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The War Within

Haunted by Confederate ghosts, the South still struggles with its misremembered past.

ALSO **The Green Scorecard:** Ranking Your State's Environment

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

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DATELINE: THE SOUTH

ATLANTA, Ga. (Dec. 6) — City officials admitted they are considering a plan to create a "hospitality zone" downtown, using tougher laws and more police to keep homeless people away from tourist attractions. Business leaders applauded the move, but homeless advocates questioned the plan. "Hospitality for whom?" asked Jim Beaty, director of the Task Force for the Homeless.

GULFPORT, Miss. (Dec. 7) — More than two decades after he served in Vietnam, veteran Harry Stanley received an award for refusing an order from Lt. William Calley to machine gun unarmed civilians at My Lai in 1968. Calley, who threatened to execute Stanley on the spot for disobeying, was later convicted of killing 22 civilians. "Being trained to kill is one thing," said Stanley, a lumberyard worker. "But murder is something else."

WALHALLA, S.C. (Dec. 11) — Eleven top officials of the Piedmont Quilting Company were indicted today for illegal labor practices. According to a federal official, the textile firm hired 117 illegal immigrants from Mexico and Peru, some as young as 12 years, and subjected them to conditions that "bordered on bondage."

DALLAS, Texas (Dec. 12) — State officials have denied an AIDS service organization its share of public health care funds because the group is run by the Dallas Gay Alliance. Health officials said they withheld the money based on a new state law prohibiting grants to organizations that promote illegal conduct — which in Texas includes homosexuality.

DALLAS, Texas (Dec. 13) — In the first such prosecution in the nation, a waste disposal firm was indicted on charges of violating the federal Clean Water Act. Control Sewer and Pipe Cleaning Company allegedly dumped hazardous wastes from local industries in city sewers. Officials say the environmental damage was minor, but admit they don't know how much waste was actually dumped.

SHREVEPORT, La. (Dec. 29) — The city tourism bureau has recalled a poster map of the city that depicts blacks as roaches being sprayed by a white hand. The poster — which was billed as a "humorous tribute to the city" — also depicts a black man with a basketball for a head and a gorilla speaking black dialect. More than 140 local businesses sponsored the map.

FORT WORTH, Texas (Jan. 5) — Officials at Fort Carswell Air Force Base admitted they have discharged seven servicemen for "homosexual activity" in recent weeks. Gay leaders put the number at several dozen, saying that a controversy in the military over anti-gay policies and pressure from anticipated troop reductions have created a "witch hunt" atmosphere at the base.

ATLANTA, Ga. (Jan. 6) — The state called out 2,400 city police, state troopers, and National Guardsmen to protect 75 Ku Klux Klan members protesting the national holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr. Angry bystanders injured 13 Klansmen at a similar protest last year. The state estimates it spent $500,000 in tax dollars to pay security forces to guard the white supremacists.

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (Jan. 8) — A federal judge upheld the state prison system policy of segregating inmates infected with the HIV virus. A group of prisoners have challenged the "AIDS-only" policy, maintaining that segregated prisoners have less access to prison facilities and a tougher path to parole.

DALLAS, Texas (Jan. 12) — Dozens of protestors spent the night in boarded-up apartments at the George Loving Place housing project, demanding that the city open the vacant rooms to the homeless. Police responded by arresting 16 protestors, including two local ministers and an organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

BATON ROUGE, La. (Jan. 12) — The Tunica-Biloxi Indian tribe sued the federal government today, demanding the return of 23,000 acres of central prairie land given to the tribe by French and Spanish colonists prior to the Louisiana Purchase. The tribe seeks $110 million in damages, maintaining that the United States used fradulent surveys to seize the land.

PAWLEY'S ISLAND, S.C. (Dec. 8) — Joe Havel, a retired forester, turned down lucrative offers for his 640 acres of forest land and signed a deal with the South Carolina Nature Conservancy to permanently protect the property from development. Havel paid $19,000 for the land in the early 1940s. The county tax assessor now values it at $13 million.

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (Jan. 12) — A group called the American Smokers Alliance has condemned the University of Tennessee for banning smoking in campus buildings. Dave Brenton, chair of the pro-smoking group, said he is disturbed that "the policy comes from a university, where freedoms of expression are sacred." UT Chancellor John Quinn dismissed the notion that smoking constitutes a freedom of expression.

RICHMOND, Va. (Jan. 22) — A state senator feigned deafness in front of a hearing-impaired state official during a briefing on a bill to help Virginians who

wear hearing aids. When the bill was announced, Senator William Fears responded by joking, "What you say?" Attending the briefing was Lilly Bess, director of the state department for the deaf. Bess, who lost her hearing at age 3, said Fear's remark "could offend a lot of people."

BATON ROUGE, La. (Jan. 24) — Governor Buddy Roemer rejected a recommendation from his state pardon board and refused to reduce the life sentence of Gary Tyler, a black man convicted of shooting a white man in 1974. Amnesty International and several civil rights groups have urged clemency, contending that the all-white jury in the case was biased and that key witnesses have recanted incriminating testimony.

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. (Jan. 28) — Two Japanese-American women have started a petition drive to build an international peace park on land purchased half a century ago to develop the atom bomb. The petition, which has attracted hundreds of signers from around the world, calls for the city to develop the park on 700 acres bought in the 1940s for the Manhattan Project.

HENRY COUNTY, Ga. (Feb. 1) — Detectives arrested a 14-year-old boy at Stockbridge High School today and charged him with using his home computer to steal $16,000 in phone services. Police said the ninth-grade hacker ran 2,922 computer searches before finding nine long-distance access codes, which he used to play video games and read electronic bulletin boards. "He's bright," said one detective after the arrest. "I like this guy."

LACOOCHEE, Fla. (Feb. 7) — An 11-year-old boy who allegedly threatened to beat up five elementary school classmates unless they forked over their milk money was arrested and charged with felony extortion today. The police were called after parents of one pupil complained that their son was afraid to go to school. In addition to felony charges, the accused bully was suspended from school for three days, and may be expelled.

LUMBERTON, N.C. (Feb. 14) — Indian activist Eddie Hatcher pleaded guilty to 14 counts of kidnapping today, two years after he held 20 newspaper employees hostage to draw attention to government corruption in Robeson County. Blacks and Indians comprise a majority of the county, but have historically been unable to win elections. Hatcher was sentenced to 18 years in prison.

HINTON, W.Va. (Feb. 8) — Unable to get money from the state to provide care for local residents, the Summers County Health Department has applied for foreign aid from the United Nations, England, France, Japan, and the Soviet Union. "I just told those old boys at the U.N. that if they can give aid to Ethiopia, they can give it to us," said Stephen Trail, county sanitation director. "We're citizens of the world, too, and we need help."

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (Feb. 9) — Madison County Sheriff Dedrick Brown was arrested today and charged with giving away three gallons of confiscated moonshine, but he said he regularly gives the white lightning to local residents for medicinal purposes. "I don't understand all the commotion," the sheriff said. "There's plenty left. I saved 19 jars out of the 25 we seized."

RALEIGH, N.C. (Feb. 12) — Allyson Duncan was sworn in today as an appeals court judge, becoming the first black woman in the state to serve on an appellate court. She recalled seeing a play as a child in which a black man was mistreated by the legal system. "It haunts me to this day," she said. "My answer was to go to law school."

DALLAS, Texas (Feb. 12) — Eight hundred Texans on welfare have been singled out to be the unwitting subjects of a federal experiment. The plan: deny them Medicaid and child-care benefits for two years to see how well they live without them. Critics say the study violates federal standards for medical experiments. "People ought not to be treated like things, even if what you get is good information," said Phillip Broyle, associate director for medical ethics at the Hastings Center in New York.

DOUGLASVILLE, Ga. (Feb. 22) — School officials are crowing about two high school seniors in the state who earned perfect scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, but one of the students discounted the importance of the college entrance exam. "I'm not even sure the SAT correlates in any way to innate intelligence," said senior Adam Thornton, "and certainly not, as many of the colleges would have you believe, to your worth as a human being."

Illustrations by Steven Cragg.

Readers are encouraged to submit articles to Dateline: The South. Please send original clippings or photocopies and give name and date of publication.

SELMA STUDENTS STAGE BOYCOTT

In 1965, Selma, Alabama emerged as the focal point of the civil rights movement when mounted troopers brutally beat scores of black marchers trying to cross the Edmond Pettus Bridge. The bloodshed helped pressure Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act.

Now, 25 years later, the civil rights struggle has once again erupted in Selma — and once again, it is being led by students. This time, however, the issue is equal education for blacks, and the leaders range in age from 7 to 17.

In January, thousands of black students boycotted class to protest the refusal of the majority-white school board to renew the contract of Norward Roussell, the city's first black school superintendent. Roussell was told he would be dismissed in June after he tried to reform the "tracking" system that segregates black students in lower-level classes.

By February, hundreds of students were marching on City Hall and occupying school buildings to demand that the school board extend Roussell's contract.

"What you have is an uprising," said J.L. Chestnut, a member of a black parents organization called Best Educational Support Team (BEST). "What you have out there is a unity that hasn't been there since 1965."

The protests began when the five black members of the school board announced they would boycott meetings until the six white members reversed their decision. BEST picketed City Hall and businesses owned by white board members, and black parents withdrew their money from white-controlled banks.

In January, an estimated 25 percent of the 6,039 students in Selma began boycotting classes. Black leaders tried to negotiate a settlement, but white school board members responded by firing Roussell on February 2.

Tensions reached the boiling point. On February 5, police forcibly ejected a group of BEST activists from City Hall for trying to see the mayor. Four protesters were arrested, and one was hospitalized for injuries she received from police.

The next day the board reinstated Roussell, who immediately closed the schools because of fear that racial tensions would lead to fights between students. Community activists began a series of mass marches and a sit-in at City Hall, and more than 100 students entered empty Selma High and began a sit-in in the school cafeteria.

The students issued a number of demands beyond what BEST had called for, including an end to all "tracking," mandatory Afro-American studies courses for all students, and the resignation of the school board and the mayor. Despite a federal injunction and the presence of National Guard troops surrounding the school, the students refused to leave.

Finally, after five days, students ended the occupation, fearing that Roussell would be forced to resign unless they left the school. "We did this to save his job," said student leader Catrena Norris. "We didn't give a damn about the federal folks. We haven't given up an inch."

Schools reopened on February 13, but little was resolved. Roussell continued to work without a contract extension, and school officials took no action on student demands.

For now, student leaders say, the focus has shifted to an arena familiar to Selma: voting rights. The state senate is consider-

Photo by Wide World

HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS BOYCOTTED SCHOOL IN SELMA, DEMANDING AN END TO PRACTICES THAT SEGREGATE BLACKS IN LOWER-LEVEL CLASSES.

ing a bill to allow Selma residents to vote on whether the school board should be elected instead of appointed by the mayor. Roussell has sued the city for violating his civil rights, and BEST has asked the courts to take over the schools until an elected board can be established.

—Matthew Countryman

STRIKING MINERS WIN PITTSTON CONTRACT

United Mine Workers on strike against the Pittston coal company for nine months put down the picket sign and picked up the ballot on February 20, ratifying a new contract by a vote of 1,247 to 734.

Rank-and-file members voting in Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky expressed satisfaction that union negotiators got the best deal possible. "We have built up confidence in the leadership from nine months on strike," said James Gibb, a mine electrician who was injured by state police during the first week of non-violent blockades at company mines.

Under the terms of the contract, miners and recent retirees will regain full health care benefits, one of the major goals of the strike. Laid-off miners also won the right to 80 percent of the jobs at non-union Pittston subsidiaries with more than 540 employees — an agreement which roughly matches a clause in the 1988 national coal contract that Pittston refused to sign.

In return, Pittston insisted on more flexible work rules and the right to cease making regular payments to the industry-wide fund that provides health care for 125,000 retired miners and their widows. The company did agree to pay $10 million to keep the debt-ridden fund afloat — for now — while the Labor Department studies the problem of long-term health care in the industry. But the agreement could mean an eventual end to the fund, as other companies will certainly demand a similar deal when their contracts expire in three years.

The strike against Pittston became a rallying point for the labor movement last year, as thousands of miners and retirees donned camouflage and launched a sustained, non-violent protest that involved entire mountain communities. Virginia courts and state police sided with Pittston, but miners and their families stood their ground until the company agreed to a settlement.

The agreement grants amnesty for all miners convicted of felonies related to the strike. But Pittston refused to rehire 13 strikers it singled out for punishment, angering many miners and prompting one Kentucky local to reject the new contract.

The settlement was almost derailed by Virginia Judge Donald McGlothlin, who refused to dismiss $63.5 million in fines against the miners before the union vote took place. Super-mediator William Usery, officials of the mountain counties most affected by the strike, and even Pittston attorneys joined the union in asking the court to drop the fines, but McGlothlin refused.

"This is our last major hurdle to complete the settlement," said miner Sam Hughes. "And we had no idea it was going to be this big of a hurdle." Said a union official: "Judge McGlothlin is being somewhat of an ass over the whole thing."

As the fines were being protested in the courts, striking miners hosted a delegation of miners from the Soviet Union. A UMW spokesman called the visit an exercise in "grassroots diplomacy" aimed at international peace and understanding. Soviet miner Oleg Bugrov, visiting a home in Clinchco, Virginia said: "We have traveled thousands of miles. We have seen the cities of New York and Washington. But *this* is America."

—John Enagonio

NURSING HOME DEATHS EXPOSE LAX REGULATION

A Christmas Eve fire at a 10-story retirement home in Johnson City, Tennessee killed 16 people. One victim was seen shortly before his death peering in terror from an eighth-floor window, a flashlight in his hand, as black smoke billowed around him.

Less than three weeks earlier, a fire at a six-story home for the elderly in Crozet, Virginia forced the evacuation of nearly 150 residents. No one was seriously hurt, and firefighters found the resident who had started the blaze on a balcony, smoking a cigarette.

Fire prevention experts say there's a simple explanation why one fire killed and the other didn't: The home in Virginia had a sprinkler system; the one in Tennessee did not.

The Johnson City fire followed blazes at two facilities for the elderly in Virginia that killed a total of 16 late last year. None of the three facilities had sprinkler systems. The 32 deaths in less than three months have focused attention on the vulnerability of elderly and disabled people living in nursing homes and retirement centers across the South. And they have raised questions about how much the long-term care industry and government are willing to spend to keep residents safe.

Many residents of the facilities are often too physically or mentally disabled to get out when a fire starts — yet about half the nursing homes in the country have no sprinklers. Fire-prevention experts say installing sprinkler systems would save countless lives, providing almost 100 percent insurance against multiple deaths from fires.

In Virginia, legislators are considering several bills that would require sprinklers in all nursing homes — although not in other facilities for the elderly. The long-term care industry has fought such legislation, arguing that the state should provide public money to defray the costs.

The Reverend Ottis Burger, who runs a Roanoke retirement center where four people died in a fire December 14, was on a state study panel in 1986 that urged that sprinklers be required in adult homes. The idea died when legislators refused to give the homes low-interest loans for sprinklers.

"If they'd wanted it to happen, they would have done it then," Burger said. "It doesn't do these dead people any good."

—Mike Hudson

Photo by Robert Bryce

ROB LEE, AN AGENT WITH THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, PULLS A DEAD BIRD FROM AN OPEN WASTE PIT.

