

Causes of The War of Northern Aggression

"Slavery was a tertiary cause of secession and of the war.

The primary cause was money. By 1860 high export tariffs on Southern raw goods (specifically the 54% Morrill Tariff) and import duties on European finished goods generated approximately 70% of the Federal budget, about 90% of which was being spent to develop infrastructure for growing Northern industrialization:

"The South has furnished near three-fourths of the entire exports of the country. Last year she furnished seventy-two percent of the whole...we have a tariff that protects our manufacturers from thirty to fifty percent, and enables us to consume large quantities of Southern cotton, and to compete in our whole home market with the skilled labor of Europe. This operates to compel the South to pay an indirect bounty to our skilled labor, of millions annually." - Daily Chicago Times, December 10, 1860

"They (the South) know that it is their import trade that draws from the people's pockets sixty or seventy millions of dollars per annum, in the shape of duties, to be expended mainly in the North, and in the protection and encouragement of Northern interest.... These are the reasons why these people do not wish the South to secede from the Union. They (the North) are enraged at the prospect of being despoiled of the rich feast upon which they have so long fed and fattened, and which they were just getting ready to enjoy with still greater gout and gusto. They are as mad as hornets because the prize slips them just as they are ready to grasp it." ~ New Orleans Daily Crescent, January 21, 1861

"...the Union must obtain full victory as essential to preserve the economy of the country. Concessions to the South would lead to a new nation founded on slavery expansion which would destroy the U.S. Economy." - Pamphlet No 14. "The Preservation of the Union A National Economic Necessity," The Loyal Publication Society, printed in New York, May 1863, by Wm. C. Bryant & Co. Printers.

"What were the causes of the Southern independence movement in 1860? . . . Northern commercial and manufacturing interests had forced through Congress taxes that oppressed Southern planters and made Northern manufacturers rich . . . the South paid about three-quarters of all federal taxes, most of which were spent in the North." - Charles Adams, "For Good and Evil. The impact of taxes on the course of civilization," 1993, Madison Books, Lanham, USA, pp. 325-327

By 1860 most of the large plantations which depended on slave labor were either bankrupt or on the verge of bankruptcy. When Lincoln established the sea blockade of Southern ports it was stated that it was specifically for the collection of revenues. This was the same stated reason for attempting to maintain Ft. Sumter as a Union outpost.

The insistence of Southern states that an equal number of slave states join the Union as more "Free" states entered was not out of desire to ensure the spread or the preservation of slavery, it had to do with an attempt to maintain at least some balance of power in the government. Northern states, with their greater voting populations, controlled the Congress and this enabled them to override any wishes or needs of agrarian states for decisions which favored the industrializing states. Southerners correctly perceived that admission of more "Free" states would further imbalance the Senate and allow an even greater burden of taxation.

This imbalance of power was the secondary cause of the war. The imbalance of power and the secondary status of the Southern states continued long after the war:

"Eight decades after the end of Reconstruction, the National Emergency Council created to examine the Depression of the 1930s reported its findings to President Franklin D. Roosevelt: The South, it said, had been reduced to the status of a colony." - Report of the National Emergency Council (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1937)

The Southern States did not secede nor fight to preserve slavery just as Lincoln and the Northern states did not start or wage a war to end slavery. Twice the North offered the South chances to preserve slavery - the first time permanently,

the second time for 37 years - and both times this failed to entice the Southern states back into the Union so they could fund the government that was not acting in their best interests.

On March 2, 1861, the 36th U. S. Congress minus the seven seceded states of the Deep South passed by a two-thirds majority the proposed "Corwin Amendment" to the Constitution after extensive lobbying on the amendment's behalf by President-elect Lincoln. Had it been ratified by the requisite number of states before the war intervened and signed by President Lincoln who looked favorably on it as a way to lure the Southern states back into the Union, the proposed 13th Amendment would have prohibited the U. S. government from ever abolishing or interfering with slavery in any state.

The proposed 13th Amendment read: "No amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish or interfere, within any State, with the domestic institutions there of, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said State." Note that this amendment was designed to be unrepealable (i.e. "No amendment shall be made...")

This exposes that claims the Union went to war in 1861 to free the slaves were and are lies. It also undermines claims that the South seceded to preserve the institution of slavery. If that had been the South's goal then what better guarantee did it need than an unrepealable amendment to the Constitution to protect slavery as it then existed?

In December, 1862, shortly before Lincoln's hypocritical "Emancipation Proclamation," during his State of the Union address Lincoln proposed gradual compensated emancipation with slavery lasting another 37 years until 1900. Again, this failed to lure the Southern states back into the Union.

If the South had seceded to preserve slavery and the Federal government was willing to permanently preserve slavery why would they refuse that offer? If the South was still fighting to preserve slavery after the shedding of blood and the Federal government offered them 37 years to wean themselves off of slavery why would they pass up that chance?

