
In recent years the pendulum of Reconstruction historiography has swung sharply toward a liberal, northern, pro-Negro interpretation. Historians of non-southern background such as John Hope Franklin, W. R. Brock, Kenneth Stampp, Richard Current, Otto Olsen, and others have demolished many of the old myths about malevolent radicals, corrupt carpetbaggers, rascally scalawags, and incompetent Negroes conspiring to rule or ruin the prostrate postwar South. It is now pretty firmly established that Reconstruction was a complex mixture of good and evil; that the radical regimes in the South were progressive and beneficial in some endeavors and corrupt in others; that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments, though imperfectly enforced and ultimately betrayed, were nevertheless significant achievements; and that the real tragedy of Reconstruction was not the effort to thrust the ill-prepared freedmen into immediate citizenship, but the failure to undertake a massive program of education, retraining, and economic reform of the South.

In their zeal to redress the historiographical balance, some of the revisionist historians may have sketched slightly too attractive a profile of radicals and Negroes. This is not true of Alan Conway's portrait of Georgia during Reconstruction. A Briton who teaches at the University College of Wales, Conway brings to his subject a degree of detachment that is perhaps impossible for Americans who are too emotionally involved in the Second Reconstruction to view the First with equanimity. This is not to say that Conway's book lacks concern and feeling. On the contrary, the author tells his story in a concise, readable style that gives the reader a sympathetic insight into the tremendous social, political, and economic problems facing the participants in Reconstruction and an understanding of the reasons why many of these problems were unsolved, indeed perhaps insoluble. There are no heroes and few villains in this book, but there are human beings struggling with issues too large for them.

The Ku Klux Klan and similar groups are the nearest things to villains in the book. Conway plainly has no sympathy with the Klan, which he sees as the extralegal means of achieving the main objectives of the Democratic party in Georgia: “first, to restrict the Negro freedmen to a social reservation beyond the pale of white society where they could be kept subservient hewers of wood and sycophantic drawers of water; second, to destroy by means of intimidation and violence the ability of the Negro vote to keep the Republican party in power” (pp. 172-73). The major issue in Georgia Reconstruction was white supremacy; and the only factor that held former Whigs, Know-Nothings, Democrats, secessionists, and Unionists together in the postwar Democratic party “was the common conviction that Georgia must remain a white man's country—a conviction which for most would have remained unshaken had Christ himself come to Georgia as a colored field hand”
(p. 180). Conway expresses mild disagreement with the C. Vann Woodward thesis that thoroughgoing racism and segregation were developments of the late nineteenth century: by 1870 in Georgia "Woodward's 'capitulation to racism' had already taken place and, faute de mieux, accepted" (p. 99). Conway also advances the provocative but thinly documented argument that the supposed contrast between the kindly, paternal attitude of upper-class whites toward the Negro and the virulent, violent racism of the rednecks is largely a myth: "Hatred, fear, resentment, and distrust of the Negro, in their many forms, came . . . from all quarters and from all sections of society" (p. 63).

This book treats all facets of the comparatively short Reconstruction period in Georgia (the state was fully "redeemed" by 1871), but it focuses particularly on the problems of the transition from a slave labor to a free labor agricultural economy. Sharecropping, tenancy, and the crop-lien system were the unhappy solutions to this problem. The absence of an agrarian reform effort to bring widespread land ownership to the freedmen has been viewed by some recent historians as the key to the failure of Reconstruction. Conway expresses qualified agreement with this view, but argues that land ownership alone would not have overcome the lack of incentive, capital, and training that both races, but especially the Negro, inherited from slavery. Conway concludes that the problems of Reconstruction, and especially the intertwined issues of race, poverty, and agriculture, were virtually insoluble: "In part the bitterness of Reconstruction was the bitterness of a people left to grapple with a racial problem to which there was no solution—left, moreover, to grapple with it in an environment of economic stagnation" (p. 228). This is a sobering conclusion, for it suggests that the failures of Reconstruction were not the fault of human error but of the very nature of the race problem itself, a problem that is timeless and perhaps as insoluble today as a century ago.

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As archivist of North Carolina during the past decade, H. G. Jones has contributed to the development of one of the outstanding state record collections. His efforts, and those of his predecessors, were rewarded in 1964 when the Society of American Archivists awarded its first Distinguished Service Award to the North Carolina State Department of Archives and History. Unfortunately, the state has not always been so diligent. In the years before the establishment of the archival department there was no systematic collection of the records. This book is a meticulously researched account of one state's sporadic concern for its documentary heritage.

Jones makes no attempt to deal with the private manuscript holdings in North Carolina; his concern is the public record. The scope