed, the revenue of the Bureau reduced; many schools had to be discontinued. The Bureau became no longer self-supporting and its whole policy was changed.

In December, 1865, the Bureau had 768,590 acres of land; in 1868, there were only 139,644 acres left, and much of this unimproved and unfertile. For a long time there still persisted the idea that the government was going to make a distribution of land. The rumor was that this was to be made January 1, 1865, and for months before that Negroes all over the South declined to make contracts for work and were accordingly accused of laziness and insubordination. The restoration of the lands not only deprived Negroes in various ways of a clear path toward livelihood, but greatly discouraged them and broke their faith in the United States Government.

These disappointments and discouragements did not for a moment stop the individual efforts of exceptional and lucky Negroes to get hold of land, and the cheapness of the land enabled them to make purchases on a considerable scale where they could get hold of a money wage. The land holdings of Negroes increased all over the South. In South Carolina, the gradual subdivision of the land showed that poor people, colored and white, were slowly getting hold of the divided plantations. Some 33,000 plantations were divided among 93,000 small farmers.

Virginia Negroes acquired between 80,000 and 100,000 acres of land during the late sixties and early seventies. There were soon a few prosperous Negro farmers with 400 to 1,000 acres of land and some owners of considerable city property. Georgia Negroes had bought, by 1875, 396,658 acres of land, assessed at \$1,263,902, and added to this they had town and city property assessed at \$1,203,202.

Of Arkansas in 1875, Nordhoff said: "Of the forty thousand Negro voters in the State, it is believed that at least one in twenty owns either a farm, or a house and lot in town. This would give but two thousand such independent landholders—a small number, but yet a beginning, showing that, even amidst the intense and incessant political turmoil

of the last seven years, a part of the colored men have been persistently industrious and economical." <sup>18</sup>

All this was the record of the exceptional and lucky freedmen. After all they owned in 1870 less than one-tenth of the land which they ought to have possessed, and the wages of nine-tenths of the black laborers were low and seldom paid in cash or with regularity. Wesley gives figures showing annual wages in Southern states to have ranged from \$89 to \$150 in 1867 and 1868. <sup>19</sup>

On the other hand this demand for land by government action and the increased disposition to vote public funds for the benefit of the pauperized masses incensed the planters. In every Southern state, the South from 1868 to 1876 stressed more and more the anomaly of letting people who had no property vote away the wealth of the rich. The strongest statement of the case against the black legislature of South Carolina was that they paid almost no taxes upon property, they who for the most part had only had the right to hold property since 1866.

This charge against the poor, frequent as it always is in democratic movements, is not valid. The first attempt of a democracy which includes the previously disfranchised poor is to redistribute wealth and income, and this is exactly what the black South attempted. The theory is that the wealth and the current income of the wealthy ruling class does not belong to them entirely, but is the product of the work and striving of the great millions; and that, therefore, these millions ought to have a voice in its more equitable distribution; and if this is true in modern countries, like France and England and Germany, how much more true was it in the South after the war where the poorest class represented the most extreme case of theft of labor that the world can conceive; namely, chattel slavery?

On the other hand, there is not the slightest doubt but that the South had a right to demand of the nation that the whole of the burden of this readjustment of wealth should not fall upon the planters; guilty as they were of supreme exploitation of labor, their guilt was shared by the rest of the nation, just as the rest of the nation had for centuries shared the profits of the slave system. It would have been fair and just for the cost of emancipating the slaves and giving them land to be equitably shared by the whole of the United States.

Moreover the increased taxation of which the South so bitterly complained was not wholly for social uplift. It took mainly the form of (1) restoration of injured property, (2) restoration of capital investment, lost or injured, as in the case of the railroads, (3) the expense of a new system of public education, (4) the expense of carrying on

a government with enlarged functions. Only the last two directly benefited the black worker.

There had been a destruction and disappearance of invested capital, through war and emancipation, which represented the greater part of the whole invested capital of the South except land. The value of the land decreased enormously because of the disappearance of slave labor and the destruction of a whole industrial system.

Accurate figures are out of the question. A report to the House of Representatives, 42nd Congress, gives these estimates: the total assessed property of the South in 1860, including slaves, was \$4,363,030,347.05; in 1870 it was \$2,141,834,188.02, a loss of \$1,634,105,341 in slaves and \$586,990,218 in other property.<sup>20</sup> The total loss in the South by the war, in property, assets and debts, state and Confederate, has been estimated at \$5,262,303,554.26.

These were the losses of capital; but what of the losses of nine million laborers, represented not so much by positive loss as by negative deprivation and exploitation for centuries?

The nineteenth century assumed that universal suffrage would prevent the state from falling into the power of forces inimical to the masses. It might and did leave power in the hands of property and invested capital, but it left them less chance to oppress unduly the laboring class, in so far as that class was thrifty and intelligent. But suppose labor was not intelligent and had been so long enslaved that shiftlessness became a virtue? It seemed clear that in America and in all leading countries in the latter half of the nineteenth century the dictatorship of wealth and capital would be modified in some degree by reference to the will of the mass of laborers. In this way industrial peace and progress toward high standards of living for the masses would be secured without disturbing the basis of capitalistic production. Thus the guidance and dictatorship of capital for the object of private profit were not to be questioned or overthrown; but it must maintain that ascendancy by controlling the public opinion of the laboring class. This was accomplished and, on the whole, easily accomplished by the power to give and withhold employment from people who were without capital, the power to fix wages within certain wide limits, the power to influence public opinion through the prestige of wealth, news and literature, and the power to dominate legislatures, courts, and offices of administration.

The building and buttressing of the new and more powerful capitalistic imperialism was slow and difficult, and with purposeful leadership, labor could enormously curtail the power of capital and bring nearer a critical time when the dictatorship of capital must yield

to a dictatorship of labor—when general well-being would replace individual profit as the object of industry.

This was not so clear in detail in the middle of the nineteenth century as it is now. There were democrats, like Sumner and Stevens, who sensed the new power which super-capital was beginning to assert over labor and particularly over universal suffrage. Still it seemed to them that the right to vote in the hands of the intelligent mass could dictate the form of any state that it wished; the difficulty was that the mass of labor and particularly black labor was not intelligent. They freely admitted, therefore, that while it would be better to give the right of suffrage only to those Negroes who were intelligent and particularly those who by economic opportunity would amass some little capital, nevertheless they felt that since the South compelled them to choose between universal suffrage and disfranchised landless labor in the control of landholders and capitalists, with increased political power based on the disfranchisement of labor, the right of suffrage even in the hands of the poor and ignorant gave better chance for ultimate economic justice than their disfranchisement.

It was for this reason that they advocated universal suffrage for the emancipated slaves. They were offered no middle ground. There were in the South only spasmodic signs that any powerful body of public opinion was willing to admit the Negro to the right of suffrage, no matter how intelligent he became, or to admit white labor without nullifying its vote by giving to capital the power based on disfranchised blacks; yet without some acceptance of a labor vote the modern state could not endure; and while the cost of introducing this sudden change in the South was great, yet the action of the dominant South left no alternative. It was either universal suffrage or modified slavery, and in either case, increased political power in the nation for the former slave oligarchy.

Moreover, it is certain that unless the right to vote had been given the Negro by Federal law in 1867, he would never have got it in America. There never has been a time since when race propaganda in America offered the slightest chance for colored people to receive American citizenship. There would have been, therefore, perpetuated in the South and in America, a permanently disfranchised mass of laborers; and the dictatorship of capital would, under those circumstances, have been even more firmly implanted than it is today.

Certainly and naturally the slaves were far more ignorant and poverty-stricken than the mass of Northern white laborers. A dictatorship of Federal power was therefore set up in the first Freedmen's Bureau bill, which would have furnished them land and schools and protected their civil and economic rights until they were ready for uni-

versal suffrage or had learned by using it. The bill, as finally passed, left out the provision for land and most of the provisions for education. The Negroes themselves continued to demand land when they were enfranchised by the Reconstruction Bill of 1867; but this evoked shrieks of anger from property in the South and apprehension from property in the North.

There arose in the South an extraordinary situation which few scholars have studied in its economic aspects. First, there was black labor, in the main ignorant and poor, but with some leaders of intelligence, backed in part by the military power of the North; secondly there was white exploitation, which in the South had been based on the ownership of land and labor and which was now widely impoverished, but still left with most of the land, some capital and large social influence. There was in addition to these the mass of impoverished and ignorant white peasants and laborers. To this there were added a number of Northern immigrants with smaller or larger amounts of capital.