OPEN WASTE PITS DOOM GAME BIRDS

It's no secret that North American duck populations are shrinking. The mallard population is down by 25 percent and the pintail population has been cut in half over the past few years. Habitat loss and drought are blamed for much of the decline, but agents with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have discovered another culprit—waste pits left exposed by the oil industry.

Authorities believe at least 100,000 ducks and 500,000 other migratory birds are dying every year in open waste pits and oil storage tanks of the playa lakes region, which encompasses West Texas and portions of New Mexico and Oklahoma. Water birds like geese, ducks, and herons are particularly vulnerable to the open pits.

Rob Lee, a Fish and Wildlife agent stationed in Lubbock, Texas believes the birds land on the oil because it looks like water. Once they touch the oil, it's too late. Unable to fly, their feathers coated with the tar-like goo, the birds drown or die slowly of hypothermia.

"Very few birds escape death once they touch the oil," Lee explained. "Sometimes a bird can escape from the pits, but it will die anyway because it has no way of cleaning its feathers. Anything more than minute amounts of oil is fatal."

Installing screens over the waste pits would prevent the disaster, but many oil companies have refused to cooperate. Since last October, Lee has been investigating oil companies in Texas for violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He said that more than 30 companies in Oklahoma and Texas may be prosecuted under the Act, which allows fines up to $10,000 and six months in jail for each bird killed by the pits.

Lee and others hope that prosecuting oil companies for killing birds will spur the industry to install screens over the pits. One industry spokesman said, "It's unfortunate, but some of these oil companies are going to have to go to court before they start paying attention to this problem."

—Robert Michael Bryce

INFANT DEATH RATE RISES IN FIVE STATES

More than 1,500 babies would not die each year if Southern infant mortality rates equaled those of the rest of the nation, according to the new reports released by Southern governors and child advocates.

According to the latest figures from the Southern Governors' Association, an average of 11.3 of every 1,000 children in the region die before their first birthday, compared to a national mortality rate of 10 deaths for every 1,000 births.

Governors cited a drop in the overall rate for the region since 1983, but recent figures show the rate is actually rising in Mississippi, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas.

"The South still lags badly behind the nation on most key children's measures," said Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund. Although she noted that the region's governors are beginning to improve conditions that cause infant mortality, she stressed that "governors need to speed up rather than slow down improvements."

According to a Defense Fund report entitled The Health of America's Children, Southern states need to do more to prevent infant deaths. States in the region spent $31 million on neonatal care and special education in 1986, yet 8 of the 10 states with the highest infant death rate in the nation are Southern.

In addition, the report said, 9 of 10 states with the lowest average birth weights were in the South. Low birth weight is the primary cause of infant deaths.

Edelman and other child advocates note that some Southern states have taken some initial steps to curb infant mortality:

▼ Mississippi, with a rate of 13.7 infant deaths per 1,000, began a prenatal risk management program in 1988.

▼ South Carolina, with a 12.8 percent rate, used a $310,000 federal grant to increase prenatal care to six counties with rising infant mortality.

▼ North Carolina formed a task force to respond to an infant death rate that has increased to 12.6 percent.

▼ Tennessee, with an 11.7 percent rate, established several adolescent preg-

nancy programs which will create teen peer counseling groups and inform teenagers of pregnancy risks.

Advocates note, however, that most Southern states are not taking advantage of all the funds available to them. Mississippi and South Carolina are the only states in the region that extend Medicaid coverage for infants and pregnant woman to the maximum level allowed by the federal government.

"Millions of new federal health dollars, averaging two dollars for every state dollar, would flow into Southern states if all existing Medicaid options were adopted," Edelman said.

—Greg Rideout

CONFERENCE URGES PEACE CONVERSION

Converting defense industries to civilian production and redirecting military spending to human services must be a top priority for Southern activists, according to community leaders and elected officials who gathered in Miami on February 9.

The three-day conference on economic conversion drew more than 200 people from six states to discuss how best to build a peacetime economy in the wake of the Cold War thaw. The meeting also explored ways to invest any "peace dividend" that results from military budget cuts.

"We have lost an enemy and gained an opportunity," said Michael Closson, executive director of the Center for Economic Conversion. "The danger is that we won't take advantage of that opportunity to cut military spending and rebuild America with the peace dividend."

Closson offered practical examples of businesses which have successfully converted from military production to civilian use. At Fisby Airborne Products in New York, he said, employees agreed to accept a temporary year wage cut in 1986 while the company retooled. Within three years, Fisby cut its dependence on defense production from 96 percent to 70 percent—without any layoffs.

Carrie Meek, a state senator from Miami, said that "Florida is in a quagmire of revenue confusion." She urged legislators to divert money from military spending to human services like day care, health insurance, and literacy training for the 250,000 Floridians unable to read or write.

Joe Iannone, director of the Institute for Pastoral Studies at St. Thomas University, took the idea of military conversion a step further. He suggested redirecting some of the "$25,000 per year per inmate and $50,000 per cell construction costs" the states spends on prisons to housing and other preventative steps.

Iannone urged "good people involved in institutions destructive to society and ecology" to work to transform them. He cited a new program at St. Thomas that offers five courses on conflict resolution as a for-credit alternative to the ROTC.

Florida activists said they plan to submit an economic conversion bill to the state legislature during its April session. Karen Woodall of Florida Impact, an interfaith lobbying organization, said legislators need to understand the connection between where state revenues come from and where they are spent.

According to Woodall, Florida ranks fourth in the nation for its share of the federal military budget. Any slowdown in the military buildup will eliminate jobs and cut sales taxes, she said. Since Florida has no income tax, she said, the state will be forced to raise corporate taxes to make up the shortfall.

"Legislators need to know that it is proper to look for alternatives," Woodall said.

Clossen echoed her sentiments. "We must act on economic conversion immediately," he said. "A smooth transition will avoid economic dislocation and make it less difficult to cut the Pentagon budget."

—Mary Bray Mosquera

FRIENDS RECALL HORTON AS TEACHER AND RADICAL

"I've been labeled just about everything you can think of: socialist, communist, anarchist, atheist," said Myles Horton, founder of the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee, shortly before his death from cancer on January 19.

"The only accurate charge I ever had made against me was the time I got arrested [at a mine strike] in 1934. They said I was 'getting information and going back and teaching it.' That's exactly what I was doing," said the 84-year-old educator.

It is a fitting epitaph for Horton, a hearty, laughing man who bedeviled Southern powerbrokers for nearly 60 years with his commitment to grassroots education for social change. From its inception in 1932, the school he founded in New Market, Tennessee bucked Jim Crow laws by running integrated workshops for union organizers.

In the 1950s Highlander started "Citizenship Schools" across the South, teaching blacks to read and write so they could register to vote. Civil rights organizers like Julian Bond, Andrew Young, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr. studied and taught at the center's woodframe house on top of Bays Mountain. Largely because of its role in the civil rights movement, Highlander was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1983.

Horton served as the guiding light at Highlander, but his educational approach always presumed that ordinary people have the potential to solve their own problems. "Myles believed in a far more genuine democracy than we have now," remembered John Gaventa, director of Highlander and a longtime colleague. "He knew that democracy only has meaning when people have education."

From the start, Highlander drew fire from white politicians who wanted illiterate and uninformed poor whites and "coloreds" to stay that way. In 1959 the years of red-baiting and cross-burning reached a head when state officials declared the school a "public nuisance," closed it down, and auctioned off its assets. Undaunted, Horton obtained a new charter and reopened at another site. In recent years Highlander has focused on economics, poverty, and environmental problems in Appalachia and the Deep South.

In spite of Horton's reputation as a radical and firebrand, many remember him for his good humor. "I never saw him lose his temper," recalled John Edgerton, a Nashville writer who worked closely with Horton. "He could laugh at anything and he never took life or himself too seriously. I guess that's one of the secrets that kept him going so long."

—Sandy Smith

The week before he died, Horton finished his autobiography, The Long Haul, *to be published by Doubleday in April. A memorial celebration will be held at the Highlander Center from May 5 to 6. For information write: Route 3, Box 370, New Market, TN 37820.*

News departments complied by John James and Eric Bates.

A *SOUTHERN EXPOSURE* SPECIAL REPORT

Headed for a CRASH

By Marty Leary

The insurance industry has suffered a $2.5 billion blowout. Guess who's paying for the damage?

BATON ROUGE, LA. — Joe Hubbard is having a bad month.

His workload has quadrupled. Every day he receives dozens of calls from worried automobile drivers who have just learned that their insurance company, Louisiana-based Champion Insurance, has been declared insolvent.

"This job wasn't created to be full-time," Hubbard complains. "But it is now."

Since June, Hubbard has paid out more than $9 million in claims to 5,500 policyholders of the failed company, once the state's third largest auto insurer. Hubbard's employer, the Louisiana Insurance Guaranty Association, reckons that at least another $125 million is due some 38,000 additional claimants.

Newspaper reporters have been calling Hubbard nonstop for three weeks. "Who is going to pay for these pay-outs?" they ask. "You and me," Hubbard responds. "The taxpayers."

Over the next eight years, officials estimate, the Champion failure will deplete state treasuries in Louisiana, Alabama, and Tennessee by over $200 million. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. According to a six-month study by the Southern Finance Project, a non-profit research center based in North Carolina, Americans have already swallowed over $2.5 billion in losses from property and casualty insurance insolvencies since 1969. Three-quarters of those losses have occurred in the past six years — and Southern taxpayers have been stuck with a third of the bill.

Like the savings and loan industry before it, the insurance industry appears headed for a crash — and like the S&L crisis, the system is set up to pass the buck to average taxpayers and consumers. The latest round of insolvencies has already overwhelmed the tenuous system that protects policyholders, yet most regulators remain totally unprepared for what may be America's next big financial crisis.

SILENT BAILOUTS

The potential losses are staggering. Nationwide, over 2,000 property and casualty insurers hold combined assets of roughly $450 billion. In 1988 alone they sold roughly $200 billion in policies, insuring customers against everything from car crashes and workplace accidents to toxic waste liability and nuclear disasters.

Like banks and other financial intermediaries, insurance companies profit by collecting money in small amounts and investing or lending it in large amounts. Unlike banks and S&Ls, however, insurers are regulated by the states. When an insurance company goes bankrupt, policyholders are protected not by the U.S.

Treasury, but by a complicated state-by-state system of guaranty associations, administered by the industry and paid for by taxpayers and consumers.

State legislatures created the associations in the 1970s after an unsuccessful attempt in Congress to establish a national guaranty fund similar to the one that protects depositors in the nation's banks and savings and loans. To avoid federal control, the industry convinced states to let it clean up after its own insolvencies, without government help. When a company failed, the guaranty association would assess all the other insurers selling similar kinds of policies a fee to cover the claims of the failed company's policyholders.

There was a catch, though: All the states allowed insurance companies to pass on the fees to taxpayers and policyholders. In Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia, insurers simply subtract the amount of the assessments from what they owe in state taxes. In the remaining Southern states, companies can raise their premiums to recoup the amount of the assessments.

In effect, the states set up a system of "silent bailouts," making an unsuspecting public pick up the tab for insurance failures. As long as insolvencies were small and infrequent, the system worked pretty well. After all, the cost of paying off claims was rarely more than a tiny fraction of the total income of the industry.

But in the 1980s, a severe downturn hit the industry. Between 1984 and 1986, 58 companies went belly-up, compared to only 19 during the previous three years. The state guaranty funds — many of them staffed by part-time claims adjusters — were suddenly swamped with claims.

In the South, the assessments mounted at a staggering pace. Between 1985 and 1988, insurance bailouts cost almost three times more than they did during the previous 14 years combined. Even after accounting for inflation, the numbers are mind-numbing. Assessments skyrocketed by more than tenfold in five states and the District of Columbia, including an increase of 7,920 percent in North Carolina. In just four years, insurance failures cost more than $211 million in Florida and $111 million in Texas. (See chart, page 11.)

"The most troublesome part is that the public doesn't even know what's already hit them," says Billy Lovett, a Georgia public service commissioner who is running for state insurance commissioner. "You can call what's happened already a crisis."

INCOMPETENCY TAX?

Whatever you call it, the dramatic rise in insurance insolvencies seems a lot like *deja vu*. Recent Congressional hearings into the failures of Transit, Mission, and Integrity — three large insurers with policyholders in nearly all 50 states — uncovered a pattern of fraud and abuse eerily familiar to the rampant wheeling and dealing that triggered the collapse of the savings and loan industry.

Many smaller companies failed because they simply tried to grow too fast, using scores of outside "managing general agents" to boost their volume of new policies. Industry insiders say the boom in new policy sales was part of a strategy called "cash-flow underwriting," the practice of selling too many policies and plowing the money into risky, high-yield investments. Last year the industry earned a record $31.5 billion in investment income, more than offsetting its $21.5 billion in underwriting losses.

In essence, insurers have been gambling with policyholders' money, betting that investment gains will keep pace with claim payments. Similar reckless money management by high-flying S&Ls helped touch off the largest financial calamity in U.S. history.

When the insurance fiasco picked up steam in the mid-1980s, no one was prepared — least of all the state guaranty funds that were supposed to protect policyholders. Paul Gulko, a guaranty-fund specialist who began overseeing the Virginia association in 1983, says he found it being run by "a part-time claims man who was working out of his trunk." It was almost impossible to pay off claims from failed companies, he adds, because "the records are terrible. They don't know who is insured with them. Their database is hopelessly out of order."

While the understaffed guaranty funds try to cope with the sudden surge of insolvencies, regulators for the most part remain on the sidelines. Many complain that they lack the resources or the authority to stem the tide of failures. But the real problem, says Georgia's Billy Lovett, is that regulators simply lack the political will to challenge the industry.

"It's an outrage," he says. "If the public knew about this, they would want to hang someone. Maybe we should start calling insolvency assessments 'fraud taxes' or 'incompetency taxes.'"

Photo by Guy Reynolds/State Times

JUDGE JOE KEOGH (LEFT) VISITS THE WAREHOUSE WHERE NAAMAN EICHER (RIGHT) HID RECORDS FROM THE DEFUNCT CHAMPION INSURANCE COMPANY. EXECUTIVES ALSO BURNED DOCUMENTS AND SCRAMBLED COMPUTER DATA. THE JUDGE SENTENCED EICHER TO ONE YEAR IN JAIL FOR TAMPERING WITH EVIDENCE.

HUSH-HUSH SLUSH

Sometimes, lawmakers say, the problem isn't lax regulation — it's outright complicity between regulators and the very industry they are supposed to be monitoring. Take Louisiana, for example. Just four months before Champion's collapse last June, state insurance commissioner Doug Green released an audit giving the company a clean bill of health. Champion executives, meanwhile, were busy transferring company assets to a holding company in an attempt to keep them out of the hands of liquidators. A few weeks after Green declared Champion insolvent, the state ethics commission began an inquiry into allegations that the owners of Champion's holding company had secretly funneled more than $2 million to Green's campaign chest.

In July, news reports surfaced that Champion's computer database had been mysteriously erased, depriving guaranty fund managers of the records they needed to pay off policyholders.

Kay Doughty, chief counsel for consumer affairs with the Texas Board of Insurance, agrees that regulators could do a better job detecting and preventing insolvencies. Back in 1986, her office noticed a rapid increase in complaints from the policyholders of National County Mutual, a large insurer that specialized in "high risk drivers" who had been turned down by other insurers. Concerned that National County's delinquency in paying claims might indicate that the company was having serious financial problems, Doughty alerted state auditors.

