



Rebel Underground

Sons of Confederate Veterans
Major John C. Hutto Camp #443
Jasper, Alabama

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Confederate Memorial Day at the Capitol
Saturday, 20 April 2024 at 10:00am
Cannoneers please arrive at 8:00am to prepare the cannon



The Major John C. Hutto Camp's April camp meeting
will be in Jasper, Alabama on

Sunday, 21 April 2024 at 2:00PM

Meeting will be at the
First Methodist Church's Adult Center

**Speaker: Mr. Spencer Harris ME, MBA, PMP
Manager of Fleet Projects, Southern Nuclear**

More Opportunities for Service

Flags on Confederate graves will be available
for volunteers at Sunday's meeting and
donating to the National Museum Project is still available

and

Don't miss distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at the University
of South Carolina, Professor Clyde Wilson's excellent article in this
month's newsletter

Why The War Was Not About Slavery

Why The War Was Not About Slavery

By Clyde Wilson

March 9, 2016

Clyde Wilson Library

Conventional wisdom of the moment tells us that the great war of 1861—1865 was “about” slavery or was “caused by” slavery. I submit that this is not a historical judgment but a political slogan. What a war is about has many answers according to the varied perspectives of different participants and of those who come after. To limit so vast an event as that war to one cause is to show contempt for the complexities of history as a quest for the understanding of human action.

Two generations ago, the most perceptive historians, much more learned than the current crop, said that the war was “about” economics and was “caused by” economic rivalry. The war has not changed one bit since then. The perspective has changed. It can change again as long as people have the freedom to think about the past. History is not a mathematical calculation or scientific experiment but a vast drama of which there is always more to be learned.

I was much struck by Barbara Marthal’s insistence in her Stone Mountain talk on the importance of stories in understanding history. I entirely concur. History is the experience of human beings. History is a story and a story is somebody’s story. It tells us about who people are. History is not a political ideological slogan like “about slavery.” Ideological slogans are

accusations and instruments of conflict and domination. Stories are instruments of understanding and peace.

Let's consider the war and slavery. Again and again I encounter people who say that the South Carolina secession ordinance mentions the defense of slavery and that one fact proves beyond argument that the war was caused by slavery. The first States to secede did mention a threat to slavery as a motive for secession. They also mentioned decades of economic exploitation and the seizure of the common government for the first time ever by a sectional party declaredly hostile to the Southern States. Were they to be a permanently exploited minority, they asked? This was significant to people who knew that their fathers and grandfathers had founded the Union for the protection and benefit of ALL the States.

It is no surprise that they mentioned potential interference with slavery as a threat to their everyday life and their social structure. Only a few months before, John Brown and his followers had attempted just that. They murdered a number of people including a free black man who was a respected member of the Harpers Ferry community and a grand-nephew of George Washington because Brown wanted Washington's sword as a talisman. In Brown's baggage was a constitution making him dictator of a new black nation and a supply of pikes to be used to stab to death the slave-owner and his wife and children.

It is significant that not one single slave joined Brown's attempted blow against slavery. It was entirely an affair of outsiders. Significant also is that six Northern rich men financed Brown and that some elements of the

North celebrated him as a saint, an agent of God, ringing the church bells at his execution. Even more significantly, Brown was merely acting out the venomous hatred of Southerners that had characterized some parts of Northern society for many years previously.

Could this relentless barrage of hatred directed by Northerners against their Southern fellow citizens have perhaps had something to do with the secession impulse? That was the opinion of Horatio Seymour, Democratic governor of New York. In a public address he pointed to the enormity of making war on Southern fellow citizens who had always been exceptionally loyal Americans, but who had been driven to secession by New England fanaticism.

Secessionists were well aware that slavery was under no immediate threat within the Union. Indeed, some anti-secessionists, especially those with the largest investment in slave property, argued that slavery was safer under the Union than in a new experiment in government.

Advocates of the “slavery and nothing but slavery” interpretation also like to mention a speech in which Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens is supposed to have said that white supremacy was the “cornerstone” of the Confederacy. The speech was ad hoc and badly reported, but so what? White supremacy was also the cornerstone of the United States. A law of the first Congress established that only white people could be naturalized as citizens. Abraham Lincoln’s Illinois forbade black people to enter the State and deprived those who were there of citizenship rights.