It is idle to speculate as to just how this situation could have been avoided. Of course, it would not have arisen if slavery had continued. Moreover, there would have been less evident catastrophe and turmoil immediately if slavery had been continued under another name, in accordance with the efforts of the Southern states under the Johnson Reconstruction plan.

But this simply meant a postponement of the trouble. Eventually the complete agrarian capitalistic system, based on the ownership of both land and labor, had to disappear from America and the world and its disappearance had to spell revolution involving a vast transfer of capital and of political power.

This revolution might have taken the form of annulling property in slaves with indemnity to the slave owners, and seeking to put into the South a laboring class without political power. This would have been an impossible solution, because this laboring class would have been thrown into even more direct competition with white laborers the land over, a fact which had already been a cause of civil war; and it would have involved an attempt at capitalist autocracy without the corrective of universal suffrage among a third of the American laboring class. Moreover, the capital to indemnify the slave owners must have come out of the wealth of that part of the country whose capital was being taxed to pay the staggering cost of a war to overthrow political power based on enslaved labor. Northern capital would not consent to restore Southern loss from investment in slaves, much less if this restored capital were to be used to compete with capital in the North.

There ensued in the South a contest for the ultimate dictatorship

of the state in conjunction with universal suffrage for black and white. The temporary dictatorship set up by the Federal government represented and had to represent, in essence, the attitude of northern capitalists. The parties that hoped to dominate this dictatorship, all of them, lacked capital; the planter had been impoverished by the war; the small capitalist from the North who had come South brought little to invest, but expected to accumulate capital on the spot; and the poor white represented the impoverished peasantry and labor class as well as a petty bourgeois of small merchants and professional men.

Here, then, was the situation. And what had to follow? The planters had to move toward the control of the political power of newly enfranchised labor, both black and white. One can see such movements in the consent of Beauregard and Longstreet in Louisiana, Alcorn in Mississippi and Hampton in South Carolina, to Negro suffrage, and their willingness to concede something of economic power to the black voters. But this movement, which would have been comparatively simple under the ordinary organization of capital and labor in modern countries, was complicated by three facts:

First, there came in a new, eager class of competing capitalists who proposed to share with the planters the dictatorship of labor.

Secondly, the movement of the planter class to attract black labor with economic concession met the immediate and bitter fear and opposition of the poor whites, not simply of the mass of half-starved white peasants and farmers, but of the merchants, the former slave overseers and managers, men who proposed to join the planters as exploiters of labor.

These desperately feared the rise of black labor to a position which might equal and even surpass the poor whites'. This was shown in the voting in Alabama, under Johnson's reconstruction, where the poor white counties went solidly against the Black Belt on several occasions; and it was also shown in the bitter opposition to the counting of black folk as a basis of representation. If the whole population was to be counted as a basis of representation, then after the war as before, the Black Belt and its capitalistic dictators were going to dominate white labor; and it was for this reason that the poor whites long fought to exclude the Negro in apportioning the political power of the state, and after Reconstruction united in disfranchising him.

When the Negro received the right to vote and had to be counted, there arose a desperate effort on the part of the poor whites to keep the planters from controlling the Negro vote by their economic power. Sometimes this effort took the crude method of driving black labor off the plantations and intimidating it in various ways. Sometimes it

took the form of trying to lead black labor through demagogues, like Hunnicutt in Virginia; and all the time, in the background, was the feeling that unless the planters united with the poor whites in a solid racial phalanx against the black voters, anarchy and destruction were preferable to the economic rise of the Negro.

How this interaction of former land monopolists, white peasant and Negro peasant, would have worked itself out if uncomplicated by other interests, is a question. But it seems almost inevitable that division would have had to take place along economic rather than racial lines, and that the planter-capitalists, reënforcing themselves with recruits from a poor white petty bourgeois, would have organized to control white and black labor endowed with universal suffrage, along the same lines that allowed capital in the North to control native white labor and new immigrants.

There entered, however, the small northern investor, usually and inaccurately comprehended under the term "carpetbagger," a phrase too vague for our use, but too much used to discard. When the war ended there were large numbers of Northern soldiers and officers in the South. There were civilian agents of the government and there were other Northerners who looked toward the South as a place of economic re-birth and investment. There was nothing extraordinary in this. Thousands upon thousands of Southerners had come into the North and had been welcomed to its freedom and opportunities; while this migration to the South had come mainly in time of war, with the resultant war hatred and bitterness, still its main reason was economic. Men with smaller or larger amounts of capital and many with no capital proposed to invest in land and free labor in the South at a time when the great staples of Southern agriculture were abnormally high and in wide demand throughout the world. These men, so far as they were investing capitalists, and most of them were, proposed to build up in the South the same kind of capitalistic democracy based on universal suffrage to which they had been used in the North. They were going to trade with free black labor and white labor and yield to it that amount of consideration and that economic share of the product which they would naturally have to yield in order to keep their dictatorship and yet get profit for themselves.

If, now, the new Northern capitalists and the Southern planter class had been united into one new capitalistic class, their only problem would have been to deal with a new laboring class composed of blacks and whites and to admit to their ranks those of either class who had or could get any amount of new capital.

But both capitalists and laborers were split in two; there was hatred and jealousy in the ranks of this new prospective capitalistic class, and

race prejudice and fear in the ranks of the laborers. In the new capitalistic class, the hatred of the planters for Northerners, who apparently were planning to add to the conquests of war new conquests of economic power, was naturally intense. It was this same power of Northern capital which in Southern minds caused civil war. The new Northern capitalists, on the other hand, could not understand why they should not be welcomed as investors without sentiment, in a region where investment of new capital was sadly needed, and why this should not be accompanied by the same attitude toward labor which capital must take throughout the world if it were going to maintain its mastery.

Thirdly, the poor whites began a desperate and almost panic-stricken attempt to force themselves into this situation, either as allies of the old planter class which had for them the greatest contempt, or as allies of the carpetbagger capitalist, against whom they had just been fighting in the ranks of the army, and whose attitude toward black labor they did not understand and feared, or even as allies of black labor, which they might use as a club against both planter and capitalist.

The ensuing turmoil in the South was a fight of these three pretenders to economic power over the capitalistic state, and also it was further complicated by the fact that the Federal military dictatorship was in the hands of Northern capitalists and Northern social workers.

There ensued a fierce fight for mastery characterized by widespread graft, corruption, and violence; for what responsibility did any of these parties have to a state they did not own? And the greater the failure of government through any of the contenders, the more it justified radical change. When the planter class moved toward black labor its leaders made demands which the planters would not meet; namely, demands for land, education and the expense of social uplift. These demands of the black laborer might have been modified, if he had not found that they were easily promised and partially fulfilled by the carpetbag capitalist. He, therefore, turned to the carpetbagger for leadership and through him was given education and at least a possibility of buying land. The poor white could try to compete with the carpetbag capitalist in leadership and demagoguery over the Negroes; or he could seek alliance with the planter because the planter's property was bearing the main cost of the new educational-social program; or by sabotage he could seek to sink the government in anarchy.

Small wonder that the ensuing graft, stealing and renewal of civil war was widely misunderstood. But the very last place where the blame for the situation could, by the wildest imagination, be placed



was upon the newly enfranchised black labor. What the Negro needed, and what he desperately sought, was leadership in knowledge and industry. In knowledge he wanted through his own irrepressible demand for education to become an intelligent citizen; and a start toward this he received through the splendid and unselfish coöperation of the Northern social workers connected with the Federal dictatorship and through their allies, the teachers who came down to man the Freedmen's Bureau schools. By straining his political power to the utmost, the Negro voter got a public school system and got it because that was one clear object which he understood and which no bribery or chicanery could seduce him from advocating and insisting upon in season and out.

On the other hand, in economic leadership, in the whole question of work and wage, he was almost entirely at sea. His higher schools based on New England capitalism and individualism gave little training for an economic battle just dawning in the world and far from the conception of leaders in Southern industry. Even his later industrial schools were tied hand and foot to triumphant capitalism unhampered by a labor vote.