"When I first brought it up, National County was in the hole by about $15 to $20 million dollars," she recalls. "By the time they did anything about it, the price tag was upwards of $50 million."

A subsequent investigation by state Senator John Montford concluded that National County had falsified two annual reports and may have illegally diverted more than $25 million in premiums to outside concerns. The investigation also revealed that the state Board of Insurance was fully aware of these facts for over a year before it placed the company into receivership.

While Senator Montford was conducting his investigation in Texas, Georgia legislator Bud Stumbaugh was walking across his state to drum up support for a slate of insurance reforms. Stumbaugh, who chairs the senate insurance committee, says that most Georgians are "totally unaware" that they pay the price for insurance insolvencies.

"In Georgia, the regulators are hush-hush about anything that has a hint of negativism," Stumbaugh laments. "A lot of times, our committee doesn't even know what needs to be done."

Even when he does know what needs to be done, Stumbaugh faces a formidable insurance lobby that has repelled nearly every substantive insurance reform initiative in Georgia for the past 50 years. It was easier for Stumbaugh to walk the backroads of the state than to walk his reform package through the state legislature. In fact, most of his reforms never made it out of the committee he chairs.

SHADY SUNSHINE STATE

Walter Dartland didn't walk across Florida to communicate his message of reform, but he did run for insurance commissioner. Since 1971, insurer insolvencies have cost Florida consumers $356 million — far more than policyholders have borne in other Southern states. Guaranty fund officials say Florida suffers higher insolvency costs because the state attracts hundreds of small, poorly capitalized companies vying to sell insurance policies to the growing population of older, more affluent Floridians.

But Dartland insists that "the real problem is political." He and others claim the recent failure of Industrial Casualty, one of the largest insolvencies in Florida, could have been prevented if regulators had acted sooner. A full year before it was declared insolvent, Industrial Casualty hired the former general counselor of the state Department of Insurance to lobby on its behalf. According to Dartland, "he convinced the commissioner not to do anything about the problems." Those problems eventually cost Florida consumers over $60 million.

In the course of his unsuccessful campaign for insurance commissioner, Dartland discovered another way that the industry exerts its influence over regulators. Dartland managed to raise about $100,000 in campaign funds, mostly from small contributors who shared his reform sentiments. He also became the first candidate ever to get matching funds from the state of Florida. But his two opponents in the primary raised over $800,000 each — most of it from insurance companies.

"The way the campaign finance laws work, a company can give and each of its employees can give," he explains. "We figured that all together, each company could get about $30,000 or $40,000 in the hands of its choice for insurance commissioner."

TREASURIES AND CHEESE

Ask just about any insurance executive to assess the way regulators have handled the industry's insolvencies, and chances are he'll point to the $300 billion S&L crisis to show how the $2.5 billion blowout in property and casualty insurance pales by comparison. But an increasing number of Southern lawmakers are beginning to see cause for alarm. After all, the S&L crisis isn't draining state treasuries of hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue. The property and casualty insolvencies are.

Over the next eight years, the Champion failure alone will rob Alabama of roughly $50 million, Tennessee of at least $10 million, and Louisiana of $135 million. The Louisiana Insurance Guaranty Association — which is currently paying policyholders of insolvent insurers $6.5 million a month in claims — predicts that an additional $44 million will be paid out as a result of eight other pending insolvencies.

In December 1989, the Louisiana association warned a state legislative subcommittee that it would run out of money in two months. To continue paying off claims, fund managers reported, lawmakers would have to either increase the maximum amount that insurers can be assessed each year, appropriate money directly to pay out the remaining claims, or levy a surtax on policyholders.

The Champion failure couldn't have come at a worse time for Louisiana. Officials predict an $855-million budget shortfall for the coming fiscal year. Still

reeling from the collapse of the oil economy in the mid-1980s, the state now faces the prospect of a tax overhaul whose major proponent, Governor Buddy Roemer, acknowledges will transfer much of the tax burden from big corporations to average citizens.

Texas has also been hard hit by the collapse of the oil economy — and big insurance insolvencies. The legislature recently enacted substantial tax increases to avoid a budget crunch. The state Board of Insurance, meanwhile, expects insurers to "offset" or deduct $40 million from their 1989 state taxes and $57 million in 1990 — nearly twice what Texas spent in 1988 to distribute cheese and other surplus food to hungry families.

Staff members for Lieutenant Governor Bill Hobby predict those losses will be much higher. Concerned about open-ended taxpayer liability and a record number of insurance insolvencies, Hobby's staff has begun a study of the overall effect of the tax offsets on the state budget. "The big fear," says Jose Camacho, an aide in charge of the forthcoming report, "is that the guaranty fund won't be able to handle the losses and the state will be left holding the bag."

"NOTHING'S BEING DONE"

By all indications, that bag is going to get much bigger in the next few years. With the insurance industry's increased reliance on investment income, a mild recession could push many firms over the brink of insolvency. "Hang on to your hats," warns Kay Doughty, the Texas consumer counsel. "The costs of insolvencies are still going up."

In the South, the industry's prospects look particularly bleak. According to *Insurance Forum* magazine, over 300 property and casualty insurance companies are currently in trouble nationwide. Ninety-eight of the firms on the "watchlist" are headquartered in the South, most of them in Texas and Florida.

Recent disasters have only made things worse. The $4.1 billion price tag on Hurricane Hugo last year contributed to the insolvency of two small South Carolina insurers and may have weakened others. And the explosion of a Phillips Petroleum plant in Pasadena was one more blow to the already shaky insurance industry in Texas.

But most of the money Southerners are paying for insolvencies results from failures by insurance companies headquartered outside the region. In 1987 and 1988, for example, 79 percent of all assessments by Southern guaranty funds stemmed from non-Southern insolvencies. The failures of the Transit, Mission, and Integrity companies based in California and Missouri accounted for $108 million of all Southern assessments — one-fifth of the region's total losses between 1985 and 1988.

Yet many regulators continue to stand by and do nothing. "I'm no expert, but right now I could tell regulators six companies that are going broke this year," said one manager of a Southern guaranty fund who asked not to be identified. "These companies ought to be jumped on. But nothing's being done."

VOTER REVOLT

The big fear for the insurance industry is that the public will lose patience with the growing number of "silent bailouts." Privately, many industry insiders argue that the only way to stem the tide of insolvencies is for the industry to raise rates substantially. But consumer advocates like Rob Schneider of the Texas Consumers Union say insurance companies that are losing money have only themselves to blame. "In Texas," he says, "you're guaranteed a profit unless you're a complete fool."

The crisis is attracting attention on Capitol Hill, where some members of Congress have called for the repeal of the McCarran-Ferguson Act, the law which exempts insurance companies from anti-trust provisions and prohibits federal regulation of insurance.

Industry lobbyists already have their hands full in the state legislatures trying to contain the growing movement for rate reform that began when Californians voted for a 20 percent rollback in insurance rates in 1988. According to Voter Revolt, a grassroots group that spearheaded the California initiative, similar rate reform campaigns are now underway in 35 states.

Texas State Representative Eddie Cavazos thinks that the groundswell of grassroots activity around rate reform reflects a fundamental transformation in the way the public regards the insurance industry. According to Cavazos, citizens are beginning to look at insurance as "a public commodity like utilities."

"It is not a product that you buy because you want it," he says. "It is a product you are required to have."

Cavazos, who recently championed a 12-point insurance reform initiative in Texas, supports repeal of the McCarran-Ferguson Act. But he insists that only tougher state regulation will protect taxpayers and insurance consumers. He and others cite the "atmosphere of secrecy" that surrounds the industry and those who regulate it. Most state insurance boards examine company books less than once every three years, and 12 Southern states do not disclose the names and financial status of troubled insurers.

Cavazos says that unless states move quickly to monitor insurance companies, taxpayers could face a bill of staggering proportions. "If we don't start regulating the insurance industry," he warns, "we will have S&L Crisis Part II." ❑

Marty Leary is a research director with the Southern Finance Project, sponsored by the Institute for Southern Studies in Durham, North Carolina. For a copy of the report on Southern guaranty funds, send $4 to: 604 W. Chapel Hill St., Durham 27702.

WHERE'S THE GUARANTY?

When an insurance company goes bankrupt, state guaranty funds assess other insurers to pay off the failed company's claims. In the South, those assessments soared by threefold from 1985 to 1988. (Ranked by latest assessment fees in millions of dollars.)

	Fees 1971-85	Fees 1985-88	% Change
Florida	157.3	211.9	35
Texas	18.7	111.9	499
Louisiana	7.2	64.3	793
Georgia	3.9	44.4	1,030
Oklahoma	2.6	38.5	1,386
Maryland	3.7	22.3	508
Alabama	2.5	22.1	768
Kentucky	3.4	14.2	321
N. Carolina	-.2	13.2	7,920
Arkansas	1.3	13.1	910
S. Carolina	.6	12.6	1,979
Mississippi	1.1	12.1	1,030
Virginia	1.3	11.6	782
Tennessee	1.1	10.9	927
W. Virginia	3.9	10.0	160
Dist. of Col.	.2	4.4	2,291
TOTAL	**208.6**	**617.4**	**196**

(Oklahoma does not include 1988 assessments)
Source: National Committee on Insurance Guaranty Funds

The War Within

The Civil War was, as Robert Penn Warren has written, "the greatest single event in our history" — not just for the South, but for the nation as a whole. In four years, it affected every facet of American life, transforming the way we live and the way we see ourselves. It fostered a national banking system and national currency, created the national debt and the federal income tax, and ushered in an age of robber barons and big business. It left 700,000 Americans dead — more than every other war in our history combined. And in the process it abolished slavery and plunged the South into a chronic poverty from which it has yet to recover.

In a sense, the Civil War defined the South we know today. The Confederate States of America lost a war — something the rest of the nation did not face until Vietnam — and the psychological pain of that defeat continues to haunt the region like the ghost of Robert E. Lee. "Only at the moment when Lee handed Grant his sword was the Confederacy born," observed Warren. "Or to state matters another way, in the moment of death the Confederacy entered upon its immortality."

One hundred and twenty-five years have passed since that April morning at Appomattox, but nostalgia for the "Lost Cause" lingers on. Every year, millions of people tramp across Civil War battlegrounds. Thousands gather to re-enact some of the bloodiest days in American history — at Antietam and Gettysburg, at Shiloh and Vicksburg and Bull Run. They fly Confederate flags and visit Confederate graves and listen to Hank Williams Jr. sing "The South Will Rise Again."

When we set out to prepare this special section of *Southern Exposure* on the lingering legacy of the Civil War, we wanted to take a closer look at the meaning of such nostalgia. Given that the war freed four million Southerners from chattel slavery, is it appropriate to say that "the South" lost? Should not defeat be assigned to some more specific group of people *within* the South?

The South was a diverse and divided land at the start of the war. In 1860 the top 5 percent of free white men owned 53 percent of the wealth, while the bottom half owned only 1 percent. What's more, one-third of all Southerners were slaves, and as such they were actually considered *part* of that wealth, stripped of all rights and held in bondage on plantations.

Wealthy white planters went to war to protect that property, launching a last, desperate attempt to preserve slavery and turn back the rising dominance of Northern industry. This, then, is "the South" that lost the war, the South of most Civil War histories — the rich slaveowners and their ill-fated political and economic agenda.

In reality, there were several "Souths" in 1860, and the Civil War was actually several wars. The story of the planter's Civil War has been told and retold for over a century. Within the region, however, the war sparked a far-reaching social revolution that changed the status of women, slaves, and landless whites. It also ignited a violent class struggle over who would control the political economy and culture of the South. We are concerned primarily with this Civil War — the war within — and its continued resonance in the contemporary South.

As historians Michael Fitzgerald and Wayne Durrill point out in their stories in this section, many poor white Southerners did not want to break with the Union to defend the property of their rich neighbors. When white men in Tennessee went to the polls in 1861 to cast ballots on secession, 104,913 voted

yes and 47,238 voted no. In Virginia, the bastion of plantation politics, the vote was 128,884 to 32,134.

After fighting broke out, many Southern whites took up arms against the Confederacy. From the Appalachians of West Virginia to the Ozarks of Arkansas, upcountry farmers and workers waged a bloody guerrilla war for control of their land and labor. As David Cecelski recounts on page 22, they were soon joined by thousands of blacks who crossed Union lines into freedom.

The hardship of war gradually took its toll, and dissatisfaction began to spread. The poor were hit the hardest. In 1862, Southern wages rose 55 percent, while prices soared by 300 percent.

Southern women, watching their children go hungry, took to the streets in protest. In the spring of 1863, bread riots erupted in more than a dozen Southern cities from Richmond to Mobile. Women armed with knives and revolvers raided shops and supply depots for food.

At the largest riot in Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, several hundred women marched to chants of "Bread! Bread! Our children are starving while the rich roll in the wealth!" They were driven away only when President Jefferson Davis himself threatened to have soldiers open fire on them. After the rioters dispersed, Confederate authorities forbid newspapers to make any mention of the revolt.

This is a war we seldom hear about — a war not between North and South, but between rich and poor. Instead, we are treated to time-worn tales of scrappy Rebel boys fighting to defend home and hearth from the invading Yankee hoardes. Such a focus diverts attention from the internal Southern struggle, conveniently placing the blame on "outside interests."

The myth of this noble "Lost Cause" emerged in the years of Reconstruction following the war, as Jefferson Davis and other former Confederates retired to write long literary justifications of their struggle to maintain slavery. When wealthy whites returned to power in the South, they took the vote away from blacks and landless whites and enshrined their war stories as official doctrine. Historian Lawrence Powell provides an account of how white elites in New Orleans invented a "glorious past" and literally set it in stone, provoking heated battles that continue to this day.

Such battles remind us that the internal conflicts unleashed by the Civil War are not over. From the Confederate flags waved at Klan rallies to the one that flies above the state capitol of Alabama, the history of those murderous years lives on, distorted beyond recognition. As historian Eric Foner has suggested, we must re-examine our misremembered past if we hope to avoid a misguided future.

"The age of the Civil War is the period of our past most relevant to the contemporary concerns of American society," Foner says. "By looking again at the Civil War, we may gain insight into the choices facing our own time."

—Robert Hinton and Eric Bates

Robert Hinton is a Ph.D. candidate in history at Yale University. His dissertation, "Cotton Culture on the Tar River: The Politics of Agricultural Labor in the Coastal Plain of North Carolina, 1862-1902," is in progress. Eric Bates is managing editor of Southern Exposure.

Engraving courtesy NC Collection, UNC

COLONEL RUSH HAWKINS AND HIS 9TH NEW YORK REGIMENT CHARGE THE CONFEDERATE TRENCHES ON ROANOKE ISLAND.

Poor Man's Fight

Contrary to popular myth, many Southern whites actually took up arms against *the Confederacy. Here's what happened.*

By Michael W. Fitzgerald

Among the startling developments that have swept Southern politics in recent decades, none has been more ironic than the increasing strength of a coalition of white moderates and blacks within the Democratic Party. Once known as the "Party of White Supremacy," the Democrats have moved increasingly toward the national mainstream in search of a broader base of support.