Instead of quoting two cherry-picked quotations, serious historians will look into more of the vast documentation of the time. For instance, in determining what the war was “about,” why not consider Jefferson Davis’s inaugural address, the resolutions of the Confederate Congress, numerous speeches by Southern spokesmen of the time as they explained their departure from the U.S. Congress and spoke to their constituents about the necessity of secession. Or for that matter look at the entire texts of the secession documents.

Our advocates of slavery causation practice the same superficial and deceitful tactics in viewing their side of the fight. They rely mostly on a few pretty phrases from a few of Lincoln’s prettier speeches to account for the winning side in the Great Civil War. But what were Northerners really saying?

I am going to do something radical. I am going to review what Northerners had to say about the war. Not a single Southern source, Southern opinion, or Southern accusation will I present. Just the words of Northerners (and a few foreign observers) on what the war was “about.”

Abraham Lincoln was at pains to assure the South that he intended no threat to slavery. He said he understood Southerners and that Northerners would be exactly like them living in the same circumstances. He said that while slavery was not a good thing (which most Southerners agreed with) he had no power to interfere with slavery and would not know what to do if he had the power. He acquiesced in a proposed 13th Amendment that would have guaranteed slavery into the 20th century. Later, he famously

told Horace Greeley that his purpose was to save the Union, for which he would free all the slaves, some of the slaves, or none of the slaves. The Emancipation Proclamation itself promised a continuance of slavery to States that would lay down their arms.

All Lincoln wanted was to prevent slavery in any territories, future States, which then might become Southern and vote against Northern control of the Treasury and federal legislation. From the anti-slavery perspective this is a highly immoral position. At the time of the Missouri Compromise, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison said that restricting the spread of slavery was a false, politically motivated position. The best thing for the welfare of African Americans and their eventual emancipation was to allow them to spread as thinly as possible.

Delegation after delegation came to Lincoln in early days to beg him to do something to avoid war. Remember that 61% of the American people had voted against this great hero of democracy, which ought to have led him to a conciliatory frame of mind. He invariably replied that he could not do without “his revenue.” He said nary a word about slavery. Most of “his revenue” was collected at the Southern ports because of the tariff to protect Northern industry and most of it was spent in the North. Lincoln could not do without that revenue and vowed his determination to collect it without interruption by secession. He knew that his political backing rested largely on New England/New York money men and the rising power of the new industrialists of Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago who were aggressively demanding that the federal government sponsor and support them. The revenue also provided the patronage of offices and

contracts for his hungry supporters, without which his party would dwindle away.

Discussing the reaction to secession, the New York Times editorialized: “The commercial bearing of the question has acted upon the North. We were divided and confused until our pockets were touched.” A Manchester, N.H., paper was one of hundreds of others that agreed, saying: “It is very clear that the South gains by this process and we lose. No, we must not let the South go.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. Congress officially declared that the war WAS NOT AGAINST SLAVERY but to preserve the Union. (By preserving the Union, of course, they actually meant not preserving the real Union but ensuring their control of the federal machinery.)

At the Hampton Roads peace conference a few months before Appomattox, Lincoln suggested to the Confederate representatives that if they ceased fighting then the Emancipation Proclamation could be left to the courts to survive or fall. Alexander Stephens, unlike Lincoln, really cared about the fate of the black people and asked Lincoln what was to become of them if freed in their present unlettered and propertyless condition. Lincoln’s reply: “Root, hog, or die.” A line from a minstrel song suggesting that they should survive as best they could. Lincoln routinely used the N-word all his life, as did most Northerners.

A statement in which Lincoln is said to favour voting rights for black men who were educated or had been soldiers has been shown to be fraudulent.

Within a few days of his death he was still speaking of colonization outside the U.S.

The South, supposedly fighting for slavery, did not respond to any of these offers for the continuance of slavery. In fact, wise Southerners like Jefferson Davis realized that if war came it would likely disrupt slavery as it had during the first war of independence. That did not in the least alter his desire for the independence and self-government that was the birthright of Americans. Late in the war he sent a special emissary to offer emancipation if European powers would break the illegal blockade.