He had, then, but one clear economic ideal and that was his demand for land, his demand that the great plantations be subdivided and given to him as his right. This was a perfectly fair and natural demand and ought to have been an integral part of Emancipation. To emancipate four million laborers whose labor had been owned, and separate them from the land upon which they had worked for nearly two and a half centuries, was an operation such as no modern country had for a moment attempted or contemplated. The German and English and French serf, the Italian and Russian serf, were, on emancipation, given definite rights in the land. Only the American Negro slave was emancipated without such rights and in the end this spelled for him the continuation of slavery.

Beyond this demand for land, economic leadership for the Negro failed. He appealed to his former master. The best of the planters, those who in slavery days had occupied a patriarchal position toward their slaves, were besieged not only by their own former slaves but by others for advice and leadership. If they had wished, they could have held the Negro vote in the palm of their hands. The Negroes would have followed them implicitly, and it was this that poor whites from Andrew Johnson down feared. But they forgot that the planters were estopped from this program by their own lack of capital; by the new and confiscatory taxation which the Negroes' demands entailed even under the most frugal and honest administration; by their own singular lack of knowledge of the methods of capitalistic democracy

throughout the world, which was based on those very concessions to labor of which they could not conceive. They kept insisting on hard, regular toil, vague and irregular wages, and no exercise of political power; all this in a day when labor the world over demanded shorter hours, a definite high wage contract, and the right to vote.

To this attitude of the planters must be added the bitter jealousy, not only of the worst and more vicious and selfish of the planters, but of the poor whites. And when there was added to this the fact that they themselves were being supplanted as advisers of Negroes by the new white Northern capitalist, willing to grant labor's demands at the expense of the state, they, in most cases, utterly refused to lead Negro labor, and thus threw the Negroes back on the carpetbag capitalists for advice and leadership. Thither, too, Negroes were attracted by a trust that naturally grew out of the fact that these people represented their emancipation. They represented Abraham Lincoln and his government, and Negroes were naturally strongly inclined to do anything that this leadership told them to, even when the advice was dishonest and unwise. Thus were the freedmen landed in piteous contradiction and difficulty.

The Negro's own black leadership was naturally of many sorts. Some, like the whites, were petty bourgeois, seeking to climb to wealth; others were educated men, helping to develop a new nation without regard to mere race lines, while a third group were idealists, trying to uplift the Negro race and put them on a par with the whites. But how was this to be accomplished? In the minds of very few of them was there any clear and distinct plan for the development of a laboring class into a position of power and mastery over the modern industrial state. And in this lack of vision, they were not singular in America. Where else in the land, even among labor leaders, was there any such fixed and definite program of action?

The fight for the domination of the new form of state which Reconstruction was building took the direction of using the income for new forms of state expenses; and for that, public investment for private profit was the widespread custom in the North. The South had entered only to a small extent into such schemes and tended to regard them as outside the function of the state. Even the forms of expenditure for education, and the help of indigents, were kinds of expenditure to which the Southern taxpayers had not been used and in which for the most part they did not believe. There were consequently fierce outcries against the "waste" of such expenditures.

When in addition to that, there came widespread and deliberate investment of public funds in railroads and corporations where the

profits went to speculators and grafters, the protest of landed property was intensified.

The results of this form of stealing bore hard upon the impoverished landholder and were particularly detestable to him because, monopolizing the government before the war, he had largely escaped taxation and had tried to transfer it to the shoulders of the small business man. Now the small business man, reinforced by the carpetbagger and black voter, was returning it to the landholder. Assessments were increased and the gradual disestablishment of the landed aristocracy became imminent.

Here is the crux of the matter: It was this large and, for the day and circumstances, overwhelming loss that lay at the bottom of the extraordinary charges of extravagance and stealing that characterize the Reconstruction controversy. For had there been no further loss, and no necessity nor effort to increase the customary taxation of the past, the planter would have felt hurt to his heart by the disappearance of the bulk of his capital. But when to this was added a new taxation for uplifting Negroes and enriching Northerners, he raised his protest to a shriek of bitterness.

When we try to get to the details of the Southern States' debts after the war and during Reconstruction, we are faced by the fact that there is no agreement among authorities. The reasons for this are several: First, What is a debt? Is it the amount which a state actually owes, or is it the amount for which a state may become liable in the future, by reason of present commitments and promises? In this latter case, for how much does it actually become liable?

A careful examination of such facts as seem established shows that the increase of debts under the Reconstruction régime was not large. In eleven Southern States there was little over \$100,000,000 of debt in 1860, which rose to \$222,000,000 on account of war. When the Confederate debt was repudiated, the recognized debts in 1865 stood at \$156,000,000. To this should be added certain railroad liabilities of Alabama, which brings the total debt at the beginning of Reconstruction to \$175,000,000. In 1871, this debt had increased nearly 100% to \$305,000,000; but \$100,000,000 of this debt consisted in contingent and prospective liabilities due to the issue of railway bonds, which confuses the whole issue with regard to Reconstruction debts. The whole increase of debt, during 1860-1871, amounted apparently to less than 100%.<sup>21</sup> What now did this increase of debt due to the railway bonds mean? It meant that Southern and Northern men, Republicans and Democrats, had united to put the credit of the state back of their railway investments. The only way in which nine-tenths of Negro voters came into this matter was as their representatives were bribed by

both parties to support this legislation for private profit. Such bribery undoubtedly was widespread. But it was widespread not only among Negro voters, but among white voters, and among all the voters of the United States, and among members of all legislatures and members of Congress. It could hardly be argued that in this respect, new and largely ignorant Negro voters should show a higher public morality than the rest of the country.

On the other hand, the wrath of the landholders against this increase in debt was the wrath of agrarian capitalists against the new industrialism; and yet they were unable to prosecute those who stole the state's money through the issue of railway bonds because there were too many Southern people, and Southern people of prominence, involved. This was shown in North Carolina, where despite the extravagant investment in railways, the hope of wide immigration and rapid development was disappointed, and the landholders put the commercialists out of power; but they did not dare prosecute them. In Mississippi, on the other hand, where the Negro was as powerful as in any state, there was no increase of debt, because from the first the landholders and Negroes refused to loan the credit of the state to railroads.

If the money raised by taxes had been spent carefully and honestly upon legitimate and necessary matters of restoration and government, the increase is not unreasonable. Or in other words, there is nothing on the face of the figures that proves unusual theft.

Over one hundred and fifty millions of this debt was repudiated by the reactionary governments which came into office after 1876. John F. Hume<sup>22</sup> claims that to this should be added \$120,000,000 of debts repudiated before the Civil War, showing that the South was not unused to dealing in this way with borrowed funds.

This indebtedness must also be interpreted by considering the price of gold. South Carolina's debt of twenty-two million in 1871 was made when paper money was at 70 and was therefore equivalent to fifteen and a half million in 1860. Indeed the curve of the price of gold explains to some extent the curve of alleged extravagance.

The debt of these states between the time when it reached its highest point and 1880 was scaled down to \$108,003,974. This meant that a sum of \$155,525,856 was repudiated and it will be noted that this is almost exactly the increased indebtedness which the Reconstruction régime incurred in order to meet the increased burden of the state—public school education, charitable institutions, the restoration of public buildings, and increased social responsibilities.

There can be no possible proof that all of this increased indebtedness represented theft; nor is there any adequate reason for believing

that most of it did. What happened in Southern repudiation after the war was that the Southern states proceeded to punish people who had dared to loan money to the Southern states under Negro suffrage, by confiscating the sums which they had loaned. This was what they had threatened to do, and they did it with vengeance.

There are certain other considerations. White Southerners were in practically complete control during the Reconstruction régime, in Virginia and Tennessee; yet in these two states, an indebtedness of \$52,000,000 in 1860 increased to \$88,000,000 before 1880, and \$34,000,000 of this was repudiated. This could hardly be charged to Negro suffrage. Then, too, in North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama, the ex-Confederate South never lost all control, and was early restored to full control. Yet in these states, an indebtedness of \$19,000,000 in 1860 reached \$81,000,000 before 1880. And of this \$56,000,000 was repudiated. A part of the blame of this may be shouldered on white Northerners, but very little of it could possibly be attributed to Negroes.