While the biracial alliance in the party is often strained, it is not without precedent in Southern history. In fact, its roots date back to the Civil War. The fighting forced many non-slaveholders to evaluate the political costs of their commitment to white supremacy. Tens of thousands of white small farmers in the uplands eventually came to view the newly emancipated "freedmen" as potential allies against the power of the wealthy planters.

A cherished belief in the popular mythology of Southern history has long been the essential unity of the white South, especially during the greatest crisis of the region's history: the Civil War. Non-slaveholders joined with their more fortunate neighbors to preserve states' rights and slavery from Northern interference, and held out until overwhelmed by sheer numbers — or so the story goes. But historians are currently dispelling this myth, demonstrating that there was substantial anti-Confederate sentiment throughout the South, and widespread opposition among whites in the mountains of Arkansas, Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

"KISS THERE HINE PARTS"

In 1860, three-quarters of Southern white families owned no slaves. Much of the non-slaveholding majority was concentrated in mountainous areas, where poor soil and transportation made the land unsuitable for plantation production. The South thus developed a "dual economy." Plantations dominated commercial agriculture with the staples of cotton, tobacco and sugar, while the rest of the region grew food crops and raised livestock. Particularly in the Appalachian and Ozark mountains, small farms owned by white "yeomen" dominated the social landscape. These enclaves were geographically and culturally distinct, with a strong identity that differed from the rest of the South.

Before Southern states seceded from the Union in 1861, most upland yeomen supported slavery and shared the common value of white supremacy. Most identified with the pro-slavery Democratic party of Andrew Jackson, seeing the westward expansion of slavery as beneficial both to themselves and their region.

Despite the support for slavery, many farmers distrusted the slaveholder elite from the rich plantation regions. In state after Southern state, representatives of the highland regions struggled against those of the plantation belt over voting districts, taxation, and symbolic issues like the location of state capitals. Most of the upland small farmers responded to Jacksonian rhetoric of equality and preferred to be left alone by both state and national government — and the tax collector. Mountain yeomen also resented the superior airs of their slaveholding social betters, often cursing black slaves and their wealthy masters with the same breath.

The first critical split in the Southern social structure came with the election of Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans, who sought to restrict slavery's spread

with the long-term goal of its extinction. Most slaveholders concluded that decisive action was necessary, and a wave of popular fear and outrage strengthened their hand. Starting with South Carolina, the seven Deep South states called for popular elections of delegates to state secession conventions.

Most of the plantation regions elected delegates pledged to "immediate secession," but the upland areas of northern Georgia and Alabama defeated these candidates by huge margins. Instead, they voted for "Cooperationists" who counseled a vague "wait and see" attitude. The Cooperationist label covered a variety of views, from conditional secessionism to outright Unionism. But it is significant that the upland voters demonstrated the most hesitation at dissolving the federal Union — in the very areas where wartime disaffection would be most pronounced.

Several of the resulting secession conventions were raucous affairs, dogged by bitter controversy. One Alabama delegate challenged the secessionists to battle "at the foot of our mountains" if the state seceded without ratification by the electorate. In both Georgia and Alabama the conventions were clearly divided, and only the example of neighboring states — and wholesale electoral fraud — carried Georgia out of the Union.

In the upper South states of North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and Arkansas, the split was even clearer. Mountain regions overwhelmingly elected anti-secession delegates, who were able to dominate the conventions called to decide the issue. For months the upper South remained in the Union, hoping that some compromise by the new administration would reunite the nation.

The Confederate attack on Fort Sumter and Lincoln's subsequent call for troops undermined such hopes. The upper South states seceded — though they did so with substantial opposition. Almost three months after the outbreak of war, the mountain region of east Tennessee returned a large majority against secession.

Even after the state seceded, a public convention proclaimed the area's continuing loyalty to the Union. Secession, observed Union supporters, had been "marked by the most alarming attacks on civil liberty" and threatened the "last vestige of freedom." A Confederate general dismissed the Unionists as "ignorant, primitive people," and others emphasized their modest wealth and rural isolation. In fact, secession was far more popular in east Tennessee's cities and towns than it was in the rural hinterland. So hostile were the mountains that the governor eventually recommended a garrison of 14,000 men to occupy the region.

The mountain region of northwestern Virginia also voted against secession after the outbreak of the war, and when Union troops entered the area, they met substantial popular support. The area eventually seceded from Virginia itself to form the state of West Virginia.

Engraving courtesy NC Archives

Fighting between North and South obscured divisions within the Confederacy.

Farther south, the reality of secession and war induced most reluctant Confederates to abandon their misgivings, but pockets of opposition remained, even in the Deep South. As one farmer wrote from the mountains of Alabama, all the Rebels wanted was "to git you pumpt up to go to fight for their infurnal negroes and after you do there fighting you may kiss there hine parts for o they care."

POOR WIVES AND CHILDREN

During the first year of the war, the Confederate cause remained relatively popular, sustained by an outpouring of public emotion. Except in bitterly Unionist east Tennessee, opposition to the war was inconsistent. Even in the mountains, volunteering for Confederate service was substantial; initially the government of Jefferson Davis had more men than guns to give them. But this wave of recruitment emptied the mountains of Confederate supporters of military age, concentrating dissent in those left behind.

As the war progressed, the costs of mobilizing the region's population and economy became more apparent — and the heaviest burden fell on the families of non-slaveholders in the mountains and surrounding foothills. The upland farms produced little in the best of circumstances, and now the war stripped away the most productive laborers. North Carolina's governor observed that "the cry of distress comes up from the poor wives and children of our soldiers... What will become of them?"

One citizen satirically recommended that the army "knock the women and children of the mountains in the head, to put them out of their misery." Somewhere between 20 and 40 percent of North Carolina's population required poor relief from the state. In Georgia, fully half the state expenditures were devoted to poor relief by 1864. The privation was equally intense elsewhere in the mountains, especially as battle devastated much of the region, and the overtaxed Southern supply network proved incapable of bringing in sufficient food.

The Confederate government compounded these hardships by enacting a 10 percent "tax-in-kind" on all agricultural products beyond the minumum needed for survival, as defined by Confederate officials. Impressment units also seized food needed by the government at nominal prices — a system that the Secretary of War described as a "harsh, unequal, and odious mode of supply."

Such seizures, combined with rampant inflation that reduced military pay to derisive levels, threatened the dependents of Confederate soldiers with privation. Hunger was indeed common among the soldiers' families, especially late in the war. The impact was graphically illustrated by a soldier's letter from his desperate wife: "I would not have you do anything wrong for the world, but before God, Edward,

unless you come home we must die." Edward deserted but was later captured, only narrowly escaping execution.

DRAFT DODGERS

During 1862, a series of military defeats combined with unpopular Confederate policies to undermine the appeal of Southern nationalism. Troubled by the increasing scarcity of volunteers, the Davis administration implemented a draft and forcibly re-enlisted all those who had joined the army the previous year.

Compounded by the growing war weariness, the draft law became the focus of resentment. The law allowed substitution, a boon to those wealthy enough to hire replacements. In addition, the Confederate Congress exempted one adult white male for every 20 slaves owned, so planters and overseers essentially escaped conscription. Little wonder that the cry went up that it was a "rich man's war and a poor man's fight." In the words of one Confederate Congressman, the exemption for planters earned "universal odium," and its influence upon the poor was "calamitous."

Desertion increased drastically after the act, and by the end of the war over 100,000 soldiers were reported as absent without leave. The Confederacy was far less successful at recapturing its deserters than was the Union, for only one out of five ever returned to the front. All this had a grave impact on the upcountry. Deserters headed for the mountains, among other rugged locales, where capture was most difficult. Since these areas were the homes of the poorest farmers in the South, the growing opposition to the Confederacy had both a regional and class character. Their increasing numbers presented the South with major difficulties in retaining public order.

Confederate efforts to recover deserters and enforce draft laws led to escalating conflict in the more isolated portions of the mountains and upper piedmont, and even in nonplantation areas closer to the Confederate heartland. Deserters joined with those who had been lukewarm to the Confederacy to dominate whole counties. As conscription agents entered the upland in force, bands of deserters and draft resisters offered battle rather than accept capture.

The Confederacy could ill afford to transfer troops from the front, and the "Home Guards" were often outmatched. In Alabama alone, according to a Confederate estimate, 8,000 to 10,000 armed deserters or "Tories" roamed the northern part of the state. One recalled that after his desertion, he "wrote the boys that they had better come home, which many of them did." Opposition to the Confederacy occurred openly. In one case a Unionist mob liberated draft evaders from jail, prompting Confederate authorities to arrest hundreds.

Across the South these anti-Confederates found it impossible to tend their farms. Some became outlaws, living off their Rebel neighbors. Others joined the invading Union troops. Over 30,000 white Tennesseans entered the Union Army, mostly from the eastern part of the state. As far south as Alabama, almost 3,000 entered federal service, nearly all of them from the mountains or from the poor "wiregrass" counties to the southeast.

Violence of an unusually savage nature escalated in the upcountry. In east Tennessee, guerrillas torched railroad bridges in November 1861 in anticipation of a federal invasion. Hundreds of arrests ensued. The Unionists hid "among the fastnesses and caves of the mountains," while the Rebels hunted them "day and night like wild beasts." The Confederate authorities hanged five of the perpetrators, leaving their bodies dangling for days to overawe the hostile populace.

In the mountains of North Carolina, the military arrested 13 suspected Union partisans in 1863 and then gunned them down in death-squad fashion. Private feuds also erupted in the politically charged environment, and the resulting violence would dog the region for years.

The rigor of Confederate efforts to maintain order offended upland farmers' firm belief in local governance. They had seceded to protect states' rights from Yankee tyranny, and now they encountered heavy-handed action by their own increasingly centralized government. While the yeomen were not the only Southerners who resented the actions of the Confederate government, their woes —and the efforts to address them —encouraged the growing conflict between state and national authority.

In Georgia, for example, Governor Joseph Brown was long identified with the yeoman farmers of the northern part of the state. Brown publicly challenged the legality of the draft, and when rebuffed by the courts, used his power as governor to exempt large numbers from conscription. He also enrolled thou-

Photo by Alfred T. Clifford, NC Collection

SOUTHERN SOLDIERS FROM THE MOUNTAINS OFTEN DESERTED AND RETURNED HOME, TAKING UP ARMS AGAINST THE CONFEDERACY.

sands in the state militia, thus keeping them out of the Confederate Army. "We must maintain a producing class at home to furnish supplies to the Army," he observed, "or it becomes a question of time when we must submit." Immediately after the fall of Atlanta in September 1864, Brown sent the militia home to gather their crops, to the horror of the army command.

A PEACE MOVEMENT

By the middle of the war, the Davis administration was unpopular, and opposition candidates triumphed throughout the region. As one observer in north Alabama observed, the 1863 elections demonstrated a "decided wish amongst the people for peace as but few of the old members were returned." The Confederate Congress actually refused to seat several of the new members for being traitors.

The most militant open opposition was demonstrated in North Carolina, where William Holden ran for governor on a "peace platform" in 1864. Although initially expected to win, military intimidation and a last-minute revelation that Holden was negotiating with President Lincoln led to a backlash. Holden was defeated, but he ran strongly in the mountains.

Organized peace sentiment even appeared within the Confederate army. Many of the conscripts from the Alabama hill country who made up "Clanton's Brigade," for example, came under "home influences" and joined a clandestine Peace Society in 1863. Some 70 were arrested for mutiny. An investigation revealed that the "soldiers from the low and poorer classes regard this as the only means of ending the war, of which they are so tired they will accept peace on any terms." General Clanton thought the men should be shot as traitors, but by 1865 the military command was conducting peace negotiations of its own. As one north Alabama Unionist observed, there was a "universal anxiety to have the war come to a close with or without Jeff Davis's consent."

Photo courtesy NC Collection, UNC

Warren County, State of North Carolina,
A
Will pay to bearer
FIFTY DOLLARS,
Receivable only for County Taxes for Warren County due in 1866.

CONFEDERATE TAX VOUCHERS LIKE THIS ONE FUELED RESENTMENT AMONG SOUTHERNERS UNUSED TO PAYING TAXES TO A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

By the last days of the war, armed anti-Confederates dominated much of the mountain region not already occupied by Union forces, and the Confederate army and home front approached collapse. After the Battle of Nashville in December 1864, the defeated army of General Hood simply disintegrated in the course of retreat. General Lee himself observed that during the siege of Petersburg, "hundreds of men are deserting nightly and I cannot keep the army together unless examples are made of such cases." When news of the surrender at Appomattox arrived, the response of much of the Southern public was relief rather than despondency.

But the pleasure of upcountry Unionists was short lived. Most assumed that peace would bring physical security and political supremacy, but conflict continued in many areas. The demobilization of the two armies brought partisans of both sides into close proximity. Union deserters, who had dominated much of the mountain region, often found themselves outnumbered by returning Confederate veterans determined to pursue personal vendettas for what had transpired in their absence.

Instead of easing the misgivings of Southerners who had supported the Union, presidential Reconstruction initially allowed many ex-Confederates to retain state power. In one instance, local officials admitted that Union men were shot upon sight for three months after Appomattox. Local juries also prosecuted Union men for wartime thefts and other misdeeds. Most alarmingly, ex-Rebel officials often discriminated against Union men in the allocation of the vast food relief supplied by the federal government. As a Tennessee newspaper observed, the "people reported to be starving" were the "political brethren of these Radicals," and thus they ought not to look to their fellow Southerners for aid.

Anti-Confederate Southerners responded angrily to Rebel persecution. Throughout the mountains they organized for resistance, often in clandestine clubs called "Union Leagues." In 1866, one Union League activist in the mountains of Alabama wrote that they "could no longer do without troops unless you allow the loyal men to kill the traitors out." This was more than talk. In north Alabama alone conflict between Unionists and ex-Confederates resulted in several pitched battles in the two years after the war.

By 1867 the Unionist minority was desperate enough to decide on a drastic course: They reached out to the newly freed slaves as allies, thus becoming the "scalawags" of Reconstruction lore. Much of the Unionist following now supported black suffrage. In Tennessee, for example, Governor William Brownlow's hard-pressed Unionist government had enacted equal suffrage voluntarily. In the rest of the region, tens of thousands of white Southerners welcomed military Reconstruction laws that gave blacks the vote, seeing them as the only means by which loyal men could rule.

Thus the Civil War helped forge a biracial lower-class alliance that changed the face of Southern politics. Far from uniting whites under the Confederate banner of white supremacy, the war heightened the class and regional conflicts that already existed within white society. The yeomanry of the hills had been reluctant to launch the Confederate nation, and the unequal demands of the war effort brought thousands into open opposition. Their militancy eventually brought many to the great heresy of the era —embracing ex-slaves as political allies after the war. Both the defeat of the Confederacy and the rise of the biracial alliance hinged on the critical reality of the Civil War: the inherent difficulty of persuading small farmers to die to preserve someone else's slaves. ❑

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An Uncivil War

In Washington County, secession launched a community rebellion that divided the plantations among poor men.

By Wayne Durrill

On Sunday, June 23, 1861, a yeoman farmer named Ellsberry Ambrose attended worship services at the Concord Church in Washington County, North Carolina, about 80 miles south of Norfolk, Virginia. Afterwards, Ambrose and his friends chatted outdoors in the warm sunshine about crops, weather, livestock, and all manner of country concerns. Then the talk turned to politics and the civil war that had just begun.

