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Historical Background of Black Discrimination

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> Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.
>
> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past.
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> Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

Racism and political democracy have been the contradictory substructure of the American system since early colonial times. The quality of the system has been deeply flawed from the outset by being rooted in class-divisioned, bourgeois economic institutions. The histories of white America and black America, while inextricably intertwined, have been strikingly diverse, though the degree of diversity has changed dramatically over the last several decades as the class structures of the two races have grown closer together. Although white immigrants into colonial America were not a homogeneous group, the great majority came voluntarily, seeking freedom and economic opportunity. The blacks came overwhelmingly as unfree labor (slaves or indentured servants) as a result of the forcible expropriation of their lives and liberty. A land of limitless opportunities for the more fortunate among the whites contrasted sharply with one of limitless bondage for all but the most fortunate of the blacks. Property ownership in early America was widespread (if unequally so) among the whites; the overwhelming majority of blacks were themselves property.

A study of American racism reveals the close interaction of economic and cultural factors in the course of the country's

development. The political economy of slavery generated a cultural superstructure that reinforced the underlying political economy, with a resulting dialectical pattern of accommodation and resistance – a pattern that has characterized the position of slaves in the antebellum period and of 'free' blacks ever since. Although racism was deeply embedded from the beginning in America's property-oriented institutions, this racism (as both an attitude and a power relationship) can only be effectively understood in light of class factors that shaped it during the process of capitalist development. The changing dialectics of race and class are pivotal in explaining the objective and subjective relations between the white and black working classes.

Antebellum Political Economy of Racism

Blacks first entered England's colonies in North America in 1619 at Jamestown, Virginia. Although the issue of their precise legal status remains in dispute, fragmentary evidence indicates that these early arrivals during the dawn of the capitalist era become part of the prevailing system of indentured servitude; they worked as unfree servants under a contract with certain masters for a stipulated period – usually seven years, although this changed over time – after which they attained free legal status. Black and white servants worked together with limited awareness of caste differences among themselves, although probably quite aware of their shared underclass status vis-a-vis the landholders. Describing common limitations on freedom in the middle seventeenth century, George Frederickson declares:

> Although some blacks were slaves, others were in service for a fixed term, and a substantial number were free. And, whatever their status, they seem to have enjoyed many of the same legal rights as other inhabitants. The tobacco farms and plantations of the seventeenth century were worked by a fixed labor force of white servants, black servants, and black slaves all of whom were subject to the same discipline.[1]

In an earlier study Oscar Handlin claims that 'some [blacks] became artisans, and a few became landowners and the masters of other men'.[2] Blacks with the requisite amount of property had legal voting rights even in the South, although the process of disfranchisement started to gather momentum toward the end of

the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Class was more important than race in determining social relations in this earliest stage of American history.

While the earliest whites doubtless brought with them the prejudiced attitudes toward blacks prevailing in Elizabethan England, their common work status, for at least the first few decades, did little to reinforce these attitudes. Unlike the whites, however, the blacks generally, so far as we know, did not have the benefit of written indenture contracts, and furthermore their entry into the New World was involuntary. Frederickson contrasts the position of white servants and blacks:

> Unlike white servants who were protected from unlimited service by their contracts of indenture and by some concern for their welfare on the part of the British government, virtually all blacks who arrived in the colonies [in the seventeenth century] had no contracts and no government to protect them; hence they were vulnerable to enslavement.[3]

The main reason for their eventual legal enslavement[4] (starting sporadically in the 1640s and more regularly by the 1660s) was the realization by the tobacco landlords (and to a lesser extent by their counterparts in rice and indigo products) that slavery would be economically profitable. The development of the plantation dovetailed with the development of slavery; each reinforced the other. The gradual decline of blacks from servant status to permanent involuntary servitude (slavery), in contrast to the gradual amelioration of the terms of white indentured servitude, had three main causes. First was the economic need to encourage more European immigrants through shorter indenture periods and improved conditions of labor.[5] Second was the realization that the supply of blacks did not depend on conditions of labor, since their servitude was involuntary. Third was the need for cheap, controllable, exploitable labor as the Southern colonies turned to plantation staples during the seventeenth century. By the end of that century, the capital accumulation process was sufficiently advanced to enable growing numbers of planters to buy imported slaves.

The very abundance of cheap land relative to the supply of labor, which led to high and rising wages for most whites, helped to fasten slavery on the blacks. Slavery enabled the

Southern planter to overcome the growing labor shortage created by the progressive growth of plantations in response to surging European markets. Given the high wages the planters would have had to pay – since land was plentiful and therefore cheap, and labor was relatively scarce and therefore expensive – production based on slave labor was probably more profitable than it would have been under alternative labor systems (for example, the free market). That is, free labor would have been harder to exploit under conditions where laborers had the alternative of becoming small farmers.

Another dovetailing factor stemmed from the linkage between the changing priorities of the dominant metropolitan centers of the early seventeenth century and those of colonial areas like the West Indies and the American South. Under the 'state-planned' mercantilist governments in Western Europe, with their emphasis on increasing the economic and political power of the nation-state through developing home manufacturers and exports, the ruling economic statesmen preferred to use their labor supply at home rather than send it to the colonies. A labor scarcity at home would drive up wages and make exports less competitive in the world market, thus creating severe monetary and fiscal problems, which in turn would intensify the need for an alternative labor supply in the colonies. These were the crucial economic reasons behind the rise of slavery.

The slave trade, which uprooted perhaps 10 million Africans,[6] was an enormously profitable venture for the commercial capitalist class of Western Europe,[7] the center of world capitalism. The efforts of some American colonies in the eighteenth century to limit or abolish the slave trade were thwarted by England under pressure from its merchant class.[8] As the Industrial Revolution (fueled in part by the profits of slavery and slave trading) established England's hegemony in the world capitalist system, the benefit of the slave trade, and slave-based agriculture in the West Indian sugar plantations, lessened considerably. Slave-trading and slavery were abolished by an English parliament in which power and wealth were shifting from a landed aristocracy to a rising capitalist class. The British textile capitalists continued to maintain a keen interest in the preservation of American slavery as the main supplier of cotton. Wallerstein explains this seemingly ambivalent position in materialist terms:

> Both the need for West Africa as a crop-producing area and the desire (and ability) to deny *European* competitors slave producers led to Britain's enforcement (selective, be it noted) of the abolition of the slave trade and encouragement in areas outside its own supply zones (such as the U.S. South and Brazil) of emancipation.[9]

After American independence, the slave trade was closed by Congress in 1808, but substantial illegal importations occurred until the eve of the Civil War.[10] A considerable slave traffic existed between the older soil-depleted areas (of the Southeast and the border states) and the richer lands in the Southwest. This internal trade helped to make the Southern economy as a whole more economically viable by facilitating the shift of capital (human beings as property) from low-profit to high-profit sectors. It also indirectly illustrated a dual function of the slave – to provide both a present and a future labor supply. As in all social systems, the dominant class (the slaveowners) possessed a means of social control over the human and physical resources.

Treatment of Slaves

Although the treatment of slaves was highly variable, it was a profoundly dehumanizing experience for them. Tribes were scattered to prevent group solidarity, in marked contrast to various West European immigrant groups. Cultural autonomy based on African rituals and customs had to be broken for the slaveowners to assert their mastery. In time, however, a distinct indigenous black culture formed, based on the common experience of life under an oppressive slave system.

Any humanizing tendencies that existed during the Revolutionary War era (reinforced, of course, by practical considerations)[11] were rapidly erased by the 1830s. Slavery was increasingly presented by the proslavery people as a positive good rather than a necessary evil,[12] and the value of this good was reflected in the increasingly stringent slave codes in the decades before the American Civil War. Eli Whitney's cotton gin, a technological breakthrough spurred by the pressures of rising world demand that coincided with the British Industrial Revolution, seemed to imprint slavery indelibly on the Southern states. Cotton production increased more than fivefold in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The machine rapidly converted the South into the world's greatest cotton producer

and thereby stimulated the demand for more slaves and more land. The increasing value of slavery was reflected in the writings and speeches of Southern apologists for slavery as well as in modifications of their legal systems. Unlike slaves in Latin America (largely emancipated by the 1830s), slaves in the US were chattels with the barest minimum of legal rights. The issue of rights was raised only in cases of disputes between owners. By 1840, private manumissions were prohibited by law in most Southern states, and the condition of 'free men of color' (488,000 by 1860, about evenly distributed between the South and other regions), was made even more burdensome, particularly in the deep South.

The far-reaching web of racial discrimination reached into the North as well.[13] Blacks were disfranchised in almost all of the Northern and border states in the decades before the Civil War, segregated either by law or by custom in schools and places of public accommodation, and, perhaps most importantly in the long run, all but completely excluded from the labor movement. White workers and craftsmen fiercely resented competition from slaves and free blacks as early as the colonial period.[14] But economic discrimination in the North only manifested itself in a truly all pervasive way in conjunction with an accelerated influx of immigrants, underscoring the cyclical nature of the competitive private-enterprise economy, accompanying the transition from an agrarian to a commercial-manufacturing base around the 1820s and 1830s.

For the vast majority of Northern blacks, who were practically excluded from factory work, menial labor was the main economic 'opportunity'. Although significant numbers of free blacks in the North and South did acquire skills and practise trades, and some managed to obtain a limited education, those in the South had more economic opportunities than their Northern counterparts. This was partly due to the political weakness of the nonslave-holding whites in the plantation-dominated society of the South; in the North by contrast, the power of the white workers and craftsmen was often applied to exclude or dominate the free blacks, particularly in economically depressed periods. The strident claim of Southern proslavery adherents that the position of Northern free blacks was worse than Southern slaves missed the crucial point that the former could more effectively struggle to improve their conditions. As John Hope Franklin says:

> Southerners did not seem to realize, however, that for the Negro the essential difference between the South and the North and West was that in the latter sections he had more of the law on his side and could therefore resist encroachments on his rights. Northern Negroes could organize and fight for what they believed to be their rights, and there was a substantial group of white citizens who gave them both moral and material support.[15]

It remains true, however, that although free blacks in the North had more political rights than their Southern counterparts, they had fewer economic opportunities in the antebellum period.

While some historians reject the notion that slaves, like all oppressed peoples, were constantly and actively resisting the system, the fact that slaveowners lived in constant fear of slave insurrections suggests that more than just paranoia prevailed in the Southern states. Over 200 slave revolts (albeit mostly minor ones) have been identified and documented.[16] The Southern apologist view of slavery as a benign and civilizing system in which the slaves were well treated, and therefore identified with the masters instead of resisting them, has been proven (despite its renewal by some modern scholars critical of slavery) to be more folklore than reality.[17] While it is true that in most cases accommodation and survival were the most frequent forms of slave behavior (and perhaps their most persistent social values), myriad forms of resistance were also a continuing aspect of slave society.[18] The rebelliousness of the slave group often expressed itself in less dramatic forms than actual revolts; work slow-downs, running away or aiding runaways, careless or inefficient work, damaging slaveowners' properties, self-inflicted wounds, occasional suicides, feigned illness, theft, arson and even the murders of overseers or masters.[19] Despite the difficulty of quantifying these occurrences, chronicles of the period certainly affirm their existence. Moreover, what appears as a 'natural condition' was rarely accepted. As Kenneth Stampp trenchantly states,

> The record of slave resistance forms a chapter in the story of the endless struggle to give dignity to human life. Though the history of Southern bondage reveals that men can be enslaved under certain conditions, it also demonstrates that their love of freedom is hard to crush.[20]

The ability of slaves to construct a viable subculture of their own (based on family, community and religion) undoubtedly enabled them to withstand some of the psychological debilitation caused by the harsh conditions of American slavery.[21] Fear of physical separation from their families, perpetrated by slaveowners with unlimited selling rights over their chattels, may well have checked the spirit of active resistance among many slaves, thus leading them to make reluctant and partial accommodation to plantation life.

Variations of privilege, incentive and discipline existed within the slave system. Subjugation was far more complete in plantation situations based on simple repetitive tasks than it was in many urban situations, especially those requiring some exercise of care and initiative on the part of the laborer. A few slaves had considerable personal freedom and received a near equivalent of wages. There were, however, inherent limitations to the degree of freedom possible under this structure.

The nature of the slave system is such that the master class must control and, in Marxist terms, exploit the slave class[22] (since slaves normally produced more value than they received in wage-equivalents). Still, conditions in the competitive product market sometimes prevented slaveowners from reaping the fruits of this exploitation. Although technically slaves were a capital input and not a labor input, it is not reasonable to assume that slaveowners looked on their slave capital in the same way they regarded, say, their cotton gin. Machines, after all, cannot comprise a caste or class; slaves and slaveowners do. One can therefore legitimately employ Marx's concept of worker exploitation to slaves, provided that the original price and maintenance costs of the slave labor are taken into account. The rough measure of slave exploitation is thus the difference between the commodity value created by slave labor (under normal conditions and in the long run) and the value required for slave subsistence and reproduction.

Slavery is only an extreme version of the class conflict between all workers trying to minimize their toil (and, of course, maximize their wages) and owners trying to overcome worker reluctance. Whether particular masters or even a majority were kindly or tyrannical is of little importance in understanding the main thrust of the system. Although there is some evidence of an improvement in the conditions of slave life in the last decades

before the Civil War – and the slave standard of living may even have compared favorably with that of free workers and peasants in nineteenth-century Europe and America – the yoke of slavery became more and more firmly set. Genovese perceives an organic connection between these divergent tendencies, the slaveholder's goal being to exert a minimum effort in maintaining control.

> The slave regime of the Old South grew more repressive toward manumission as it grew more humane with respect to the material conditions of life. In the specific conditions of Southern slavery, the one required the other – or rather, each formed part of a single process of social cohesion.[23]

Wallerstein connects increased legal repression and economic improvement with a key external event – England's definitive control, by 1815, over the world capitalist economy, including its abolition of the slave trade. 'It seems self-evident that if you cannot import slaves from elsewhere (the United States from 1808 on) you have to reproduce them yourself and that this fact alone will require improvement of material conditions.'[24] The sheer monotony of the labor and the almost total absence of control over their own work, coupled with the continual threat or actuality of whipping[25] to maintain discipline, must have strained the slaves' endurance to the physical and psychological limits. W.E.B. DuBois grasped the distinction between this way of life and that of the 'free' worker in the desperate era of the Great Depression:

> There was in 1863 a real meaning to slavery different from that which we may apply to the laborer today. It was in part psychological, the enforced personal feeling of inferiority, the calling of another Master; the standing with hat in hand. It was the helplessness. It was the defenselessness of family life. It was the submergence below the arbitrary will of any sort of individual. It was without doubt worse in these vital respects than that which exists today [the 1930s] in Europe or America.[26]

Virtually all contemporary studies of American slavery that focus on profitability (Fogel and Engerman), psychological affinities and contrasts with other societies (Elkins) or mutual cultural social adaptations of slave and master (Genovese) do not cut to the marrow of one vital aspect of the slave system – every

instrument of persuasion from brute force to accommodationism (acknowledged by Genovese), and even some extension of social privileges (as a modest cooptation device), was employed to enforce and reinforce the power and interests of a ruling class over its subjects. This hierarchical structure formed the very warp and woof of the slave system. This was the basic operative social relation. The essential brutality and inhumanity of this system are not diminished by its 'complexity' or by the 'semi-autonomy' ('adaptability' is a more correct term) of the oppressed. On the other hand, it is essential to recognize that the slaveholders were not fiends or madmen. However much they viewed their 'victims' as *Untermenschen*, the slaveholders never contemplated the sheer economic irrationality (not to mention the immorality) of executing them. They knew that the slaves were the key to their elitist way of life. One did not destroy a valuable chattel anymore than one destroyed a machine. Hence, except for rare occurrences, open barbarism was selective and episodic rather than general and continuous. It was, however, an omnipresent threat, since the maintenance of discipline over an involuntary work force requires it. It is this point of differentiation between the keystone of a system and its subordinate parts that has been insufficiently grasped by certain historians (for example, Avery Craven and Ulrich Phillips) who seek to demonstrate the 'irresponsible exaggeration' by abolitionists about the 'complex' human relations under slavery. Howard Zinn has dealt with the alleged distortions of the slave–master relationships and insightfully exposed the shallowness and passive methodology of orthodox theory.

> There is an answer to the problem of how to state simply a complex truth – but this requires an activist outlook rare among scholars. . . . If we start from the ethical assumption that it is fundamentally wrong to hold in bondage – whether kindly or cruelly – another human being, and that the freeing of such persons requires penetrating the moral sensibilities of a nation, then it is justifiable to focus on those aspects of the complexity which support this goal. . . . The scholar who accepts no harsh judgment because it does not do justice to the entire complex truth, can really accept no judgments about society, because all are simplifications of the complex. The result is scholarly detachment from the profound ethical conflicts of society and from that human concern without which scholarship becomes a pretentious game.[27]

While Zinn indeed cuts to the ethical heart of slavery, a materialist outlook must also deal with the *economic* tap roots of the system. Subject to the two constraints that slaves were a capital good (with the unique biological ability to reproduce more than their own value equivalent) that required a certain amount of care in order to function, and that slave-produced staples were sold in internationally competitive markets at prices over which the slaveowners had no control, the individual planters attempted (like all capitalists) to obtain reasonable returns on their investments.[28] Unfortunately for the planters, their inferior market power relative to merchants and manufacturers affected their ability to gain profits. While the question of the precise psychological–sociological relationship of the ruling and subordinate class is important in its own right, it pales in comparison with the crucial facts of economic life. Certainly a detailed study of the culture of slavery is interwoven with its political economy. Certainly capitalism is more quality-selective (in a market sense) than slavery. Moreover, the inferiority of the planters in relation to the capitalists was rooted not in the market but in the social control over labor. Though the planters displayed a modicum of shrewdness about marketing, their sense of social–cultural values inhibited any similar insights into the production process. The culture of slavery interfered with capitalist rationality. There is little doubt that the planters' belief in their own indispensability, and in their power to dictate economic terms to the industrial sector, reflected their cultural conditioning. Moreover, the cultural rigidity of the slave-based system at least partly explains the inability of the ruling class to make those concessions that would have prolonged its rule.

Southern whites were split along class lines. On one side was the relatively small plantation aristocracy, which dominated the political, economic and cultural scene. On the other was the large nonslaveholding class that resented (although seldom actively challenged)[29] the planters' hegemony, while at the same time fearing the potential or actual competition of the slaves and free men of color. Small farmers who harbored the hope of becoming larger-scale operators and therefore admired the planters were probably the exception. The ownership of slaves was extremely concentrated: only one-fourth of the South's white families owned slaves and, of this group, almost three-fourths owned fewer than ten slaves. In 1860, about 8,000 planters (a trifle more

than 2 per cent) owned 50 or more slaves, and a disproportionate number of the slaves worked on these relatively few plantations.[30] Small independent yeoman farmers, who did not own slaves but scratched out a subsistence living, were much more typical of the antebellum South than the slave-based plantation.

A fuller understanding of Southern power relations is attained by analyzing the intersecting effects of gender, class and race. Although all Southern women, from black slave women to white mistresses of the large plantations, were oppressed by a chauvinist society, some were more privileged than others. In her insightful study *Within the Plantation Household*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese identifies gender, class and race relations as

> the grid that defined Southern women's objective positions in their society, constituted the elements from which they fashioned their views of themselves and the world, constituted the relations of different groups of Southern women to one another. The class relations that divided and interlocked Southern women played a central role in their respective identities. Slaveholding, slave, yeoman, poor white, and middle-class town women, as members of a gender, shared the imposition of male dominance, but their experience of that dominance differed significantly according to race and class.[31]

Fox-Genovese notes that although slave mistresses were closely tied to slave women in complex ways, they were privileged members of a ruling class with near absolute power over their slaves. The slave mistresses were solid supporters of the slave system while slave women, exploited economically as well as sexually, resisted the system as best they could.

Slavery and World Capitalism

The plantation was the vital economic unit of the Southern political economy. It turned out the overwhelming part of the Southern staples – rice, sugar, tobacco, hemp and, above all, cotton. Although diversified farming existed in the upper South, most Southern plantation agriculture was specialized.

Unlike the slavery of antiquity, slavery in the New World operated within the framework of national and international capitalism. It provided the major part of the surplus that generated the industrial take-off of England and France (and later of the United States). Marx stressed the crucial role of slavery in this process:

> Direct slavery is the pivot of bourgeois industry . . . without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you cannot have modern industry. It is slavery which has given colonies their values; it is the colonies which have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the precondition of large scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the highest importance.[32]

The fact that the slave South was embedded in world capitalist relations does not justify regarding it as a minor variant of a capitalist system – a system in which surplus value and capital accumulation take place with the use of slave capital.[33] Slavery as a separate mode of production coexisted with, influenced and was influenced by capitalism as another separate mode of production.[34] Slavery, in essence, was an archaic and inferior precapitalist mode of production dominated by the plantation class, which had engrafted some aspects of bourgeois civilization because of its subordination to the dominant world capitalist system. To be sure, the peripheral position of the South in relation to the semiperipheral North and to the European core countries (to use Wallerstein's language)[35] does help to explain the fragility and contradictions of the Southern economy, weaknesses stemming from its concentration on export staples. It also helps to explain the exploitation of the undeveloped periphery by the metropolitan core, and how the former contributed to the latter. In other words, the world capitalist model provides a key for understanding how the surplus in the colonial countries was pumped out by the colonialist powers.

In Wallerstein's terms, the defeat of the Southern periphery slave economy by the Northern semiperiphery capitalist economy was (within the world capitalist mode of production) essential for launching the Northern core-dominated economy on the path toward building a core nation. However, this approach bypasses an important part of the dialectic. It is simply this: the process by which the South generated its surplus depended on the social relations between classes in the region. Slavery and feudalism in the periphery were compatible with (although subordinate to) capitalism in the semiperiphery and the West European core. Although the relation between wage-labor and capital, basic to capitalism, has points in common with the earlier

slave system – for example, surplus was appropriated by the dominant class from the subordinate one – the differences are far more important. While capitalism has been a relatively efficient regime of growth for a considerable period, American slavery had severe built-in limitations precisely because the hegemony of the ruling class would have been threatened by the diversification required for growth. While individual slave producers were quite naturally concerned with the maximization of their profits, from the point of view of the system, this goal was subordinate to the maintenance of an antiquated mode of production. The world capitalist approach reveals these weaknesses, but does not get at the inner mechanism of the system creating and intensifying them. An analysis of how planter behavior was influenced, but not determined, by a capitalist mentality reveals the symbiosis of slavery and capitalism.