In the case of Florida and Mississippi, the debt was negligible, and on the face of it, absolutely defensible. Yet large amounts were repudiated by the reform party. In South Carolina, the debt stood at nearly \$6,000,000 in 1865, before Reconstruction. It reached at its highest point, before 1880, nearly \$25,000,000. And of this \$17,000,000 was repudiated. If any large proportion of it represented theft, it represented as much the illegal graft of Northern moneylenders as the theft of money actually received by the state. Arkansas, under a government in which the Negro had almost no part, repudiated \$12,000,000 out of \$18,000,000 of indebtedness.

The whole debt transaction of the South after Reconstruction seemed to show that many of the accusations of unreasonable debt, and the haste at repudiation, were a blow aimed at Northern finance, rather than a proof of Negro extravagance. It was openly said in Louisiana that it was fitting that "the Northerners who tore down the basis of our former prosperity should share some of the ills."<sup>23</sup>

Sir George Campbell said: "All the Carpet-bag Governors are, as a matter of course, accused of the grossest personal corruption; and as soon as they fall from power it is almost a necessity that they should fly from criminal prosecutions instituted in the local courts under circumstances which give little security for fair trial. . . ."

"On the whole, then, I am inclined to believe that the period of Carpet-bag rule was rather a scandal than a very permanent injury . . . ; and there was more pilfering than plunder on a scale permanently to cripple the State."<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, in most cases, the testimony concerning stealing and corruption in the South during this time was either given by bitter politi-

cal opponents who constituted themselves judge, witness, and jury or by criminals who were clearing their own skirts by accusing others.

Note well the character of the stealing in the South. In the first place, when money was appropriated even extravagantly, it was appropriated for railroads, which the South needed desperately, and it was appropriated under the same terms that had enabled the North and the West to get their railroads; it was appropriated for public institutions; it was appropriated for the buying of land in order to subdivide the great plantations; it was appropriated for certain public services.

In all cases the graft and dishonesty came in the carrying out, the fulfillment of these needs, and this was not only in the hands of white men, but Southern white men as often as Northern; and Northern white financial agents and manipulators in Wall Street helped to make the bond sales of South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. To charge this debt to the Negroes is idiotic. It was not so charged at the time, but this came to be a popular version of Southern corruption when it became unpopular to accuse the Northerners.

In the original charges of graft and corruption made by the Southerners, Negroes were mentioned only as tools. It was the carpet-bagger and scalawags, Northern and Southern white men, who were continually and insistently charged with theft and corruption.

Then as the carpet-baggers lost the power of military dictatorship, and as the prospect of alliance with the poor whites showed the planters a way of re-securing the government, they turned and with the poor whites concentrated all their accusations of misgovernment and corruption upon the Negro, in order to deprive the Negro of his political power.

Southern corruption was not the exclusive guilt of scalawags and carpet-baggers, nor were all carpet-baggers and scalawags thieves. Some carpet-baggers were noble-hearted philanthropists. Some scalawags were self-sacrificing benefactors of both Negroes and whites. Some of the scalawags and carpet-baggers lied and stole, and some helped and coöperated with the freedmen and worked for real democracy in the South for all races. Indeed in graft and theft the skirts of Southern whites of all classes were not clear before or after the war.

Before the war, the South was ruled by an oligarchy and the functions of the state carried on largely by individuals. This meant that the state had little to do, and its expenses were small. The oligarchic state does not need to resort to corruption of the government. Its leaders, having the right to exploit labor to the limit, receive an income which makes them conspicuously independent of any income from

the government. The government revenues are kept purposely small and the salaries low so that poor men cannot afford to enter into government service.

On the other hand, when the oligarchy is broken down and when labor increases its power, revenue is raised by taxing the rich, and then the temptation to bribery and stealing increases according to the amount of poverty. The corruption in the South before the war did not usually touch the state governments. The income there was too small to be tempting; yet in Mississippi, after two receivers of public money had defaulted for \$155,000, a United States treasury agent recommended that the last one be retained since another would probably be as bad. Other Southern states had defaulting officials, and shamelessly repudiated their public debts.

For thirty years, during 1830-1860, the South was ruled by its own best citizens and yet during that time there were defalcations in Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Alabama and Arkansas among postmasters, United States marshals, collectors and surveyors, amounting to more than one million dollars.

How far, then, was post-bellum corruption due to Negroes? Only in so far as they represented ignorance and poverty and were thus peculiarly susceptible to petty bribery. No one contends that any considerable amount of money went to them. There were some reports of show and extravagance among them, but the great thieves were always white men; very few Negro leaders were specifically accused of theft, and again seldom in these cases were the accusations proven. Usually they were vague slurs resting on the assumption that all Negroes steal. Petty bribery of members of Reconstruction legislatures, white and black, was widespread; but Wallace in Florida shows the desperate inner turmoil of the Negroes to counteract this within their own ranks; and outstanding cases of notably incorruptible Negro leaders like Lieutenant-Governor Dunn of Louisiana, Treasurer Cardozo of South Carolina, Secretary of State Gibbs of Florida, and Speaker Lynch of Mississippi, are well known.

Certainly the mass of Negroes were unbribeable when it came to demands for land and education and other things, the beneficent object of which they could thoroughly understand. But they were peculiarly susceptible to bribes when it was a matter of personal following of demagogues who catered to their likes and weaknesses.

The mass of Negroes were accused of selling votes and influence for small sums and of thus being easily bought up by big thieves; but even in this, they were usually bought up by pretended friends and not bribed against their beliefs or by enemies. To the principles that

they understood and knew, they were true; but there were many things connected with government and its technical details which they did not know; in other words, they were ignorant and poor, and the ignorant and poor can always be misled and bribed. What made the Negro poor and ignorant? Surely, it was slavery, and he tried with his vote to escape slavery.

As Dunning says: "As to corruption under the Negro government of the South, this must be noted: first, the decade when the Negroes were ushered into political life, from 1867 to 1877, was probably the most corrupt decade in the history of the United States, and of all parts of the United States.

"The form and manner of this corruption, which has given so unsavory a connotation to the name 'reconstruction,' were no different from those which have appeared in many another time and place in democratic society. At the very time, indeed, when the administrations of Scott, in South Carolina, and Warmoth, in Louisiana, were establishing the Southern high-water mark of rascality in public finance, the Tweed ring in New York City was at the culmination of its closely parallel career."<sup>25</sup>

"When we come to examine them, the charges made by such men as Rhodes, Oberholtzer, Dunning, Bowers, etc., even if taken at their face value, which they assuredly should not be, are charges that might with equal force be leveled against every government, Federal, state and municipal, North and South, Republican and Democratic, of the time—and against the 'lily white' Restoration governments that followed in the South with reaction. Only compare the public moneys stolen by officers of the Reconstruction governments with the vast sums that found their way into the pockets of the Tweed Ring in the perfectly Conservative, Democratic, Copperhead City of New York!"<sup>26</sup>

It may be contended that the presence of a mass of unlettered and inexperienced voters in a state makes bribery and graft easier and more capable of misuse by malign elements. This is true. But the question is, is the situation any better if ignorance and poverty are permanently disfranchised? The whole answer of modern industrial conditions is—no, it is not. And the only alternative, therefore, is the one continually urged by Sumner, Phillips and Stevens: if ignorance is dangerous—instruct it. If poverty is the cause of stealing and crime, increase the income of the masses.

Property involves theft by the Rich from the Poor; but there comes a grave question; given a mass of ignorance and poverty, is that mass less dangerous without the ballot? The answer to this depends upon whose danger one envisages. They are not dangerous to the mass of



laboring men. If they are kept in ignorance and poverty and dominated by capital, they are certainly dangerous to capital. To escape such revolution and prolong its sway property must yield political power to the mass of laborers, and let it wield that power more intelligently by giving it public schools and higher wages. It is naturally easier for capital to do this gradually, and if there could have been a choice in 1867 between an effective public school system for black labor in the South and its gradual enfranchisement, or even beyond that, a property qualification for such laborers as through free land and higher wage had some chance to accumulate some property—if this had been possible, it would have been, without doubt, the best transition program for capital and labor, provided of course that capitalists thus tamely yielded power. But there was no such alternative. Labor, black labor, must be either enfranchised or enslaved, unless, of course, the United States government was willing to come in with a permanent Freedmen's Bureau to train Negroes toward economic freedom and against the interest of Southern capital. This was revolution. This was force and no such permanent Freedmen's Bureau backed by a strongly capitalistic Northern government could have been expected in 1867.