Saying that the South was fighting only to defend the evils of slavery is a deceitful back-handed way to suggest that, therefore the North was fighting to rid America of the evils of slavery. Nothing could be further from the truth. First of all, secession did not necessarily require war against the South. That was a choice. Slavery had existed for over two hundred years and there was no Northern majority in favour of emancipation. Emancipation was not the result of a moral crusade against evil but a byproduct of a ruthless war of invasion and conquest. Not one single act of Lincoln and the North in the war was motivated by moral considerations in regard to slavery.

Even if slavery was a reason for secession, it does not explain why the North made a war of invasion and conquest on a people who only wanted to be let alone to live as they had always lived. The question of why the North made war is not even asked by our current historians. They assume without examination that the North is always right and the South is always

evil. They do not look at the abundant Northern evidence that might shed light on the matter.

When we speak about the causes of war should we not pay some attention to the motives of the attacker and not blame everything on the people who were attacked and conquered? To say that the war was “caused” by the South’s defense of slavery is logically comparable to the assertion that World War II was caused by Poland resisting attack by Germany. People who think this way harbor an unacknowledged assumption: Southerners are not fellow citizens deserving of tolerance but bad people and deserve to be conquered. The South and its people are the property of the North to do with as they wish. Therefore no other justification is needed. That Leninist attitude is very much still alive judging by the abuse I receive in print and by e-mail. The abuse never discusses evidence, only denounces what is called “Neo-Confederate” and “Lost Cause” mythology. These are both political terms of abuse that have no real meaning and are designed to silence your enemy unheard.

Let us look at the U.S. Senate in February 1863. Senator John Sherman of Ohio, one of the most prominent of the Republican supporters of war against the South, has the floor. He is arguing in favour of a bill to establish a system of national banks and national bank currency. He declared that this bill was the most important business pending before the country. It was so important, he said, that he would see all the slaves remain slaves if it could be passed. Let me repeat this. He would rather leave all the slaves in bondage rather than lose the national bank bill. This was a few weeks after the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation.

What about this bill? Don't be deceived by the terminology. So-called National Banks were to be the property of favoured groups of private capitalists. They were to have as capital interest-bearing government bonds at a 50% discount. The bank notes that they were to issue were to be the national currency. The banks, not the government, had control of this currency. That is, these favoured capitalists had the immense power and profit of controlling the money and credit of the country. Crony capitalism that has been the main feature of the American regime up to this very moment.

Senator Sherman's brother, General Sherman, had recently been working his way across Mississippi, not fighting armed enemies but destroying the infrastructure and the food and housing of white women and children and black people. When the houses are burned, the livestock taken away or killed, the barns with tools and seed crops destroyed, fences torn down, stored food and standing crops destroyed, the black people will starve as well as the whites. General Sherman was heard to say: "Damn the niggers! I wish they were anywhere but here and could be kept at work."

General Sherman was not fighting for the emancipation of black people. He was a proto-fascist who wanted to crush citizens who had the gall to disobey the government.

The gracious Mrs. General Sherman agreed. She wrote her husband thus:

"I hope this may not be a war of emancipation but of extermination, & that all under the influence of the foul fiend may be driven like swine into

the sea. May we carry fire and sword into their states till not one habitation is left standing.”

Not a word about the slaves.

As the war began, the famous abolitionist Theodore Weld declared that the South had to be wiped out because it is “the foe to Northern industry—to our mines, our manufactures, our commerce.” Nothing said about benefit to the slaves. The famous abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher enjoyed a European tour while the rivers of blood were flowing in America. Asked by a British audience why the North did not simply let the South go, Beecher replied, “Why not let the South go? O that the South would go! But then they must leave us their lands.”

Then there is the Massachusetts Colonel who wrote his governor from the South in January 1862:

“The thing we seek is permanent dominion. . . . They think we mean to take their slaves? Bah! We must take their ports, their mines, their water power, the very soil they plow”

Seizing Southern resources was a common theme among advocates of the Union. Southerners were not fellow citizens of a nation. They were obstacles to be disposed of so Yankees could use their resources to suit themselves. The imperialist impulse was nakedly and unashamedly expressed before, during, and after the war.