The simple answer is that the South was not fighting to preserve slavery except as a corollary issue.

On the other hand, the Federal government had made clear by the proposed Corwin Amendment and by the offer of gradual compensated emancipation that it was not fighting to end slavery. After all, there were slaves in the North (Union) before, during, and AFTER the war and Northern states had their own "Black Codes" that were in place before the war and endured long after the war. Under the specifications of the "Emancipation Proclamation" the status of slaves in Union slave states, areas of the Confederacy under Union control, and even the Confederate states of Tennessee remained unchanged until December, 1865, some eight months after the end of the war and until the ratification of the the 13th Amendment.

In Illinois, not satisfied that a mere law could sufficiently protect them from Free Blacks and Free People of Color, the restrictive "Black Law" was made an amendment to the state constitution in 1856. This allowed for the arrest of any Free Black or Free Person of Color who remained in the state longer than ten days, when they could then be tried for a "high misdemeanor," fined, assessed court costs, and sold into slavery if they could not pay the fines and costs. Free Blacks and Free People of Color were being sold into slavery in Illinois during the Civil War even after the so-called "Emancipation Proclamation."

In contrast, even though Virginia had "Black Codes" on the books, the 1860 U.S. Census reported that there were 64,000 Free Blacks and Free People of Color living in that state. A review of the Census records shows that they owned houses, farms, businesses, and slaves.

It is therefore ironic when one considers the following:

"Robert (Uncle Bob) Wilson, Negro veteran of the Confederate army who observed his 112th birthday last January 13, died early yesterday morning in the veterans' hospital at the Elgin State hospital...He enlisted as a private in Company H of the 16th regiment of Virginia Infantry on Oct. 9, 1862 and discharged May 31, 1863."- Elgin (Illinois) Daily Courier-News, Monday, April 12, 1948

Please note that Robert Wilson was a regularly-enlisted Confederate private at a time when Blacks were not yet allowed in the Union ranks except in servile roles. The status of Free Blacks and Free People of Color in the South was different from what it was in the North:

"Almost fifty years before the (Civil) War, the South was already enlisting and utilizing Black manpower, including Black commissioned officers, for the defense of their respective states. Therefore, the fact that Free and slave Black Southerners served and fought for their states in the Confederacy cannot be considered an unusual instance, rather continuation of an established practice with verifiable historical precedence." - "The African-American Soldier: From Crispus Attucks to Colin Powell" by Lt. Col [Ret.] Michael Lee Lanning

Perhaps the best assessment of the situation and the best prediction of the future was made by Irish-born Confederate Major General Patrick Cleburne from his January, 1864, letter which proposed the mass emancipation and enlistment of Black Southerners into the Confederate Army:

"Every man should endeavor to understand the meaning of subjugation before it is too late...It means the history of this heroic struggle will be written by the enemy; that our youth will be trained by Northern schoolteachers; will learn from Northern school books their version of the war; will be impressed by the influences of history and education to regard our gallant dead as traitors, and our maimed veterans as fit objects for derision...The conqueror's policy is to divide the conquered into factions and stir up animosity among them...It is said slavery is all we are fighting for, and if we give it up we give up all. Even if this were true, which we deny, slavery is not all our enemies are fighting for. It is merely the pretense to establish sectional superiority and a more centralized form of government, and to deprive us of our rights and liberties."

To reduce the causes and conduct of the "Civil War" to a knee-jerk comment about slavery is disingenuous and uninformed, specifically designed to continue to demonize the South and Southerners, and maintain us in a status as second-class citizens who must either preface our existence with an apology for imagined sins or forever bear the "stain" of slavery.

We have nothing for which to apologize and, as the good people who have come to Mississippi from all over the nation to help us rebuild after Hurricane Katrina have discovered, we have better race relations than anywhere in the country. The most common amazed comment has been, "You folks just get along!"

Through painstaking research and thorough, uncommented documentation we celebrate the courage, sacrifice, and heritage of ALL Southerners who had to make agonizing personal choices under impossible circumstances.

"The first law of the historian is that he shall never dare utter an untruth. The second is that he shall suppress nothing that is true. Moreover, there shall be no suspicion of partiality in his writing, or of malice." - Cicero (106-43 B.C.)

We simply ask that all act upon the facts of history. We invite your questions.

Your Obedient Servant,

Colonel Michael Kelley, CSA
Commanding, 37th Texas Cavalry (Terrell's)
<http://www.37thtexas.org>
"We are a band of brothers!"

". . . political correctness has replaced witch trials and communist hearings as the preferred way to torment our fellow countrymen." "Ghost Riders," Sharyn McCrumb, 2004, Signet, pp. 9

"I came here as a friend...let us stand together. Although we differ in color, we should not differ in sentiment." - LT Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, CSA, Memphis Daily Avalanche, July 6, 1875" <http://www.petersburgexpress.com/Causes.html>