The essential problem of Negro enfranchisement was this: How far is the poor and ignorant electorate a permanent injury to the state, and how far does the extent of the injury make for efforts to counteract it? More than a million Negroes were enfranchised in 1867. Of these, it is possible that between 100,000 and 200,000 could read and write, and certainly not more than 25,000, including black immigrants from the North, could be called educated. It was the theory that if these people were given the right to vote, the state, first of all, would be compelled to discontinue plans of political action or industrial organization which did not accord with the general plans of the North, and secondly, in self-defense, it would have to begin the education of the freedmen and establish a system of free labor with wages and conditions of work much fairer than those in vogue during slavery.

How far was this a feasible social program? It was not possible, of course, if the South had the right to continue its industrial organization based on land monopoly and ownership of labor. Conceding the emancipation of labor, that emancipation meant nothing if land monopoly continued and the wage contract was merely nominal. If a wage system was to be installed, it must receive protection either from an outside power, like that of the Federal government, or from the worker himself. So far as the worker was concerned, the only protection feasible was the ballot in the hands of a united and intelligently led working class. Could it be assumed now that the possession of the

ballot in the hands of ignorant working people, black and white, would lead to real economic emancipation, or on the other hand would it not become a menace to the state so great that its very existence would be threatened?

It had been the insistent contention of many that the basis of the state was threatened between 1867 and 1876 and, therefore, the revolution of 1876 had to take place. The known facts do not sustain this contention and it seems probable that if we had preserved a more complete story of the action of the Negro voter the facts in his favor would even be stronger. As it is, it must be remembered that the proponents of Negro suffrage did not for a moment contend that the experiment was not difficult and would not involve hardship and danger. The elections for the conventions went off, for the most part, without upheaval, with intelligence and certainly with unusual fairness. The conduct of the Negro voters, their selection of candidates, their action in conventions and early legislatures, was, on the whole, sane, thoughtful, and sincere. No one can, with any color of truth, say that civilization was threatened or the foundations of the state attacked in the South in the years from 1868 to 1876.

Then, however, came a time of decisions. Did the South want the Negro to become an intelligent voter and participant in the state under any circumstances, or on the other hand was it opposed to Negro voters no matter how intelligent and efficient?

It may be said, then, that the argument for giving the right to vote to the mass of the poor and ignorant still stands as defensible, without for a moment denying that there should not be such a class in any civilized community; but if the class is there, the fault is the fault of the community and the community must suffer and pay for it. The South had exploited Negro labor for nearly two and one-half centuries. If in ten years or twenty years things could be so changed that this class was receiving an education, getting hold of land, exercising some control over capital, and becoming co-partners in the state, the South would be a particularly fortunate community.

If, on the other hand, there had been the moral strength in the South so that without yielding immediate political power, they could have educated and uplifted the blacks and gradually inducted them into political power and real industrial emancipation, the results undoubtedly would have been better. There was no such disposition, and under the profit ideal of a capitalist organization, there could not have been. That would have required, after the losses of war, an industrial unselfishness of which capitalist organization does not for a moment admit. Force, therefore, and outside force, had to be applied or otherwise slavery would have persisted in a but slightly modified form, and

the persistence of slavery in the United States longer than it had already persisted would have been a calamity worse than any of the calamities, real or imagined, of Reconstruction.

Consequently, with Northern white leadership, the Negro voters quite confounded the planter plan; they proved apt pupils in politics. They developed their own leadership. They gained clearer and clearer conceptions of how their political power could be used for their own good. They were unselfish, too, in wishing to include in their own good the white worker and even the ex-master. Of course, all that was done in Constitution-making and legislation at this time was not entirely the work of black men, and in the same way all that was done in maladministration and corruption was not entirely the fault of the black man. But if the black man is to be blamed for the ills of Reconstruction, he must also be credited for its good, and that good is indubitable. In less than ten years, the basic structure of capitalism in the South was changed by his vote. A new modern state was erected in the place of agrarian slavery. And its foundations were so sound and its general plan so good that despite bitter effort, the South had to accept universal suffrage in theory at least, and had to accept the public school system. It had to broaden social control by adding to the landholder the industrial capitalist.

Indeed the Negro voter in Reconstruction had disappointed all the prophets. The bravest of the carpetbaggers, Tourgée, declared concerning the Negro voters: "They instituted a public school system in a realm where public schools had been unknown. They opened the ballot-box and jury box to thousands of white men who had been debarred from them by a lack of earthly possessions. They introduced home rule in the South. They abolished the whipping post, and branding iron, the stocks and other barbarous forms of punishment which had up to that time prevailed. They reduced capital felonies from about twenty to two or three. In an age of extravagance they were extravagant in the sums appropriated for public works. In all that time no man's rights of person were invaded under the forms of laws."<sup>27</sup> The Negro buttressed Southern civilization in precisely the places it was weakest, against popular ignorance, oligarchy in government, and land monopoly. His schools were more and more successful. If now he became a recognized part of the state, a larger and larger degree of social equality must be granted him. This was apparent in his demand for a single system of public schools without discrimination of race—a demand that came for obvious reasons of economy as well as for advantages of social contact. It appeared also in the demand for equal accommodations on railroads and in public places.

Ultimately, of course, a single system of public schools, and state

universities without distinction of race, and equality of civil rights was going to lead to some social intermingling and attacks upon the anti-intermarriage laws which encouraged miscegenation and deliberately degraded women. This was a possibility that the planter class could not contemplate without concern and it stirred among the poor whites a blind and unreasoning fury.

The dictatorship of labor in the South, then, with its establishment of democratic control over social development, education and public improvements, succeeded only at the expense of a taxation on land and property which amounted to confiscation. And it was accompanied by a waste of public funds partly due to inexperience, and partly due to the prevailing wave of political dishonesty that engulfed the whole country.

The singular thing about the wholesale charge of stealing and corruption during Reconstruction times is that when government was restored to the whites and to the Democratic Party, there were so few attempts at criminal indictment or to secure any return of the loot. In North Carolina, for instance, wholesale theft was charged against the carpetbaggers, and yet when the governor and leader of the Republican Party was impeached, no charge of stealing was in the indictment. He was impeached for using the militia to put down admitted and widespread disorder, and for the arrest of the men who openly and impudently encouraged the disorder.

In Mississippi, all that the restored government apparently wanted was to get rid of Governor Ames. They made no attempt to charge him with theft. In South Carolina, the restored government claimed to have documentary evidence of widespread stealing and graft, and they made a few indictments which were afterward quietly quashed. Why did not the fraud committee go into the courts which they now controlled, and find out where the money they alleged was stolen had gone, and who was now enjoying it? The conclusion is almost inescapable, that the fraud committee knew perfectly well that a large proportion of the thieves were now on the side of white rule, and that much of their theft had been designed and calculated to discredit Negroes and carpetbaggers.

These facts and similar ones show that the overthrow of Reconstruction was in essence a revolution inspired by property, and not a race war.

The echo of the Northern reform movement was felt in the South. It encouraged the Northern capitalists and the more intelligent Negroes to unite in a Southern reform movement. This was shown by the Chamberlain government in South Carolina, the Ames government

in Mississippi, and less clearly by the Kellogg government in Louisiana.

The carpetbag reformers moved toward an alliance with the planters with an understanding that called for lower taxes and the elimination of graft and corruption. Negro voters began to support this program, but were restrained by distrust. They feared that the planters still planned their disfranchisement. If this fear could have been removed, and as far as it was removed, the power of the Negro vote in the South was certain to go gradually toward reform.

It was this contingency that the poor whites of all grades feared. It meant to them a reestablishment of that subordination under Negro labor which they had suffered during slavery. They, therefore, interposed by violence to increase the natural antagonism between Southerners of the planter class and Northerners who represented the military dictatorship as well as capital, and also to increase the fear of the Negroes that the planters might try to reenslave them. The planters certainly were not disposed to make any permanent alliance with carpetbaggers like Chamberlain. After all they were Northerners, recent enemies, and were responsible for the taxation that had gone before reform.

The efforts at reform, therefore, at first widely applauded, one by one began to go down before a new philosophy which represented understanding between the planters and poor whites. This again was not an easy thing for the planters to swallow, but it was accompanied by deference to their social status, by eagerness on the part of the poor whites to check the demands of the Negroes by any means, and by willingness to do the dirty work of the revolution that was coming, with its blood and crass cruelties, its bitter words, upheaval and turmoil. This was the birth and being of the Ku Klux Klan.