Charles Dickens, who had spent much time in the U.S. a few years before the war, told readers of his monthly magazine in 1862: “The Northern onslaught upon slavery was no more than a piece of specious humbug designed to conceal its desire for economic control of the Southern states.” Another British observer, John Stuart Mill, hoped the war would be against slavery and was disappointed. “The North, it seems,” Mill wrote, “have no more objections to slavery than the South have.”

Another European thinker to comment was Karl Marx. Like many later Lincoln worshippers, Marx believed that the French Revolution was a continuation of the American Revolution and Lincoln’s revolution in America a continuation of the French. He thought, wrongly, that Lincoln was defending the “labour of the emigrant against the aggressions of the slave driver.” The war, then, is in behalf of the German immigrants who had flooded the Midwest after the 1848 revolutions. Not a word about the slaves themselves. Indeed, it was the numbers and ardent support of these German immigrants that turned the Midwest from Democrat to Republican and elected Lincoln. It would seem that Marx, like Lincoln, wanted the land for WHITE workers.

Governor Joel Parker of New Jersey, a reluctant Democratic supporter of the war, knew what it was all about: “Slavery is no more the cause of this war than gold is the cause of robbery,” he said. Like all Northern opponents and reluctant supporters of Lincoln, he knew the war was about economic domination. As one “Copperhead” editor put it: the war was simply “a murderous crusade for plunder and party power.” “Dealing in confiscated cotton seems to be the prime activity of the army,” he added.

Wall Street agreed and approved. Here is a private circular passed among bankers and brokers in late 1861:

“Slavery is likely to be abolished by the war power and this I and my friends are all in favor of, for slavery is but the owning of labor and carries with it the care of the laborers, while the European plan, led on by England, is that capital shall control labor by controlling wages. The great debt that capitalists will see to it is made out of the war must be used as a means to control the volume of money.”

It is not clear whether this is authentic or a satire, but it tells the truth whichever.

The libertarian Lysander Spooner, an abolitionist, called the Lincoln rule “usurpation and tyranny” that had nothing to do with a moral opposition to slavery. “It has cost this country a million of lives, and the loss of everything that resembles political liberty.”

Here is Frederick Douglass, the most prominent African American of the 19th century:

“It must be admitted, truth compels me to admit . . . Abraham Lincoln was not, in the fullest sense of the word, either our man or our model. In his interests, in his associations, in his habits of thought, and in his prejudices, he was a white man. He was preeminently the white man’s president, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men. He was ready and willing at any time . . . to deny, postpone, and sacrifice the rights of

humanity in the colored people to promote the welfare of the white people of his country.”

What better testimony is needed that emancipation was a by-product, not a goal, of a war of conquest. Let me repeat: emancipation was a by-product of the war, never a goal.

How about these curiosities from the greatest of Northern intellectuals, Emerson. He records in his journals: “But the secret, the esoteric of abolition—a secret, too, from the abolitionist—is, that the negro and the negro-holder are really of one party.” And again, “The abolitionist wishes to abolish slavery, but because he wishes to abolish the black man.” Emerson had previously predicted that African Americans were like the Dodo, incapable of surviving without care and doomed to disappear. Another abolitionist, James G. Birney, says: “The negroes are part of the enemy.”

Indeed a staple of Northern discourse was that black people would and should disappear, leaving the field to righteous New England Anglo-Saxons. My friend Howard White remarks: “Whatever his faults regarding slavery, the Southerner never found the existence of Africans in his world per se a scandal. That particular foolishness had its roots in the regions further North.”

In 1866, Boston had a meeting of abolitionists and strong Unionists. The speaker, a clergymen, compared the South to a sewer. It was to be drained of its present inhabitants and “to be filled up with Yankee immigration . . .

and upon that foundation would be constructed a new order of things. To be reconstructed, the South must be Northernized, and until that was done, the work of reconstruction could not be accomplished.” Not a word about a role for African Americans in this program.