Export markets were the main outlet for Southern staples. Although Northern textile firms also depended on the South for raw cotton, foreign trade was the key to rapid American economic development since it had a large multiplier effect on all areas of the economy.[36] An emphasis on prior production instead of on subsequent trade (a reasonable position, since production takes place before exchange) leads to the conclusion that slavery was perhaps the single most important factor in this early growth. Certainly the most lucrative part of America's export trade came from products turned out by slaves. Different regions of the country benefitted differently: profitable mercantile activity was concentrated in the North, so the South lagged far behind, despite the high value of slave-produced products. Much of the planter's profits were siphoned off by Northern merchants.

Slavery and Nonagricultural Development

Slaves were also used in Southern manufacturing, mining, lumbering, railroad building and construction, as well as in many craft occupations in the cities, although the extent of these activities remains unclear. Stampp gives a figure of a half million slaves in cities and towns or engaged in nonagricultural work by the end of the slave era;[37] of them, perhaps 50,000 were employed in manufacturing. Many in the upper South, referred to by Clement Eaton as 'quasi-free',[38] were hired out by their

owners for a specified time, and a selected few hired out their own services and split the returns with their owners. Slave artisans and free men of color (more easily exploitable than Southern white workers) worked as mechanics, carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, brickmakers and other craftsmen. (Ironically, blacks were virtually excluded from those crafts in the post-Civil War period.)

The development of industry in the South, a predominantly agrarian society, lagged far behind that in the North. The South accounted for less than 10 per cent of the manufactured goods in the country. Still, significant industrial development did occur in the slaveholding South. The 1860 census indicates that in that year there were 20,000 manufacturing establishments in the South employing over 110,000 workers, comprising a capital investment of $96 million. Several Southern cities had a considerable number of working people. White wage-workers in those cities sometimes felt the competitive pressure of slave labor. The threat of using slave labor was an effective weapon against agitation by white workers for shorter hours or higher pay.[39] Southern planters were ambivalent about the use of slaves in manufacturing, some viewing it as a way of competing more effectively with the North and others as a potential threat to traditional, agrarian slavery.[40] Although some slaveholders invested their agricultural profits in manufacturing, most used them to buy more land and slaves.

The interests of a nascent capitalist class conflicted with those of the slaveholding class, because slavery, with the extreme concentration of purchasing power in few hands, limited markets necessary for business expansion and thus weakened the development of local Southern capitalism. Virtually all Southern manufacturing in the pre-Civil War period was on a small scale, serving plantation needs with a very narrow range of goods. Planter-dominated legislatures refused to underwrite the development of internal improvements and, in general, impeded the growth of a manufacturing class that might threaten the planters' hegemony or tax their wealth. The manufacturing class perforce accepted a limited industrial expansion with continued planter control. Though few of its members realized it, this rising class of capitalists sacrificed its own long-run interests by accepting the legitimacy of the slave system.[41] In the final analysis, the contradictions of this system – particularly the

absence of adequate internal markets, technological backwardness and poor utilization of labor – made it less adaptable to nonagricultural development than a fully capitalist system. Although some shifting of Southern resources from agriculture to manufacturing did take place, it was certainly less than would have occurred under a free-market system. In a discussion of slave-based production in antiquity, Perry Anderson brilliantly distilled the general drag effect of slavery:

> Agricultural slaves themselves had notoriously little incentive to perform their economic tasks competently and conscientiously, once surveillance was relaxed. . . . On the other hand, many slave craftsmen and some slave cultivators were often notably skilled, within the limits of prevailing techniques. The structural constraint of slavery on technology thus lay not so much in a direct intraeconomic causality, although this was important in its own right, as in the mediate social world, contaminating hired and even independent labour with the stigma of debasement. Slave-labour was not, in general, less productive than free, indeed in some fields it was more so; but it set the pace of both, so that no great divergence ever developed between the two in a common economic space that excluded the application of culture to technique for inventions.[42]

Hinton Helper: Spokesman of the Nonslaveholding White Southerner

To comprehend the intricate class-caste-race factors in antebellum America, it is necessary to examine further the relationship between the nonslaveholding whites and the slaveholders. Was it one of harmony or conflict? Because, as whites, they believed themselves superior to blacks, the nonslaveholders psychologically associated with the ruling class. This affinity, however, hardly created a classless relationship between the propertied slaveholding elite and the white nonslaveholding masses. Abundant evidence indicates that the latter resisted the political control of the former.[43] They recognized that political power advanced the economic opportunities of the slaveholders over the nonslaveholders. Taxes were disproportionately light on the slaveholding aristocracy. Employment opportunities for the poor whites were quite limited and their wages were abysmally low since employers could, and often did, use the threat of employing blacks instead.[44]

Some poorer whites, like Hinton Helper, protested against slavery as a system and not merely against some of its undesirable effects.[45] His *Impending Crisis*, appearing on the eve of the Civil War, is a strident manifesto for the thorough and immediate eradication of Southern 'oligarchal despotism', which he believed not only degraded the slaves but impoverished the majority of whites as well. Helper's study reveals a prejudice toward blacks as a race ('an undesirable population'), tempered by a sympathy for their sufferings under the iniquitous system of slavery. Living in the Northern fringe of the slave region (Kentucky), where the contrast with the more economically diversified free-soil states was more apparent than in the deep South, Helper had the sensitivity to reject the self-serving lines of the Southern slaveholding class that emphasized the mutual interests of all whites regardless of class position.[46] He clearly recognized that slave labor was the basis of slaveowner wealth, and proclaimed that the slaves rather than the slaveholders ought to be compensated during the coming emancipation. Helper said,

> Slavery is a shame, a crime, and a curse – a great moral, social, civil, and political evil – an oppressive burden to the blacks, and an incalculable injury to the whites. . . . From the labor of their [slave] hands, and from the fruit of their loins, the human mongers of the South [the slavocracy] have become wealthy, insolent, corrupt, and tyrannical. . . . We [the nonslaveholding whites] are unwilling to allow you to swindle the slaves out of all the rights and claims to which, as human beings, they are most sacredly entitled.[47]

Helper favored levying a $60 tax on the slaveholders for each slave in their possession (payable to the slaves themselves), for the economic damage they had inflicted on the South. Although he personally favored using this tax to finance the colonization of ex-slaves in Africa or South America, he also suggested that the slaves could use the funds for 'their Comfortable Settlement within the Boundaries of the United States'.[48]

Helper directed his political message to his fellow nonslaveholders. He called for 'Thorough Organization and Independent Political Action on the part of the Non-Slaveholding Whites of the South'; his key operating motto was 'The Greatest Possible Encouragement to Free White Labor'.[49] This is the group that

Helper wanted to sting into abolitionist consciousness and activity by showing them that slavery was detrimental to their material interests by restricting their economic opportunities. He argued that slavery enabled a small group of slaveholders to gain disproportionate ownership of land (indeed about 3 per cent of the population owned one-third of the land in the 15 slave states) and that it institutionalized the slaveholders' legal control over the entire region. Slaveholders, said Helper,

> depreciate the value of their own and other's lands, degrade labor, discourage energy and progress, prevent non-slaveholders from accumulating wealth, curtail their natural rights and privileges, doom their children to ignorance . . . [and] constitute themselves the sole arbiters and legislators for the entire South.[50]

Although Helper nowhere calls for an interracial alliance, he comes close to recognizing the need for it. He states, 'The despotic adversaries of human liberty are concocting schemes for the enslavement of all the laboring classes, irrespective of race or color.'[51]

Helper's view of slavery as the enemy of the white masses reflects an incipient class consciousness. The psychological comfort of being white in a system of slavery was considerably eroded by the economic deficiencies of the system. Yet slavery had the effect of postponing the class conflict brewing in the white community. The class consciousness of the majority of nonslaveholding whites was deflected into a belief that they could promote their self-interest by opposing the groups (slaves and free men of color) who seemed their closest rivals. Ironically it was the police service of the poor whites that kept slavery profitable. Without their help, the economic losses represented by runaway slaves – every fugitive was a severe capital loss – would have been calamitous for the owners. Helping to dominate the slaves may have fed the egos of the poor whites, but it bolstered the system that constrained their work opportunities. Hundreds of thousands of the more ambitious were forced to emigrate from the South in search of a better life.[52]

Incipient opposition by the poor whites (declassed elements and most of the yeomanry) to the institution of slavery thus never matured. Ultimately, the race split proved to be decisive, as the vast majority of nonslaveholders sided with the planters in

the sectional conflict with the North. Many died in defense of an institution that victimized them almost as much as the slaves. Despite appearances of unity, white society has never anywhere been an undifferentiated monolithic bloc, not even in the antebellum South. An analysis focusing on the harmony and conflict in intraclass and interclass relations, and on the culture that shapes them, is essential for appropriately weighing the forces of social change and social containment.

Blacks and Abolitionism

It is worth noting that the struggle for freedom among the Northern blacks in the antebellum period took place on a higher level than that of their Southern counterparts. Within the abolitionist movement, as well as separate from it, a small but highly articulate group of blacks propounded a variety of views ranging from assimilationism to separatism. Certain individuals shifted from one to the other, depending on their degree of disaffection with mainstream politics that propounded the ideals of democracy and equality yet continually compromised with the forces of prejudice and oppression.

While blacks showed enthusiasm and appreciation for the sacrificial efforts of courageous humanitarian whites in the liberation struggles of the antebellum and immediate postbellum periods, they became increasingly critical of the vacillation and paternalism of their white benefactors. Blacks were, on the whole, relegated to a modest role in the abolitionist movement, especially in the arena of policy making.[53] Their primary function in the white abolitionist groups was as speakers to enlist Northern white audiences in the growing antislavery crusade. Frederick Douglass was among the most eloquent and prominent of the black abolitionist orators.[54] In their own organizations, of course, the blacks felt fewer restraints and at times expressed views that went beyond the calls of most white abolitionists (John Brown is a notable exception) for moral education of whites or political action within the major parties. Many white abolitionists criticized the efforts of Northern black abolitionists to set up their own independent organizations, and some blacks resented the pressure not to splinter the abolitionist movement.[55] The abolitionists, black and white, were at all times a small avant-garde (not more than 150,000 at their peak), well in

advance of the great majority of the nation in terms of their moral sensibilities. With evangelical fervor, this brave band of radical reformers demanded the immediate and unconditional emancipation of slaves. They tried to arouse the sensibilities of their fellow men, and time proved to be on their side. Beneath the relative prosperity of the 1850s, an unprecedented crisis was building, and the abolitionist vision of the coming struggle was in large measure vindicated.[56]

Unfortunately, the ambivalent relationship of white workers and abolitionists weakened the causes of both. The antebellum labor movement was not, on the whole, sympathetic to antislavery. Fear of economic competition from free black labor was reinforced by the leaning of white labor toward the Democratic Party, in which the Southern planter viewpoint carried considerable weight. Workingmen often expressed considerable hostility to abolitionism, contending that wage slavery was more pervasive and important than chattel slavery. The abolitionist crusade would undoubtedly have been more effective if it had mounted an assault on the wage system as well as on slavery, but this was perceived by only a few of the abolitionists. They never fully understood the class nature of slavery or capitalism. Most were imbued with the capitalist ethic.[57]

The black movement had its own splits. At a series of Negro conventions in the 1840s and 1850s, and in earlier literature, some blacks called for armed resistance to slavery, a stand strongly resented by an overwhelming majority of white abolitionists. As early as 1829, David Walker, a free Bostonian black abolitionist, in a fiery *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* called for militant resistance to the iniquitous slave system. He forcefully proclaimed to the slaves that 'freedom is your natural right' and bitterly rejected Negro colonization schemes. 'Let no man of us budge one step, and let slaveholders come to beat us from our country. America is more our country than it is the whites' – we have enriched it with our *blood and tears*.'[58] Although he did not disregard assistance from well-intentioned whites, his appeal was overwhelmingly directed to the blacks as agents of their own liberation.

In an address to the 1843 Negro Convention in Buffalo, the Reverend Henry Garnet, one of the most revolutionary black nationalists in antebellum America, exhorted the blacks,

> You had far better all die – *die immediately*, than live slaves, and entail your wretchedness upon your posterity. If you would be free in this generation, here is your only hope. However much you and all of us may desire it, there is not much hope of redemption without the shedding of blood. . . . Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. . . . *Rather die freemen than live to be slaves*. Remember that you are four millions. . . . Let your motto be resistance! resistance! resistance! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance.[59]

Although the main thrust of Garnet's writings and speeches was against slavery and racism, they also contain elements of more radical consciousness concerning issues later adopted by the populist movement (for example, the relative wealth and power of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'). Garnet stated,

> Again: let slavery be abolished in the country and let the land and labor monopolists have three or four hundred years the start of the emancipated, and still the free [black] man will be heavily laden, with an uphill course before them.[60]

Earl Ofari claims that Garnet

> foresaw that simply ending slavery would neither break the power of the rich controllers, nor insure any meaningful program for black liberation. It was necessary to destroy totally the class that held power if black and white were ever to progress.[61]

Although this may overstate the degree of Garnet's radical insights, certainly Garnet understood that emancipation of the slaves would not eradicate the power of the propertied class. Garnet and other black leaders were aware of the class divisions that were beginning to appear within the Northern black community and sought to contain them. As one writer stated, 'The Declaration of Sentiments [proposed at the 1853 Negro Convention] asserted the need for race pride, unity, self-determination, the *obliteration of class distinctions among blacks* [my emphasis], acquisition of land, and economic development.'[62] Garnet alternately advocated black militant resistance and emigration. The latter was partly justified on the dubious ground that 'the base of slavery [in the United States] could be weakened

through the wider use of free labor and the building of an alternative African supply of cotton.'[63] Despite his sympathy with the emigration movement, Garnet saw it as subordinate to the black liberation struggle inside America.

For some black leaders, nationalism took a more conservative form. Despairing of their ability to secure equal rights in America, and fearing the indefinite existence of slavery, a Black Zionism group – of whose members Martin Delaney was the most prominent – advocated emigration to Africa.[64] Claiming that black Americans were 'a nation within a nation' and that white America was unalterably opposed to extending equality to them, Delaney viewed Africa as a potentially rich haven for the black man. 'This land is ours – there it lies with inexhaustible resources, let us go and possess it. In Eastern Africa will rise up a nation, to whom all the world must pay commercial tribute.'[65] Although this emigrationist tendency was an understandable and psychologically justified reaction to the deep sense of alienation felt by the overwhelming majority of black Americans living and working in an oppressive white-dominated society, objectively this strategy was naive and reactionary. Emigration may have been a viable alternative for small numbers of free blacks, but it was not an option for most slaves. Probably not more than 15,000 blacks emigrated from America in the pre-Civil War period, a number that represented but a tiny fraction of the natural increase in the black population. Frederick Douglass, the most prominent black abolitionist, consistently opposed all colonization attempts by either whites or blacks, although he fluctuated between supporting the Republican Party politically and advocating (and engaging in) illegal acts, such as aiding fugitive slaves.

Contradictions of Slavery and the Civil War

The unique set of class and race attitudes that the Southern plantation aristocrats developed to justify the slave system, and their powerful economic and political position, finally helped undo the system. As in all class-based systems, the ruling elite in periods of decisive challenge tend to act – usually in an inflexible, self-defeating way – to protect their threatened interests. As Eugene Genovese and others have ably pointed out, the slave system had to expand into new areas to maintain its viability.

This pressure brought the Southern slavocracy into conflict with Northern business interests. Slaveowners precipitated a war to defend the slave system and its accompanying way of life.

During the pre-Civil War period, in which no single mode of production had attained clear national hegemony, class relationships were complex as well as contradictory. Although the slave and capitalist modes of production were analytically and culturally distinct, they were historically interconnected. For a substantial period of time, the simultaneous development of Northern capital and Southern slavery proceeded in a mutually advantageous way from the point of view of their respective dominant classes. Mutually profitable ties existed between the Northern merchants and Southern planters. The structural dynamics of development were such, however, that slavery gradually became economically subordinate in the late antebellum period, although the political division of power on a national level did not thoroughly reflect this economic change. The state, in fact, was in the increasingly awkward position of trying to harmonize two diverging modes of production, which partly explains its growing paralysis as the Civil War approached. In the historical struggle between two opposing modes of production, the subordinate one must ultimately decline under the weight of accumulated internal contradictions as the barriers to continued expansion become more and more insurmountable. This did not mean that Southern slavery had completely throttled the development of productive forces on a national level. The process of industrial and financial capitalist development was well underway in the decade before the war (particularly in railroads), although the national political power of the Southern slavocracy undoubtedly crimped the process by resisting legislation favorable to the establishment of domestic manufacturing. Industrial progress was, however, overwhelmingly centered in the North. Within the South, the productive potentialities of capitalist entrepreneurship went largely unrealized. Capitalism remained a weak, truncated mode of production – perhaps it is more fruitful to refer to it as a social formation – and the slave masters (despite some internal opposition) were the indisputable hegemonic power. According to Jay Mandle the plantation economy (whether under a slave, indenture or sharecropping system) is 'inconsistent with the process of modern economic development'.[66] The planters' monopoly of

economic and political power, and the orientation of production to a few leading staples for foreign markets, discouraged new capital formation and maintained a highly polarized wealth and income distribution. The Southern slave-based plantation system was not capable of instituting agrarian reforms[67] or diversified technological developments.

The war starkly revealed the system's economic and political weaknesses. The Southern slave economy was ill-equipped to provision and transport an army for a prolonged war. The South produced only 3 per cent of the iron ore mined in the United States, and only one rolling mill had the capability of casting heavy guns.[68] Although industry and crop diversification did make a start under wartime exigencies (the Northern blockade stimulated the development of a variety of manufactured goods that had previously been imported),[69] the Confederacy was nevertheless at a severe industrial-military disadvantage relative to the Union forces. Furthermore, the planter-dominated social structure compounded the difficulties of financing the Southern war effort. Speculation and inflation were rife, in large part because so little of the war was financed by taxing the wealthy planters. As one writer stated, 'All taxes raised through the life of the Confederacy amounted only to about one per cent of its expenditures.'[70] It took a prolonged and costly war to shatter this antiquated structure. The stage was then set for the next evolutionary advance.

The slaves played a crucial role in the victory of the North during the Civil War in two ways. First, they eventually comprised about 10 per cent of the Union Army, as pragmatic considerations induced Lincoln and the Union Army leaders to overcome their prejudices against using blacks as soldiers (many served with great heroism), laborers or spies behind the enemy lines. And second, their flight from the South (certainly a revolutionary act, even if not conceived as such), severely lessened the war-production ability of the Southern secessionists by depriving them of an important part of their labor force.[71]

The will to fight collapsed in the Old Confederacy, exacerbated by a combination of military disasters and class conflict between the common folk and the plantation elite. Although the nonslaveholding farmers, artisans and poor whites never constituted an active threat to the slave order in either the pre-Civil War or actual war era, their perception that the slaveowners

were exempt from military service must have led some to question whether or not their vital interests were at stake in the sectional conflict. Widespread desertions from the Confederate Army were a partial corroboration that the decline of Southern resistance had powerful internal causes.

The Civil War developed a revolutionary quality, despite the efforts of both sides to contain or roll back the forces of change. Even the Southern leaders in their last desperate months made the appearance of offering the blacks their freedom if they fought for the Confederacy. Self-interest compelled the North to put in motion forces for completing the bourgeois revolution. The disaffection of working-class whites, as evidenced by the ferocity of draft riots, foreshadowed the necessity of using black troops to win the war. This at least partly explains President Lincoln's issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation after reiterating again and again that the sole purpose of the war was to preserve the Union, not free the slaves. DuBois offers a very convincing description of an important part of this revolutionary process:

> Freedom for the slave was the logical result of a crazy attempt to wage war in the midst of four million black slaves, and trying all the while sublimely to ignore the interests of those slaves, in the outcome of the fighting. Yet, these slaves had enormous power in their hands. Simply by stopping work, they could threaten the Confederacy with starvation. By walking into Federal camps, they showed to doubting Northerners the easy possibility of using them as workers and servants, as farmers, and as spies, and finally, as fighting soldiers . . . by the same gesture depriving their enemies of their use in just these fields. It was the fugitive slave who made the slaveholders face the alternative of surrendering to the North or to the Negroes.[72]

The paradox of the antiquated slave mode of production in the midst of political democracy had to be ended in order to unleash the vast potentials of the market economy. Released from the drag effect of slavery, American capitalism took a giant step toward eventually overtaking England as the epicenter of the world capitalist system.

But the upsurge of full-fledged capitalism, while it coincided with an extension of democracy that helped to free blacks from their political shackles, actually introduced a new despotism – that of the commercial–manufacturing economy.

One discouraging response that surfaced during the Civil War

was the ambivalent reaction of the Northern white working class to the black emancipation movements. On one hand, Northern whites did not espouse the cause of Southern slavery; on the other, their hierarchy of values did not include a belief in racial equality on any level. Racism was deeply embedded in the white workers' psyches. Their fear of increased job competition from the freed blacks was a real one, and it was exacerbated by the clever use of blacks as strike breakers by many employers in some Northern cities. What the white workers did not understand was that competition from black slaves was probably worse in the long run than competition from free blacks, if for no other reason than that slavery inhibited the labor movement and led to the use of Southern political power in ways that restricted commercial–industrial development.

The struggling labor movement pitifully tried to separate its cause from the abolitionist movement. Within months of the Civil War, a labor leader at a militant rally stated,

> We are weary of this question of slavery; it is a matter which does not concern us; and we wish only to attend to our business, and leave the South to attend to their own affairs, without any interference from the North.[73]

This was neither the first nor the last time that white workers foolishly chose to follow their ephemeral race interests rather than their basic class interests. Is it any wonder that white resistance took the ugly forms of mob violence, burning of black homes and business, and draft riots?[74] A federal policy that vacillated in response to changing pressures may well have fueled this racial hostility.

There is, of course, a certain logic to the racist behavior of the white working class – which has indeed followed a repetitive but not continuous pattern in several different settings. The economic interest of some of the white workers can, under particular conditions, be furthered by erecting racial barriers, even though these gains are severely limited by the class-conflict framework of a capitalist economic system.

No one better understood the ironies of class and race under slavery than Frederick Douglass:

> The slaveholders . . . by encouraging the enmity of the poor laboring white man against the blacks, succeeded in making the said white man almost as much a slave as the black man himself . . . Both are plundered, and by the same plunderers. The slave is robbed by the slave system, of just results of his labor because he is flung into competition with a class of laborers who work without wages. [He might have added, 'or raw minimal wages for the free blacks'.] At present, the slaveholders blind them to this competition, by keeping alive their prejudices against the slaves as men – not against them as slaves. They appeal to their pride, often denouncing emancipation, as tending to place the white working man on an equality with Negroes, and by this means, they succeed in drawing off the minds of the poor whites from the real fact, that by the rich slave-master they are already regarded as but a single remove from equality with the slave.[75]

How poignant it must have been to recognize with such uncommon clarity the need for an alliance of white and black labor so that both could be freed of economic oppression, and at the same time to see the deep-seated resistance by white workers to any such alliance.