Before the war, there had been violent Southern anti-Negro propaganda on racial lines; but that had been mainly for consumption in the North. Northerners, traveling in the South, were always astonished at finding it accompanied by peculiar evidences of social equality and closer intimacies; in other words, there was no deep racial antagonism except in the case of poor whites, where it had a tremendous economic foundation. After the war, the race division, so long as the economic foundation was equitable, would have become less and less pronounced had it not been emphasized with determination in the application of the "Mississippi Plan."

It is one of the anomalies of history that political and economic reform in the North and West after 1873 joined hands with monopoly and reaction in the South to oppress and reenslave labor.

Every effort was made by careful propaganda to induce the nation

to believe that the Southern wing of the Democratic party was fighting the same kind of corruption as the North and that corruption was represented in the South solely by carpetbaggers and Negroes. This was only partly true in the South; for there labor too was fighting corruption and dishonesty, so far as land and capital, which were secretly abetting graft in order to escape taxation, would allow it to do so without disfranchisement. But the South now began to use the diplomacy so badly lacking in its previous leadership since the war. Adroitly it stopped attacking abolitionists and even carpetbaggers, and gradually transferred all the blame for post-war misgovernment to the Negroes. The Negro vote and graft were indissolubly linked in the public mind by incessant propaganda. Race repulsion, race hate, and race pride were increased by every subtle method, until the Negro and his friends were on the defensive and the Negro himself almost convinced of his own guilt. Negro haters and pseudo-scientists raised their heads and voices in triumph. Lamar of Mississippi, fraudulently elected to Congress, unctuously praised Sumner with his tongue in his cheek; and Louisiana solemnly promised to give Negroes full political and civil rights with equal education for Negro children—a deliberate lie which is absolutely proven by the revelations of the last fifty years.

The South was impelled to brute force and deliberate deception in dealing with the Negro because it had been astonished and disappointed not by the Negro's failure, but by his success and promise of greater success.

All this came at a time when the best conscience of the nation—the conscience which was heir to the enthusiasm of abolitionist-democracy—was turned against the only power which could support democracy in the South. The truth of the insistence of Stevens was manifest: without land and without vocation, the Negro voter could not gain that economic independence which would protect his vote. Unless, therefore, his political and civil rights were supported by the United States army, he was doomed to practical reënslavement. But the United States army became in the seventies the representative of the party of political corruption, while its political opponents represented land monopoly and capitalistic reaction in the South. When, therefore, the conscience of the United States attacked corruption, it at the same time attacked in the Republican Party the only power that could support democracy in the South. It was a paradox too tragic to explain and it deceived leading reformers, like Carl Schurz, into consenting to throw the poor, ignorant black workers, whom he had helped to enfranchise, to the lions of land monopoly and capitalistic control, which proposed to devour them, and did.

In the South, reform sought to follow the Northern model and the carpetbag capitalists turned toward the purging of the civil service and the throttling of monopoly. In this, they gained the backing of many intelligent Negroes. But for one thing they could have got the bulk of the Negro vote, and that one thing was the Negro's distrust of the honesty of the planters' objects. Did the planter want reform or did he want reënslavement of Negro labor? As a matter of fact, the planter got the beginnings of reform in the administration of government in South Carolina, in Mississippi, and even in Louisiana. But he was aware that if that movement went far, it would prove that the Negro vote could be appealed to and made effective in good government as well as bad. This he did not want. As the South Carolina Democratic convention said, April, 1868, in an address to the colored people: "It is impossible that your present power can endure, whether you use it for good or ill."<sup>28</sup>

Back of this was the knowledge that honest labor government would be more fatal to land monopoly and industrial privilege than government by bribery and graft.

The white South, therefore, quickly substituted violence and renewal of the war in order to get rid of the possibility of good government supported by black labor votes.

There was not a single honest Southerner who did not know that any reasonable political program which included a fair chance for the Negro to get an honest wage, personal protection, land to work, and schools for his children, would have received the staunch, loyal and unyielding support of the overwhelming mass of Negro voters; but this program, when ostensibly offered the Negro, concealed the determination to reduce him practically to slavery. He knew this and in his endeavor to escape floundered through bribery, corruption, and murder, seeking a path to peace, freedom, and the income of a civilized man.

The South has itself to blame. It showed no historic sign of favoring emancipation before the war, rather the contrary. It showed no disposition to yield to the offer of recompensed emancipation which Abraham Lincoln repeatedly made. It showed no desire to yield to emancipation with correspondingly curtailed political power as Congress suggested. It showed no disposition to reform democracy with the Negro vote. It relied on stubborn brute force.

Meantime, the leaders of Northern capital and finance were still afraid of the return of Southern political power after the lapse of the military dictatorship. This power was larger than before the war and it was bound to grow. If it were to be used in conjunction with North-

ern liberals, it might still mean the reduction of the tariff, the reduction of monopoly, and an attack upon new financial methods and upon concentrated control in industry. There was now no sentiment like "freedom" to which the Northern industrialists could appeal. It was, therefore, necessary for Northern capital to make terms with the dominant South.

Thus, both the liberal and the conservative North found themselves willing to sacrifice the interests of labor in the South to the interest of capital. The temporary dictatorship as represented by the Freedmen's Bureau was practically ended by 1870. This led to an increase of violence on the part of the Ku Klux Klan to subject black labor to strict domination by capital and to break Negro political power. The outbreak brought a temporary return of military dictatorship, but the return was unpopular in the North and aroused bitter protest in the South.

Yet the end that planters and poor whites envisaged and, as the fight went on, the end that large numbers of the Northern capitalists were fighting for, was a movement in the face of modern progress. It did not go to the length of disfranchising the whole laboring class, black and white, because it dared not do this, although this was its logical end. It did disfranchise black labor with the aid of white Southern labor and with the silent acquiescence of white Northern labor.

The white capitalist of the South saw a chance of getting rid of the necessity of treating with and yielding to the voting power of fully half the laboring class. It seized this opportunity, knowing that it thus was setting back the economic progress of the world; that the United States, instead of marching forward through the preliminary revolution by which the petty bourgeois and the laboring class armed with the vote were fighting the power of capital, was disfranchising a part of labor and on the other hand allowing great capital a chance for enormous expansion in the country. And this enormous expansion got its main chance through the thirty-three electoral votes which the counting of the full black population in the South gave to that section. It was only necessary now that this political power of the South should be used in behalf of capital and not for the strengthening of labor and universal suffrage. This was the bargain of 1876.

Reconstruction, therefore, in the South degenerated into a fight of rivals to control property and through that to control the labor vote. This rivalry between dictators led to graft and corruption as they bid against each other for the vote of the Negro, while meantime Negro labor in its ignorance and poverty was agonizing for ways of escape. Northern capital compromised, and Southern capital accepted race



hate and black disfranchisement as a permanent program of exploitation.

In a certain way this great struggle of a laboring class of five black millions was epitomized by the appearance of sixteen of their representatives in the Federal Congress from 1869 to 1876. These are the men, their states and their service:

Hiram R. Revels, Senator, Mississippi, 1870-1871.

Blanche K. Bruce, Senator, Mississippi, 1875-1881.

Jefferson P. Long, Congressman, Georgia, 1869-1871.

Joseph H. Rainey, Congressman, South Carolina, 1871-1879.

Robert C. DeLarge, Congressman, South Carolina, 1871-1873.

Robert Brown Elliott, Congressman, South Carolina, 1871-1875.

Benjamin S. Turner, Congressman, Alabama, 1871-1873.

Josiah T. Walls, Congressman, Florida, 1873-1877.

Alonzo J. Ransier, Congressman, South Carolina, 1871-1873.

James T. Rapier, Congressman, Alabama, 1873-1875.

Richard H. Cain, Congressman, South Carolina, 1873-1875, 1877-1879.

John R. Lynch, Congressman, Mississippi, 1873-1877, 1881-1883.

Charles E. Nash, Congressman, Louisiana, 1875-1877.

John A. Hyman, Congressman, North Carolina, 1875-1877.

Jere Haralson, Congressman, Alabama, 1875-1877.

Robert Smalls, Congressman, South Carolina, 1875-1879, 1881-1887.