One man suggested a rally and flag-raising to show loyalty to the Union. But another man cautioned his compatriots, warning them that the neighboring planters would call out the militia and shoot them all.

Ambrose brushed aside the warning. In this war, he said, "the rich people" were going to "make the poor people do all the fighting" — and in the fight on behalf of the wealthy he was determined to take no part. He told his fellow farmers that he would "never muster under a secession Flag." According to one report, he "threatened violence" to anyone who tried to compel him to join the Confederate Army.

Had Ellsberry Ambrose spoken for himself, his remarks might have drawn little notice from local planters. But Ambrose was a substantial citizen in the community, with a farm of 206 acres. Within three days, planters had him arrested, releasing him on bond only on the condition that he "keep the peace and be of good behavior."

From then on, Ambrose kept silent. But his words had thrown down the gauntlet to the planters of Washington County, launching a local guerrilla war which would last three years and destroy the very plantation society that secessionists had gone to war to save.

Over the next several months, Ambrose and his fellow yeoman farmers organized themselves into extra-legal militias, pledging to resist any effort to force Unionists into the Confederate army. What's more, they formulated a vision for restructuring local society and a plan for doing so. They told planters that the community rebellion was not about states rights and Southern honor — it was about the land and labor that Washington County planters had hoarded since the Revolution. Their aim, the yeomen farmers announced, was to drive planters off their plantations and divide the land among poor men.

The yeomen even tried to form an alliance with the county's slaves. John Phelps, who later led a Unionist cavalry in the county, went to one large plantation and said "in the presence of several negro slaves, that the object of the Yankees was to free the negroes and place them on an equality with the white men." Perhaps as an act of good faith, Phelps spent two days "with the negroes engaged in teaching them to spell and read."

Although the slaves could not take up the offer for fear of their masters calling upon Confederate troops, they never forgot the gesture. After the war they joined with poor whites in a local Union League

which succeeded in driving Washington County's largest planters from the area and dividing the land among poor men, both black and white.

HOME RULE

How could this have happened? Did not the South rise as one to defend its honor and the institution of slavery? Did not Southern white men flock to the nearest train station and rush to the front to defeat the vile Yankee aggressors? Did not all whites understand themselves in racial terms, as whites against blacks, and avoid all conflict among themselves?

Certainly Civil War historians have found little but unity among Southern whites during the war. One scholar summarized the conventional wisdom this way: "The Confederate quest for home rule never became a contest over who should rule at home." In this view, conflict among Southerners — the little that occurred — was simply incidental to the larger "War Between the States," as Southerners came to call it in the 20th century.

Indeed, it is this struggle between two nations that has obsessed historians. They have focused on affairs of state, on the words and actions of generals and politicians; theirs are stories of legislation and massive battles, of constitutional difficulties, and of strategy and tactics.

These are important matters. But such histories frame accounts of the war in terms of the concerns articulated by national politicians and generals. They do not address issues that were raised in Washington County by Ellsberry Ambrose and other yeoman farmers and white wage laborers. Nor do they account for the struggles of slaves caught between the power of their masters and the prospect of freedom.

The story of Washington County during the Civil War is the story of ordinary people who fought over the means by which to make a living. When set alongside histories of poor people in the mountains of Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Arkansas, it directs our attention to other struggles during the war — conflicts often local in form but widespread in their cultural themes.

As in Washington County, poor people in many parts of the South took the war as a chance to challenge the power of planters while their warrior sons and hired hands fought on distant battlefields. In doing so, they disputed the very legitimacy of the hierarchical Southern society and its grossly unequal distribution of wealth.

Photo courtesy NC Archives

Josiah Collins, master of Somerset Place plantation, always tipped his hat to poor white men to ease class resentments.

"COLOR MAKES CASTE"

In 1860, Washington County was home to 3,593 whites, 2,465 slaves, and 237 free blacks. Most people lived in the countryside and relied on farming to survive. A handful of planters owned most of the land and slaves, while an estimated 500 white men operated smaller farms. Somerset Place, the largest plantation, was owned by Josiah Collins, who controlled about 3,000 acres of prime black soil and 30,000 acres of cypress woodlands.

Planters like Collins had dominated the county for decades by working to contain the smoldering resentment among landless laborers and swampers. Their strategy had been twofold: make poor whites financially dependent on them, and destroy leaders among the poor — both black and white, free and slave.

Destroying the leadership among slaves was easy enough. When trouble arose at Somerset Place, for example, the black slave preacher was simply sold to a slave trader. Dealing with poor white leaders was a little trickier, however. They could not be banished — but they could be coopted.

The best opportunity arose during the first of the so-called "slave rebellions" in 1802. A great regional revival swept the area, producing a slave leadership and an increasing number of runaways who took to the nearby swamps to live as maroons. In Washington County, the supposed revolt centered around a slave preacher called Dr. Joe who had allegedly conspired with runaways "to kill the white people." Whatever actually happened, planters seized the opportunity to mobilize poor whites with rumors of a race war. In the end, according to one planter account, white vigilantes shot "6 or 7 blacks" who were on their way to join the "insurrection."

The threat of a race war precluded a confrontation between planters and poor whites by creating a sense of common danger. Planters solidified their support among their less-fortunate neighbors by actively seeking clients among poor whites — men who had little property or prospect of acquiring the assets that defined independence in a political system that required a man to pay property taxes in order to vote.

On the county's larger estates, planters operated general merchandise stores and extended credit to small farmers and laborers who sought to buy cloth, household items, tools, knives, gunpowder, and other necessities. Planters also leased land to poor men who agreed to cut timber, which was

sawed in the planter's sawmill and ferried to the North on his ship.

More important, Washington County planters hired an enormous number of white laborers. Some worked temporarily as coopers, sawyers, overseers, carpenters, machinists, boat makers, gin builders, ironmongers, or millwrights. But most labored for planters at common, back-breaking physical tasks. Charles L. Pettigrew, for one, employed poor white neighbors to spay livestock, clear ground, cut and roll logs, run errands, hunt runaway slaves, and dig or clean canals and ditches.

Pettigrew attempted to make his neighbors as dependent on him as possible. In years when crops had gone bad, he often hired as many as 100 poor white men — almost 15 percent of the county's adult white males — all of whom were grateful for the crumbs that the planter let fall from his table.

Planters like Pettigrew and Josiah Collins took care to defer to poor white men in public, ritual displays. As one eyewitness put it, Collins always treated "the poor man with the same politeness that he does the rich." He saluted any white farmer or laborer because "not to lift your hat to a poor white man would be giving mortal offence." Collins hoped by the gesture to enforce the idea that "colour alone makes caste here," and that economic differences did not constitute a basis for class conflict.

Engraving courtesy NC Collection, UNC

WHEN FEDERAL TROOPS ARRIVED ON THE COAST, FARMERS LAUNCHED AN ALL-OUT WAR AGAINST PLANTERS.

DAWN ARREST

There was one more group that planters had to face — yeoman farmers. Unlike landless laborers, such men possessed the means to live without recourse to the wages or credit that planters offered to other poor white men. To yeoman farmers, land meant independence — but it also provided a way for planters to coopt them as well. Washington County planters offered yeoman farmers a deal: join the Whig party, which was dominated by planters, and have their land claims and civil liberties upheld in the courts.

It worked. Yeoman farmers and planters governed the county in the interests of property holders for 30 years — until the outbreak of civil war.

In the winter of 1860, planters proposed to secede from the Union and go to war if necessary to protect their "rights." Those rights, however, also included slaves, a species of property in which most yeoman farmers had little interest. Farmers balked at the talk of secession, and instead began to identify themselves with the Republican party of Abraham Lincoln, which included in its creed protection of the "free soil" rights of farmers.

In Washington County, secession produced a violent political battle never before seen in the community. The alliance between planters and yeoman farmers which had endured for three decades suddenly broke apart, paving the way for a union of poor men dedicated to securing some "free soil" for themselves — many for the first time in their lives.

Former allies turned against each other. Both sides began to compete for the support of men who earned their living by laboring for wages — the poor white workers and tenant farmers who comprised a majority of the county in 1860.

On the Confederate side, large planters formed an alliance of the very rich and the very poor. They attracted about 350 men who had been clients before the war — shinglers, tenant farmers, artisans, and small farmers who depended on plantation stores for supplies, credit and marketing. They also had the support of the wealthy merchants, lawyers, and clergymen with whom they dealt.

Unionists, on the other hand, tended to be men of middling means — yeoman farmers and their sons who owned land but seldom any slaves. Yeoman leaders found a constituency of about 350 men like themselves who farmed or hunted for a living and thus remained independent of the outside world — and planters.

With the fall of Fort Hatteras to federal troops in August 1861, Unionists began to organize themselves. By September, they began to understand the Civil War as a "property war." As one of the Pettigrews wrote, many of those who lived "on the edge of the swamps" thought that "if the Yankees succeeded, the rich men wld be forced to divide with them & all share alike."

In October, Ellsberry Ambrose ran for captaincy of the local militia — and won. At five o'clock on the morning of October 31, in the midst of a rainstorm, the new militia captain answered a knock on his door in his nightshirt. He was greeted by a squad of 21 Confederate cavalrymen, one of whom pointed a cocked pistol at Ambrose and told him to "put on his clothes and come instantly."

The arrest of Ambrose had the desired effect. "There was," one planter reported, "the greatest panic" among the Unionists. When the Confederate presidential election was held 10 days later, every man turned up at the polls for fear of being singled out as a Lincoln supporter. "Never," exulted another planter, "did any tree bear quicker fruit." When another of the Ambrose clan ran against a planter in the militia election in November, Josiah Collins — acting as an election official — voided the votes of Union supporters.

THE FRONT STEPS

Unionists needed a force strong enough to counter the power of the Confederate Army — and the coming of federal troops and gunboats to eastern North Carolina in the summer of 1862 provided it. In short order, Unionists organized their own local government outside the federal lines that encircled the county seat of Plymouth. They also formed their own cavalry unit to roam the countryside to protect Unionists, drive the remaining Confederates out of the county, and seize the personal property and lands abandoned by planters who had fled to the upcountry.

In September 1862, news of the impending Emancipation Proclamation focused the local war directly on the planters by attacking their personal property — houses, furniture, and slaves. Many fled to the upcountry, taking their slaves with them.

Ironically, though, the Proclamation also drove a wedge between yeoman farm-

ers and their landless allies. Poor white men immediately began carving up the plantations for themselves, often coming to blows over the possession of particular parcels. At Somerset Place, hundreds of landless men raided the mansion of Josiah Collins and took $18,000 worth of goods, including all the furniture, a library of 3,000 books, and the front steps to the house.

In this competition for land lay the beginnings of the demise of the local alliance of poor men. By destroying planter claims to property without erecting a coherent system of counter-claims, the Emancipation Proclamation left every man to fend for himself. Guerrilla war in Washington County began in January 1863. The result was 18 months of bitter, bloody fighting among poor whites.

By the spring of 1864, poor whites were using the county seat of Plymouth as a staging area from which to launch pillaging expeditions into the upcountry, seeking to carry off livestock, tools, wagons and other planter property. In doing so, they forced planters to retreat further inland with their slaves and deprived them of the use of their plantations.

That spring, slaveholders in the eastern third of the state could plant no crops. The Confederate Army was unable to get at the region's surplus of corn from the previous year, or at the green pastures needed desperately to graze rebel cavalry horses. The result was a shortage of grazing land and corn for the Army of Virginia and, increasingly, distress and political dissension among planters from eastern North Carolina. Those planters soon threatened to join the state's burgeoning peace movement.

LAND AND LABOR

A solution for local secessionists and for the Confederate government lay in the destruction of Plymouth. In the spring of 1864, Jefferson Davis himself ordered the temporary withdrawal of about 10,000 Confederate troops from the defense of Richmond. The soldiers marched on Plymouth and attacked the fort there which was garrisoned by 2,500 Union soldiers, many of them local blacks.

In the end, the fort fell. The Confederates massacred nearly 500 black soldiers on the spot and shipped the rest of the prisoners to Andersonville, where more than half died within a year.

The Confederate victory worked as planned. It terrorized poor white men and blacks, all of whom abandoned Washington County for the duration of the war. And it persuaded planters to return to eastern North Carolina.

Photo courtesy NC Archives

WITH 3,000 ACRES OF RICH SOIL AND 30,000 ACRES OF CYPRESS TREES, SOMERSET PLACE WAS THE LARGEST PLANTATION IN WASHINGTON COUNTY.

But the victory at Plymouth did not restore slavery to Washington County. A few planters returned to survey the damage, but none brought their slaves home or commenced planting. Planters realized at last that the society which they had gone to war to preserve had been destroyed. They could return to Washington County, but the alliance of property holders would never be renewed. Instead, the conflict over land and labor would be continued by political means.

The local war in Washington County was as much as part of the Civil War as Gettysburg or Shiloh. Indeed, there were two separate wars fought between 1861 and 1865 — one between two national governments and their armies, and the other over land and labor in the South.

The broader war involved mutually respected rules that sacrificed the bodies of men to preserve all manner of possessions — land, slaves, personal property, women and children. By contrast, the war for land and labor fought in Washington County and other parts of the South soon became an attack on property itself and on the people who controlled it. Many poor white men sought not to protect property concentrated in the hands of a few, but rather to acquire by force possessions which could be distributed equitably among themselves.

In Washington County, planters justifiably feared their Unionist opponents and called them "levellers" and "agrarians." The war at home had destroyed plantation society, but it did not establish the basis for a new community. Questions about the social meanings of freedom would continue both to perplex and inspire local residents through Reconstruction and beyond. A struggle for a just society, borne in the crucible of war, had only commenced. ❑

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A Thousand Aspirations

Black Southerners who escaped to the Carolina coast forged new communities and fought for their freedom.

By David Cecelski

On November 17, 1861, a lone black man named Ben sailed a leaky "cooner" from a Confederate fort on Roanoke Island, North Carolina, across a stormy sea to a Union encampment on Hatteras Island. His skillful escape from slavery through the middle of a war zone astonished the soldiers who greeted him, but they had yet to see the true extent of the newcomer's courage and ability.

Less than three months later, on the eve of the Battle of Roanoke, Ben was "comfortably closeted" with General Ambrose Burnside making plans for the next day's attack. The ex-slave and the Union commander discussed the greycoats' numbers, fortifications, and morale. Most importantly, Ben identified the battery "defending the only pass to the enemy's rear, which he had helped build." The next morning Ben led troops under General Foster to the battery and was among the first to attack it, distinguishing himself in battle more than a year before the United States officially recruited black soldiers.

Another escaped slave, a young boy named Thomas Robinson, also played an important role in the Battle of Roanoke. Unlike Ben, Robinson was a native of Roanoke and had an expert knowledge of the dangerous shoal waters surrounding the island. In the thick of a naval battle, he led 10 soldiers including a topographical engineer ashore in a small boat.

The young guide identified Ashby's Harbor, three miles south of the Confederate forts, as the best place for landing Union troops on the island. His scouting party surveyed enemy defenses there and returned under fire to Burnside's ship. By midnight 7,500 bluecoats had come ashore at Ashby's Harbor, setting up a horrible surprise for outmanned Confederate troops who had counted on the Yankees' inferior knowledge of local terrain to defend the island.