Reconstruction

The Civil War marked a critical watershed in the nation's social, political and economic development. Aided by the passage of protective tariffs during the war (when the South was no longer an opposing force in Congress), Northern industrial development was rapidly accelerated. Labor shortages and the high level of effective demand provided strong incentives for investment in labor-saving machinery in a variety of economic sectors. The war-based prosperity of Northern business laid down the economic framework for a spectacular postwar development.[76] In the fertile soil provided by the Civil War, the 'spirit of capitalism' sank deeper, more powerful roots. In marked contrast to the vastly increased economic strength of the victorious North, the defeated South emerged from the war with a prostrate, disorganized economy, reduced for the most part to a subsistence level. Based on government census data, one writer concluded that between 1860 and 1870, Southern wealth had fallen 30 per cent, while Northern wealth had risen an incredible 50 per cent.[77] Regardless of the intentions of its participants, the Civil War was indeed a revolution, a social upheaval of the same monumental proportions as the seventeenth-century English Revolution and eighteenth-century

French Revolution. As historic turning points they are unparalleled. The famous Beardian characterization of the Civil War and Reconstruction as the 'Second American Revolution' is right on target.

The defeat of the Southern slave mode of production (including the expropriation of $4 billion in slave capital) and the victory of the Northern industrial–financial capitalist mode decisively shaped the American future. England remained the center of the world capitalist system – only adamant opposition to slavery by its working class had prevented England's intervention on the side of the South – but an emerging capitalist giant was in the wings.

Although ending slavery did not end class and race conflict, it did alter their form and removed an important impediment to economic growth. The way was cleared for the development of classes within the black ranks, although the persistence of racism made it proceed in an uneven and distorted manner. Most of the black elite – ministers and some of the former 'free blacks' (many of whom supported the Confederacy while yearning for freedom) – now realized that their interests were tied to the mass of freedmen.

Although the victory of the Union forces swept away one of the barriers to economic development, the new, less fettered form of capitalism reflected a combination of the old mode of production (a mixture of small-scale capitalism and slavery) and the new mode of production (a mixture of competitive capitalism and the embryo of monopoly capitalism). After any war, especially one as cataclysmic as the Civil War, there are powerful contradictory social forces at work – those seeking to restore stability and those aiming to deepen social change. Whereas in the North the bourgeoisie emerged triumphant, in the defeated South a fierce struggle for control ensued, crossing both race and class lines. The contending groups included the ex-planter class (weaker than in the prewar era, but still the dominant holder of capital), Northern carpetbaggers (petty capitalists in search of new profit opportunities and dedicated social workers associated with the Freedmen's Bureau), Southern 'scalawags' (moderates trying to overturn the injustices of the past), poor whites (co-victims of the old slave system who nevertheless still feared competition from the ex-slaves), and, of course, 4 million ex-slaves painfully trying to establish a life for themselves.[78] This

struggle, moreover, took place against a background of unprecedented graft, corruption and violence that bordered on anarchy.

The poor whites in particular had lost their moorings. In effect they were faced with a Hobson's choice: either reject the planter and his ideals (together with the war, in which so many poor whites had died in vain) and form an alliance with the ex-slaves against their mutual oppressor, or feed their racial vanity by forming a white racial alliance with the planter to resist the ex-slaves' attempts to lift themselves up from slavery. The former option would strain their cultural and psychological conditioning to the breaking point, while the latter was essentially a dead-end street in terms of expansion of economic opportunities. By helping (often initiating the effort) to yank out the fragile threads of abolitionist democracy in the postwar period, the poor whites unintentionally affirmed their own second-class status vis-a-vis the planters and new capitalists. Only a few at this period of Reconstruction could conceive of (much less act on) economic solidarity between white and black workers. One study of the Reconstruction period stated, 'If the white South feared anything . . . it was not the likelihood of black failure, but the possibility of black success.'[79] The small progressive Southern white minority willing to accept, however reluctantly, the blacks as free agents in the economy were ultimately swamped by the forces of reaction. Although the heroic efforts of such whites and their black allies were able for a brief interim between 1867 and 1876 to hold back the tide of reaction, the fierce tenacity of the reactionaries overturned or neutralized virtually all efforts to extend civil rights or economic opportunities to the ex-slaves.

After Lincoln's assassination, President Andrew Johnson altered the whole thrust of Lincoln's moderate reconstruction plans. In fact, Johnson made a complete turnabout in his attitudes. A radical defender of the poor whites and a bitter enemy of the wasteful elitist slavocracy, he had been eager to confiscate the planters' land and economically punish them; he could be seen in this period as cut from the same cloth as Hinton Helper. Yet, he soon became a faithful spokesman for the ex-planters, eager to restore the Southern states to Congress without extending either civil rights or economic protection to the ex-slaves.

Johnson used his power to frustrate the noble aims of the

Freedmen's Bureau to redistribute confiscated Confederate land to the ex-slaves (by the end of the war, the Bureau had accumulated 800,000 acres in the form of abandoned estates or lands of absentee landlords). He in fact dispossessed many blacks by restoring land that had already been distributed to the ex-slaves during the war (General Sherman, for example, in his famous march to the sea had settled blacks on abandoned Sea Island and coastal plantations). Rather than satisfy the justified land hunger of the ex-slaves, he virtually forced the great majority of them, economically destitute though politically free, to become low-paid wage laborers. Nevertheless, by a combination of exceptional ability, industriousness and luck a very modest number of Southern blacks (undoubtedly well under 5 per cent) did acquire land and commenced the steep and dangerous ascent to economic respectability in capitalist America.

DuBois cited Johnson's overt racism:

> It must be acknowledged that in the progress of nations, Negroes have shown less capacity for government than any other race of people. . . . The blacks of the South are . . . so utterly ignorant of public affairs that their voting can consist in nothing more than carrying a ballot to the place where they are directed to deposit it.[80]

More often his racism was veiled by his repeated accolades to the free market as the key to economic progress, although it was strikingly evident that the functioning of a vital free-market mechanism – labor mobility – was severely impeded by the heritage of slavery. Formal market equality masked substantive inequality. Hence the duplicity, or at least irrelevance, of the following Johnson comment:

> His [the freedman's] condition is not so bad. His labor is in demand, and he can change his dwelling place if one community or state does not please him. The laws that regulate supply and demand will regulate his wages. The freedmen can protect themselves, and being free, they could be self-sustaining, capable of selecting their own employment, insisting on proper wages.[81]

To Johnson and many other Southerners, the victory of Northern capitalism was not expected to alter fundamentally the

race and class relationships. One writer trenchantly observed of the brief interval (1865–7) between the end of the war and the setting up of Reconstruction governments:

> Southern leaders knew that they could grant the freedman economic freedom in a competitive society without thereby granting him economic or social equality, that, lacking a massive and extended program of economic and educational assistance, the great mass of Southern Negroes, crippled in mind and spirit by two centuries of slavery, devoid of property, prestige, learning, experience, and organization were doomed to remain indefinitely in a submerged position.[82]

In the absence of massive economic assistance to overcome the heritage of slavery, the extension of formal legal and political rights was at best a modest improvement and at worst an empty gesture. Only an alteration of the traditional relationship between labor and capital could provide the essence of freedom, and neither Southerners nor Northern radicals (with few exceptions) were willing to undertake this step.

The defeated, frustrated, unrepentant Southern white populace, captives of their own paranoid propaganda, feared the rise of the former slaves to power. They unleashed a savage reign of terror and enacted the infamous Black Codes[83] (strikingly similar to the infamous black codes of the antebellum era), which provoked the Republican-controlled Congress to assert greater control over the Reconstruction process. Litwack described the growing confrontation between President Johnson and Congress:

> What helped to make possible the extension of the suffrage and civil rights to black Americans was not the activities of black activists (who lacked the necessary power to give force to their appeals), or the Northern abolitionists (many of whom rested content with the achievements of emancipation), or even the radical Republicans (most of whom would have stopped short of enfranchising blacks), but the insistence by the white governments in the South that the essentials of the old order must be maintained with a modicum of concession and the equally unyielding determination of the President to validate the work and spirit of those governments.[84]

The rising Northern industrial–financial capitalist class, the

dominant power in the Northern-based Republican Party, was in a peculiar position. This class had begun to establish its economic and political hegemony during the Civil War under the dual circumstances of expanded economic opportunities and the loss to secession of the Democratic Party's Southern wing. The Northern capitalists desired a postwar climate in which to deepen and widen their newly attained hegemony, a climate in which business could most easily flourish.

Although the South, even under slavery, had had profitable relations with some Northern merchants, Southern civilization was not genuinely receptive to an all-sided capitalist development, and did not dramatically change in the immediate postwar period.

The ex-planters viewed Northern carpetbaggers as a political threat. Although some of the revisionist historians are correct in asserting that opinions differed among Northeastern business groups concerning the tariff and money questions,[85] these businessmen did agree on the fundamental drive to control the party in power. To this aspiration the ex-planters posed a threat. At this point, the struggle for economic interests became intertwined with political issues. Northern business interests temporarily and reluctantly joined with social reformers in a crusade to extend political rights and a modest program of land redistribution to the blacks[86] in order to limit the political and economic power of the Southern ruling class. The temporary and fragile marriage between Southern democracy and Northern capitalism was thus rooted in the effort of the Northerners (despite splits in the ranks) to establish their dominance by weakening the political power of the Southern plutocracy. The Northern capitalists wanted expanded markets (including the South), fuller utilization of Southern resources and a cheap source of labor for Northern industry (which turned out to be unnecessary, in view of the rapid increase of postwar European immigration). Legislation favorable to Northern business interests, such as tariffs and subsidies (particularly for railroad development), became the theme of the postwar era.[87] Despite some exaggerations, DuBois's description retains considerable usefulness:

> When . . . the South went beyond reason and truculently demanded not simply its old political power but increased political power based on disfranchised Negroes, which it openly threatened to use for the revision of the tariff, for the repudiation of the national debt, for disestablishing the national banks, and for putting the new corporate form of industry under strict state regulation and rule, Northern industry was frightened and began to move towards a stand which abolition-democracy had already taken; namely, temporary dictatorship [of labor reinforced by the military], endowed Negro education, legal civil rights, and eventually even votes for Negroes to offset the Southern threat of economic attack.[88]

Although capitalism did indeed rise in tandem with political democracy, it has become increasingly clear that it is not *per se* for or against political democracy.[89] Its vital concern is how best to achieve a steady flow of profits over the long run. Theoretically and historically, this has been compatible with representative as well as repressive governments. Northern capitalists backed Reconstruction democracy (1867–76) because they thought that Southern reaction endangered the continuity of profits. Once the dominance of Northern capital was established, the Republican Party (the national party for capitalism) was willing to sunder the relationship between Southern democracy and Northern capitalism. Southern democracy had the long-run potential of undermining Northern capitalism since redistribution of land set in motion a dangerous precedent regarding property in other areas of economic activity. Capitalism, after all, is based on the inviolability of private property. The logic of capitalism preconditioned Northern capitalists to reject a genuine agricultural revolution that expropriated the former plantations and turned them over to the ex-slaves and poor whites. The capitalists possessed an ideological aversion to any scheme requiring a significant structural transformation of society and a pragmatic unwillingness to accept the risks of breaking up viable units with which the Northern business community had close ties in the antebellum period.[90]

When control by the emerging big business establishment had been effectively asserted, the continued resistance of the Southern ruling class (and poor whites manipulated by them) to Reconstruction created enough instability to threaten production and profits. This induced the Northern business class to accept the overthrow of democratic supremacy. Theoretically Northern capitalists would have benefitted more from a thorough industrialization of the South, but Southern resistance made this an

uncertain, risky and therefore expensive process. Moreover, at this early stage of capitalist development, except for periods of cyclical crisis, there were adequate investment outlets in the North and West for surplus capital. Hence, the second-best solution was to accept unequal levels of regional development as relatively permanent and, within this restriction, to maximize profits by using the South predominantly as a source of raw materials. The North surged ahead; the South aided this process but did not share proportionately in its benefits. In rejecting the cause of democracy, Northern capitalists were acting in their short-run class interests, which required enough social stability to allow for a moderately steady flow of profits.

With the newly acquired legal right to contract freely for the sale of their labor, the ex-slaves were able to resist the efforts of the planters to reimpose tight controls through a wage system. After two centuries under the plantation slave system, the freedmen's reluctance to submit to a 'free market' variation of the same work routine is understandable. Crop failures made them more prone to accept a transformation from large-scale plantation production to small-scale tenancy operations.[91] The freedmen naturally preferred farm ownership, but this required credit, which was not readily forthcoming. Sharecropping (a modified form of feudalism) evolved as a compromise, and became the dominant type of Southern agricultural production in the postslavery era.[92] As several writers have noted, the deconcentration of agriculture into small tenant units was paradoxically accompanied by increasing concentration of land ownership.[93] Despite the change in form, the antebellum and postbellum societies maintained essential continuity.

Control by Northern capital and local merchants forced a return to the prewar pattern of concentration on the production of marketable staples (particularly cotton). Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch claim that local merchants used their regional monopoly power to provide credit to the small farmers at exorbitant rates, putting them under the yoke of 'a perpetual cycle of cotton overproduction [crop diversification was strongly discouraged] and short-term debt'.[94] The white planters also exerted coercive pressure against the embattled sharecroppers, black as well as white. The chain of indebtedness between the sharecropper, landlord and banks had most severe effects in periods of falling or low cotton prices. Jay Mandle writes,

'Sharecropping, itself by delaying payment until the end of the crop year, limited seasonal mobility and guaranteed the labor supply.'[95] Although this system did enable many landowners to maintain control over production and to minimize economic risks, its overarching effect was to retard the progress of the South; little incentive existed to allocate resources in a way conducive to cumulative regional development.

The impact of racism was felt by whites as well as blacks. Racism impeded the upward mobility of the recently freed slaves and helped to keep the South in poverty. Discrimination made it more costly and difficult for blacks to acquire skills and education. In any case, as long as the South remained an agrarian region with a very thin industrial base, demand was low for skilled workers of either race.

Although there was a trickle of black migration from the rural areas to urban centers of both the North and South, agriculture continued to dominate the Southern economy until well into the twentieth century.[96] The South remained a low-wage, low-productivity, undeveloped region in the postwar period. Production methods continued to be based primarily on labor rather than capital. Mandle effectively explains this in terms of the 'social context' of cotton cultivation:

> Even after the Civil War cotton cultivation took place within a plantation economy that continued many of the features of the slave regime. It continued a social structure and way of life that militated against the introduction of new technology. . . . Plantations used a plentiful supply of low productivity/low wage labor mobilized under the close supervision of management to achieve substantial returns . . . The planters profit orientation led him to minimize the use of capital in production. . . . The nature of class relations between planter and worker inhibited the search for greater productivity.[97]

The Ransom–Sutch study indicates, moreover, the crucial importance of weighing private gain against social costs.

> While it is true that from the point of view of any single nonexploited farm operator, cotton seemed more profitable than diversified agriculture, and agriculture seemed more profitable than manufacturing, this view cannot be validly generalized to the entire economy. For the South as a whole, cotton specialization was not more profitable than diversified agriculture, and an agrarian economy was

not superior to an economy with a balance between agriculture and industry. . . . The economic institutions established in the post emancipation era effectively operated to keep the black population a landless agricultural labor force, operating tenant farms with a backward and unprogressive technology . . . [and] caught up whites in its trap, stilled their initiative, and curtailed their economic progress.[98]

Without a fundamental change in the land tenure system, the choices open to the freedmen were quite limited. The great majority, out of necessity, worked for their former masters at not much better than subsistence wages. Their cry for land went largely unheeded. The failure of Congress to adopt a policy of breaking up and redistributing the large landed estates inevitably reduced the vast majority of former black slaves and many poor whites to a status akin to economic serfdom. Historian John Hope Franklin noted the results:

Because the Federal government failed to give the Negroes much land, they slowly returned to the farms of the planters and resumed work under circumstances hardly more favorable than before the war . . . Negro farm workers contributed greatly to the economic recovery of the South. As free workers, however, they gained but little. The wages paid to freedmen in 1867 were lower than those that had been paid to hired slaves.[99]

The social price paid by the Southern region was no less striking. The technological weaknesses of this relaunched plantation society, which cumulatively worsened over the next several decades, condemned it to a subordinate status compared to other regions of the country.

Despite all its flaws and limitations, the short period of Reconstruction, 1867–76, was the most racially egalitarian in Southern history.[100] For a brief period the oligarchy that dominated Southern political life was replaced by a democracy. Poor whites, as well as ex-slaves, exercised the franchise in unprecedented numbers for a broad range of candidates. Blacks participated actively in public life for several decades following the Civil War. C. Vann Woodward claims, 'White leaders of opposing parties encouraged them to vote and earnestly solicited their votes.'[101] Blacks held a wide variety of public offices in all Southern states, although, contrary to the claim of

white racists, they did not control any of them. This period marked the first tentative step toward a society of equals. Although DuBois, in his powerful polemic *Black Reconstruction*, has doubtlessly exaggerated in referring to Southern state governments under Reconstruction as 'dictatorships of labor' (in fact they all operated within the framework of private ownership and production for an unregulated market), they were a highly progressive and democratic force limiting the power of the planters, introducing educational and tax reforms, and above all abolishing property qualifications for voting or holding office. Despite the vigorous efforts of militant Congressional leaders like Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner to block the reassertion of power by the former slaveowning class,[102] and the courageous efforts of a black vanguard to seize and redistribute the plantations, the Republican leaders, as men of property, had no desire to interfere in any basic way with the sanctity of private property rights. A political revolution might clear the way for the development of capitalist industry, but carrying out a genuine social revolution was quite another matter. Because the ascending power elite was not inclined to lay a sufficiently firm new economic foundation for the most exploited strata of society, the emancipation could in time be rolled back, even though slavery itself was permanently discarded in favor of a free market system.

This was a period of rapid economic growth for the country as as whole, with the industrial capitalist class providing the main organizational thrust. Class conflict within and between geographical sections was muted by racial factors. In the South, nonslaveholding whites had virtually no power against the use of ex-slaves in crafts or manufacturing, as opposing this would have meant an interference with the sacred rights of property. Opposition by poor whites was hardly possible in a society in which almost all levers of power were wielded by the propertied class.

Reconstruction and Labor

In the postwar period, national unions developed as business enterprise became more national in scope, and the emerging pattern of black–white labor relations revealed a combination of estrangement and tentative efforts at solidarity, running the

gamut from total exclusion of blacks from some unions, joint strikes (some successful), formation of separate unions (sometimes cooperative, sometimes competitive) and the use of blacks to break strikes among white workers. William Sylvis, the founder of the National Labor Union, tried in vain to convince the rank-and-file white unionists that their self-interest dictated embracing all labor in the common struggle against the power of Capital. Radical rhetoric, despite substantial distancing from practice, filled the air in the late 1860s: 'If the whites will not lift the colored up, the colored will drag the white down'; it was 'impossible to degrade one group of workers without degrading all'; 'the success of the labor movement . . . depends on the cooperation and success of the colored race'.[103] Tragically the two labor movements could not coalesce; the white National Labor Union and the Colored National Labor Union differed on ideological as well as political issues. The NLU (or at least its leadership) was more politically advanced than its black counterpart. Whereas the NLU regarded the major parties (particularly the ruling Republican Party) as paragons of parasitic capitalism, and thus favored the formation of a politically oriented Labor Party, the more reformist-minded CNLU sympathized with the Republican Party (seen as deliverers from slavery), viewed capital–labor relations as relatively harmonious and favored business unionism rather than political unionism, with the stress on overcoming racial employment barriers.

Despite his evident sympathy for the black Reconstruction leadership, DuBois captured the lack of clarity in their economic and political thinking:

> On the whole, it believed in the accumulation of wealth and the exploitation of labor as the normal method of economic development. But it also believed in the right to vote as the basis and defense of economic life. . . . They wanted the Negro to have the right to work at a decent rate of wages, and they expected that the right to vote would come when he had sufficient education and perhaps a certain minimum of property to deserve it.[104]

The political naivete of the black labor unions, and the lack of sensitivity of white labor to the special needs of a people recently removed from slavery, hindered the development of interracial solidarity. Moreover, intimidation and violent opposition to unionization (particularly interracial) by the Ku Klux Klan[105] and men of wealth made union organizing in the South – where the great majority of blacks eked out a living in agriculture – a task fraught with extraordinary danger. The overthrow of the Reconstruction governments made the task next to impossible.

Another impediment to the development of interracial workers' solidarity was immigration: by constantly changing the composition of the working class, it very effectively prevented the establishment of a stable organizing base. Each ethnic group tried to raise itself on the backs of the weakest, and each was consequently vulnerable to being played off against the other. The deeply entrenched culture of racism provided ample justification for this practice; the blacks shifted, in effect, from legal slaves to permanent *Untermenschen*. In this sense, ethnic and racial discrimination dovetailed as the handmaidens of post-Civil War American capitalism. They simultaneously paved the way for capital accumulation as well as for the social control to ensure that the primary beneficiary of this process was the capitalist class (particularly its leading echelons).

When white workers and artisans sided with the ex-planter class out of fear of the blacks, thus helping to end Reconstruction, they sacrificed their own long-run class interests, since an alliance of the poor whites and free blacks was the only way to avert a substantial regrowth of domination by the planters. When the Northern industrialists' need for support to establish political hegemony was lessened, and prevailing laws and practices harmonized with the industrialists' acquisitive bent, support for blacks and resistance to the resurgence of Southern conservatism dwindled. Private greed quickly squelched whatever impulses toward social reform had accompanied the drive for postwar growth. In accepting a subordinate position in the national political economy, the Southern conservatives became masters in their own region. The withdrawal of Federal troops from the South, following the disputed election of 1876, sealed the regional victory of conservatism. This victory, however, was more Pyrrhic than anyone anticipated: the South, as a region, become a colony of the North, a relationship that persisted well into the twentieth century. Foner's judgment about the legacy of Reconstruction is on target:

> If racism contributed to the undoing of Reconstruction, by the same

token Reconstruction's demise and the emergence of blacks as a disfranchised class of dependent laborers greatly facilitated racism's further spread . . . [it] shifted the center of gravity of American politics to the right.[106]

The triumph of racism in the US, moreover, foreshadowed the transition of American (and European) capitalism to a policy of imperialism, in which people of color in the world capitalist orbit would undergo a similar process of degradation and exploitation.

Populism and the Early Labor Movement: Temporary and Partial Experiments in Racial Unity

It should not be thought that the progressive aspects of the Reconstruction period evaporated at once without a struggle or any important countercurrents. Several decades of violence, intimidation, chicanery and sheer terror by the Ku Klux Klan and similar groups eventually succeeded in disfranchising the blacks, but the struggles were intense. After the white-supremacist Democratic Party in the South had returned to power, legislative means (for example, poll taxes, literacy tests and gerrymandering of voting districts) were used to undercut the previous enfranchisement of the blacks. Considerable numbers of blacks nevertheless voted even into the 1890s. Two important progressive movements in the 1880s and 1890s delayed the counter revolution: the rise of Populism and the growth of unions like the Knights of Labor, the United Mine Workers and even the American Federation of Labor in its early years.