Several others, like Menard of Florida, Pinchback of Louisiana, Lee and others, had excellent titles to their seats, but did not gain them. Twelve of these men who were the earliest to enter Congress were ex-slaves or born of slave parents and brought up when Negroes were denied education. On the other hand the other four had received a more or less complete college education in the North and abroad. Five of the Congressmen were lawyers, and two, Elliott and Rapier, had unusual training and ability.

Rhodes sneers at these men: "They left no mark on the legislation of their time; none of them, in comparison with their white associates, attained the least distinction."

But Blaine, who knew them and served with most of them, said: "The colored men who took seats in both Senate and House did not appear ignorant or helpless. They were as a rule studious, earnest, ambitious men, whose public conduct . . . would be honorable to any race."

Most of the colored Congressmen had had experience in state legislatures and in public office. When these men entered Congress, questions of Reconstruction and of the economic and social condition in the North and West were before it. These included the exploitation of public lands, the development of railroads, the question of money, and the

relation of the races in the South. The Negro Congressmen, especially, had three objects: to secure themselves civil rights, to aid education, and to settle the question of the political disabilities of their former masters.

This last question became of paramount importance. Long of Georgia was in favor of removing disabilities if the Southerners proved loyal to the new legislation. Revels supported amnesty, but Rainey felt that it had led to force and murder. Elliott protested against amnesty, saying that the men seeking relief were responsible for the crimes perpetrated against loyal men in the South, and that this proposal put a premium on disloyalty and treason.

All the Negro Congressmen plead for civil rights for their race. It was here that Robert Brown Elliott made one of his greatest speeches in a dramatic situation seldom equaled in Congress. Forney describes the incident: "Mr. Stephens, the Vice-President of the Confederacy, of which slavery was the corner-stone, spoke January 6, 1874, and Mr. Elliott, the colored champion of the liberated race, followed him the next day. I cannot describe the House when the two men addressed it, especially when the African answered the Caucasian. Here we have a new history—a history that may, indeed, be repeated, but which stands alone in the novelty of all its surroundings, and in the eloquence of all its lessons. . . .

"Mr. Elliott, the last speaker, is a full-blooded black, a native of Boston, Massachusetts, where he was born August 11, 1842. Educated in England, he was not of age when the Rebellion broke out; and in 1868, in his twenty-sixth year, was a member of the South Carolina Legislature, and elected to Congress from Columbia district in 1872. He received 21,627 votes, against 1,079 votes for the Democratic candidate, W. H. McCaw. Had any man predicted that this colored boy, while attending school in 1853, at High Holborn Academy, and Eton College, England, in 1855, would sit in Congress from the capital of the proud state of South Carolina in 1874, and would there confute the ablest apostle of the old slave power, he would have been pronounced a madman."

Elliott, defending against Stephens civil rights for Negroes, said:

"Sir, it is scarcely twelve years since that gentleman shocked the civilized world by announcing the birth of a government which rested on human slavery as its corner-stone. The progress of events has swept away that pseudo-government which rested on greed, pride, and tyranny; and the race whom he then ruthlessly spurned and trampled on are here to meet him in debate, and to demand that the rights which are enjoyed by their former oppressors—who vainly sought to

overthrow a Government which they could not prostitute to the base uses of slavery—shall be accorded to those who even in the darkness of slavery kept their allegiance true to freedom and the Union. Sir, the gentleman from Georgia has learned much since 1861; but he is still a laggard. Let him put away entirely the false and fatal theories which have so greatly marred an otherwise enviable record. Let him accept, in its fullness and beneficence, the great doctrine that American citizenship carries with it every civil and political right which manhood can confer. Let him lend his influence, with all his masterly ability, to complete the proud structure of legislation which makes this nation worthy of the great declaration which heralded its birth, and he will have done that which will most nearly redeem his reputation in the eyes of the world, and best vindicate the wisdom of that policy which has permitted him to regain his seat upon this floor.”<sup>30</sup>

In the matter of education, Rainey of South Carolina was one of the first Americans to demand national aid for education. Walls of Florida protested that national aid was not an invasion of state rights, and showed the discrimination in the distribution of state funds.

The colored Congressmen advocated local improvements, including distribution of public lands, public buildings, and appropriations for rivers and harbors, in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and South Carolina.

Aside from these more personal questions, Negro Congressmen discussed national economic matters. Walls of Florida and Lynch of Mississippi asked protective tariffs for local products, including cotton, lumber and sugar. Walls voted for an appropriation for the centennial exposition of 1876, and urged the recognition of Cuba. Hyman championed relief of the Cherokee Indians. Bruce opposed the restriction of Chinese immigration, arraigned our selfish policy toward Indians, and especially advocated improving the navigation of the Mississippi and protecting life and property from its overflow.

The words of these black men were, perhaps, the last clear, earnest expression of the democratic theory of American government in Congress.

Congressman DeLarge of South Carolina said in 1871: “When I heard the gentleman from New York (Mr. Cox) on Tuesday last hurl his shafts against the members of my race, charging that through their ignorance they had brought about these excesses, I thought he should have remembered that for the ignorance of that portion of the people, he and his party associates are responsible, not those people themselves. While there may have been extravagance and corruption resulting from the placing of improper men in official positions—and

this is part of the cause of the existing state of things—these evils have been brought about by men identified with the race to which the gentleman from New York belongs, and not by our race.”<sup>31</sup>

Congressman Rainey of South Carolina said in the same debate: “Sir, I ask this House, I ask the country, I ask white men, I ask Democrats, I ask Republicans whether the Negroes have presumed to take improper advantage of the majority they hold in that State by disregarding the interest of the minority? They have not. Our convention which met in 1868, and in which the Negroes were in a large majority, did not pass any proscriptive or disfranchising acts, but adopted a liberal constitution, securing alike equal rights to all citizens, white and black, male and female, as far as possible. Mark you, we did not discriminate, although we had a majority. Our constitution towers up in its majesty with provisions for the equal protection of all classes of citizens.”<sup>32</sup>

It was not, then, race and culture calling out of the South in 1876; it was property and privilege, shrieking to its kind, and privilege and property heard and recognized the voice of its own.

The bargain of 1876 was essentially an understanding by which the Federal Government ceased to sustain the right to vote of half of the laboring population of the South, and left capital as represented by the old planter class, the new Northern capitalist, and the capitalist that began to rise out of the poor whites, with a control of labor greater than in any modern industrial state in civilized lands. Out of that there has arisen in the South an exploitation of labor unparalleled in modern times, with a government in which all pretense at party alignment or regard for universal suffrage is given up. The methods of government have gone uncriticized, and elections are by secret understanding and manipulation; the dictatorship of capital in the South is complete.

The military dictatorship was withdrawn, and the representatives of Northern capital gave up all efforts to lead the Negro vote. The new dictatorship became a manipulation of the white labor vote which followed the lines of similar control in the North, while it proceeded to deprive the black voter by violence and force of any vote at all. The rivalry of these two classes of labor and their competition neutralized the labor vote in the South. The black voter struggled and appealed, but it was in vain. And the United States, reënforced by the increased political power of the South based on disfranchisement of black voters, took its place to reënforce the capitalistic dictatorship of the United States, which became the most powerful in the world, and which backed the new industrial imperialism and degraded colored labor the world over.

This meant a tremendous change in the whole intellectual and spiritual development of civilization in the South and in the United States because of the predominant political power of the South, built on disfranchised labor. The United States was turned into a reactionary force. It became the cornerstone of that new imperialism which is subjecting the labor of yellow, brown and black peoples to the dictation of capitalism organized on a world basis; and it has not only brought nearer the revolution by which the power of capitalism is to be challenged, but also it is transforming the fight to the sinister aspect of a fight on racial lines embittered by awful memories.

It is argued that Negro suffrage was bad because it failed, and at the same time that its failure was a proof of its badness. Negro suffrage failed because it was overthrown by brute force. Even if it had been the best government on earth, force, exercised by a majority of richer, more intelligent and more experienced men, could have overthrown it. It was not overthrown so long as the military dictatorship of the North sustained it. But the South proved by appropriate propaganda that Negro government was the worst ever seen and that it threatened civilization. They suited their propaganda to their audience. They had tried the accusation of laziness but that was refuted by a restoration of agriculture to the pre-war level and beyond it. They tried the accusation of ignorance but this was answered by the Negro schools.