In the next four years, hundreds of thousands of slaves all across the South would follow Thomas Robinson and Ben to freedom. Even before the Emancipation Proclamation, they joined the Union army wherever it had established beachheads on Southern soil — in Tidewater Virginia and the Sea Islands of South Carolina late in 1861, on the North Carolina coast and large parts of the Mississippi Valley early in 1862, and in Louisiana later that year. (See chart, page 23.)

The story of how black Southerners struggled for freedom in North Carolina highlights an important and usually neglected part of Civil War history — the contribution that slaves across the region made to their own liberation. "Often," wrote Colonel Rush Hawkins of the 9th New York Regiment stationed at Hatteras, the slaves brought "news of important military activity." But the newly freed Southerners contributed much more to the Yankees — and took much more from the Rebels — than military intelligence. They brought experienced labor, skills ranging from carpentry to espionage, a willingness to fight, and a knowledge of the local environment that proved invaluable to the Union occupation on the Carolina coast and to their own struggle for freedom.

THE DISMAL SWAMP

After the victory at Roanoke Island, federal troops commanded by Burnside quickly captured the coastal towns on the interior of the Outer Banks. The campaign opened a strategic "back door" to the Confederate capital in Richmond, eliminated a base for privateers, and blockaded Southern shipping along the state's entire

coast except for Wilmington for the duration of the war.

Many slaves fled to the thin stretch of coast occupied by the Union army, especially to the vicinity of New Bern and Roanoke Island. Mary Barbour's parents carried her 200 miles from McDowell County to New Bern when she was a small child. "We traveled all night and hid in the woods all day," she recalled years later. A slave woman named Juno escaped with her children by rowing a canoe down the Neuse River at night, and a group of Onslow County slaves swam the White Oak River into Jones County and walked to New Bern.

A crowd of slaves "patched until their patches themselves were rags" sailed 75 miles from the town of Plymouth past rebel forts to Roanoke Island. "How they succeeded," wrote a Union soldier, "is a wonder to us all." Another dinghy crowded with fleeing "contrabands" sailed down the Chowan River while a frustrated owner took potshots at the boat from shore. And on a single night, almost 100 Hertford County slaves stole across the Roanoke River into Bertie County en route to federal camps. Others fled to the North Carolina coast from as far away as South Carolina and Alabama.

Some slaves emerged literally out of the swamps. The Dismal, Great Alligator, Angola, and other coastal swamps had provided escaped slaves with important refuges prior to the Civil War. William Kinnegay, a tall man with a "meditative air" who ran away from a Jones County plantation after his owner sold him apart from his wife and children, hid in swamps south of New Bern for six years before crossing into Union lines in 1862. Another man, a black preacher, arrived in New Bern from a clandestine ministry in the Dismal Swamp.

By mid-1862, more than 10,000 contrabands had converged on the North Carolina coast. The population of New Bern swelled from roughly 5,400 to 7,500. By the end of the war, almost 16,000 freed slaves would live in the vicinity of New Bern.

"THEIR OWN EFFORTS"

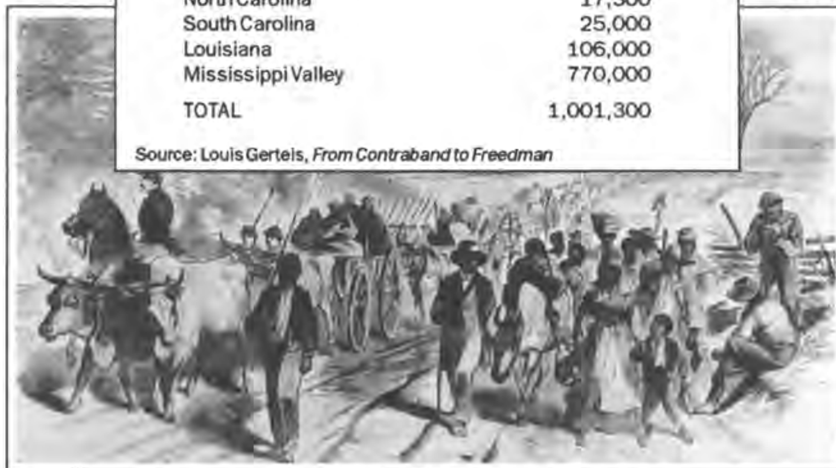
None of the slaves could know how long their moment of freedom would last. Yet old women sang hymns of praise and jubilation late into the nights. Families separated by the auction block celebrated joyful reunions. Gradually, the former slaves built their own communities out of slavery's shadow. New Bern, recorded a soldier, was growing into "a Mecca of a thousand aspirations."

FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

Although slaves in North Carolina escaped to freedom earlier than most others in the South, an estimated one million blacks had crossed over Union lines by the end of the war.

Tidewater Virginia	70,000
Eastern Virginia	13,000
North Carolina	17,300
South Carolina	25,000
Louisiana	106,000
Mississippi Valley	770,000
TOTAL	1,001,300

Source: Louis Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman*



Engraving from Harper's Weekly

AFTER THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, THOUSANDS OF FREED SLAVES CROSSED UNION LINES AT NEW BERN.

The ex-slaves cleared land, laid out streets, planted gardens, and built homes. At Roanoke Island, "wives and children ... united with the men in performing the work of the carpenter, mason, and the gardener." Blacksmiths, coopers, millwrights, tailors, and other artisans established shops.

Freed slaves in New Bern formed political organizations and relief societies, elected elders and founded churches, including the first A.M.E. Zion church in the South. They also began to educate themselves. Under the supervision of the Superintendent for Negro Affairs, 800 children and adults attended evening schools in two "African churches." They were eager to learn; a union corporal observed sawmill workers who "speedily whipped out and zealously studied" their spelling books "at every break." By 1865, there were 19 day schools and eight evening schools in the district — the first public schools for blacks in North Carolina.

Thousands of freedmen were hired by the federal forces. Laborers, carpenters, and engineers built docks, a new railroad bridge over the Trent River, and fortifications that were a "chief reliance against the rebels." Other workers dug canals, loaded and unloaded ships, and served as teamsters and personal servants. Many women worked as cooks, nurses, and laundresses for the army.

Though a common enemy united blacks and Yankees and undoubtedly smoothed over many potential problems, mistreatment of black workers and instances of brutality by Union soldiers were not uncommon during the federal occupation. In addition, some officers were widely known to swindle black workers and soldiers out of wages and bonuses. These abuses strained relations to the point where many black laborers in New Bern refused to work for the Union Army by the end of the war.

The corruption and brutality forced the freedmen to rely more on their own resources. In the New Bern area in 1864, as many as 1,200 chose to work on cotton farms and turpentine lands leased from the Treasury Department rather than for the occupation forces. "Their hope rested in their own efforts," concluded a northern missionary, "mainly for freedom and justice."

SPIES AND SCOUTS

The "best and most courageous" blacks in New Bern served as guides, scouts, and spies for the Union army, which was employing more than 50 of these volunteers by the summer of 1862. The former slaves infiltrated greycoat lines and visited enemy

camps as far south as Swansboro, north to the Roanoke River, and west to Goldsboro.

A young black man named Charley, for example, made three journeys to Kinston in 1862 and brought back key information on troop movements and the location of the enemy camp there. Another time, General Foster sent two scouts back to their homeland in Onslow County to investigate rumors of an impending Confederate attack coming from the south. The two men almost died from exposure during a four-day reconnaissance in stormy weather, but they proved that the rumors were unfounded.

William Kinnegay, the swamp refugee, traveled 35 miles through enemy territory to spy on rebel headquarters in Kinston. On his way back to New Bern, he detoured south to rescue his wife and children from his former plantation in Jones County. Other scouts led forays for supplies and food and located railroads, bridges, munitions factories, and other military targets that became objects for Union raids.

The freedmen sometimes contributed to Union military strategy. In 1862, for example, another black man named Charlie proposed a raid to retrieve a large stash of cotton that he had encountered during his escape to New Bern. He convinced Union officers of the merits of his plan and successfully led 20 blacks and 100 white soldiers to retrieve the valuable prize.

Sam Williams, a refugee from Jones County, proposed a more daring plan to the army. Williams outlined a surprise attack on a rebel encampment near Trenton. He explained the location of the enemy, the lay of the land, and pointed out a little-known route through a swamp that would surround the greycoats. With Williams riding ahead with a part of the 3rd New York Cavalry, three regiments attempted the raid. The expedition was unsuccessful, but not because of faulty advice from Williams, whose horse was shot from under him in a skirmish.

Spying and scouting were especially dangerous occupations for escaped slaves, who risked re-enslavement — or worse — if captured. According to a Confederate soldier captured in the raid devised by Williams, the greycoats "would have roasted him alive" if they had caught the former slave.

On his last foray into Kinston, young Charley and another scout encountered Confederate guerrillas five miles south of the town and had to retreat quickly to New Bern with bloodhounds on their heels. On an expedition to Tarboro, another black scout had to soak his party's feet in turpentine to confuse the bloodhounds trailing them. At least two scouts were captured on other occasions. One scout was killed in Kinston when his former owner caught him trying to bring his wife to New Bern. A boy scout was ambushed by Rebel Rangers while piloting a squad of federal cavalry in Chowan County.

In New Bern, black refugees from the town of Plymouth (60 miles north) told somber stories about the treatment of captured black soldiers and "colored employees of the government" after Confederate troops retook the town in April 1864. Many had been summarily executed; those not killed were enslaved.

GODS OF THE SEA

Many blacks living near the coast also possessed piloting, navigation, and other watercraft skills that were invaluable to the federal occupation. The Yankees held only a few ports securely. Control over the rivers and immense sounds within the Outer Banks was thus essential for maintaining transport, supply lines, the blockade, and most military raids. However frequent storms, narrow inlets, and a shallow, shifting sand bottom made the North Carolina coast, the legendary "Graveyard of the Atlantic," among the most hazardous in North America.

Union soldiers quickly recognized that many blacks were adept fishermen, pilots, sailors, and ferrymen with an excellent practical knowledge of boating and the coastal environment. "The negroes at Roanoke are fond of boats," reported the Reverend Horace James, "and know how to manage them." In Beaufort, he observed that the local blacks "take to the water almost as readily as the sea fowl that abound in this vicinity."

The Union quartermaster at Hatteras Inlet employed blacks "to man the boats" that enforced the blockade. Other maritime freedmen crewed approximately 20 steam transports operating out of New Bern. And "not less than one hundred" freedmen ferried troops and supplies to the federal camps and lookouts in coastal Carteret County — "this business," noted Reverend James, "being wholly in the hands of the negroes."

The advantage of employing local pilots was incalcu-

Engravings courtesy NC Collection, UNC

FURNEY BRYANT, REFUGEE...

lable. Prior to the battle of Roanoke, Union pilots had grounded many ships and sank at least five. A bluecoat infantryman quickly saw the difference, though, when a local pilot took over the helm on a transport entering Beaufort Inlet. "Before we went carefully and slowly along," he wrote home in November 1862, "and now we went full speed winding, turning, straight — right — left and so on, till we entered Morehead City."

Confederate patriots were galled that their advantage of fighting a war in familiar territory was undercut by the knowledge and experience that black watermen supplied Union troops. "The negroes ... in that region are mere nomads," complained a Roanoke River diarist, "owing allegiance to Neptune and Boreas only" — the gods of the sea and wind.

TO THE TRENCHES

Many freedmen on the North Carolina coast also fought in the Civil War. When Congress permitted Lincoln to enlist black soldiers in July 1862, New Bern was "flooded with recruitment agents," and many blacks joined the army. "The able-bodied men mostly enlist," wrote Horace James in his annual report as Superintendent of Negro Affairs. By January 1865, his office was feeding 1,351 members of "colored soldiers families" in New Bern alone.

Blacks such as Furney Bryant, who had been a slave in 1862, joined the 1st N.C. Colored Regiment the following year. (See illustration, pages 24 and 25.) His and three other regiments in the 2,000-man "African Brigade" left New Bern for duty in Charleston in the summer of 1863, sporting a "beautiful banner of the Republic" given the soldiers by the local Colored Ladies Union Relief Association.

After arduous duty in South Carolina, two regiments from the "African Brigade" raided northeastern North Carolina in the fall of 1863. They freed more than 2,500 slaves, destroyed four guerrilla camps, and captured large amounts of supplies. A Northern reporter on the expedition observed the black troops excelled in "scouting, skirmishing, picket duty, guard duty, every service incident to the occupation of hostile towns, and best of all, fighting."

Confederate troops tried twice to recapture New Bern — and black residents played an important role in defending their new community. The most serious threat was in February 1864, after many troops had been diverted to the Army of the Potomac. As many as 1,200 blacks "took to the trenches" under Brigadier General I.N. Palmer to repel the attack. The town's defenders stood fast, though many black civilians living outside the town were killed before they reached New Bern's fortifications. Furney Bryant, promoted to first sergeant for his "gallantry and intelligence," was among the town's defenders.

... AND FURNEY BRYANT, SOLDIER.

JAMES CITY

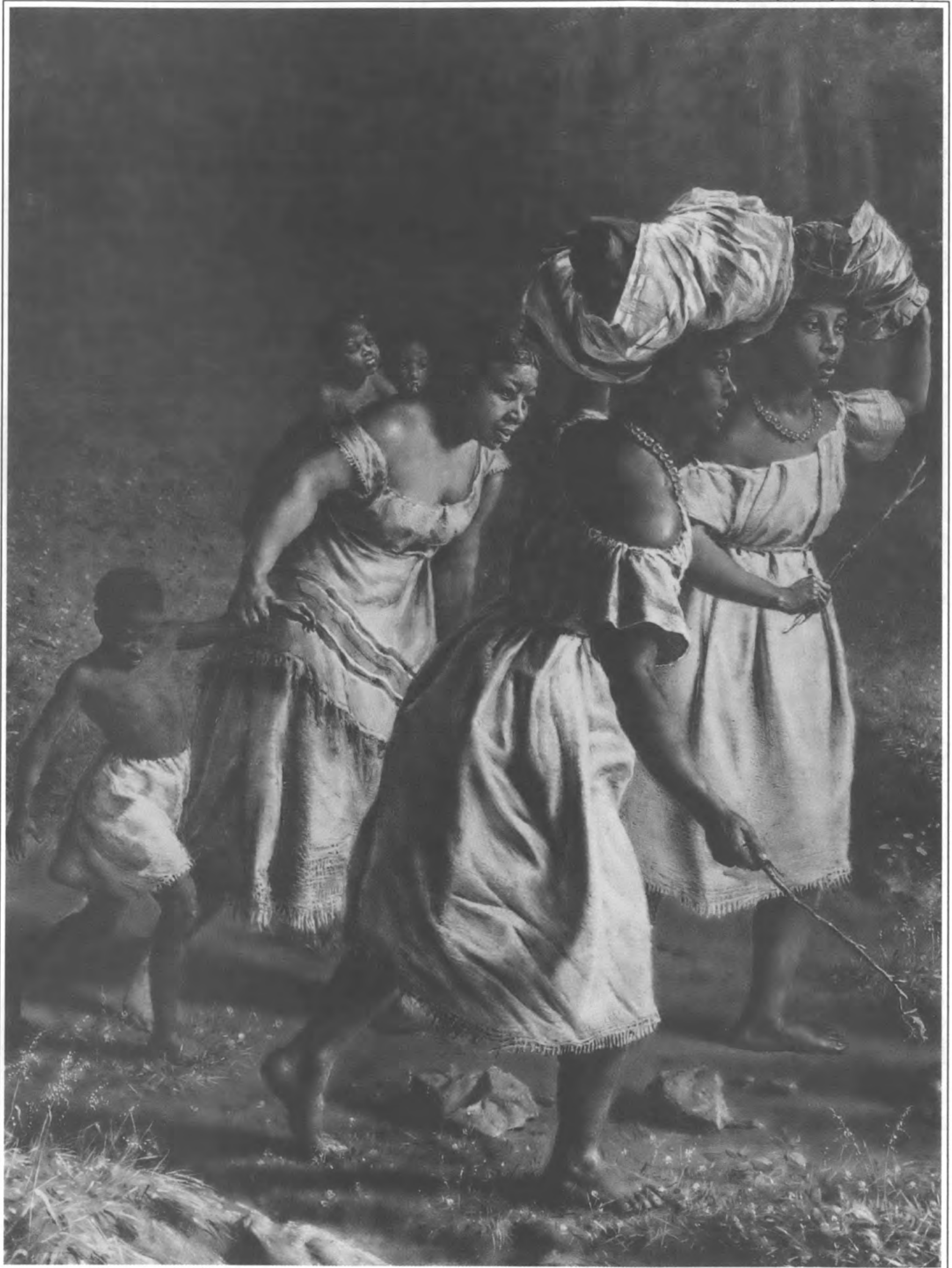
When the war ended in 1865, blacks who had built new homes, churches, and schools moved quickly to secure the fruits of their freedom. They had helped fight a war of liberation and preserve the Union, and they had won. A gathering of freed slaves in New Bern demanded full political rights and organized a statewide freedmen's convention — the first such meeting in the South.