In the radical agrarianism of the Populists and the labor militancy of the early unions, important elements of class solidarity partly overrode racial factors. Populism was a nativist movement for egalitarianism[107] – and, in that loose sense, anticapitalist – which arose from a period of agrarian unrest in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This was a period of transition from competitive capitalism (anchored in agriculture and petty commodity production) to monopoly capitalism based on industry and finance. The Southern Populists had to cross racial boundaries since blacks were a large part of the small farmer-tenant class. The farmer–labor alliance of poor whites

and blacks along class lines was, in fact, the backbone of Southern Populism. Under the crop-lien system, farmers of both races lived in a state of permanent indebtedness to the merchants. Blacks felt the additional yoke of an all-pervasive racism. As Goodwyn states, even the rare black farmer who experienced improvement in economic status during this period was 'just as vulnerable to the whims of Southern justice, just as unprotected against lynch law, as the most downtrodden tenant farmer. In this fundamental sense, economic improvement gave him no guarantee of protection.'[108] Tom Watson, the leading agrarian radical of the 1880s and 1890s, tried to form a multiracial third party out of the farmers of all classes and the city working class. He told both races:

> You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is rested the keystone of the arch of financial despotism which enslaves you both. You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a monetary system which beggars both.[109]

Despite intimidation – including many murders of Populist supporters – Watson received enthusiastic support from the blacks[110] as a result of his forthright call for their full political rights and his condemnation of lynching, the Ku Klux Klan and terrorism. The alliance of the white Southern Farmers Alliance and the Colored Farmers National Alliance, which probably totalled in excess of a million at the peak, was the basis of Watson's strength in the South.[111]

Populist ideology drew a basic distinction between the industrial–financial capitalist on one side and all the agrarian elements on the other. This dichotomy, while real in many ways, obscured the conflict between landowners and landless workers; it grouped landowners, tenants and agricultural laborers under the same rubric, despite obvious class conflicts between the landowners and the swelling class of tenant-laborers. This distinction had racial significance, too, since whites were more likely to be owners and blacks more likely to be tenant-laborers.[112] Given this lack of clarity, C. Vann Woodward's judgment of the Populists and Watson is a reasonable one:

> Never before or since have the two races in the South come so close

together politically. . . . Under the tutelage of Watson and the Populists, a part of the Southern white people were learning to regard the Negro as a political ally bound to them by economic ties and a common destiny rather than as a slender prop to injured self-esteem in the shape of white supremacy. Here was a foundation of realism upon which some more enduring structure of economic democracy might have been constructed. The destruction of that foundation constitutes a tragic chapter in Southern history.[113]

Vann Woodward unfortunately does not trouble to define 'economic democracy' or deal with the thorny issue of the compatability of economic democracy (however defined) with a market-directed system.

The Populists' promising effort at interracialism died. Although the Populists won several local elections – in fact, they received more than 1 million votes in the presidential election of 1892 – and for a while posed a significant threat to the hegemony of the planters, they were eventually overcome by external power. In any case, a rural-based movement without organic links to the industrial working class was doomed to minority status in a society in which agriculture was being inched aside by industrial capitalism. The interracial agrarian revolt thus died, a victim of racism and structural change.

Vann Woodward suggests another factor delaying the victory of white supremacy: the Southern conservatives' longtime pursuit of a policy of paternalistic racial moderation. These whites showed a 'tendency to distinguish between classes of the race, to encourage the "better" element, and to draw it into white alliance'.[114] However, during the struggle with the Populists, who at the time championed the unity of poor whites and blacks, Southern conservatism shifted to a racist appeal in an attempt to maintain their political control. The depressed conditions of the 1890s provided the peg on which to hang the new policy. Vann Woodward draws these following overall conclusions about this period of striking change:

> The South's adoption of extreme racism was due not so much to a conversion as it was to a relaxation of the opposition. . . . What happened toward the end of the century was an almost simultaneous – and sometimes not unrelated – decline in the effectiveness of restraint that had been exercised by all three forces: Northern Liberalism, Southern Conservatism, and Southern Radicalism. . . .

> Just as the Negro gained his emancipation and new rights through a falling out between white men, he now stood to lose his rights through the reconciliation of white men.[115]

For a number of years (approximately 1880–1905), the union movement, even in the South, also held racism in check and resisted capitalists' efforts to use discriminatory tactics for splitting the working class. Not all white workers embraced close unity; some championed crude (often self-defeating) racist positions, such as striking to prevent the employment of black workers. Eventually the wave of discrimination engulfed the unions, but this was due much more to external pressures than to growing racism among the white workers.

The Knights of Labor for a brief period in the late 1870s and 1880s was the most powerful union in America. Appealing to the skilled and unskilled blacks and whites, in farming and industry, they established assemblies in all regions, including the South.[116] Some locals were racially integrated, other segregated. The Knights reached a peak membership estimated between three-quarters of a million and 1 million in 1886, before undergoing a rapid disintegration at the end of the 1880s. Though most blacks joined all-black locals, over 60,000 flocked to the Knights' banner attesting to the union's interracial character. This quality was important in winning some strikes, although the Knights' loose structure, the timidity and opportunism of the leadership, and the fierce resistance of the capitalist class, especially in the South, badly weakened the union. Among the opponents' arsenal were racial antagonism between white and black workers, blacklisting of unionists, using the judicial system to intimidate 'radicals', and sheer brutalizing terror. It is likely that the cyclical nature of the capitalist economy also weakened the solidarity of the working class in general. The redundancy of labor accompanying the depressed conditions of the late 1880s and 1890s put severe stress on the interracial alliance. Eventually it snapped. Opportunism and moral decline overcame the developing sense of brotherhood. As one study lamented:

> The decline and disappearance of the Knights of Labor was a tragedy for all American workers, but especially for the black workers. For a brief period a national labor body had actually challenged the racist

structure of American society. . . . The Knights contributed immensely toward a brief era of good feeling between black and white workingmen, even in the South. From those heights the Knights of Labor steadily declined, year after year weakening the fraternal bonds it had built until at the end it became an apologist for white supremacy.[117]

The United Mine Workers was another major bulwark against racism. Black labor played an important role in coal mining and in the iron and steel industries in Alabama, particularly in the Birmingham district. By 1900, more than half of the labor force in these industries was black. Despite growing racial hostility in the last decade of the nineteenth century, examples of class solidarity transcending racial conflict were quite frequent in the UMW. Interracial cooperation within the union was the rule rather than the exception. One writer stated:

In at least a dozen unions, including some of the exclusionary ones, officers and members argued that effectively organizing the South depended on the inclusion of black workers. Both the egalitarian principles of the labor movement and the self-interest of white workers, they insisted, dictated that Southern Negroes not be left unorganized. . . . Although the admission of black workers to labor unions and the militancy of many of these black unionists conflicted with increasingly strident demands in the state [Alabama] for Negro subordination, black workers and their unions received aid and encouragement not only from white union members, but occasionally from other elements in the white community.[118]

Unfortunately, these promising episodes in interracial unionism were ended by intimidation and violence from the capitalists and the government (which closely reflected business interests), and by the union's own adoption of exclusionist policies aimed at protecting skilled workers from the unskilled. By the early 1890s, the American Federation of Labor, organized according to skilled crafts, had become the dominant labor union. Although the leadership resisted racism for a brief period, within a decade discrimination had been formally or informally institutionalized.[119] The AFL leadership accepted discrimination in its affiliates, because it lacked the power to oppose it effectively. Through either restrictive membership clauses or 'tacit consent', blacks were virtually excluded from

craft unions. Auxiliary union status for black workers was only slightly better than outright exclusion; black unionists were restricted to less skilled jobs. Union policies heightened the black workers' job insecurity and made their earnings more unstable than those of whites. Block's explanation of the blacks' outsider position in the craft union is useful:

Prior to the formation of national labor unions Negro economic mobility was mainly limited by public and employer prejudice. After the formation of national unions . . . conscious steps were taken by the unions to institutionalize Negro subordination. . . . These unions were not acting with any special malice towards the Negro; they merely helped crystallize social subordination as an economic weapon to maintain and raise their members' economic security and general socio-economic status in society. . . . This was economic preservation in a society beset with cyclical fluctuations. Fewer eligible for the upper occupational strata make greater bargaining power with respect to wages, and also more regular work for the elite.[120]

Foner claims that it was the economic distress accompanying the depression of 1893–8 that weakened the workers' sense of interracial solidarity and gave the AFL a more racist and less class-conscious orientation.

Racial clashes intensified as blacks sought work desperately, undercutting the white unionists. . . . As employers stepped up the use of black workers and manipulated racial antagonism to drive down labor costs in the economic crisis, most unions affiliated with the AF of L continued to refuse to accept Negroes as equal members and instead increased their efforts to drive black workers off the job.[121]

As racial discrimination by the AFL increased, black workers became more hostile to unions and, for their own survival, accepted the role of strikebreakers (although they never constituted a majority among strikebreakers), when management found it useful to use them. This exacerbated the racism of white workers by 'demonstrating' to them that blacks were anxious to push their own interests at the expense of the whites. What white unions wanted, especially in periods of limited markets, was the impossible combination of excluding blacks

from their unions but not having them work as scabs. Since most blacks in the nonagricultural sector were unskilled, and since only a minute fraction of unskilled workers were unionized as late as the 1930s, blacks were almost completely excluded from the entire labor movement.

Even in the Populist and early labor movements, the coalitions between white farmers-workers and blacks mixed a substantial element of expediency with incipient class consciousness. Racism and class consciousness appeared to move in a semi-cyclical pattern, with the dynamics of class and race continually intermeshing. The cohesiveness of the temporary racial alliance among whites, in response to what they perceived as a threat by blacks, tended to break down when the key fact of life in a market society – difference of class interest – asserted itself. As small farmers and workers came to resent the control of powerful economic interests – corporations, banks, utilities, the state – their class consciousness began to cross color lines, since power considerations demanded it regardless of the social preferences of the 'superior' race. In those circumstances, the workers recognized that racism undermined or inhibited trade-union consciousness (which can be viewed as a stage in the development of genuine class consciousness). Unfortunately, this racial solidarity had a weak base that seldom survived strong resistance by the powerful conservative forces in society. The value derived by these forces from racism, during this first major thrust toward monopoly capital, is beyond dispute. Contemporary studies of the period, such as the Congressional Industrial Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor (1898), revealed that discrimination pulled down white wages as well as black, and that many capitalists used it expressly for that purpose.[122]

A study of the history of race and class struggle in this period reveals an interesting (and perhaps vital) regional variation. Although racism was undoubtedly embedded in a deeper and cruder way in the South than in the North and West, it is in the South that one finds the greatest efforts to overcome it, in the form of class-conscious interracial alliances of poor whites and blacks, especially in occupations where blacks comprised a significant part of total employment. Southern history proves that the drive for interracial solidarity based on mutual self-

interest has been incredibly strong and persistent; it was overcome only by an unparalleled offensive by the ruling classes, ranging from cajolery and monopolistic use of the cultural apparatus to force, fraud and sheer brutality. Under capitalism class solidarity has been powerful enough that its recurring breakdowns and the rise of racism have again and again been followed by a regeneration of worker unity. The very pressures that splintered the working class also helped to re-cement it.

Industrial Workers of the World: The Labor Movement's Finest Hour

A valiant effort to arrest the onrushing tide of racism was made by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the most thoroughgoing antiracist union in American history. This was no elitist, genteel, procapitalist union (such as the AFL), but rather a direct-action industrial union, completely eschewing traditional parliamentary politics. The purpose of strikes was not only to lessen the poverty and exploitation of the working class; it was also to raise the workers' consciousness by instilling in them a sense of their power as a class (what Marx called *Klass für sich*). The goal of this process of education and class struggle was to create a general strike against the entire capitalist system.

The racial attitudes and practices of the IWW, the 'Wobblies', reflected no ambivalence or mere expediency. The radical leadership took on unskilled, exploited but quiescent workers, overcame much of their cultural conditioning, and pushed them toward industrial action through racial and class enlightenment. Carrying the gospel that 'an injury to one is an injury to all' and 'all of the working class is one big union', they made inroads into the lumber and waterfront industries (neglected by the AFL), where blacks were a substantial part of the labor force. They won several strikes (mostly in the decade before World War I) that were models of racial solidarity in the face of powerful outside pressures. Examples of radical rhetoric that raised the specter of trouble for the employing class, and provoked a powerful reaction, included:

> We shall ourselves assume control of our industry and dictate the conditions of work . . . Southern workers ought to realize that while there are two colors among the workers in the South there is actually only one class. . . . As far as we, the (white) workers of the South are concerned, the only 'supremacy' and 'equality' they (the employers) have ever granted us is the supremacy of misery and the equality of rags. . . . No longer will we allow the Southern oligarchy to divide and weaken us on lines of race, craft, religion and nationality.[123]

Under IWW tutelage, some workers saw that playing off white and black workers against each other enabled the capitalists to oppress all workers. If it had not been for the violent and brutal resistance of the outraged employers (particularly in the South) backed up by courts and police, the interracial solidarity would probably have deepened and spread. As Dubofsky said in his detailed study of the IWW: 'As far as Southern workers are concerned, the IWW preached nonviolent and industrial action; the companies practiced violence and inflicted murder and mayhem upon union members. To put it bluntly, violence initiated by employers destroyed Southern unionism.'[124]

The lesson to be learned from the experience of the IWW is clear: ruling classes use the state as a repressive mechanism against the working classes when they (or at least a leading section) feel their continued hegemony threatened. The form and degree of control may run the gamut from moderate harassment (for example, that encountered by present-day radicals) to savage reprisals (for example, as experienced by IWW members).

The legacy of the IWW remains labor's finest hour. Dubofsky stated it well:

> The history of the Wobblies is also part of the never ending struggle to humanize conditions in the workplace by creating a social system in which workers, through their own democratic institutions, determine the nature and goals of work.[125]

In affirming a rigorous standard of racial equality, the IWW reached a level of consciousness that today's bureaucratized unions could well emulate. The contrast of its all-embracing unionism with craft unionism, which dominated in this period before World War I, reveals the ineffectiveness of craft unions as instruments of class struggle and antiracism. At its best, craft unionism can provide improvement for only a part of the work force. More normally it divides the working class and helps to legitimate capitalism as a system. The future course of the labor–capital conflict may well hinge on which approach wins the workers' consciousness, and that assuredly influences political organization and action by the working class.

The Triumph of Jim Crow*

As Jim Crow reigned in the last decades of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century, in its wake followed a myriad forms of discrimination, mob violence,[126] and the rise of monopoly capitalism. The entry of the United States into imperialist ventures – starting in 1898 with the Spanish–American War, which brought some 8 million colored people under the American aegis – provided grist for the Southern mill of white supremacy. The reactionary view of black racial inferiority dominated from the 'redneck' regions of the South to the groves of academe. Blacks were effectively disfranchised in every Southern and border state by 1900–10. Segregation was the rule in virtually all public accommodations and schools. Supreme Court decisions, such as Plessy v. Ferguson, reflected and reinforced these practices.

At the turn of the century, about 80 per cent of the black population resided in the rural South, and it was here that racism was most ruthlessly enforced. Southern whites used a variety of strategems to slow the exodus of blacks to the West and North. According to John Hope Franklin, these included

> the enforcement of vagrancy and labor contract laws . . . legislation imposing penalties for enticing laborers away, and the establishment of systems of peonage by which blacks were hired out by the county in order to pay the fine for a crime or to pay a debt.[127]

These discriminatory measures may have impeded the mobility of the blacks, but they did not arrest it.

Industrial employment in the South increased considerably in this period for both blacks and whites, although, almost without exception, blacks occupied the lowest jobs in terms of wages

* 'Jim Crow' in its colloquial sense means discrimination against or segregation of blacks.

and prestige. Blacks became an important part of the unskilled labor force in lumber, mining, and iron and steel production. Convict-lease arrangements between private businesses and Southern state governments – a highly disproportionate number of the convicts were blacks – were not uncommon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their depressing effect on wages undoubtedly strengthened resentment among white workers as well. Urban life for the blacks was at best a marginal improvement on rural life. Except for a thin stratum of black entrepreneurs,[128] who somehow managed to thrive under difficult conditions, blacks benefitted minimally from the fruits of economic progress. Moreover, Southern blacks had increasingly become nonparticipants in the political process, which reinforced the barrenness of their economic prospects.

Washington v. DuBois

It was against this background of institutionalized racism that Booker T. Washington, the most influential black leader before World War I, developed a conciliatory, accommodationist position. He implicitly justified the lack of black participation in the political process and urged blacks to acquire an industrial education in order to better themselves economically. Although Washington did not favor black disfranchisement, in debates in the National Afro-American Council[129] from 1898 to 1908, he indicated that literacy and property qualifications for voting were acceptable if applied in a nonracial way. He refused to face the fact that restrictive voting rights were necessarily biased against the blacks. Uncritically accepting the values of bourgeois society, he established the National Negro Business League in 1900 as part of a self-help program to uplift the blacks so that, at some future date, they might earn the white man's respect.

Class conflict as well as race conflict was played down. Washington urged blacks to reject the appeals of labor union organizers and to look to upper-class whites for jobs and protection. In a working-class struggle in Birmingham during the late 1890s and early years of the twentieth century, Washington 'denounced cooperation between white and black wage-earners and urged the district's black workers to "maintain peaceful and friendly relations with the best white people of the community who give our race employment and pay their

wages" '.[130] He viewed the establishment of black business as a key to economic advancement. Unfortunately, many of Washington's prescriptions were out of phase with the country's development:

- The demand for some of the skills Washington emphasized was becoming less important as a result of technological developments.
- Labor unions were keeping out many blacks who had acquired skills through the kind of industrial education advocated by Washington.
- Technological developments in agriculture were making obsolete some of the agricultural skills he emphasized. The irony of his call for improved scientific farming techniques among the black farmers is that these techniques were accompanied by the development of large-scale capitalistic agriculture among the relatively small, overwhelmingly white group capable of making the required investment in agriculture and by the increased pauperization of the small-scale sharecropper and tenant farmer (among whom the blacks were disproportionately concentrated).
- The development of American industry from small, competitive units to a few large, monopolistic firms tended to make small-scale black enterprise a shaky venture. This historical lag at a time of industrial transition could not help but retard and distort the development of black capitalism.

When Washington's position is examined in a historical rather than a modern context, it appears less conservative and more understandable. Even W.E.B. DuBois, Washington's main critic at the turn of the century, agreed that some emphasis ought to be placed on the acquisition of technical skills and pride in one's work and race. Like Washington, DuBois supported the development of black business as a way of creating economic opportunities in a racist society. According to Harold Cruse, Washington's program of industrial training without political involvement was not necessarily more conservative than DuBois' program of civil rights and higher education, since the latter 'could not be won under Southern conditions at that time'; indeed, the differences between these two black leaders were

'essentially tactical rather than substantive'.[131] For Cruse, both men reflected the same social forces but pointed out different paths of development.

> Washington's record clearly shows that he was *not* against the things DuBois stood for in civil rights, any more than DuBois was against Washington's program of making Negro artisans, businessmen and property owners, or his philosophy of Work and Money. . . . The Washington–DuBois controversy was a reflection on the split within the new, emerging Afro-American black bourgeoisie of our twentieth century America. . . . Booker T. Washington was the spokesman and the prophet of the bourgeois national wing of the black bourgeoisie . . . DuBois was the leading spokesman for the radical civil rights protest wing of the black bourgeoisie. . . . These antagonists and protagonists were all of the same class development; they simply represented different tendencies in that same class emergence.[132]

Although this presentation offers a useful antidote to the caricature of Washington as a white capitalist puppet, it seriously understates his differences with DuBois. Far more than a 'bourgeois integrationist', DuBois sustained a militant, uncompromising agitation for full political rights, at considerable personal risk. He understood, in a way Washington did not, that political struggle and economic progress were closely linked. His attempts, with limited success, to break the allegiance of the blacks to the Republican Party, while recognizing the 'impossible alliance' in the Democratic Party between radical Northerners and conservative Southerners,[133] foreshadowed the modern tendency among some radical blacks to opt for independent politics. DuBois' socialist orientation (starting about 1907) is evident in his call for unity between blacks and oppressed workers in all countries including the US.[134] He was sympathetic to unions but despaired of the attempts to eliminate rampant discrimination in their ranks. For the most ardent and advanced black socialists, their radicalism was stretched to the breaking point by the repeated unwillingness of most white workers to support the black struggle against racial barriers. These leaders observed with anguish and exasperation the abandonment of the class struggle by white workers in pursuit of their temporary self-interest. DuBois looked to the exceptional fraction – the 'talented tenth' – to provide the leadership for uplifting the poverty-stricken black masses, and he believed that, for this elite, a liberal education was essential to inculcate a sense of civilization. He poetically stated:

> It is industrialism drunk with its vision of success to imagine that its work can be accomplished without providing for the training of broadly cultured men and women to teach its own teachers. . . . Education and work are the levers to uplift a people. Work alone will not do it unless inspired by the right ideals and guided by intelligence. . . . The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. . . . The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.[135]

The main thrust of a long lifetime of writing and agitation indicates that DuBois was more concerned with community aspirations than with individual success, and with a socialistic approach rather than with allegiance to a private enterprise system (including a black variant).

Without doubt, the key reason for the decline in the acceptance of Washington's accommodationist–gradualist line by the black community, and for the rise of DuBois' more militant stance, was white brutality against blacks, as evidenced by the number of lynchings and race riots, particularly those in Atlanta (1906) and Springfield, Illinois (1908). The rise during the 1920s of Marcus Garvey's black nationalist movement (the largest mass movement in black history) was another manifestation of this increased militancy, though it took forms quite different from the DuBois approach. With hindsight, we can see that the conflict between Washington and DuBois (and later that between DuBois and Garvey) was more than a dialogue in the history of ideas. It was a manifestation of the contradictions created by the powerful social forces of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the Industrial Revolution in an unplanned, cyclically prone market economy, waves of poor immigrant labor, a state attuned to the needs of capital, a weak (and essentially craft-oriented) labor movement and an all-pervasive racism that crossed class and regional lines in a complex and changing pattern.

