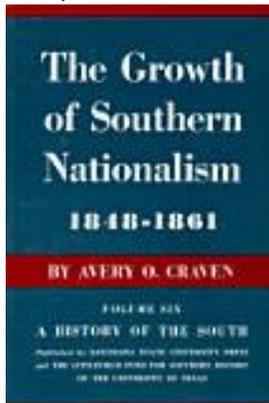


Avery Craven on why the South seceded

February 8, 2012

By Michael



Famous Northern historian Avery Craven in his book *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861* had the following to say on page 391 about the reasons that Southerners chose to secede from a Union formed by their grandparents:

The immediate occasion for Southern withdrawal from the Union had been the election of a President by the Republican Party and his refusal to recognize the right of secession or to yield Federal property within the seceding states. These matters, however, were only the final stages in a situation which had long been developing. Back of present actions lay fears, distrust, hatred, jealousy, values and interests. Southerners were acting because of an accumulation of things, not just because of some immediate happenings. They desired the breakup of the Union, or accepted it, because they had come to feel that such a step was necessary for the preservation of their property, their self-respect, their rights, and the regard of their neighbors. Lincoln's election signified the final reduction of the South to the status of a permanent minority, subject, as they thought, to the will of a numerical majority whose purpose was the alteration of their social structure. The alternatives were submission or secession.

One thing that should be noticed in the above short quote is the complexity of the situation just prior to Southern secession. Another point that modern politically-correct Southerners and Confederate heritage defenders need to understand is that Southerners did want to maintain their social structure while many (though not all) Northerners wished to forcibly change Southern society. This attitude of the Yankees in 1860 is comparable to the notion of 'American Exceptionalism' today and the commonly heard insistence by many Americans that they have the right to intervene in foreign societies and force democracy, social change and 'progress' upon unwilling foreigners.

Dr Craven continued:

Lincoln's attitudes and actions were also the product of certain great changes that were gradually transforming his part of the nation [sic]. A new interdependent age was dawning there – and age in which national [sic] unity was essential to social-economic welfare and in which the enslavement of human beings could not co-exist with the labor requirements of free enterprise or the ethical standards of a competitive society. For the realization of the American democratic ideals, the Union had to be preserved, and slavery had to be put on the road to ultimate extinction. There was no other choice.

It would be easy to delve into many problems with Dr Craven's conclusion. In brief, the North had never supported free enterprise but had from the very beginning of United States history advocated protectionist tariffs, monetary inflation and crony capitalism. Meanwhile, the South was largely a bastion of support for hard money, free trade and economic freedom (as discussed here by Dr Leonard Liggio). Also why was the South's involuntary 'unity' with the North 'essential to the social-economic welfare' of Northerners? We could easily dive into this as well as other problematic statements from the short excerpts above, but if we take Dr Craven's conclusion at face value what does it say about the USA, the North and 'American democratic ideals'? The expansionist and revolutionary attitude of Northerners, combined with a strong sense of moral superiority, is basically what Dr Craven is describing. This is precisely the same attitude we see today in US society. It is the same mentality that gave rise to countless social and military crusades since the 1800s – one after another. It should also be noticed that this mentality is deeply anti-traditional and basically at odds with the concept of a classical civilisation. The Southern world-view, rooted in a truly conservative (in the communitarian sense of concern with conserving a particular people and culture) was certainly at odds with the Northern world-view.

<http://southernnationalist.com/blog/2012/02/08/avery-craven-on-why-the-south-seceded/>