With the common enemy defeated, however, Union leaders had other ideas. Federal troops disbanded freedmen's communities throughout coastal North Carolina and returned the land to its previous owners. The federal Freedmen's Bureau also urged blacks to return to their former plantations and work for wages.

Relations between the new citizens and the occupying forces deteriorated quickly. Residents of James City, a bustling town of approximately 2,000 freedmen located across the Trent River from New Bern, protested the eviction and refused to vacate their new homes. Insisting that their "promised land" was just payment for their contribution to the war effort, they waged a battle of rent strikes, legal suits, and confrontations with local and state militias. As late as 1895, they were still fighting.

It was a battle fought by black communities across the South. Blacks had come through the Civil War, the bloodiest and most painful conflict in the country's history. Millions had escaped from slavery, fought to save the country, and forged their own communities. Now they expected the promise of freedom to be fulfilled. ❑

David Cecelski, a native of coastal North Carolina, chairs the board of directors of the Institute for Southern Studies.


Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Erving and Joyce Wolf, 1982

Picturing Freedom

White images of blacks helped shape public opinion in the era of Emancipation.

By Karen C. C. Dalton

"There is no arguing with pictures," wrote Harriet Beecher Stowe as she began work on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. "Everybody is impressed with them, whether they mean to be or not."

In a society that had worked hard to repress troubling images of slavery, Stowe's novel proved explosive. Arriving at a time when the popular illustrated press was rapidly becoming a powerful new cultural force, it appeared in serial form before it became a book.

Stowe saw herself as a "painter" with words, seeking to hold up the "peculiar institution" before her readers "in the most lifelike and graphic manner possible." Even those who detested her message had to concede her success, when her fictional account of "Life Among the Lowly" sold an unprecedented 300,000 copies during 1852—the equivalent of 20 million copies today. The book's scenes of slave auctions, brutal punishments, and dramatic escapes, along with the piety of Uncle Tom, provided a storehouse of verbal pictures to inspire visual artists.

The success of her work—and the illustrations that accompanied it—also confirmed Stowe's belief in the power of pictures. Even before the struggle for black freedom in America erupted into open war, important battles were already being fought out in popular periodicals and elite academies of art. For the images that whites used to portray African-Americans were a matter of continuous debate and considerable consequence. They reflected—but also helped to shape—public opinion in the years just before and after Emancipation.

BAD FOR BUSINESS

An English artist named Eyre Crowe was reading Stowe's novel when he traveled through the South in 1853. In Richmond, Crowe visited the city's slave sale rooms and sketched a scene that he later developed into a painting entitled *Slaves Waiting for Sale—Richmond, Virginia*. Five neatly dressed women and three children of varying ages sit on a bench around a rusty stove. Separated from them is a muscular fieldhand hunched slightly forward with his jaw tight in anger and his fists clenched in a silent gesture of defiance. It is significant that a foreign painter would record this attitude of protest. American artists, reluctant to depict such a threat in their midst, shied away from depicting black men capable of reflection and revolt.

One American sculptor, John Rogers, learned early in his career that representing strong and sympathetic blacks could be bad for business. A few days before the attack by John Brown and several black men on the U.S. arsenal at Harper's Ferry in October 1859, Rogers had the idea for his *Slave Auction* group.

"The design is a man & his wife & two children who are standing before the desk of the auctioneer who is selling them," Rogers wrote. "The sentiments expressed are the maternal affection of the mother and the sullen resignation of the man while the auctioneer is expressive of heartless calculation."

When this group went on the market two weeks after the execution of John Brown, it was very well received by the abolitionist community. But, as Rogers himself remarked: "I find the times have quite headed me off, for the *Slave Auction* tells such a strong story that none of the stores will receive it to sell for fear of offending their Southern customers.... By taking a subject on which there is a divided opinion, of course, I lose half my customers."

Despite this financial setback, John Rogers, like Eyre Crowe, gave us a strong, capable American black man. In doing so, these artists contradicted the prevalent views both of abolitionists, who tended to see slaves as dependent on them for their liberation, and of the defenders of slavery, who maintained that blacks were essentially incapable of managing without their masters.

DAWN OF LIBERTY

While slave auctions provided one visual focus in the years after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared, attempts to escape from bondage provided another. The Scottish artist, John Adam Houston, painted *The Fugitive Slave* in 1853, and Englishman Richard Ansdell created a dramatic canvas, *Hunted Slaves*, in 1861. Thomas Moran, an English-born artist living in America, probably saw Ansdell's painting when he visited London in 1861; the following year he created his own treatment of the theme, entitled *The Slave Hunt*.

With the outbreak of war, opportunities for escape increased, and the camps of the Union Army became the destination for hundreds of desperate and courageous black Southerners. Engravings in *Harper's Weekly* frequently showed the flow of so-called "contrabands" to Union lines, and oil painters also took up the subject.

In Theodore Kaufmann's *On to Liberty*, a group of women and children, bathed in the light of a metaphorical dawn, are within sight of freedom. (Perhaps the expressions on the faces of the first frightened East European families rushing to the West during 1989 can help us begin to imagine the emotions connected to such scenes.) Having traveled all night with their few personal belongings balanced on their heads, these fugitives dare not rest until they reach the American flag waving in the distance. (See illustration, page 26.)

Such dawn scenes were often actual as well as symbolic, as Eastman Johnson learned near Manassas on March 2, 1862. Through the morning mist the artist witnessed a family of four, astride a horse, dashing toward freedom. He recaptured the moment in his dramatic painting *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves*. The glint of bayonets can be seen in the distance as Union soldiers advance into battle, a clear reminder of the sacrifices being made to bring about a new dawn of liberty.

For most of the South's African-Americans, escape from slavery was impossible. Hope for freedom lay in waiting and watching for the Stars and Stripes to arrive. Pockets of slaves near the coast, in the Sea Islands and elsewhere, welcomed liberation forces early in the war, but for most the wait seemed interminable.

The gifted New England painter Winslow Homer portrayed the tension of waiting in a little-known picture that shows a handsome black woman emerging from a cabin doorway. In the background Confederate soldiers, carrying the Stars and Bars, lead away unarmed Union captives. (This painting, lost for nearly a century, was shown on the cover of SE Vol. XII, No. 6.)

Scholars first called Homer's oil painting *At the Cabin Door*, but recent research has revealed the artist's more meaningful original title: *Near Andersonville*. The reference is to the Andersonville prison in southwest Georgia, the largest POW camp of the war, where some 45,000 Union soldiers were imprisoned under dismal conditions and 13,000 lost their lives. The face of Homer's woman is grave with concern; her hands anxiously grip her apron. Dipper gourds, the traditional emblem of freedom in the Afro-American community, grow beside her door, but their promise cannot be fulfilled as yet. For the moment her

Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Charles Stewart Smith, 1884

***THE CONTRABAND*, PAINTED BY THOMAS WATERMAN WOOD IN 1866, DEPICTS AN ESCAPED SLAVE READY TO VOLUNTEER AS...**

would-be liberators have been captured, and she must conceal her reactions or run the risk of putting her life in jeopardy.

An article in *Harper's* on September 30, 1865 makes clear just how dangerous it was for black Southerners to express their hopes over the long-awaited arrival of federal troops. The story tells of one Amy Spain in Darlington, South Carolina, who reacted to the arrival of Union soldiers by exclaiming: "Bless the Lord, the Yankees have come!" Unfortunately, the occupation was only temporary. When Sherman's cavalrymen departed, local whites in Darlington condemned Spain to death for her disloyalty to the Confederacy. According to the illustrated article, she was hanged "to a sycamore-tree standing in front of the courthouse, underneath which stood the block from which were monthly exhibited the slave chattels."

Amy Spain's fate could befall the woman depicted in *Near Andersonville* if she reveals her disappointment. Through this isolated, stoic figure, Homer communicates the anguish of waiting for liberty long delayed.

FROM SLAVE TO SOLDIER

From the very beginning of the war, black Southerners campaigned for the right to bear arms and participate as soldiers in the struggle for their own liberty. Both the Union and Confederate armies forbade blacks to fight in their ranks. By the summer of 1862, however, the North could no longer afford the luxury of such racism. In July Abraham Lincoln began the first draft of his historic Emancipation Proclamation which would free the slaves of disloyal masters and open the Northern armed services to Negroes. On September 22, President Lincoln announced his proclamation would be signed 100 days later, on New Year's Day 1863, applying to all states then still in rebellion.

Reaction to the Emancipation Proclamation was felt throughout the land and filled the illustrated press. On January 24, 1863, *Harper's* published a double-page engraving by the staunch abolitionist and pioneering political cartoonist, Thomas Nast. Calling his picture *Emancipation of the Negroes, January 1863—The Past and the Future*, Nast arrayed the past evils of slavery on the left, in contrast to the optimistic prospects of freedom on the right.

The next week *Harper's* presented Alfred Waud's *Contrabands Coming into Camp in Consequence of the Proclamation*. The following month the editors included a wood engraving of *The Effects of the Proclamation: Freed Negroes Coming into Our Lines at Newbern, North Carolina*. (See engravings, page 24.)

Even before Emancipation, Northern artists who visited the front could not help but be struck by the presence of Southern blacks arriving as refugees. The appearance of "contrabands" caused sharp debate within the Union high command, and the reactions of Yankee soldiers varied almost as much. When Winslow Homer created *A Bivouac Fire on the Potomac* for *Harper's* on December 21, 1861, he showed a former slave dancing to the tune of a black fiddler within a circle of curious white soldiers. The picture illustrated their first encounter with the distinctive music and movements of Southern black culture.

After an outpouring of public sympathy for the first wave of contrabands, the Union Army began to find these refugees to be burdensome, and they were put to work doing menial camp tasks such as cooking meals, washing clothes, polishing boots, hauling wood, herding livestock, driving wagons, and digging trenches. Though nominally free, their situation at first was not too different from that of the slaves in Confederate camps who were being forced to prepare food and build fortifications. But later, as war casualties mounted and the difficulty of recruiting

... ***THE RECRUIT***, **A PROUD SOLDIER WITH HIS EYES LIFTED TOWARD THE FUTURE.**

troops increased, these escaped slaves saw active service — first as scouts and pickets, then finally as armed soldiers — alongside newly enlisted blacks from the North.

The admission of black men as soldiers into the Union army provided a new subject for both the popular and the fine arts, offering not only topical material but also a metaphor for the dramatic transformations of the time. In its July 4, 1863 issue, *Harper's* published three portraits taken from photographs of a Negro named Gordon. The newspaper reported: "One of these portraits represents the man as he entered our lines ... chased as he had been for days and nights by his master with several neighbors and a pack of bloodhounds; another shows him as he underwent the surgical examination ... his back furrowed and scarred with the traces of a whipping administered on Christmas-day last; and the third represents him in United States uniform, bearing the musket and prepared for service."

A year later *Harper's* reproduced two more images, from photos of an unnamed man, entitled *The Escaped Slave* and *The Escaped Slave in the Union Army*. The editors did not hesitate to underscore their propagandistic purpose: "We present to our readers this week ... two sketches ... one, the picture of a negro slave, who fled from Montgomery, Alabama, to Chattanooga, for the purpose of enlisting in the army of the Union, the other a picture of this same negro, endowed for the first time with h is birth-right of freedom, and allowed the privilege dearer to him than any other — that of fighting for the nation which is hereafter pledged to protect him and his." The article went on to praise the heroism of black regiments under fire at Fort Wagner near Charleston, Olustee near Jacksonville, and the Crater near Petersburg.

This contrasting of past and present through the rapid transformation of a black soldier receives its fullest treatment in a series of three paintings by Thomas Waterman Wood, painted in 1866 and exhibited under the title, *A Bit of War History*. We see first *The Contraband* (page 28), an escaped slave arriving at the Provost Marshall's Office to volunteer for service. He holds his meager belongings in one hand while he tips his hat with the other and offers a timid but eager smile. In the second picture the runaway has been transformed into *The Recruit* (page 29), his plantation clothes replaced by a U.S. Army uniform and instead of his traveling stick, he shoulders a rifle. The man who had appeared somewhat hesitant and self-effacing as a contraband has become a proud soldier, his head and eyes lifted toward the future, his stride directed toward his duty.

In the final scene this same handsome man reappears as *The Veteran* (below). The leg he put forward as a recruit is now partially gone; his well-used gun rests against the wall behind him now, and he leans on crutches for support. With sadness in his eyes for what he has experienced, the Veteran returns home, saluting the country to which he has given such a full measure of service. African-Americans had proven their bravery as soldiers to skeptical whites.

IN *THE VETERAN*, THE SAME MAN PREPARES TO RETURN HOME, SALUTING THE COUNTRY HE HAS SERVED SO WELL.

Wood's paintings represent a public recognition of the critical role blacks had played both in defending the Union and in fighting for their own liberty as a people. They also underscore how the war and Emancipation transformed images of blacks in American art and the popular press. No longer do African-Americans appear as slaves struggling to escape bondage. By the end of the war, white images of blacks reflect national pride in their contributions — and confidence in their ability to participate fully as free citizens. ❑

Karen Dalton directs the Houston office of the Menil Foundation's Image of the Black in Western Art project. She is the co-author, with Peter Wood, of Winslow Homer's Images of Blacks: The Civil War and Reconstruction Years *(University of Texas Press), selected one of the Outstanding Academic Books of 1989 by Choice Magazine.*

"Who Wrote the History?"

John Hope Franklin has devoted his life to teaching the kind of Civil War history we never learned in school.