Discrimination and Ruling Class Control

Between the late 1890s and World War I, racism reached a post-Civil War peak as industrialization shifted into higher gear. To focus on the contrast between political democracy for whites and racial discrimination for blacks, is to oversimplify the political and economic realities of this era. Whatever democracy was gained by whites was impeded by the economic and political control of the ruling property interests, which allowed the poorer whites (factory workers, small landholders and landless agricultural laborers) only a degree of power that did not challenge their control. Racial discrimination against blacks was accompanied in virtually all cases by class exploitation. It is nevertheless correct to say that 'inter-class' conflicts among whites were much displaced by interracial conflicts, and the hegemony of larger property interests was secured.'[136] Discrimination created a large pool of unskilled labor, required by the labor-intensive technology of the period, that kept wages down. In fact, until World War I, almost all factory labor was white, but the threat of using black labor put severe restraints on wages. Discriminatory policies served the political as well as economic designs of the hegemonic class since racism helped to preserve the class rule of the new Southern oligarchy and its Northern counterpart. At this time it appeared that white domination was compatible with the order and stability essential for capitalists. Northern capital, which dominated the Southern economy, accepted the regional hegemony of Southern propertied interests since they did not pose a threat to Northern profits or national supremacy, and may, in fact, have ensured them by weakening the power of the working class.

Blacks and Imperialism

The position of blacks in American society was markedly affected by the drift of American foreign policy into imperialism in the late 1890s. Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii, several smaller Pacific islands, and much of Central and South America came within the American sphere of influence as America became an important factor in world affairs. The rising class of industrialists attempted to spread their economic and political power beyond the country's borders in a search for new sources of raw materials, markets for their rising output or markets in which to

invest their growing profits. The lesson of American imperialism for American blacks is that a society willing to exploit 'backward' colored people in less developed countries could not be expected to espouse democracy for its own 'backward' people. The view of blacks as inferior was held by almost all classes, section and political philosophies in America around the turn of the century.[137] Even groups like the Progressive Party reformers, who were interested in the advancement of blacks, were paternalistic rather than egalitarian in their racial attitude.

The historian Dewey Grantham tried to explain the paradox of a Progressive Party with strong humanistic leanings that had a blind spot on the race issue. He finds the answer in the American attitude toward imperialism from 1898 to 1919:

> Progressives were no more willing to accord equal civil and social rights to the people recently subjected by the American republic than were the majority of Americans. . . . Once having accepted the ideology of the new imperialism, it was difficult to escape the logic of the Southerners' position [on white supremacy].[138]

According to Grantham, the conciliatory, moderate Booker T. Washington's 'idea of self-advancement' found 'easy lodgement' in the Progressive theme of emphasizing individual reforms such as restraining monopolies, abolishing special privileges and using government to improve schools. These reforms, says Grantham, would 'produce a condition in which men might be free to prove their merit. If the black could make his way on the economic front, political and civil rights would take care of themselves.'[139] The Progressives made the same error that Washington did – not recognizing that political rights condition one's ability to take advantage of opportunities on the economic front.

As a statement of fact, Grantham's position on white attitudes toward imperialism and blacks has the ring of authenticity. Yet, to explain the stand of white America vis-a-vis colored people at home and abroad, one must consider the short-run material gains by the former at the expense of the latter. The gains of the white workers stemmed from their monopoly of higher-paying skilled jobs. The gains of the white entrepreneur were more complicated. At this point in American history, foreign investment served to absorb part of the surplus generated by rapid

development in the domestic economy. The exploitation of foreign workers made for greater returns on US capital invested in foreign areas under its political control. Hence the unity of trade and flag. Domestic and foreign people of color absorbed the brunt of exploitation, which lessened the competition among whites in both psychological and material terms.

World War I and the Black Transition

World War I was a watershed in American black history. A substantial part of the black populace, changed from peasants to proletarians. The war dramatically slowed the waves of immigrants to the United States (from 1.2 million in 1913 and 1914 to 110,000 in 1918)[140] at the same time that it raised industry's demand for labor. This favorable labor market created new employment opportunities for blacks. Business agents of Northern industrial firms lured Southern blacks and whites with descriptions of plentiful work opportunities at higher wages than either earned in agriculture. The economic distress of Southern blacks, as well as widespread social injustice, gave them winged feet. Although the vast majority of blacks continued to reside in Southern rural areas until World War II, nearly 1 million migrated to Northern (and secondarily to Southern) industrial centers. Between 1919 and 1940, the proportion of the black population living outside of the South rose from 11 per cent to 23 per cent (in absolute numbers from 1.9 million to 4 million).[141] The black population in Detroit rocketed from fewer than 6,000 to 120,000.[142] Although a certain 'black belt' had existed in major Northern cities before the first great migration (white hostility to blacks living in white areas was not significant in this period), the bounded ghetto as we know it today first emerged with the vast influx of blacks during World War I. The Drake–Cayton study makes the point that

> In 1919 . . . more than two-thirds of the Negroes lived in areas less than fifty per cent Negro, and a third lived in areas less than ten per cent Negro. By 1920, eighty-seven per cent of the Negroes lived in areas over half Negro in composition.[143]

The number of blacks in the industrial labor force nearly doubled between 1910 and 1920.[144] This represented a truly

significant change in occupational roles. Although the vast majority were confined to unskilled jobs in basic industries like steel, mining, meat packing, autos and shipbuilding, their economic improvement was dramatic in comparison with their previous state of abject poverty. But the rapid changes put severe strains on the social fabric; racial clashes in the factories and outside were not uncommon. Under enormous pressure from the sudden entry of blacks into the industrial labor force, the AFL took tentative steps to open the union doors to them. The blacks had as little understanding of the imperialist basis of World War I as the whites; both patriotically served in a segregated army while helping to 'make the world safe for democracy'.[145]

The end of the war saw the return of lynchings, race riots and job discrimination – although militant resistance by the black community grew dramatically. When the pace of wartime economic expansion abated in the early postwar years, increased job competition and unemployment in the highly populated urban areas fanned the fires of racial discord. Blacks protested against mass layoffs in their recently opened areas of industrial employment. The new militancy of the blacks in their struggle for economic and political justice confronted fierce resistance from the threatened whites (including the working class). Given the past culture of violence, it was only a question of time before the accumulated pressure exploded. A wave of race riots throughout the country, of which the hostile and violent outbursts in East St. Louis (1917) and Chicago (1919) were probably the most severe,[146] reflected the blacks' deep frustration and alienation, as well as the weakness of working-class bonds between blacks and whites. Spero and Harris note that the migration of 10,000 blacks to the industrial center of East St. Louis and the use of some as strikebreakers at the Aluminium Ore Company, preceded an appeal by the Central Trade and Labor Union for 'action to curb the "growing menace" of Negro labor' and the 'most bitter race riot in the history of the nation'.[147] Similarly, they indicate that the outbreak of violence in Chicago two years later followed on the heels of the migration of thousands of Southern blacks in search of work in the steel and meat-packing industries. Their conclusion is that in both affairs 'Competition between white and Negro labor, and organized labor's failure to bring the

Negro into the Unions, stimulated latent racial antipathy. Racial antagonism made it possible for employers to play off one racial group against the other.'[148]

Within the AFL, the relatively small number of blacks raised militant voices against union discrimination. Some radical blacks advocated setting up their own unions in order to struggle more effectively against employers and discriminatory white unions.[149] Other radical blacks like DuBois 'advocated a dual position: Negroes should work increasingly to build black–white unity in the labor movement, but at the same time they should challenge and unrelentingly attack segregation and discrimination in the trade unions'.[150] DuBois observed with the same poignant insight as Frederick Douglass the unity of aims between white and black labor and the bitter irony of blacks serving as scabs or wage undercutters because of white labor's refusal to make common cause with them.

> Theoretically we are a part of the world proletariat in the sense that we are mainly an exploited class of cheap laborers; but practically we are not a part of the white proletariat; and are not recognized by that proletariat to any great extent. We are the victims of their physical oppression, social ostracism, economic exclusion, and personal hatred; and when in self-defense we seek sheer subsistence, we are howled down as scabs.[151]

The Ku Klux Klan experienced explosive growth during the 1920s to 3 or 4 million members including many in Northern regions. The frustration of the whites in dealing with blacks no longer willing to be submissive led to an unprecedented wave of lawlessness and violence. Although blacks suffered higher casualties than whites, they fought back with an ardor that only the exploited who have glimpsed the possibility of change can summon. Doubtless one of the chief reasons for the emergence of the New Negro in the 1920s was increasing urbanization, because the possibility of group solidarity is so much greater in a concentrated urban environment than in the isolated countryside. In a rapidly expanding urban ghetto setting, blacks became more aware of their potential political and economic power; the ability of terrorists to intimidate them therefore diminished.

Despite resistance by white workers, increasing numbers of

blacks did achieve entry into various industries. This process was sometimes used by big business to crimp union activity:[152] white unionists often unwittingly aided the very management they opposed by forcing black workers into scabbing in order to enter industrial plants. Despite the vigorous efforts of black and white radicals to batter down the walls of discrimination during the 1920s, by the end of the decade, not more than 10 per cent of the blacks in industry were in labor unions. The combination of capitalist and white worker racism kept them anchored at the lower rungs of the industrial ladder.[153] The nature of craft unionism imparted a political conservatism to the AFL, prevented effective struggle along class lines and weakened the union's power in bread-and-butter industrial disputes with management. The insensitivity of the AFL to racism is only one aspect of the inherent limitations of craft unionism, particularly when accompanied by low political consciousness. On a practical level, the AFL never succeeded in organizing more than a tiny percentage of the workers in basic industry.

The position of black capitalists in business improved in the 1920s, although in terms of the national economy, the change was minimal. The ghetto economy was the fragile basis of the new black capitalism. Periods of economic distress created significant unemployment among blacks, which reduced black spending power and made the ghetto-dependent business firms very vulnerable. The vast majority of these firms were high-cost, inefficient outfits with limited credit for expansionary investment. A black business elite, centered in banking and insurance, did develop, but it lagged far behind the white elite since racism restricted virtually all of its activities to the ghetto economy.

In addition to their inferior labor status and a higher unemployment rate even in the midst of the prosperity, blacks also carried a heavier burden of the agrarian distress of the 1920s than whites did because of their higher concentration in the agricultural sector. Natural disasters like the boll weevil (which laid waste immense areas of the Southeast), economic factors such as increased foreign competition and technological changes that displaced farm labor contributed to the relative decline of agriculture. Although the general prosperity of the 1920s swept the blacks along with it, the shaky foundation of that prosperity would become all too evident in the following decade.

The Great Depression and World War II

While the unprecedented economic collapse of the 1930s was severe for whites, it was cataclysmic for blacks.[154] From a third to a half of the black labor force were unemployed in most of the 1930s – more than 50 per cent higher than for whites. As the Depression deepened, pressure from unemployed white workers induced many capitalists to replace black labor, even in positions normally considered 'Negro jobs'. The number of families on relief was staggering, particularly in the cities. Yet, even at the bottom of the heap, discrimination continued.

As a protest against the onerous conditions of the 1930s, the Populist spirit reawakened in the agrarian South and the industrial North.[155] With leadership by white and black socialists and communists, heroic efforts were made in the South to form interracial agricultural unions, though these were held in check by the usual combination of adamant resistance (including brutal violence) by racists, aided by local police and courts, and the inability of the oppressed whites to completely overcome their own racial conditioning. The abysmal poverty of black and white tenants was reinforced by their political weakness.

From the end of World War I until the formation of the CIO in 1935, the American labor movement was dominated by racist craft unions. The appearance of the CIO on the industrial scene was a turning point in terms of race and class issues. Although the CIO's entry into mass-production industries (such as auto, steel, rubber and meat packing) did not bring an end to racial discrimination in industry and the unions, it did mark a renewed effort to organize industrial workers regardless of color or level of skill. Ray Marshall, the eminent labor economist, claims that the industrial union structure of the CIO (as opposed to the craft structure of the AFL) made it more prone to accept enlightened social policies.

> Industrial unions have very little control over the racial composition of their membership because they do not control jobs; they attempt to organize workers who are already employed. Craft unions, on the other hand, have the ability to determine whom the employer hires because they often control the supply of labor. . . . The industrial union has less opportunity for discrimination.[156]

The CIO's racially egalitarian policies emerged out of ideological and organizational struggle. While the black clergy and most black community leaders were hostile or aloof to the union movement, black (and white) union organizers (including some communists) struggled valiantly, and with some considerable success, to enlist the sympathy of the working class. Since blacks constituted a significant part of the unskilled labor force in several mass-production industries, self-interest induced the white workers to accept black entry into the unions. Even in the South, the CIO organizers courageously preached the message of worker solidarity against the reactionary forces, who were often in covert alliance with the AFL.[157] In addition, the CIO was active in the political struggle for equal opportunities for blacks through its Committee to Abolish Racial Discrimination and its Political Action Committee.

For one of the few times in history, black workers were organized without discrimination, although the CIO did not fight strongly against the traditional racial occupation patterns. Racism within the ranks of the white workers – particularly among poor Southern migrants to Northern industrial centers – was not eradicated overnight. It lingered in diminished form, despite the laudable efforts of the more advanced members and the national office. Large numbers of blacks did penetrate previously excluded industries (especially during the acute labor shortage of World War II), but disproportionate numbers remained trapped in dangerous, onerous and poor-paying jobs. While interracial working-class solidarity was never a full-fledged reality, the CIO deserves credit for planting the seed. Labor historian Philip Foner concludes that

> Whatever its shortcomings, the CIO was unquestionably the most important single development since the Civil War in the black worker's struggle for equality. . . . Before the establishment of the CIO barely 100,000 blacks were members of American trade unions; by 1940 there were roughly 500,000. . . . In four years, organized labor achieved more for black workers – with the participation of the black workers themselves – than it had in almost a century of previous existence.[158]

The reformist thrust of the New Deal administration, under pressure to stave off the collapse of capitalism, induced the adoption of some pro-labor legislation at the state level, but at the corporate level, only extraordinary worker solidarity (par-

ticularly in basic industry) could induce capital to yield some of its power. President Roosevelt did not mount a challenge to either racial segregation or disfranchisement of the blacks.[159] Concessions were made to the new industrial unions, but with the greatest reluctance. It is also essential to note that legislation favorable to labor unions (for example, the Wagner Act) was not as effective in advancing the interests of black workers as white workers, since it did not bar racial discrimination by the unions.[160] The significance of the CIO experience for black and white workers was not so much in economic improvement – although this did indeed occur in terms of wages, security and working conditions – but rather in a growing awareness of their power through joint participation in industrial action. While the union did not actually strike at the basic prerogatives of corporate ownership and control, neither did the rank and file accept the ideology of class harmony. In a period of recovery and war-induced economic expansion, the working class was not yet ready for an open anticapitalist struggle. Labor's militancy was deflected by an immature class consciousness. Some of the valuable lessons of this prewar and war experience were frittered away in the anticommunist hysteria after World War II, in which the most politically and racially progressive of the unions were expelled from the CIO. Nevertheless, the experience served as a base from which to commence again the arduous task of politicizing the working class on the basis of class struggle.

World War II ended the Great Depression and sharply accelerated the black proletarianization that had been developing since World War I. Blacks rapidly increased in the industrial labor force at all skill levels (particularly the semi-skilled) as their numbers rapidly declined in farm labor. It took militant action by blacks, such as the threat of a massive march on Washington in 1941 to demand fair treatment in the labor market, as well as several years of acute labor shortages accompanying the massive war effort, for the racial barriers in industry and unions (particularly in craft unions like the Brotherhood of Locomotive Foremen)[161] to start crumbling. For some time, shortages of white labor coexisted with black unemployment. Production was thus sacrificed and the mounting of an all-out war effort impeded. The response of the state to this crisis was decisive; it had to overcome the particularist, narrow, short-run interests of

some capitalists and some unions in order to advance the general capitalist interest. The exigencies of war demanded a fuller and more effective use of black manpower, however much this ran counter to cultural and economic conditioning. The Fair Employment Practice Commission was established to put pressure on both unions and companies with war contracts to end the discriminatory practices that were clearly hampering the war effort.

Fighting racism in Germany necessitated certain socio-economic changes on the domestic front, and the state was the necessary vehicle for this process. Pressure from the blacks themselves as the most oppressed stratum forced, or at least induced, a series of changes affecting the status of the black working class – and eventually that of the white working class. The northward migration of Southern blacks, which had slowed during the depression, now swelled to enormous proportions in response to unprecedented industrial production. In the decade spanning World War II, blacks became a thoroughly urbanized people, although a majority continued to reside in the South well into the 1970s. Still more important politically was the entrenchment of blacks in the union structure. Discrimination was far from extirpated (particularly in the stubbornly resistant craft sector), but it had receded in importance, at least in terms of capital's ability to manipulate the working class for its own economic advantage. In effect, the class struggle had attained a higher and more decisive stage from which the ultimate demise of the capitalist system was faintly visible.

Summary and Conclusion

The history of the period up to the 1940s is a tangled web of class and race, accommodation and resistance, unity and conflict, exploitation and benevolence, equality and paternalism, all woven on the structure of such changing modes of production as slavery, feudalism and capitalism. It demonstrates the interconnectedness of changing societal forms, the changing relations between whites and blacks, and the changing class struggle. American economic development vitally affected the position of blacks, and their position in turn vitally affected the course of American economic development.

In this period capitalism emerged fully triumphant. The

contradictions engendered by previous systems like slavery – supplemented, of course, by a class awareness of these contradictions and appropriate political forms of organization – eventually brought about their demise. Capitalism greatly enlarged society's productive potential as well as the sphere of individual freedom for particular groups. But those benefits were bought at a considerable price, in the form of low standards of living for the working class and blacks.

Capitalism did not arrive fully formed after the eclipse of slavery and feudalism, though its growth was intimately linked with both of these systems. Accompanying this growth, and partly the cause of it, was a widening of inequality, particularly for the blacks. In addition to this economic burden, blacks suffered from political and social injustice at the hands of the white ruling and working classes. Comparatively few white workers saw any conflict between demands for increased political democracy for themselves and the maintenance of discriminatory barriers for blacks. Except for brief sporadic periods, racial conflict prevented the emergence of broad-based working-class consciousness. Labor has paid a steep price for its failure to mount a sustained offensive against racism – not only in lost strikes and lower wages, but also in its persistently weak political organization for altering the power structure in society.

It is the social and economic structure of the capitalist system, with its built-in exploitation mechanism, that repeatedly creates class consciousness and political organizations (unions, political parties and agitation movements) for struggling against racism. At many critical junctures, racism has short-circuited this process, but it has not destroyed it. The dialectics of race and class are intricately intertwined, whether under slavery or the so-called free market system.

It may be argued that white political democracy within a capitalist economic framework was made possible by racism, first, in the obvious sense, that the Indians had to be chased off their lands for the small independent farmers to establish themselves, and second, in the more subtle sense, that racism is a necessary (or at least useful) adjunct to the ideology of capitalist democracy because it purports to explain why some people remain impoverished while others reap the major economic gains. Bourgeois social scientists maintained that this inequality reflected the different characters of the people

involved in the economic process – the former being inferior and lazy and the latter being superior and industrious. The truth is that poverty and affluence are both functions of the capitalist mode of production and distribution. In other words, racism has been used as a justification for inequality, which allows the capitalist system to function more effectively. In fact, it is the present 'legitimation crisis' of capitalism, stemming in part from the attack on racism, that now contributes to the fiscal and economic crisis of the state.[162] That is, racism not only keeps the working class divided and a portion of it weak economically, but it also legitimates the system as a whole for the majority of people.

Reactions of blacks prevented from moving into the mainstream of American life have included painful accommodation to second-class life, withdrawal into black nationalist or religious movements, reformist struggles for equal rights within the system and a revolutionary struggle for liberation through a restructuring of existing societal forms. In practice, the last two responses have merged, since the struggle for reform sometimes crosses over into revolutionary activity, depending on the ability and desire of the system to institute timely reforms.

Blacks have been caught in a cultural trap, seeking acceptance into a society that professes a democratic credo but repeatedly resorts to racism whenever blacks take this credo seriously. Ironically, black alienation from American society sustains the alienation of whites as well. Blacks (particularly in the working class) cannot be fully emancipated unless their white counterparts recognize that white liberation depends on black liberation. W.E.B. DuBois poignantly described the ethnic dualism in racist America:

> One ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two working ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. . . . He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.[163]

The ability of American capitalism to resolve this conflict will assuredly affect its tenure.

Appendix: a Critique of Fogel and Engerman

Time on the Cross by Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman is a powerful polemic on the economics of slavery that elicited an outpouring of both praise and criticism when it appeared in 1974.[1] It is cut from the same neoclassical cloth as the earlier pioneering study by Conrad and Meyer.[2] The mass of data that Fogel and Engerman subjected to computer analysis included slave mobility and standard of living, relative exploitation of slave and free labor, slave prices, cotton prices, average output of slaves, cost of slave maintenance, profitability of slavery and regional growth rates. One cannot help but admire such an undertaking, despite its deficiencies on both a methodological and statistical level.

Fogel and Engerman present an essentially favorable view of the social relations and economic effectiveness of the antebellum South. They claim that not only did the slaves absorb the Protestant work ethic (as well as Victorian sexual mores) of their masters', but that the resulting situation was mutually profitable: the slaves were able to rise to positions of responsibility and higher income, and the owners were able to develop social control mechanisms that made their 'capitalistic' operations efficient and profitable. The authors admit that the yoke of slavery hung heavily on the skilled and ambitious slave, since he could acquire neither freedom nor property, but they deny that slavery was a major handicap for the ordinary slave. Whippings and the forced breakup of families through slave market transactions,[3] according to Fogel and Engerman, have been grossly exaggerated by well-meaning but erring historians. They label as racist (or at least contributing to racism) those views emphasizing that the slaves' dependent, debilitating and exploited position caused them to lose their sense of identity and drive to achieve. Recognition of 'black achievement under adversity' is seen as a minimum requisite for affirming credentials as a nonracist. The arrogance of this pronouncement obscures the fact that the example of a slave voluntarily working effectively and efficiently does not represent 'black achievement under adversity', but rather a deeply rooted alienation (that is, making an individual adjustment to an inherently unjust system). 'Devoted, hard-working, responsible slaves who identified their fortunes with the fortunes of their masters'[4] were as

rare and pathological as the antisemitic Jew or antiblack black. Since the overwhelming beneficiaries of slave diligence, carefulness and efficiency would have been the slaveowners, is it reasonable to assume that this type of behavior was 'normal' for slaves? Internalizing the work ethic of the slaveowners would, in effect, have meant acquiescing in their own degradation, rather than showing the superior management capabilities of the planters or the superior quality of black labor. It is Fogel and Engerman, not the revisionists and others they castigate, who denigrate blacks by casting them as Uncle Toms.