One of the most important aspects of the elimination of slavery is seldom mentioned. The absence of any care or planning for the future of black Americans. The Russian Czar pointed this out to an American visitor as a flaw that invalidated the fruits of emancipation. We could fill ten books with evidence of Northern mistreatment of black people during and after the war. Emancipation as it occurred was not a happy experience. To borrow Kirkpatrick Sale’s term, it was a Hell. I recommend Kirk’s book *Emancipation Hell* and Paul Graham’s work *When the Yankees Come*, which are available here.

I suspect many Americans imagine emancipation as soldiers in blue and freed people rushing into one another’s arms to celebrate the day of Jubilee. As may be proved from thousands of Northern sources, the Union soldiers’ encounter with the black people of the South was overwhelmingly hate-filled, abusive, and exploitive. This subject is just beginning to be explored seriously. Wrote one Northerner of Sherman’s men, they “are impatient of darkies, and annoyed to see them pampered, petted and spoiled.” Ambrose Bierce, a hard-fighting Union soldier for the entire war, said that the black people he saw were virtual slaves as the concubines and servants of Union officers.

Many black people took to the roads not because of an intangible

emancipation but because their homes and living had been destroyed. They collected in camps which had catastrophic rates of mortality. The army asked some Northern governors to take some of these people, at least temporarily. The governors of Massachusetts and Illinois, Lincoln's most fervid supporters, went ballistic. This was unacceptable. The black people would be uncomfortable in the North and much happier in the South, said the longtime abolitionist Governor Andrew of Massachusetts. Happier in the South than in Massachusetts?

What about those black soldiers in the Northern army, used mainly for labour and forlorn hopes like the Crater? A historian quotes a Northern observer of U.S. Army activities in occupied coastal Carolina in 1864. Generals declared their intention to recruit "every able-bodied male in the department." Writes the Northern observer: "The atrocious impressments of boys of fourteen and responsible men with large dependent families, and the shooting down of negroes who resisted, were common occurrences."

The greater number of Southern black people remained at home. They received official notice of freedom not from the U.S. Army but from the master who, when he got home from the Confederate army, gathered the people, told them they were free, and that they must work out a new way of surviving together. Advocates of the war was "caused by slavery" say that the question has been settled and that any disagreement is from evil and misguided Neo-Confederates deceived by a "Lost Cause" myth.

In fact, no great historical question can ever be closed off by a slogan as

long as we are free to think. Howard White and I recently put out a book about the war. Careful, well-supported essays, by 16 serious people. Immediately it appeared on amazon, someone wrote in: “I’m so tired of the Lost Cause writing. Don’t believe the bullshit in this useless pamphlet.” He could not have had time to actually read the book. It can be dismissed unread because he has the righteous cause and we do not. This is not historical debate. It is the propaganda trick of labeling something you do not like in order to control and suppress it. Such are those who want the war to be all about slavery—hateful, disdainful, ignorant, and unwilling to engage in honest discussion.

But if you insist on a short answer solution as to what caused the war I will venture one. The cause of the greatest bloodletting in American history was Yankee greed and hatred. This is infinitely documented before, during, and after the war.

Glory, Glory, Hallelujah

Don’t miss the excellent comments at the end of the article posted on the [Abbeville Institute’s website](#)

Clyde Wilson is a distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at the University of South Carolina where he was the editor of the multi-volume The Papers of John C. Calhoun. He is the M.E. Bradford Distinguished Chair at the Abbeville Institute. He is the author or editor of over thirty books and published over 600 articles, essays and reviews and is co-publisher of www.shotwellpublishing.com, a source for unreconstructed Southern books.

HUTTO CAMP OFFICERS

Commander	James R. Blackston
1 st Lt. Cmd	Trent Harris
2nd Lt. Cmd	Jeremy Jackson
Adjutant	John McGraw
Chaplain	Barry Cook
Judge Advocate	Cherokee Brasher
Communications	Barry Cook
Facebook	Brandon Prescott - Jeremy Jackson
Quartermaster	Barry Cook
Newsletter Editor	James Blackston

Website: www.huttocamp.com

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