It happened that the accusation of incompetence impressed the North not simply because of the moral revolt there against graft and dishonesty but because the North had never been thoroughly converted to the idea of Negro equality. When, therefore, the North, even granting that all the South said of the Negro was not true, contemplated possibilities, it paused. Did the nation want blacks with power sitting in the Senate and in the House of Representatives, accumulating wealth and entering the learned professions? Would this not eventually and inevitably lead to social equality and even to black sons and daughters-in-law and mulatto descendants? Was it possible to contemplate such eventualities?

Under such circumstances, it was much easier to believe the accusations of the South and to listen to the proof which biology and social science hastened to adduce of the inferiority of the Negro. The North seized upon the new Darwinism, the "Survival of the Fittest," to prove that what they had attempted in the South was an impossibility; and they did this in the face of the facts which were before them, the examples of Negro efficiency, of Negro brains, of phenomenal possibilities of advancement.

Moreover, Americans saw throughout the world the shadow of the coming change of the philanthropic attitude which had dominated the early nineteenth century, with regard to the backward races. International and commercial imperialism began to get a vision. Within the very echo of that philanthropy which had abolished the slave trade, was beginning a new industrial slavery of black and brown and yellow workers in Africa and Asia. Arising from this, as a result of this economic foundation, came the change in the attitude toward these darker people. They were no longer "Brothers in Black"; they were inferiors. These inferiors were to be governed for their own good. They were to be raised out of sloth and laziness by being compelled to work. The whole attitude of Europe was reflected in America and it found in America support for its own attitude.

The great republic of the West was trying an impossible experiment. They were trying to make white men out of black men. It could not be done. It was a mistake to conceive it. The North and Europe were still under the sway of individual laissez-faire in industry, and "hands off" in government. It was easy, therefore, for the North to persuade itself that whatever happened politically in the South was right. If the majority did not want Negro rule, or Negro participation in government, the majority was right, and they would not allow themselves to stop and ask how that majority was made. They knew that an organized inner group was compelling the mass of white people to act as a unit; was pounding them by false social sanctions into a false uniformity.

If that part of the white South which had a vision of democracy and was willing to grant equality to Negroes of equal standing had been sustained long enough by a standing Federal police, democracy could have been established in the South. But brute force was allowed to use its unchecked power in the actions of the whites to destroy the possibility of democracy in the South, and thereby make the transition from democracy to plutocracy all the easier and more inevitable.

Through the rift of the opposition, between votes for and against the Negro, between high and low tariff, between free land and land monopoly, plutocracy drove a silent coach and four.

What the South did in 1876 was to make good its refusal either to give up slavery or to yield the political power based on the counting of slaves.

And so the South rode the wind into the whirlwind and accomplished what it sought. Did it pay? Did it settle either the Negro's problem or any problem of wealth, labor, or human uplift? On the

contrary, it made the government of the South a system of secret manipulations with lying and cheating. It made its religion fundamental hypocrisy. And the South knows today that the essential Negro problem is just as it was—how far it dare let the Negro be a modern man.

It was all so clear and right and logical. A nation could not exist half-slave and half-free. If it tried, either its mass of laborers would by force of competition sink into the depths of exploited, ignorant poverty, or rising in bloody revolt break the monopoly of land and materials and endow the mass with more equal income and more political power to maintain their freedom.

So in America came Civil War over the slavery of labor and the end was not peace, but the endeavor really and honestly to remove the cause of strife—to give the black freedman and the white laborer land and education and power to conduct the state in the interests of labor and not of landed oligarchy. Labor lurched forward after it had paid in blood for the chance. And labor, especially black labor, cried for Light and Land and Leading. The world laughed. It laughed North. It laughed West. But in the South it roared with hysterical, angry, vengeful laughter. It said: "Look at these niggers; they are black and poor and ignorant. How can they rule those of us who are white and have been rich and have at our command all wisdom and skill? Back to slavery with the dumb brutes!"

Still the brutes strove on and up with silent, fearful persistency. They restored the lost crops; they established schools; they gave votes to the poor whites; they established democracy; and they even saved a pittance of land and capital out of their still slave-bound wage.

The masters feared their former slaves' success far more than their anticipated failure. They lied about the Negroes. They accused them of theft, crime, moral enormities and laughable grotesqueries. They forestalled the danger of a united Southern labor movement by appealing to the fear and hate of white labor and offering them alliance and leisure. They encouraged them to ridicule Negroes and beat them, kill and burn their bodies. The planters even gave the poor whites their daughters in marriage, and raised a new oligarchy on the tottering, depleted foundations of the old oligarchy, a mass of new rulers the more ignorant, intolerant and ruthless because of their inferiority complex. And thus was built a Solid South impervious to reason, justice or fact.

With this arose a Solid North—a North born of that North which never meant to abolish Negro slavery, because its profits were built on it; but who had been gradually made by idealists and laborers and

freed slaves to refuse more land to slavery; to refuse to catch and return slaves; and finally to fight for freedom since this preserved cotton, tobacco, sugar and the Southern market.

Then this new North, fired by a vision of concentrated economic power and profit greater than the world had visioned, tried to stop war and hasten back to industry. But the blind, angry, bewildered South threatened to block the building of this new industrial oligarchy by a political power increased by the very abolition of slavery, until the North had to yield to democracy and give black labor the power with which white Southern landholders threatened Northern industry.

In return, Northern capital bribed black and white labor in the South and white and black labor in the North. It thrust debt, concessions and graft on the South, while in the North it divided labor into exploiting and exploited groups of skilled and highly paid craftsmen who might and did become capitalists, and a mass of ignorant, disfranchised imported foreign slaves. The West transformed its laboring peasant-farmers into land speculators and investors and united its interests through railways to the Solid South in return for non-interference with Big Business.

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God wept; but that mattered little to an unbelieving age; what mattered most was that the world wept and still is weeping and blind with tears and blood. For there began to rise in America in 1876 a new capitalism and a new enslavement of labor. Home labor in cultured lands, appeased and misled by a ballot whose power the dictatorship of vast capital strictly curtailed, was bribed by high wage and political office to unite in an exploitation of white, yellow, brown and black labor, in lesser lands and "breeds without the law." Especially workers of the New World, folks who were American and for whom America was, became ashamed of their destiny. Sons of ditch-diggers aspired to be spawn of bastard kings and thieving aristocrats rather than of rough-handed children of dirt and toil. The immense profit from this new exploitation and world-wide commerce enabled a guild of millionaires to engage the greatest engineers, the wisest men of science, as well as pay high wage to the more intelligent labor and at the same time to have left enough surplus to make more thorough the dictatorship of capital over the state and over the popular vote, not only in Europe and America but in Asia and Africa.

The world wept because within the exploiting group of New World masters, greed and jealousy became so fierce that they fought for trade and markets and materials and slaves all over the world until at last in 1914 the world flamed in war. The fantastic structure fell, leaving



grotesque Profits and Poverty, Plenty and Starvation, Empire and Democracy, staring at each other across World Depression. And the rebuilding, whether it comes now or a century later, will and must go back to the basic principles of Reconstruction in the United States during 1867-1876—Land, Light and Leading for slaves black, brown, yellow and white, under a dictatorship of the proletariat.

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Profit? What profit hath the sea  
 Of her deep-throated threnody?  
 What profit hath the sun, who stands  
 Staring on space with idle hands?  
 And what should God Himself acquire  
 From all the æons' blood and fire?

FANNIE STEARNS DAVIS

From *Crack o' Dawn*, The Macmillan Company

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1. Haworth, *The Hayes-Tilden Disputed Presidential Election of 1876*, p. 32.
2. Nordhoff, *The Cotton States in the Spring and Summer of 1875*, p. 20.
3. Somers, *The Southern States Since the Civil War*, pp. 30, 54.
4. Campbell, *White and Black*, p. 131.
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20. 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, House Reports, II, No. 22, Part I, pp. 214-215.
21. *Ibid.* Cf. *Report on Valuation and Taxation and Public Indebtedness, 10th Census of U. S.*, pp. 281-294. "A very conservative figure in 1872 put the increase of indebtedness of the eleven states since their reconstruction at \$131,717,777.81, of which more than two-thirds consisted of guarantees to various enterprises, chiefly railways." (*Reconstruction, Political and Economic*, W. A. Dunning, p. 208.)
22. *North American Review*, August-December, 1884.
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