Fogel and Engerman can be criticized on at least two levels – the adequacy of the numbers they plugged into their models and their fundamental concepts. Herbert Gutman convincingly shows that a number of their claims are based on dubious data or imaginative leaps. Gutman reveals that they rely heavily on unreliable probate records (the wills of deceased slaveowners) for information on slave occupations. These give a much more favorable view of slave status than that obtained by the use of Union Army records of black soldiers. Fogel and Engerman, for example, estimate that 11 per cent of rural slaves were artisans, while army records of 20,000 blacks indicate only 1.6 per cent in this category. Probate records also significantly understate the percentage of male slaves who were field hands or common laborers. Gutman, for example, rejects Fogel and Engerman's 'evidence' that slaves in Charleston counted heavily in several Southern crafts. He states:

> Only 15% of Charleston's slaves [in 1860] had skills as contrasted to 2/3 of Charleston's white workers and 3/4 of Charleston's free Blacks. It surely made a huge economic difference to be a white or free black worker as opposed to a slave worker in antebellum Charleston. Any suggestion that urban slaves shared a common occupational structure with either free black workers or white workers or that slave artisans dominated the urban antebellum crafts is egregiously mistaken.[5]

If consciousness has any relationship to economic position, certainly considerable doubt ought to be directed toward the Fogel and Engerman claim that the slaves internalized the behavioral norms of the plantation owners. On the basis of dubious (or at best controversial) data, they present the thesis that despite limitations the 'slave society produced complex

social hierarchy [with a] flexible and exceedingly effective incentive system'.[6] However, using military population censuses and Freedman's Bureau marriage registers in various Southern counties and Kentucky Union Army recruitment records, Gutman definitely shows that a very modest number of black slaves achieved artisan status and that at least 85 per cent of the rural slave population in the decade before the Civil War were fieldhands. Mobility opportunities within slavery were meager indeed. Fogel and Engerman's stand that 'Field hands could often become drivers and artisans', and 'drivers could move up to the position of head driver and overseer'[7] is a fanciful flight of the imagination based on a very thin statistical base. With the fall of this thesis comes, at the very least, a questioning of the relative efficiency (and profitability) of slave-based cotton production.

The issue of profitability is dealt with by Fogel and Engerman in a very unconvincing manner. They hold that the slave system was 35 per cent more efficient than free family farming in the North and that 'the purchase of a slave was generally a highly profitable investment which yielded rates of return that compared favorably with the most outstanding investment opportunities in manufacturing'.[8] Neither Fogel and Engerman nor Conrad and Meyer recognize that the profitability of cotton production, on which hinged the profitability of slavery, was a cyclical phenomenon that depended primarily on the level of foreign demand. Generally, speaking the periods from 1819 to 1832 and 1838 to 1848 were ones of considerable financial distress for the Southern planters. Cotton prices fell prey to cyclical declines, and profits were at considerably reduced levels, particularly on the higher-cost depleted soils of the old South. The profit squeeze in these periods was further exacerbated by the fact that the higher fixed-cost burden resulting from high previous investment in slaves tended to reduce the mobility of capital, despite considerable profit differentials between agriculture and manufacturing. Indeed the lack of mobility of Southern capital from agriculture to manufacturing in certain periods was not due to high profits in agriculture but to cultural and institutional rigidities.

That slave-based operations were, on the average, larger scale than typical free farming operations, and that some economies of scale were reaped by the slave plantations, is beyond dispute.

The economies of large-scale production, as well as the fuller utilization of the lifetime labor of the slave, partly compensated for the inefficiency of forced labor. Moreover, the greater exploitability of slave labor (for example, longer hours of work at lower living standards) may counteract its lower productivity. But the closest Fogel and Engerman come to a recognition of this fact is their comment that slaves were organized into 'highly disciplined interdependent teams capable of maintaining a steady and intense rhythm of work'.[9] This sweating of labor, however, contradicts their assumption that slave-labor efficiency stemmed, at least in part, from an adequate incentive system.

Fogel and Engerman make the unwarranted leap that profitability of slavery to slaveowners also furthered the economic interest of the whole Southern region. Regional specialization by the South (along comparative advantage lines) could have a beneficial economic effect only as long as it was part of a larger entity.[10] While Southern specialization in agriculture may not have inhibited growth as measured by increases in Gross National Product, it did inhibit an all-sided development, and that increased the vulnerability of the South once it seceded from the Union. Its previous period of specialization put the South at a severe, and ultimately decisive, disadvantage relative to the diversified economy of the North and West. Rational action by the individual slaveholders thus ultimately yielded chaotic results for the slave system as a whole. The social inefficiency of slavery was in marked contrast to its private profitability to some slaveholders in some periods of the slave era.

The high rate of disguised unemployment among the poor whites because of restricted opportunities in a plantation-slave economy testifies to the high social cost of that system. Like Conrad and Meyer, Fogel and Engerman obscure the difference between the private and social aspects of the profitability of slavery. Specialization in cotton production by the plantation-slave system distorted the overall development of the Southern economy. To the extent that the Southern planters could check the growing political power of the North, they could reap the economic gains accompanying the specialization. But once they precipitated the politically suicidal path of secession, the South's economic vulnerability surfaced. Southern specialization could

therefore be seen as a marriage of either good economics and bad politics, or bad economics and good politics. The point is that the Southern system was trapped. Fogel and Engerman try the escape hatch of suggesting that considerable economic diversification was possible within slavery:

> The course of slavery in the cities does not prove that slavery was incompatible with an industrial system or that slaves were unable to cope with an industrial regimen. Slaves employed in industry compared favorably with the free workers in diligence and efficiency. Far from declining, the demand for slaves was actually increasing more rapidly in urban areas than in the countryside.[11]

Fogel and Engerman show virtually no understanding of the struggle over Southern industrialization by the Southern ruling class. However valid their figures on slaves engaged in manufacturing, they provide but a glimmer of this conflict. An examination of the roots of this struggle reveals much more about the social forces in the South than do large amounts of statistical evidence.[12] It reveals the resistance to or, at best, ambivalence toward industrialization. Even the more farsighted Southerners were trying to rationalize the irrational – that is, to achieve capitalist industrialization in a society with a precapitalist civilization, however embedded its external relations were in a world capitalist system.

Fogel and Engerman do not examine the intricate interrelationship between individual phenomena and the larger social setting. To them slavery was simply a variant of capitalism that employed more or less similar criteria for economic action, rather than a complex and contradiction-ridden system. Their militantly narrow econometric approach simplifies complex realities to the point of near caricature. What ought to be studied from the vantage point of social and political economy is to them an exercise in technical economics. They make no effort to analyze either the basic structure of Southern slave society (including the polarization of wealth and power) or the consciousness of its classes and races. Perhaps above all what they lack is an understanding of the nature of oppression. It is precisely for this reason that they cannot come up with a theory of why the 'capitalist' South and capitalist North ended up in a devastating war in which the former was soundly thrashed by the latter. For Fogel and Engerman, the Civil War must be either

repressible or idiosyncratic. Their arguments pall alongside Genovese's much richer analysis, in *Political Economy of Slavery*, concerning the vested interest of the Southern oligarchy in fighting to preserve the slave plantation system whether or not it was efficient or profitable.

Nevertheless, the Fogel–Engerman study is not without merit. In suggesting that the rate of exploitation of free Northern labor in the slave era was close to that of Southern slave labor, they touch the heart of the capital accumulation process, although their frame of analysis inhibits a thoroughgoing examination. They also perform a service in showing that slave emancipation did not have much effect in improving the economic position of blacks and may well have hurt them for an extended period. It is worth remembering, however, that it was slavery that prevented virtually all blacks from acquiring property, thus severely handicapping them in the Reconstruction period in which unfettered capitalism was the new order of the day. While it is true that the absence of genuine land reform during the Reconstruction held back black advancement, the deep roots of the problem are to be found in the previous period of enslavement.

Gavin Wright's study, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, is in many ways an admirable critique of the Fogel–Engerman approach, although his political analysis is less sure-footed than his economic analysis. Among his provocative ideas is that the rapid growth of the Southern cotton-based economy was not sustainable since the British textile industry, the primary customer for Southern exports, 'stood on the crest of a major crisis of overproduction'[13] by the end of the 1850s. Wright also notes that the benefits of antebellum Southern prosperity were very unevenly distributed. Not only was there regional variability, but land and slaveholdings were becoming increasingly concentrated, which meant that the economic gap between slaveowners and Southern nonslaveowners widened rapidly in the antebellum period. 'The fraction of all Southern families who were slaveowners declined [from 1830 to 1860]. . . . Relative to their share in the population, slaveholder wealth was growing rapidly.'[14]

This element of class analysis is, at best, weakly developed by Fogel and Engerman. This issue closely interrelates with the question of economies of scale and the relative efficiency of slave

and free labor. Fogel and Engerman state, 'The fact that economies of scale were achieved exclusively with slave labor clearly indicates that in large-scale production some special advantage [was] attached to the use of slaves.'[15] Wright insightfully shows that their method of measuring the comparative efficiency of slave and free labor – comparing an index of outputs aggregated at market prices with an index of inputs for the two types of production – was statistically biased in favor of the slave-based plantation. His reasoning is that the market mix of cotton and corn (for subsistence production) were different for the plantation and the free family farmer, and that 'each percentage point increase in the cotton share [of output] increased the value of output per worker by more than 1 per cent'.[16] Since the free farmer operating a smaller farm was likely to have a relatively heavier concentration on food crops than would the large planters, the latter would appear to be getting more value of output per unit of input. Planters as well as small farmers attempted to make rational decisions about the mix of cotton and corn without given land and labor constraints. They operated, however, in a world of uncertainty, since prices were determined in the international market; the stage of the British business cycle was probably the most crucial determinant of cotton prices and profitability.[17] Therefore, both farmers and planters had to allocate some of their resources to food production even if their profits turned out smaller than if they had planted less corn and more cotton. Risk minimization meant planting enough corn to cover minimum requirements. Since planters operated on commercial rather than subsistence levels, they were more subject to the discipline of the market, which thus put them under unremitting pressure to grow a substantial amount of cash crops. This higher mix of market to nonmarket crops creates the appearance of large-scale economies for the plantation, but that was not the reality. According to Wright, if there were substantial scale economies, there would have been much more concentration of slaves and productions among the largest plantations than there was in fact. One may also add, however, that the absence of monopoly power over prices, high credit costs and rising prices of land and slaves may have created increasing liquidity problems for slave-based operations, which in effect imposed an upper bound on their ability to expand.

Wright is on target when he states, 'Slavery did not possess superior productive efficiency in the sense of more output from the same input of labor and other factors.'[18] Whatever efficiency slavery possessed was on a micro level (for example, flexibility in using the labor force between various uses). But surely Wright goes too far in asserting that 'because the supply of slave labor was elastic to the individual farm, factors of production were combined efficiently according to their relative prices and marginal product'.[19] Even if one accepts the dubious metaphysical notion that the marginal product of slave labor is knowable as well as measurable, it is essential to note that this allocational efficiency is valid only in a static sense. Once the planter bought a slave, to him that slave created inelasticity, since a fall in cotton prices was not likely to contract production, and any overproduction would drive prices down still further. Since slave labor was a considerable capital investment, it could not simply be released in slack periods; even if sold it would be at falling prices not likely to cover the investment.

Wright, in marked contrast to Fogel and Engerman, is very sharp in pointing out that there was a higher level of technical advance in Northern agriculture than Southern agriculture and in relating it to the internal logic of their respective systems:

> During a period of rapid demand expansion [1850s] Northern farmers increasingly pressed against labor constraints and searched for mechanical means of increasing acreage and output. In the South, in contrast, it was sensible for planters to concentrate on geographical expansion, systems of labor management, and (for somewhat different reasons) the political security of slave property.[20]

This explains why the North experienced a balanced development of industry and agriculture (with many forward and backward linkage effects) while the South experienced a lopsided, dependent, unsustainable development that combined continued agricultural specialization (along static comparative advantage lines) with a very thin industrial base.

On a political level, Wright backs off from some of his own economic analysis. While noting the economic reasons for geographical expansion, he nevertheless rejects Genovese's insight into Southern political economy – that the slave South had to expand into the new lands of the Southwest or die out

(Genovese sees this dilemma as provoking Northern resistance, which precipitated a rational effort by the slavocracy to wage war to preserve their unique civilization). Wright insists no land shortage confronted the South in the 1850s. Improved acreage, according to him, was growing more rapidly than population in the Southern states. But this is a sidetrack from the main issue. Profits on virgin lands were much greater than on poorer lands of the Southeast (Southern planters and politicians in these older lands were well aware of this),[21] and the movement of slaves and capital from the older to the newer was unmistakable.[22] The point then is not the land squeeze emphasized by Wright, but relative profitability. According to Wright, 'The essence of the profitability of slavery was the financial value of slave prosperity', and this would not have been raised by Westward expansion. But Wright's proposition is very dubious, since this type of hypothetical profitability was only realized when slaves were sold. Much more vital to the slaveholder was his yearly income.

Wrights's political naivete is revealed in his view that the planters, despite their obvious economic muscle, did not use this power politically.[23] Simply put, this betrays a profound historical ignorance of the relationship of slaveholders and nonslaveholders in the South. Despite the staunch efforts of Southern intellectuals and political statesmen to describe this relationship as one of class harmony,[24] considerable discord existed between regions of high slave population and low slave population. Nonslaveholding whites in the latter resisted the political control by the plantation barons. Wright seems aware of this in two brief sentences: in contrasting the usefulness of immigration to Northern manufacturers and Southern slaveholders, he says, 'a growing class of slaveholders might create a political threat to their hegemony', and shortly after, 'The political rise of a large class of free wage laborers would have posed an increasing threat to the political dominance of slaveowner'.[25]

There is considerably fuzziness in Wright's brief discussion about the cause of the Civil War. On the one hand, 'The North had no strong economic interests to fight a war over slavery.' On the other, the South didn't seem aware of this. Southerners had an 'insatiable thirst for psychological reassurance' about slavery and the value of slaves, and began to view Northern political

actions like the Kansas–Nebraska for free territorial status as a 'moral rebuke to slavery [and] hence a threat to the foundations of Southern wealth'.[26] This formulation, with its glaring lack of a class dimension, barely skims the surface of a highly complex interaction of changing class and sectional conflict. Nevertheless, Wright's work remains impressive. Although his essentially materialist analysis is not sufficiently interwoven with a dialectical framework, it represents a far more impressive use of economic tools for shedding light on a crucial watershed in American history. By showing that a significant part of the continuing economic malaise among blacks is rooted in the heritage of slavery, his work stands on a considerably higher plane than Fogel and Engerman's 'Heavenly Days in Dixie'[27] approach.

Notes

Introduction

1. See Mike Davis, 'Realities of the Rebellion', *Against the Current*, July/August 1992, pp. 14–18, for a keen analysis of the complex components of the Los Angeles events. Depicting the conditions behind the rioting and looting, he says,

   > The real savage edge of the recession cuts basically through the communities and new immigrants in Los Angeles, where unemployment rates have tripled and there's basically no safety net. People are in free fall, their lives are literally falling apart as they lose their minimum wage jobs.

2. See *New York Times*, 26 February 1988.
3. A full-fledged analysis of the psychology of racism is outside of the parameters of this study. But I believe it is reasonable to assume (at least in theory) that the psychological dynamics of racism under a profit-based capitalist structure would be different under a societal-based socialist structure. Although 'rednecks' as individuals will undoubtedly survive a social transformation, it is not hopelessly utopian to expect that the soil that nourishes this character-type is likely to become progressively more barren.
4. Don Terry, 'More Familiar Life in a Cell Seems Less Terrible', *New York Times*, 13 September 1992. The article adds that 'nationwide on any given day almost one in four black men from the ages of 20 to 29 is in prison or jail or on parole or probation'.
5. See the insightful article by Ellen Wood, 'Capitalism and Human Emancipation', *New Left Review*, January–February 1988, pp. 3–20.
6. See A. Sivanandan's original article 'Imperialism in the Silicon Age' in his collection *A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance* (1982), pp. 143–61. Sivanandan claims that multinational firms are continually on the move within the Third World periphery countries, always searching for lower wages and higher profits.
7. Sandra Harding, 'Taking Responsibility for Our Own Gender, Race, Class: Transforming Science and the Social Studies of Science', *Rethinking Marxism*, Fall 1989, p. 14.

Chapter 1: Historical Background of Black Discrimination

1. Frederickson, 'Why the Blacks were Left Out', 1974, p. 23. This is a critical but judicious review of Jordan's *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (1974). See the discussion in the following footnote. In the same article Frederickson claims there is evidence indicating instances of interracial solidarity within this class of servants and slaves against harsh masters, including collaborating with each other in insurrections.
2. Handlin, *Race and Nationality in American Life* (1957) p. 7. See Chapter 1, 'The Origins of Negro Slavery', pp. 3–22, for Handlin's excellent discussion of the transition from servitude to slavery, especially its legal institutionalization. Jordan, in his *White Over Black* (1968), is critical of Handlin's version of the enslavement process. He argues that white attitudes toward color differences made it possible to enslave the blacks. He also claims that racism existed from the outset and that differential treatment and legalization of the slave status of blacks occurred earlier than Handlin asserted. In my opinion, Jordan has overstated the importance of his differences with Handlin. Certainly slavery as a system based on differential power relations could effectively use a color-oriented racialism to establish a culture control mechanism, but, without the economic foundation provided by plantation staples, slavery (and racism) would have eventually withered away. If Handlin can be faulted for overemphasizing slavery as an economic institution, Jordan, perhaps more importantly, can be faulted for overemphasizing it as a socio–cultural–psychological experience.
3. Frederickson, 'Why the Blacks were Left Out', p. 23. Edmund Morgan takes the position that 'it seems probable that all Negroes, or nearly all, arrived in the colony as slaves'. See his *American Slavery and American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (1975), p. 154.
4. Eugene Genovese shrewdly observes that the legal status of slaves as out-and-out chattels was somewhat modified in real life. He points out that several Southern law cases implicitly noted that viewing the blacks as chattels was not only a legal fiction but self-defeating, in that blacks might not be held responsible for actions like insurrections. See his *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974), p. 28. The importance of this modification should not be overstated, however. Ruling classes, especially intelligent ones, have enough elasticity in their legal system to deal with changing threats to social stability precisely in order to maintain the inherently unequal social relationship accompanying a particular mode of production. Also see Mark Tushnet's *American Law of Slavery* (1981) for a penetrating treatment of the law and slavery.
5. It is too easy to exaggerate the voluntary nature of the emigration of white indentured servants from England. In addition to being pushed out by poverty, many of the lower class saw their freedom of decision as a Hobson's choice – either emigrate or go to prison for such crimes as being in debt. An untold number of early indentures were shanghaied by enterprising ship captains.
6. Older studies like Woodson and Wesley, *The Negro in Our History* (1922),

place the figure at 50 million. The most recent authoritative estimate is by Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (1969). He estimates the total deportation of African slaves to the Americas as between 9 and 10 million. These Africans came from many different cultures at varying states of cultural and economic development. It required the melting pot of slavery to give them a common heritage. Although slavery existed in Africa before the presence of the white man, it differed considerably in nature and extent. What is beyond dispute is the savagely disruptive effect of commercial slavery in African culture and economic life. The ensuing degeneration of African society was both deep and prolonged.

7. For a discussion of the relationship of the slave trade and the development of capitalism, see Williams, *Africa and the Rise of Capitalism* (1975), and Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944). Also, see Mannix, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518–1865* (1962), and James, *Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1963). The latter's exceptional blend of culture, politics and economics in his article 'The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery', *Amistad I* (1970) provides broader insights on this issue.

   It is, of course, very difficult to quantify slave trade profitability with any degree of precision. Although the variability of profit (by region and time period) is beyond dispute, the large amount of capital involved in this traffic provides reasonably convincing evidence of entrepreneurial sentiment that the rate of return economically justified continuing investment. For an opposing point of view, see Stanley Engerman, 'The Slave Trade and British Capital Formation in the Eighteenth Century', 1972, pp. 430–43; Robert Thomas and Richard Beam, 'The Fishers of Men: The Profits of the Slave Trade', *Journal of Economic History*, December 1974, pp. 885–914; Thomas, 'The Sugar Colonies of the Old Empire', 1968, pp. 30–45. All these articles emphasize that slave trade profits played a modest role in financing the Industrial Revolution. Also see Charles Freedeman's balanced review, 'Capitalism and Slavery', 1980. Freedeman astutely notes (as did Williams) that although slavery was not the sole cause for triggering the Industrial Revolution, it was enormously important: 'The growth of overseas demand, with which slave labor was closely connected, afforded a powerful stimulus for the Industrial Revolution. Without this stimulus, the timing and pace of English industrialization would have been retarded.'

8. Stampp correctly notes that these attempts 'were motivated by the desire of established planters to keep prices up and restrict competition by the fear of too high a proportion of slaves in the total population, and by the danger of receiving rebellious slaves from the West Indies'. This is an example of 'humanitarianism fortified by practical considerations'. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution* (1956), p. 25.

   After the successful slave insurrection in Haiti (the foremost sugar producer in the Caribbean) against the French sugar planters and British invaders, as well as a general crisis of overproduction in the early 1800s, the British abolished the slave trade (1807). When the planters lost out in the struggle with the rising industrialists, parliament abolished slavery completely in the British empire in 1833. Some scholars claim that British industrialists continued to secretly finance slave ships to the American South, with whom they had developed close economic ties. See the interesting discussion in Belisle, *Black Slavery and Capitalism* (1968), pp. 11–15.

9. Wallerstein, 'American Slavery and the Capitalist World Economy', 1976, p. 1209. Wallerstein's methodology is discussed further in this chapter.
10. Hawk, *Economic History of the South* (1936), p. 237, estimates that approximately 270,000 slaves were illegally smuggled into the United States between 1808 and 1860.
11. Lynd, in *Class Conflict, Slavery and the United States Constitution* (1967), stressed the centrality of slavery to the political conflicts and compromises involved in drafting and ratifying a federal constitution after the Revolutionary War. The slaveholding states were able not only to retain sectional control over slavery but, in addition, to preserve through the famous 'three-fifths' clause (each slave counted as three-fifths of a man for purposes of taxes and political representation) significant political power at the national level.
12. See Lloyd, *The Slavery Controversy, 1831–1860* (1939). It ought to be noted that the moral superiority claimed for slavery by the antebellum planter class is part of a family of similar assertions made by all hegemonic ruling classes. Some proslavery advocates developed the self-serving theory that slavery avoided the class conflicts inevitably associated with capitalist industrialization.
13. A useful account of the widespread nature of prejudice and segregation in antebellum Northern cities can be found in Litwack's *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860* (1961).
14. See Foner's *Organized Labor and the Black Worker* (1974), for a thorough treatment of the relationship of blacks and the labor movement. Foner claims, 'The opposition of white workers to the continued competition of slave labor was an important factor in ending slavery in the North', p. 4. While not meaning to disparage completely this position, it would appear to be an exaggeration. Slavery was not a viable system in small-scale agriculture or manufacturing, and although no mode of production withers away without human intervention, slavery in the North never became sufficiently rooted to withstand much pressure. No ruling strata stood to lose very much from its abolition.
15. John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (1967), p. 236. Chapter 14, 'Quasi-Free Negroes' has very useful material on the accomplishments of blacks toward economic independence as well as the enormous obstacles. Franklin, however, lacks an adequate class analysis: hence many insights remain undeveloped.
16. Aptheker's *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943) is the most thorough treatment of resistance to slavery. His theme of the continual, multivariate forms of slave resistance has been challenged by Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (1962), who claims that the American slaves by and large accommodated themselves to slavery in a manner similar to the Jews in the Nazi concentration camps. To the extent that Elkins' depiction of structurally induced infantalism has any validity, it would apply more to the average house slave rather than to the average field hand. There is a danger, however, of overstating this house–field dichotomy, since many of the most fanatically militant slave leaders were

house slaves. Although the opportunities for subtle or open resistance to slavery were less for the average house slaves, it is possible that their closer proximity to the slaveholders made them more vulnerable to the massive kind of socio–cultural–psychic disruption that sometimes develops rebellious (and perhaps revolutionary) leaders. I have benefitted from discussions with my colleague Cedrik Robinson on this subject. Also see Genovese, 'Rebelliousness and Docility in the Negro Slave', 1967, pp. 293–314, for a subtle and sophisticated evaluation of the Elkins thesis. Reprinted in the interesting collection of Bracey *et al.*, *American Slavery: The Question of Resistance* (1971).

17. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*. See Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (1918) and *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929), for an earlier Southern apologist view. Marxist historian Eugene Genovese has given a modern and much richer adaptation of the Phillips point of view in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.
18. Genovese holds that 'accommodation' included a big dose of resistance.
19. Bauer and Bauer, 'Day to Day Resistance to Slavery', Bracey *et al.*, *American Slavery*, pp. 37–60. This article originally appeared in 1942.
20. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, pp. 91–2.
21. See Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (1972), for a sensitive and well-documented account of this aspect of slave life. Also see Gutman's definitive study, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (1976).
22. Exploitation has a different meaning in Marxist theorizing than it has in marginal productivity theorizing. In the former sense – which is the one used in this study – it means the difference between the value created by labor power and the value of the labor power itself, while in the latter, exploitation exists only if labor receives less than its marginal revenue product. (Note that in marginal productivity theory, any factor can be exploited. In Marxian theory only the worker can be exploited, since the marginal product of the capitalist and landowner equals zero.) It follows that exploitation is the normal state of affairs in a private property system under Marxian assumptions, but exceptional under marginal productivity assumptions (that is, a result of monopsony power). Ransom and Sutch have developed a modification of orthodox theory concerning the measurement of slave exploitation. They state,

> the rate of exploitation is the fraction of the total product of labor which is exploited. By the term product of labor, we do not mean the average total annual output per slave (as might a Marxist), but rather that amount less the share of output paid to capital, land and management personnel, where these other shares are figured at the market rate of return. . . . Our calculations suggest that slaves received only 21.7 per cent of the output produced on large plantations, and well over one-half of their potential income was appropriated from them without compensation.

Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (1977), pp. 3–4.

23. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, p. 57. Genovese shows that the efforts of some proslavery Southerners to modestly humanize the slave system without undermining its roots bore meager tangible results. He claims that despite the shift of public opinion in the later period against the most severe practices of the slave masters, whippings were common, and more cruel forms of punishment had far from disappeared. Although Genovese had modified the Southern apologist view of contented slaves and indulgent masters, he has perhaps, in his legitimate search for a fair and balanced portrait of slavery, leaned too far in the Southern direction. A system of private ownership of one group of human beings by another, in which total control and decision making rests in the former, is one of unremitting degradation and injustice, even though in practice the system's theoretical totalitarianism and harshness is tempered through a complicated accommodation process in order for the system to function with tolerable effectiveness. In a note to the author, Genovese says that he agrees with the above description of slave–planter relations, and in fact defines slave master 'paternalism' as 'a relation that rested on violence'.

That the older apologist view has not been laid to rest is seen in a relatively recent description of the stake of slaves in the plantation system by a prominent economic historian:

> The great majority had rude housing, coarse clothing, plenty of wholesome food of monotonous variety, little liquor, reasonably good provision for care in sickness and old age, complete security against unemployment, and plenty of *healthful exercise* [emphasis added]. . . . Perhaps the great majority were better fed, better housed, better clothed, and better cared for than they would have been if they had been free.

Russel, *A History of the American Economic System* (1964), p. 219.

24. Wallerstein, 'American Slavery and the Capitalist World Economy'.
25. Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (1974), p. 145, take the contrary view that whippings were very infrequent and exceptional. This view has been subjected to an impressively detailed scrutiny by Herbert Gutman, and emphatically rejected. See Gutman, 'The World Two Cliometricians Made', 1975, pp. 67–85. The Fogel–Engerman thesis is discussed in depth in the appendix of this chapter.
26. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Towards a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (1935), p. 8. Cited by Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. For an interesting variation of DuBois' stand, see James, 'The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery', edited by John A. Williams and Charles F. Harris (1970). He says,

> This black community was the center of life for the slaves; it gave them an independent basis for life. The slaves did not suffer from rootlessness – they belonged to the slave community, and even if they were sold down the river they would find themselves on new plantations. Here people who shared a common destiny would help them find a life in the new environment. (p. 133)

Perhaps both forms existed in some complex combination.

27. Zinn, 'Abolitionists, Freedom Riders and the Tactics of Agitation', 1968, pp. 430–1.

28. It can be argued that the planters were not as sensitive to alternative investment opportunities as the capitalists. See Melvin Leiman, 'A Critique of the Conrad–Meyer Thesis on Slave Profitability', *Social and Economic Studies*, April 1965.
29. The upcountry people in the South (mostly nonslaveholders), in particular, resented the disproportionate power wielded by the plantation class. One Southern newspaper editor in the late 1850s, fearing that they were precipitating a sectional war over the slavery issue, warned, 'Tell the barons of the low country that if they involve the State (of South Carolina) in a war they may defend themselves as well as they can.' Cited by Leiman, *Jacob Cardozo: Economic Thought in the Antebellum South* (1966), p. 190.
30. There was a small number of black slaveholders, a few of whom had substantial property holdings. See Woodson, *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830, Together with Absentee Ownership of Slaves in the United States in 1830* (1924). A discussion of trends in concentration appears in the appendix of this chapter.
31. Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (1988), p. 43.
32. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1913) edition, p. 121.
33. Among those viewing slavery as 'plantation capitalism' are Fogel and Engerman *Time on the Cross*. For quite different reasons, this is also the position taken by Wallerstein in 'American Slavery and the Capitalist World Economy' and others.
34. The theme of historically interacting modes of production is brilliantly analyzed and elaborated by Anderson in his *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (1974). Also see Dobb's path-breaking study on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (1947).
35. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (1974).
36. North, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790–1860* (1966), pp. 53–4.
37. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, p. 60. Also see Wade, *Slavery in Cities: The South 1820–1860* (1964), and Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (1970). Starobin makes the provocative point that there was a surprising amount of racial tolerance between slaves and white workers in integrated industrial enterprises in the antebellum South. He also claims that the number of slaves in manufacturing was about 200,000 (four times greater than Stampp's estimate).
38. Clement Eaton, 'Slave Hiring in the Upper South', 1960.
39. This discussion of Southern industrial development appeared in my earlier work, *Jacob Cardozo*, p. 186.
40. Genovese quotes James Hammond, a key political figure in antebellum South Carolina, as saying 'whenever a slave is made a mechanic he is more than half freed, and soon becomes, as we all too well know, and all history attests, with rare exceptions, the most corrupt and turbulent of his class', Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, p. 225. A perceptive proslavery contemporary of Hammond named Jacob Cardozo took the opposite view that the use of slaves (as well as under-employed whites) in manufacturing would make the Southern economy more viable. *Southern Patriot*, Charleston, South Carolina, series starting February 23, 1840, cited by Melvin Leiman, *Jacob Cardozo*, pp. 178–9.

41. This is a major theme of Genovese's *Political Economy of Slavery* (1965). Genovese is preeminent among contemporary Marxist writers on slavery. Among the laudible assets of this ground-breaking book is the subtle way the author deals with the interaction of the cultural–socio–political superstructure and the economic base, the intra-propertied class conflict between the dominant planter class and the nascent Southern bourgeoisie, and the combination of political and economic imperatives that rationally led the Southern oligarchy to follow a self-destructive policy. There is, however, a rather startling oversight: Genovese virtually ignores the relationship between the nonslaveholding whites and the slaveholders, and treats the slaves themselves as passive participants in the society. Also see his *In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History* (1971), and *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. Despite the great richness of detail and subtlety of presentation in the latter, its weakness relative to the earlier *Political Economy* is its more static framework. By overemphasizing the intricate and varied forms of accommodation between the slaveowners and slaves, Genovese understates the cumulative contradictory forces in the slave mode of production and how they helped to precipitate the conflict that brought its tenure to an end. In this sense, the study is insufficiently dialectical.
42. Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (1974), p. 27.
43. Wallace, *South Carolina: A Short History, 1520–1848* (1951), p. 515. Also see Buck, 'The Poor Whites of the Antebellum South', 1925, pp. 41–54.
44. The famous Tredegar Iron Company in Richmond used slaves effectively to break a strike by whites for higher wages in 1847. Bruce, *Virginia Iron Manufacture in the Slave Era* (1931).
45. Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South and How to Meet It* (1859), reprint 1963. Some Southern whites went further than Helper and actually aided slave uprisings at great personal risk. See John H. Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom* (1967), p. 213, and Wish, 'American Slave Insurrections Before 1861', 1971, pp. 27–8. The original article appeared in 1937.
46. One of the more articulate proslavery voices from the South dealing with this subject was James DeBow. See his pamphlet *The Interest in Slavery of the Southern Non-Slaveholder* (1860). He claimed that the Southern nonslaveholder had higher wages and less unemployment than similar labor in the Northern free states, as well as possessing considerable upward mobility for becoming a slaveowner. Typical of his comments appealing to the psychological benefits of color discrimination for the nonslaveholder is the following: 'The poor white laborer at the North is at the bottom of the social ladder whilst his brother here has ascended several steps, and can look down upon those who are beneath him [the slaves]' ibid., p. 9. He used his journal, *DeBow's Review*, in the 1850s for propagandizing for a reopening of the slave trade to further extend slavery into the ranks of the whites.
47. Helper, *The Impending Crisis*, pp. 155, 158, 159.
48. Ibid., p. 137.
49. Ibid., p. 136.
50. Ibid., p. 124.

51. Ibid., p. 94.
52. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860–1880* (1969 edition), p. 28. DuBois claimed that a majority of the poor whites went to the West. He claims further that this compromised the Free Soil Movement, since this group, having experienced at close hand the competitive pressures of slave and free black labor, favored slavery's exclusion from the Western lands.
53. See Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto: An Interpretative Essay of American Negroes* (1966), pp. 101–2, for a good description of white–black relationships in the various abolitionist organizations. They state that

> although the abolitionists were . . . far in advance of the public opinion of their age, at the same time they were, in fact, ambivalent in their relationships with Negroes. One must therefore distinguish carefully between egalitarian rhetoric and their paternalistic and prejudiced actions. p. 107

This characterization did not, of course, apply to the few genuine radical abolitionists like Wendell Phillips and Gerritt Smith. The latter actually divided 12,000 acres of upstate New York farmland among blacks. Also see Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (1969), and Jane and William Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1780–1861* (1974).
54. See Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (4 volumes, 1950–5). Also see the informative study of Quarles, *Frederick Douglass* (1958).
55. An example is the response of the Reverend Henry Garnet to strong criticism of his support of the Liberal Party at a National Negro Convention (1842) by Mrs Maria Chapman, a white antislavery poet. Garnet, with scarcely controlled fury, responded, 'If it has come to this that I must think and act as you do, because you are an abolitionist, or be exterminated by your thunder, then I do not hesitate to say that your abolitionism is abject slavery.' Ofari, *Let Your Motto be Resistance: The Life and Thought of Henry Garnet* (1972), p. 144. This book has a good selection of Garnet's speeches as well as interesting commentary by Ofari. On the complex interweaving of the women's movement for sex equality and the abolitionist movement for racial equality, see Kraditor, 'The Woman Question', 1973, pp. 254–78.
56. For an interesting collection of different views on the origin and significance of abolitionism by contemporary historians, see Curry, *The Abolitionists: Reformers or Fanatics?* (1965).
57. See Temperley, 'Capitalism, Slavery and Ideology', 1977, pp. 94–118. For a subtle discussion of the contradictions and ambivalences of the labor-abolitionist issue, see Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and his Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834–1850*. She states,

> When the more far-seeing labor leaders asserted that black labor could never be completely freed by a movement that did not work for the interests of white labor, they were right. And when abolitionists declared that white labor could not emancipate itself unless it worked also for the emancipation of the chattel slaves, they were right. But neither movement took to heart this admonition. Ibid., p. 253.

58. Aptheker, *One Continual Cry* (1965), p. 131. The third edition (1830) of Walker's work is reprinted in this book, pp. 61–147. Walker wrote from a passionate religious position warning the slaveholders that repentance was the only way they could avoid destruction. See Stuckey's introduction to his *Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (1972) for a discussion of Walker's black nationalism including a call for the establishment of a black nation. Stuckey claims that Walker and other early black nationalists showed a 'tendency to exaggerate the degree of acquiescence to oppression by the masses of black people', Ibid., p. 11. Also see Harding, *There is a River* (1980).
59. Henry Garnet, in Ofari, *Let Your Motto be Resistance*, pp. 150–2. Many white abolitionists voiced objection to Garnet's forthright call for a revolutionary uprising. Garnet's writings reveal the same religious fervor as Walker's. Although Garnet was well aware that white churches and ministers supported slavery, he drew a distinction between this reactionary church stand and the theoretical precepts of Christianity. The black churches in the North took an ambivalent position on abolitionism; some were against antislavery agitation, while others (like Garnet's) played a dominant position in the freedom movement.
60. Garnet, *North Star* (Rochester, New York), September 15, 1948. Quoted in Ofari, *Let Your Motto be Resistance*, p. 30.
61. Ofari, ibid., p. 30.
62. Ibid., p. 74. The real and personal wealth of the small black business and professional elite in the pre-Civil War North was estimated at $50 million. Ibid., p. 78.
63. Ibid., p. 81.
64. Delaney favored various sites of emigration during his career. At first he was dedicated to Canadian or Central American sites, then East African, and finally West African emigration. Despite his pro-emigration stance, Delaney was opposed to the American Colonization Society, which had been supported at various times by some abolitionists as well as proslavery sympathizers, who saw colonization of free Negroes as a way of strengthening slavery.
65. Delaney, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of Colored People of the United States Politically Considered* (1852).
66. Mandle, 'The Plantation Economy', 1972, p. 61. Mandle uses the term 'plantation economy' to describe its 'peculiar mix of capitalist enterprise and archaic labor relations'. In other words, the plantation economy is a combination of coercive control of the labor supply (rather than a free labor market) and 'intensely profit-oriented commercial enterprises, which respond readily to changing international market signals'. Ibid., pp. 59, 62. The last point is somewhat questionable. Slave staples were sold in world competitive markets while operating with heavy fixed costs. Therefore it is not likely that they adjusted the volume of output in response to market prices. Although foreign demand did fluctuate cyclically, it is likely that the Southern planters produced as much as they could and threw it on the market for the best price they could get.
67. See Genovese's unpublished doctoral dissertation, *Limits of Agrarian Reform in the Antebellum South*, 1960, for an able exposition of this theme.
68. Clark, 'Manufacturing Development During the Civil War' 1967, p. 63,

states that 'the total number of cotton spindles in the seceding states [in 1860] was less than those in the single city of Lowell [Mass.]'.

69. See Lerner, 'Southern Output and Agricultural Income, 1860–1880', 1967, pp. 113–14. Clark claims, however (ibid., pp. 62–6) that 'in the South the War, instead of stimulating the infant manufactures already in existence, interrupted their normal growth. . . . The manufactures established in the South during the Confederacy were largely of an emergency character.'
70. Kirwan, *The Confederacy* (1959), p. 117. Also see Coulter, *The Confederate States of America, 1861–1865* (1950).
71. See McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (1964), and *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War for the Union* (1965), for a discussion of the positive role of the abolitionist vanguard during the emancipation struggle of the Civil War itself and the Civil Rights struggle after the War. McPherson also deals effectively with the splits between the militant and moderate abolitionists.
72. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880*, p. 121. Chapters 4 and 5 are essential for an understanding of this point. As expected, a certain number of the most psychologically maimed slaves remained loyal to the very system that oppressed them and even contributed to its military defense. See Obatola, 'The Blacks Loyal to Dixie', 1979, pp. 94–101. Also see Brewer, *The Confederate Negro: Virginia's Craftsmen and Military Laborers*, cited by Obatola.
73. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880*, pp. 25–6. DuBois also noted the extraordinary ambivalence of the socialists and communists in the 1850s regarding slavery. Some were actually against the abolitionist movement and not merely neutral. Few indeed had the farsightedness to see the indissoluble linkages between the abolitionists and labor struggles. See ibid., pp. 21–5.
74. Sowell, in *Race and Economics* (1975), p. 74, claims that the infamous New York City draft riot of 1863, which resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,000 persons, was essentially due to the anti-abolitionist Irish working class. It was triggered off by the fact that

> the Irish were often in direct competition with Negroes for the hardest and dirtiest work in the North or South . . . [and] The military draft law used during the Civil War exempted those financially able to pay a certain sum of money instead of serving in the army, throwing the burden of fighting and dying on working class people, among whom the Irish were prominent.

75. Quoted by Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, p. 8, from Douglass' *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1883).
76. This thesis has come under attack from Cochran, who claims that the Civil War retarded rather than accelerated economic expansion. See Cochran, 'Did the Civil War Retard Industrialization?', 1961, pp. 197–210. There is a very able reply by Salsbury, 'The Effect of the Civil War on American Industrial Development', 1962, pp. 161–8. Salsbury shows, in a comparison of the pre-Civil War decade (1850–60) and the post-Civil War decade (1865–75), that there was a substantial rise in the output of pig iron, coal and railroad track construction – vital indicators of industrial development with powerful forward and backward economic linkage effects – as well as a shift of wartime income in favor of the profit-receiving class, which stimulated the thrust toward development. Wesley Mitchell claims that the issuance of paper money (greenbacks) led to inflation, falling real wages and a probable increase in profits relative to wages. See Mitchell, 'The Greenbacks and the Cost of the Civil War', 1962, p. 94.

77. Sellers, 'The Economic Incidence of the Civil War in the South', 1962, p. 101.
78. For an effective undermining of the formerly dominant William Dunning school viewing Reconstruction as a sordid affair in which 'Blacks appeared as passive victims of white manipulation or as unthinking people', rather than 'active agents in the making of Reconstruction', see Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (1988), pp. xx and xxiv. Foner has an excellent emphasis on the interaction of class, race and nationalism.
79. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (1980), p. 553.
80. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 341–2. DuBois claimed that Johnson abandoned his radical demand for dividing up the plantations in the postwar period, when he began to realize that the blacks would be the main beneficiary of this policy. It ought to be noted that unlike traditional accounts of Reconstruction, DuBois draws heavily from government sources for example, the Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction, the Congressional Globe, reports of the Freedmen's Bureau and other documentary records of government officials.
81. DuBois, ibid., p. 276.
82. Wagstaff, 'Call Your Old Master – "Master"', 1969, p. 325. This excellent article reveals an insightful understanding of the complex race and class factors operating in this brief period.
83. See Wilson, *The Black Codes of the South* (1965). These laws placed severe limitations on the mobility, work, property and legal privileges of the free Negroes. Also see DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 166–80. He put his finger on the dilemma of the former slaves: unemployed while searching for work they were liable to receive severe penalties – fines, imprisonment, forced work – under all-embracing vagrancy laws. I find DuBois to be a refreshing example of a person whose deep moral commitment adds to, rather than impedes, efforts at honest scholarship. Also see Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, pp. 366–71, 531. He notes that the enactment of the Black Codes radicalized conciliatory blacks, who began to see that they needed suffrage (protected by the federal government) to obtain land and freedom. Without this, the economic and political power of the freedman relative to the former ruling plantation class would remain, at best, a slight cut above their position under slavery.
84. Litwack, ibid., pp. 536–7.
85. See Hofstadter, 'The Tariff Issue on the Eve of the Civil War', 1964, pp. 280–5, originally in *American Historical Review*, October 1938, and Coben, 'Northeastern Business and Radical Reconstruction: a Re-examination', 1964, pp. 307–21 (originally in *Mississippi Historical Review*, June 1959). Both of these revisionist efforts were negative reactions to the Beard–Hacker

materialist approach (see Charles and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (1933), and Hacker, *The Triumph of American Capitalism* (1940), in which the Civil War is seen as a clash between an agrarian South and an industrial North, while the alleged significance of Reconstruction is the economic unleashing of triumphant capitalism. While Beard and Hacker ought to be faulted for the mechanistic aspects of their approach, revisionist history is deeply flawed by the inadequate mixing of political-social movements and economic factors. Hence, their rejection of the latter as significant causal variables projects them into a theoretical void. Hofstadter, for example, would have us believe that the economic policy differences between the South and the North in the antebellum period were inconsequential. How then would he explain the South's confrontational policy culminating in the war? Would he have us accept the entirely superficial view that cultural differences or political errors explain an event as decisive as the Civil War? On this he is mute.

86. The Freedman's Bureau was the key government agency dealing with this politically explosive issue. With considerable difficulty, a number of the newly freed blacks acquired land, mainly through the purchases of newly opened public lands in several Southern states from the federal government. Although the white Southern charge of corruption and inefficiency against the bureau was in some measure true, its program of relief and rehabilitation, especially in medical care and education, was a remarkable achievement. John H. Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 312.
87. In an economic study of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the revisionist historian Robert Sharkey tries to show that the Republican Party was seriously divided on economic policies like the currency and tariff issues, although he acknowledges that an approach emphasizing economic factors (particularly the triumph of capitalism) provides the 'hard core of meaning' to the Civil War and Reconstruction. He notes that industrial capital and financial capital may have divergent economic interests, and that it was the first group that was a major beneficiary of the Civil War and Reconstruction. He states, 'Whereas industrialists generally favored high protective tariffs and a policy of easy money, finance capital tended toward free trade and sound money.' Sharkey, *Money, Class, and Party: An Economic Study of Civil War and Reconstruction* (1967), pp. 299, 300, 306.

    The overall impact of tariffs and of the national banking system on the functional distribution of income is an important, closely connected issue. Although it is well-nigh impossible to reconstruct the available historical data with quantative precision, it is highly likely that the distribution of income in the North shifted in favor of capital in the war and Reconstruction period. Federal legislation aided this process. For a contrary view, see Engerman, 'The Economic Impact of the Civil War', 1967, pp. 198–202.
88. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 185.
89. See Lindblom, *Politics and Markets: The World's Political Economic Systems* (1977), for an opposing point of view. He juxtaposes the 'market system' and 'authority relations'. According to him,

> Liberal democracy has arisen only in nations that are market oriented. . . . However poorly the market is harnessed to democratic purposes, only within market oriented systems does political democracy arise. . . . Political democracy has been unable to exist except when coupled with the market. Ibid., pp. 5, 116.

This obfuscates the point that there is no logical connection between liberal democracy (Lindblom doesn't deal with its inherent limitations) and the market. Authority is fundamental to the market system in so far as unequal class relations occur in the market exchange process. The nature of work in a market system is hardly voluntary when one class must sell its labor power to another class in order to survive. By stressing government as the source or center of power, Lindblom misses the point that property rights are the source of operative authority relations, and that those who control the economy ultimately control the state. How sterile is the language of liberalism: 'Property is a form of authority created by government. . . . Property rights are consequently grants of authority made to persons and organizations, both public and private, and acknowledged by other persons and organizations'. Ibid., p. 26.

90. See Foner, *Business and Slavery* (1968). Also see Hofstadter, 'The Tariff Issue on the Eve of Civil War', pp. 284–5. Hacker draws a useful distinction between the 'Old Radicals' as egalitarians vitally concerned with black rights and the 'New Radicals' as business pragmatists for whom the issue of black rights was of relatively minor importance. Hacker, *The Triumph of American Capitalism*, pp. 340–2. In a discussion of this work, Sharkey adds the interesting point, 'The "Old Radicals" were the faithful representative of the entrepreneurial type of industrial capitalist, whereas the so-called "New Radical" . . . more often than not supported the interests of finance capital and the oligopolistic brand of industrial capitalist'. Sharkey, *Money, Class, and Party*, p. 307.
91. See Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (1977), Chapters 4 and 5, for a convincing demonstration of the decline of large-scale plantation production and the rise of tenancy.
92. Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, pp. 140–1, note that the precise origins of sharecropping are obscure. The first use may have been during the Civil War in some army-supervised contracts, and the impetus for its further implementation may have come from either the black freedmen or the planters. What is clear is that a system of rural debt peonage, which survives in some measure even today, developed out of the sharecropping method. Also see the fascinating account of the Port Royal experiment (Sea Islands of South Carolina) during the Civil War in Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction* (1964). The government under the stress of war used a changing combination of sharecropping, wage labor and a free black yeomanry. Unfortunately, constant disputes between different government departments and the socioeconomic climate of the period made it impossible to establish a viable program of land ownership for the nearly free blacks.

    For a while after the Civil War, the plantation owners attempted to overcome the resistance of the ex-slaves by importing wage labor from the Orient and Cuba. But the numbers who came were small, and many of

those who came left the plantation and attempted to become independent producers. See Ezeani, 'Economic Conditions of Freed Black Slaves in the United States, 1870–1920', 1977, p. 108.

93. Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, pp. 78–9. They also favorably cite the important works of Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers During Slavery and After, 1840–1875* (1939), and Jonathan Wiener, 'Planter Persistence and Social Change: Alabama, 1850–1870', 1976. Also see Wiener's excellent study *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama 1860–1885* (1978). It effectively shows the political struggle of a small planter elite to control the black labor force in western Alabama following the Civil War. However, I find his depiction of the Freedmen's Bureau as the agent of the planter class unwarranted by the evidence presented.
94. Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, p. 164.
95. Mandle, 'The Economic Underdevelopment of the Postbellum South', 1978, p. 77.
96. Some black migration to the West also took place. For a fascinating account of this process, see Kenneth W. Porter, 'Negro Labor in the Western Cattle Industry 1866–1890', *Labor History*, Summer 1969, pp. 346–74. Porter claims that 8,000–9,000 black cowhands lived in a more egalitarian, less alienating way of life than blacks in other sections in the post-Civil War period.
97. Mandle, 'The Economic Underdevelopment', pp. 74, 75, 77, 78. Mandle rejects explanations of Southern underdevelopment that focus on either the reduced labor supply following emancipation or decreased world demand for cotton. Also, see Mandle's *The Roots of Black Poverty: The Southern Plantation Economy After the Civil War* (1978). This fine study is marred by an overemphasis on how black cultural dependency and subservience (as part of a culture of paternalism) shaped black–white relations for many decades after the Civil War.
98. Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, pp. 191, 198. This position on the conflict between private gain and social cost has validity for the prewar as well as postwar periods.
99. Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 310–11. I have not been able to find any precise verification for the last sentence.
100. This is the key theme in Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1966). This conclusion has come under attack by the new 'radical historians'. In a recent second edition, Vann Woodward has slightly modified his earlier stance, admitting that he understated the extent of racist practices in the antebellum and Reconstruction period. He continues to hold, however, that racist patterns did not become stable and dominant in the Reconstruction period, and that they were, in fact, highly variable until the 1890s. Also see his *Reunion and Reaction* (1956).
101. Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, pp. 105–7.
102. For a sensitive portrayal of the thinking and struggles of these two great champions of black rights and industrial democracy, see DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*. They understood, better than any other participants in the struggle over Reconstruction, the necessity for laying down an economic foundation for black civil rights by redistributing confiscated plantations to the freedmen.

103. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker* (1974), pp. 19, 23, 46. Foner's coverage of the Reconstruction period is quite thorough, although insufficiently critical of black unionism. Union tactics and ideology can only effectively be understood in the context of dominant and subordinate strata of the capitalist mode of production. Also see Block, 'Craft Unions and the Negro in Historical Perspective', 1958. He says that at the first convention of the National Labor Congress in 1866 – this was the first effort at forming a national union – a Negro Labor Committee in the union made a racial-sounding recommendation that 'every union help inculcate the . . . idea that the interests of labor are one; that there should be no distinction of race or nationality'. The Committee also said that unless the blacks were unionized, the capitalists would use them against the white workers. Block notes, however, that after this promising beginning there was 'no further mention of the Negro Question', ibid., pp. 12–13.
104. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 350–1.
105. Rubinstein in his interesting study *Rebels in Eden: Mass Political Violence in the United States* (1970) uncovers a class dimension to the Ku Klux Klan's guerilla activities on behalf of the old Southern social order: 'General Forest [the prime leader of the KKK in early Reconstruction] and his fellow aristocrats apparently feared losing control of the Klan's operations to unorganized poor whites; they ordered its dissolution and its activities declined', pp. 69–78.
106. Foner, *Reconstruction: American's Unfinished Revolution*, p. 604.
107. Antisemitism was an aspect of an anti-immigrant tendency among Populist spokesmen. The positive and negative features of Populism have been hotly debated. See Pollack, *The Populist Response to Industrial America* (1962), for a somewhat unbalanced adulatory view that Populists were pre-Marxist socialists. Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, presents a more negative view. Goodwyn's *The Populist Movement: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (1978) is the most complex and balanced study on the Populist movement. He shows sensitivity and fairness in dealing with the peculiar blend of race and class in the Populist movement.
108. Goodwyn, ibid., pp. 120–1.
109. Thomas Watson, 'The Negro Question in the South', *Arena*, vi, 1892, p. 548, cited by Woodward, 'Tom Watson and the Negro in Agrarian Politics', 1968, pp. 43–4. This article ably documents Watson's shift from a radical to a reactionary position on the race question. Watson's descent into bigotry is indicated in his statement in 1910, 'This is a white man's civilization, and the white man must maintain it', quoted by Woodward, ibid., p. 57.
110. Many blacks, out of a combination of ignorance and intimidation, continued to support the Southern Redeemers (white leaders who favored restoring white domination to the South), perhaps on the grounds that the upper-class Southern conservative paternalists presented themselves as easier on the blacks than lower-class whites were. This voting tendency of the blacks may partly explain the later rejection of the blacks by virtually all of the Populist leaders.
111. Goodwyn, *The Populist Movement*, p. 120, estimates the size of the Colored National Alliance at 250,000 but notes that a good deal of its organizational

efforts and activities were 'shrouded in mystery' as a result of having to operate in an atmosphere permeated with white supremacy.

112. Woodward cites an example of a clash between black agricultural laborers in the Colored Farmers Alliance and white agricultural proprietors in the National Farmers Alliance when the former proposed a strike to raise the wages of cotton pickers (overwhelmingly black). Woodward, 'Tom Watson and the Negro in Agrarian Politics', pp. 50–1.
113. Ibid., pp. 47, 51.
114. Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, pp. 105–7. Woodward insufficiently emphasizes the linkage between the Southern oligarchy and the violence of their agents – the poor whites.
115. Ibid., pp. 51, 52, 53.
116. Meyers, 'The Knights of Labor in the South', 1940, pp. 479–85. Also, see Foner's seminal study, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1973*, Chapter 4.
117. Foner, ibid., p. 63.
118. Worthman, 'Black Workers and Labor Unions in Birmingham, Alabama, 1897–1904', 1969, pp. 383–4, 400. Also, see Herbert Gutman's 'The Negro and the United Mine Workers', 1968, pp. 49–127, and Gutman's 'Black Coal Miners and the Greenback-Labor Party in Redeemer, Alabama: 1878–1879', 1969, pp. 506–35. The last article presents letters showing a shift of some Southern blacks and whites to a more radical stance following the collapse of Reconstruction.
119. Foner, *Organized Labor*, p. 63. Also see Bernard Mandle. 'Samuel Gompers and the Negro Workers, 1886–1914', 1955, pp. 234–60.
120. Block, 'Craft Unions and the Negro in History', 1958, p. 32.
121. Foner, *Organized Labour*, pp. 69–70.
122. Cited in Foner, ibid., p. 86.
123. Foner, ibid., pp. 112, 116; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All* (1969), p. 215.
124. Dubofsky, ibid., p. 219.
125. Dubofsky, ibid., Preface, p. vii.
126. *The Negro Year Book* for 1952, p. 277, gives figures for lynchings by state and race for the period 1882–1951. The statistics show a total of 4,730 lynchings, of which 3,437 were of blacks. Unrecorded lynchings and the casualties involved in race riots would make the overall toll of mob violence considerably larger. It is clear that the legal system has not operated with equal justice for blacks. Its class bias against the nonpropertied poor regardless of race is beyond dispute. A perceptive article revealing the political and economic underpinnings of lynchings is Randolph, 'Lynching: Capitalism its Cause; Socialism its Cure', 1965. He claims that capitalist economic arrangements in agriculture and industry cultivate race prejudice between white and black workers, which weakens the effectiveness of labor unions and explodes at times into lynchings.
127. Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 300. Foner in *Organized Labor*, p. 120, says that many Southern blacks worked as miners, building railroads, or cutting timber under a convict lease system under which the companies compensated the various states at very cheap rates.
128. Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, note an important shift in the character of black businesses from those catering to upper-class whites (caterers, building contractors, etc.) to those directed toward the black market (banks, insurance companies, cemetery and reality associations, ghetto storekeepers, etc.). These entrepreneurs and a small professional group formed the new black upper class, pp. 172–6.

129. The National Afro-American Council was reformed from the earlier National Afro-American League (1887–93), which may have been the first organized black protest group in the post-Reconstruction period. The latter phase was dominated by Booker T. Washington, although radical opposition from Trotter and DuBois was strong. The Niagara Movement, later the NAACP, developed in opposition to Washington's influence. The black masses remained largely indifferent to these power struggles. See Emma Lou Thornbrough, 'The National Afro-American League, 1887–1908', *Journal of Southern History*, November 1961, pp. 494–512.
130. Worthman, 'Black Workers and Labor Unions', p. 382. The quote is from a Birmingham paper in 1908. Also, see Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1800–1915* (1963), pp. 100–18, 209–10, and Meier and Rudwick, 'Attitudes of Negro Leaders Toward the American Labor Movement from the Civil War to World War I', 1968, pp. 39–41. The latter claim that Washington became slightly less hostile to unions toward the end of his career.
131. Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution*, 1968, pp. 161, 167.
132. Ibid., pp. 219–20.
133. See Rudwick, 'The Niagara Movement', 1957, pp. 194–5. DuBois took an illogical liberal position on this issue – against the Southern racist wing of the Democratic Party while urging Northern blacks to support liberal Democrats. There is ample historical evidence that this reformist approach did not and could not undermine racism.
134. Rudwick, ibid., p. 197.
135. DuBois, *The Negro Problem* (1903), pp. 31–5. It is doubtful whether, in fact the 'talented tenth' performed this uplifting function since they were, in the main, isolated from the masses, but perhaps this was an impossible role in a period when Southern barbarism was at its zenith. Historically the vast majority of the 'talented tenth' sought integration into bourgeois society rather than the riskier route of leading the black masses in a more radical direction.
136. Baron, 'The Demand for Black Labor', 1971, p. 16. This fine article deserves a wider audience than it is likely to receive. It blends race and class analysis with considerable subtlety.
137. Even the moderate wing of the Socialist Party held similar views, while condemning capitalism for fostering discrimination. Victor Berger stated in 1902 that 'there can be no doubt that the Negroes and Mullatoes constitute a lower race than the Caucasians and indeed even the Mongolians have the start on them in civilization by many thousand years – so that Negroes will find it difficult ever to overtake them'. Cited by Grantham, 'The Progressive Movement and the Negro', 1965, p. 76. Grantham does note that the left wing of the Socialist Party (like Debs) and the Socialist Labor Party took strong stands against black discrimination.
138. Ibid., pp. 77–8.
139. Ibid., p. 80. Grantham adds that the inadequate treatment of the black

problem by the Progressives helped inadvertently to promote black militancy in the search for a solution.

140. Kennedy, *The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward: Effects of Recent Migrations to Northern Centers* (1930), p. 42.
141. Downs and Burks, 'The Historical Development of the Black Protest Movement', 1969, p. 331.
142. Geschwender, *Racial Stratification in America* (1978), pp. 173–5. This is an excellent Marxist study, particularly in its manner of combining race and class analysis.
143. Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis* (1945), p. 176.
144. Geschwender, *Racial Stratification*, p. 175. The percentage of black population in the South declined from 89 per cent to 85 per cent in the decade 1910–20. In addition, there was a vast upsurge nationally in the percentage of blacks living in urban areas from 27 per cent to 34 per cent.
145. Even DuBois urged the blacks to 'close ranks and support our war effort'. Randolph and Owen, editors of the left-wing *The Messenger*, were among the few exceptions. See John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 475–6.
146. See Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917* (1964); Waskow, *From Race Riot to Sit-in, 1919 and the 1960s* (1966); and Tuttle, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (1970).
147. Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (1968 edition – original date 1931), p. 112.
148. Ibid., p. 112.
149. See Foner, *Organized Labor*, pp. 148–51, for an interesting discussion of the radical position taken by Randolph and Owen. They soundly condemned government prosecution of the IWW on trumped-up charges. They extolled industrial unionism (and the IWW against craft unionism and the AFL). Somewhat inconsistently, however, they favored the formation of an independent black labor movement. As a defensive maneuver in the face of intransigent white labor hostility, this strategy is, of course, acceptable. But the theory that it might goad the white labor movement in a more radical direction is questionable.
150. Foner, ibid., p. 80. As editor of the NAACP's official journal, the Crisis, from 1910 to 1934, DuBois frequently dealt with the effects of class and race exploitation on black economic and political life. Some of these editorials were in response to black readers who had been favorably influenced by the Russian Revolution. See Walden, *W.E.B. DuBois: The Crisis Writings* (1972), especially Chap. 14, 'Radical Thought, Socialism, Communism'.
151. Quoted by Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*, p. 400, from *Crisis*, August 1921.
152. Cayton and Mitchell, *Black Workers and the New Unions* (1939), p. 48.
153. See Nearing, *Black America* (1929).
154. See Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery* (1970) for a general study of this topic. Also see the excellent collection of articles of the 1930s on the 'Economic Condition of the Black Workers' in Foner and Lewis, *The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*, Volume 6 (1981).
155. See Mark Naison's two informative articles: 'The Southern Tenant Farmers Union and the C.I.O.' *Radical America*, September–October 1968, pp. 26–56, and 'Black Agrarian Radicalism in the Depression: The Threads of a Lost Tradition', *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, Fall 1973, pp. 47–65.
156. Geschwender, *Racial Stratification*, p. 181, claims that conflicts between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party also helped to destroy efforts to develop a tenants' union in the South.
157. Marshall, *The Negro Worker* (1967), pp. 24–5.
158. Foner, *Organized Labor*, pp. 230–1. He says, 'While the national AF of L leadership never endorsed Klan violence, even against CIO organizers, it maintained a discreet silence and did nothing to investigate frequent reports that hooded AF of L members participated in assaults on CIO organizers.'
159. The political aspects of the New Deal regarding blacks are discussed in Kirby, *Black Americans in the Roosevelt Era: Liberalism and Race* (1980).
160. Foner, *Organized Labor*, p. 215, suggests that the AFL pressured the legislators to avoid attaching an antidiscrimination clause to the Wagner Act.
161. For a thorough presentation of the varied forms of union discrimination during World War II and the attempts of blacks to overcome them, see Foner, ibid., Chapter 17. Also see Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro* (1944), cited and discussed in Foner.
162. See O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* (1973), one of the most important and original Marxist studies in the last several decades.
163. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), pp. 3–4.

Appendix, Chapter 1

1. Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, 2 volumes (1974). References in this appendix are to Volume 1. Some of the reviews (other than the mass media) include Gutman, 'The World Two Cliometricians Made', 1975, pp. 53–227, and Wallerstein, 'American Slavery and the Capitalist World system', 1976. The basic anti-Fogel-Engerman text is David *et al. Reckoning with Slavery* (1976).
2. Conrad and Meyer, 'Economics of Slavery', 1958, pp. 95–130.
3. W.E.B. DuBois' quiet words of wisdom on this volatile topic – in his neglected and undervalued classic *Black Reconstruction* (1935), pp. 43–4 – are still on target:

> So far as possible, the planters in selling off their slaves avoided the breaking up of families. But they were facing flat economic facts. The persons who were buying slaves in the cotton belt were not buying families, they were buying workers, and thus by economic demand families were continually and regularly broken up.

On the question of whippings, see the meticulous treatment in Gutman, 'The World Two Cliometricians Made' pp. 68–93.

4. Quoted from Fogel and Engerman by Gutman, ibid., p. 33.
5. Ibid., p. 105.
6. Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, pp. 40–1.

7. Ibid., p. 149. Ransom and Sutch estimate that 88.5 per cent of the rural slave population were fieldhands and only 5.6 per cent were artisans. Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (1977), p. 16.
8. Ibid., p. 192. Conrad and Meyer, 'Economics of Slavery', p. 110, similarly conclude that slavery was apparently as remunerative as alternative employments to which slave capital might have been put'. The fact that slaves were purchased indicates to Conrad and Meyer that the expected return over the life of the capital asset was at least equal to that obtainable from other methods using capital assets (measured by the annual average interest rate on prime commercial paper – bonds and stocks in manufacturing and public utility concerns – from 1840 to 1860). This comparison is neither legitimate nor meaningful, since it is highly unlikely that these two types of investment were considered as available alternatives by Southern planters. See my article 'Slave Profitability and Economic Growth: An Examination of the Conrad-Meyer Thesis', *Social and Economic Studies*, June 1967.
9. Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*.
10. In the history of economic doctrine, it would be hard to find an approach with less explanatory power – and wider acceptance by the economics profession – than the law of comparative advantage. It is both static and tautological. Gavin Wright comments succinctly and effectively:

> Goods would not be produced unless it was profitable to do so, and if it was possible to produce these goods the region must have had a comparative advantage in those goods. . . . It has never been shown that a comparative advantage in manufacturing was a necessary condition for 19th century industrialization.

Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South* (1978), pp. 111–12.

11. Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, p. 5.
12. Leiman, *Jacob Cardozo: Economic Thought in the Antebellum South* (1966), Chapter 8.
13. Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, p. 96.
14. Ibid., pp. 34, 35.
15. Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, p. 324. Cited by Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, pp. 44–5.
16. Wright, ibid., p. 75.
17. This point was made in Leiman, *Jacob Cardozo*, pp. 174–5.
18. Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, p. 87.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 108.
21. Ibid.
22. See Smith, *Economic Readjustment of an Old Slave State: South Carolina, 1829–1860* (1958).
23. Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, p. 41.
24. James DeBow, editor of *DeBow's Review* and an ardent secessionist, in his pamphlet 'The Interest in Slavery of the Southern Non-Slaveholder' (1860) claimed that under slavery class conflict within the white race was minimal in comparison with the industrial North, and that Southern white workers were effectively shielded from competition with black slaves. He shows no awareness of the fact that the use of slave labor narrowed the range of opportunities for the use of free labor.
25. Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, pp. 123, 127.
26. Ibid., pp. 145, 157.
27. This is the title of Herbert Aptheker's review of *Time on the Cross* in *Political Affairs*, June 1974.

Chapter 2: The Economic Facts of Life

1. A good description of the changes in the Southern economy can be found in Ezell, *The South Since 1865* (1963), particularly Chapter 22 on 'Southern Economic Development Since 1930'. Also see Hoover and Ratchford's more specialized study *Economic Resources and Policies of the South* (1951), and Street, 'Cotton Mechanization and Economic Development', 1955, pp. 566–83.
2. Two important early studies of Southern agriculture which focus on important racial aspects of the problem are Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (1944), and Perlo, *The Negro in Southern Agriculture* (1953). More recently see Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865–1980* (1984).
3. *The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View, 1790–1978*, Series P-23, No. 80. United States Bureau of the Census, p. 14.
4. See *Employment and Earnings*, Bureau of Labor Statistics Department of Labor, April 1986, Table No. A-57, p. 68.
5. Ibid., Table No A-59, p. 70.
6. *America's Black Population: 1970 to 1982*, 1984. Special Publication P10/POP-83–1, p. 15.
7. Gallaway, in his article 'The North–South Wage Differential', 1963, emphasized the persistence of significant differentials. He claims that 'The apparent presence of barriers to factor mobility of such strength suggest that the North–South wage differential will be a somewhat permanent feature of the system', p. 271. The relatively higher rate of economic progress in the South (overshadowing the other regions), as well as the slow unionization of manufacturing establishments, suggests that 'permanent' is too strong a descriptive term.
8. See Goodman, *The Last Entrepreneurs: America's Regional War for Jobs and Dollars*, 1979.
9. *America's Black Population: 1970 to 1982*, 1984, Special Publication P10/POP-83–1, p. 1.
10. *Statistical Abstract of the U.S. 1982–3*. Table 26, pp. 22–4. The population in these six cities totals 6,942,000.
11. *America's Black Population: 1970 to 1982*, 1984. Special Publication P10/POP-83–1, pp. 2, 3.
12. *Wall Street Journal*, 17 November 1980.
13. Otto Feinstein and Gabriel Breton, 'Civil Rights – An Analysis', *New University Thought*, September–October, 1963.
14. Before 1964, income figures for blacks as a separate nonwhite category were