Interview by Eric Bates

John Hope Franklin is a neighbor of Southern Exposure. *He works just down the road at Duke University, where he is James B. Duke Professor Emeritus and Professor of Legal History at the law school.*

Franklin came to Duke to culminate a long and illustrious career. At age 75, he has chaired the history department at the University of Chicago, received more than 75 honorary degrees, and authored numerous books, including The Emancipation Proclamation *and* From Slavery to Freedom.

But Franklin has not limited his activities to the classroom. He participated in the historic civil rights march at Selma, Alabama in 1965, and has devoted much of his creativity to his impressive collection of orchids.

Perhaps most important, Franklin has served as father to an entire generation of African-American historians. Through his scholarly work and his enormous generosity as a colleague, he has helped bring a diversity of voices to the profession of history.

On a recent afternoon we met Franklin on campus and talked about his study of the Civil War.

***SE:** Tell us about your own experiences growing up. How did you first learn about the Civil War?*

JHF: I grew up in Oklahoma in a village near Honey Springs. There was a battle during the Civil War called the Battle of Honey Springs, and we used to walk down to the battlefield and pick up Indian arrowheads. I knew there had been a battle there but knew very little about it.

I suppose my first memory of the war is my father telling me, as a small boy, about how *his* father ran away and enlisted in the Civil War. That memory was later confirmed by documents regarding his efforts to get a pension.

My first real confrontation with the war was in college, when I decided to major in history. I began to look at the Civil War and the whole 19th century rather seriously, and I've been writing about that period ever since.

***SE:** It's easy to forget, now that archives are integrated, the kind of obstacles that black scholars ran into. What kind of barriers did you confront in trying to research the war?*

JHF: In North Carolina I ran into the first big obstacle. I was informed by the then-director of the state department of archives and history that I was not allowed to do research there. But he conceded that perhaps I did have a right to do it, so he said, "If you'll give me a few days, I'll make some arrangements."

This was a Monday, and he wanted a week. I just looked at him, because I was paying rent, and eating. He said, "Well, how about Thursday?"

I went back Thursday and they had

stripped a room in the museum part of the archives. They had pulled out all the display cases and put in a bare desk and a wastebasket, and that was my study room. It remained my study room for some four years.

When I went to Alabama, I was even afraid to go to the state archives. I thought it would be much worse than North Carolina. When I finally worked up enough courage to go in the summer of '45, I was working on a book on Southern militancy, which always appealed to people in archives because they thought I was singing the praises of the South's martial tradition — the Citadel and VMI.

I went in and told the woman in charge of the research room what I wanted. She brought me all the material and handed it to me. I just stood there, looking at her and looking around. By then, I was like Pavlov's dog — I was waiting for the signal.

Some white people were doing research in one section of the room, so I started to go to another part, just so I'd have a quiet place to do my work. But when I started toward that corner, the woman said, "You can't sit over there."

My reaction was, "Well why didn't you tell me I had to go to the basement in the first place!" But she said, "That's the hottest part of the room. The only cool place is over here with these other people, where the fan is. They need to meet you anyway." And she stopped everybody and introduced me. So I sat there at the same table with these white scholars, with the Confederate flag waving over the archives building.

I left there and went to Louisiana. I arrived in Baton Rouge the week World War II ended. There was a great celebration, and everything was closed. The archivist said I would not be allowed to do research there because they didn't allow blacks into the building to do anything except clean it.

Then he said, "I'll be up here this week catching up on some paperwork. If you want to do research, you can come then. I don't care." So the only reason I was able to do research there was the fact that the archives were closed to celebrate the great victory of democracy over totalitarianism.

Photo by Laura Drey

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN TAKES A BREAK FROM TEACHING WITH HIS ORCHIDS — ONE VARIETY OF WHICH WAS NAMED IN HIS HONOR.

***SE:** What are some of the connections between what's happening today in places like Selma and South Africa and what happened during the Civil War?*

JHF: The general American public needs to know so much more about the history of their country and the place of blacks in that history. There hasn't been a moment since 1619 that blacks have had an insignificant part. But people don't make that connection. People still say, "Well, if you don't like it here, go back where you came from," as though we weren't here when they got here! We've been here. And white people need to know that. They need to know that this state, this region, this nation was cleared, tilled, and developed by black hands as much as white hands, if not more so.

When blacks talk about the need to know our history, I say, "Listen: You don't have enough power to be the only one who needs to know your history. What you need is to put information in the hands of people who do have some power, so that the sharing of power can make more sense."

For example, they need to know that in the generation before the Civil War, enormous numbers of whites from Europe came here completely ignorant, many of them illiterate, with no under-

standing of the political process, of what democracy meant. Yet they weren't asked any questions — they were just given the vote. Meanwhile, blacks were being denied the vote. Even where free blacks could vote, the vote was being withdrawn. It was withdrawn in Tennessee in 1834, in North Carolina in 1835. We need to make these connections.

The same thing is true in South Africa. You would think that there was nothing in South Africa before white people arrived. But they didn't make that gold, they didn't make those diamonds. Indeed, they didn't mine those diamonds — blacks mined them. All whites did was to benefit from the toil of blacks. But they don't know enough of their own history, or they refuse to confront their history, to recognize how in any civilization the various ethnic, religious, and racial groups play a part in the development of that civilization.

> **In South Africa they refuse to confront their history, to recognize how in any civilization the various ethnic, religious, and racial groups play a part in the development of that civilization.**

***SE:** What about the Civil War? How did those four years shape the expectations of blacks like George Washington Williams, who ran away to fight at age 14?*

JHF: The war changed the expectations of an entire generation. During the war, blacks were discriminated against in pay. White privates got $13 a month; black privates got $10 a month – for doing the same thing. Black privates began to refuse to take the money; they laid down their arms and said, "You don't seem ready for us to fight. You need it more than we do. Keep it." Some were court-martialed, but they stuck to their guns. Some were shot, for refusing to take the pay.

This was a new kind of black emerging. Freedom for them meant freedom *and* equality.

At the end of the war, the former Confederate states thought they could settle down to live the way they had always lived — where no blacks were enfranchised, no blacks had anything. Whites came back to power and passed laws limiting very severely the movement of blacks, their work opportunities — disenfranchising them altogether.

Blacks reacted to this in a very clear, unequivocal, courageous fashion. In every Southern state, blacks held statewide conventions — they had two here in North Carolina. They drew up resolutions, protested, and reminded the nation of what they had done. In Tennessee, the Nashville Convention of Colored Men drew up a resolution saying, "We want the ballot. We believe that surely if men return from the war after years of fighting for the country, at least they should be given the ballot." Blacks knew exactly what the score was — what they were entitled to and what they were not getting. They were quite articulate.

***SE:** When Sherman marched into Charleston, there was tremendous celebration. For blacks, the war meant liberation. Yet the popular mythology is that the South was destroyed by the war, laid waste. How do we reconcile these two different memories?*

JHF: Quite true — but hardly surprising. After all, who wrote the history of that period? It is important to remember that former Confederates had nothing but memories, which they cherished and wept about and exaggerated. They wrote a lot of articles like "The South: The Land We Love" — stories of the war and heroism. They left out the great celebrations in the streets, the rejoicing by blacks when they won their freedom.

They also left out the fact that the demobilization of the Union Army was very, very rapid. They said, "We were occupied, we were trampled on." In fact, a million men were mustered out within less than a year. There were very few soldiers left — certainly not enough to maintain anything like occupation. By 1866 the best that the United States government could do was to man the regular military installations in the South like Fort Sumter. Soldiers were not striding in the streets.

There were more blacks in the army at the end, and the Confederates interpreted that as a deliberate effort to humiliate them. It wasn't that at all. Blacks simply weren't mustered out as rapidly because they didn't have anywhere to go, the way the whites did.

Meanwhile, the former Confederate licked his wounds and looked back on his glorious memories. So the North began to say, "Well, if this is what makes you happy, we'll let you write it the way you want. Just let us come down and manufacture these textiles and make these cigarettes. Making money is what makes *us* happy. We don't care what you do with your Negroes and your memories."

That's the kind of sentiment you had after the war. And that's the way this history was distorted — almost primitively so. It got into movies like *The Birth of a Nation* and became popular and respectable.

***SE:** When talk turns to the Civil War, the emphasis often seems to be on the word "civil." People seem to forget that it was a* war, *an incredibly bloody war full of terrible carnage.*

JHF: It was very, very bloody. I have no doubt that the carnage was a great trauma for the participants on both sides. This is one of the reasons why the vanquished side, suffering as it did, tended to live in the past. They felt that the past was about all they had.

This also explains the continuing fascination with the war. It was so bloody and fratricidal. There has never been anything like it, before or since. It's the only real war, real fighting we've had in this country — except for the Revolution, and that was not really on the scale of the Civil War.

The fascination with the war is unbelievable. Look at the Civil War Round Tables all over the United States. What else except the Civil War would

make a lawyer and a doctor and a merchant close their businesses to go study something like the Gettysburg battlefield? They do it all the time. I can't understand it — there are carloads, trainloads, busloads of people who go and walk on the battlefields.

I was in Gettysburg once to read the Gettysburg Address along with Ed Morgan, a friend of mine from graduate school who is now Sterling Professor of History at Yale. Neither Ed nor I knows very much about the intricacies of the Civil War battles. Yet there we were on these buses, surrounded by Round Table people from all over the United States.

This particular year, we were following Lee's retreat to the Potomac, which didn't mean a thing to me. We would ride the bus for maybe half a mile, and we'd get out, and the military historian from Gettysburg would explain the action at that point. It was raining, and we would slush through the mud to watch him point out that this particular battalion was here, this regiment was there.

Someone asked him, "Where was the Seventh Iowa Regiment at that time?" The historian pointed and said, "Over by that tree," just as casually as if he were pointing to that book on the table. Ed Morgan looked at me, and I looked at him, and he said, "What are we doing here?" Unbelievable, it's unbelievable.

You don't have a similar reaction in Europe, for example. In my travels through Europe, I've never heard anybody say, "Would you like to go to see the Ardennes?" Of course, this country has more than its share of admiration for all things military. After all, what's the most powerful lobby in the United States? Probably the National Rifle Association. There is this great fascination with arms and everything that relates to arms.

SE: Let's talk for a moment about the tensions among Confederate whites during the war. We are always told that Southern whites rose as one to fight the Yankee invaders. Is that true?

JHF: No. There were many tensions among Southern whites. Many Southerners went North to school, to travel, to go shopping, and they frequently married Northerners. Northerners like the Brown Brothers banking firm had businesses in the South and owned property in the South. Many business people in New York were very much opposed to the war because of their economic interests.

When the war came, despite the fact that you had what I would call an "absence of free speech" in the South, there were those in every community who were opposed to the war. They couldn't oppose it openly, because it was not the healthy thing to do, but there was opposition. You see it in the books, in the secession conventions and so forth. I think there was much more than was openly expressed.

This residue of opposition lingered. Things that looked so romantic in the spring of 1861 ceased to be romantic as the war progressed. You began to run out of supplies. Those lovely boots which your servant polished for you in '61 began to wear out in '62. Your whole perspective about the war began to change.

Women also had serious questions about their husbands going off to fight in some other part of the country. They felt deserted by their men, and they wrote marvelous letters. Imagine being on the front and getting a letter from your wife or your sister that says, "What are you doing there when we're in danger here? Why do you go to Virginia to fight and leave us exposed here in Alabama? The Yankees could reach us any day." That would really make you stop and think. That helps explain desertion in the Confederate Army.

The Confederacy was also torn by the same states' rights theory that Southern states developed in arguing against the North before the war. Southern states were just as anti-central government in 1862 as they were in the 1850s. It didn't make any difference to them whether it was Washington or Richmond — they didn't like it, and they fought it. Leaders like Governor Brown of Georgia told the Confederacy, "You can't impose this on us! I'm not sending you anything." So the states' rights sentiment helped undo the South during the Civil War.

SE: But states' rights is always presented as the factor that united poor white farmers and rich white planters.

JHF: Farmers resented the fact that planters could receive an exemption from fighting if they had a plantation of a certain size or were responsible for a certain number of slaves. Now that's sort of strange. After all, a sensitive Southern gentleman shouldn't have to be persuaded to go to war to fight for his honor — yet here they were hiding behind exemptions.

Gradually, you began to hear that phrase, "rich man's war and a poor man's fight." There was a strain between classes of white people in the South. The workers, the landless or small farmers felt they were doing more than their share, and that strain contributed to desertion and all kinds of morale problems in the Confederate forces.

What's the most powerful lobby in the United States? Probably the National Rifle Association. There is this great fascination with arms and everything that relates to arms.

SE: Is there any possibility of "reconstructing" the past so that Southern whites can realize that there was a loyal opposition to the war — that there is an alternative history, if you will?

JHF: It's an interesting proposition. The history has been so distorted that it would take some doing. There are books which touch on this, but I don't think they do what you're suggesting — reversing the whole perspective and looking at the war from the point of view of the opposition. I don't think that's ever been done fully and adequately. It would be a great challenge. I don't know who would do it. But it can be done. ❑

Eric Bates is managing editor of Southern Exposure.

Look Away

Whites see pride, blacks see shame. Why are Southerners still fighting over the Confederate flag?

By Eric Bates

DURHAM, N.C. — It's been two years since Alesia Keith wore the Confederate flag to school, and she's still trying to get her job back.

Keith wore a flag handkerchief in her back pocket as she picked up junior high students along her school bus route the morning of March 11, 1988. Some of the kids had declared the day "Southern Pride Day," and Keith wanted to show her support.

But when she pulled up in front of Chewning Junior High, "all hell done broke loose." School officials promptly fired Keith and two other drivers and suspended 14 students. By noon, dozens of angry parents had descended on the school. More than 20 sheriff's deputies and state troopers were called to disperse the crowd.

"You would have thought we walked in there with bazookas," laughs Keith, a 23-year-old white woman. "I've never in my life seen so many law enforcement officials. And over what? A Confederate flag!"

Keith, who is suing the school board to get her job back, insists that the flag has nothing to do with racism. "It's about heritage, not hate," she says. "I wear it to show my pride in the South. I'm from the South, and I'm going to wear my Confederate flag, like it or not."

Alvin Holmes doesn't like it. On the same day Keith wore the flag to work in North Carolina, Holmes and 11 other black state legislators from Alabama faced criminal charges for trying to take down the Confederate flag that flies above the capitol dome in Montgomery.

"We had a ladder, and we tried to go over the fence and go up there and get it," recalls Holmes. "I was just about half way over when they caught me by the legs and pulled me down and told me I was under arrest."

Holmes and his fellow lawmakers were fined $100 each. They sued the state to remove the flag, but lost. "We feel it represents slavery and opposition to black people," Holmes says. "It was the battle flag of the Confederate states that fought to hold black people in slavery. To fly the Confederate flag on top of the state capitol in Montgomery, Alabama is similar to flying the Nazi flag over the Knesset in Israel."

To Holmes, the flag is more than a piece of cloth. "Every day we go to the capitol we have to look at a flag that held our foreparents in slavery. We are fighting discrimination in jobs, in bank loans, in housing, and we are fighting the Confederate flag, too. Alabama does not need old symbols that represent hate."

A white Southerner fights to display the Confederate flag, and a black Southerner fights to take it down. One speaks of pride, the other of shame, but both feel strongly enough to resort to civil disobedience to make their point.

Such battles are as old as the flag itself. When Virginia seceded from the Union in 1861, President Lincoln sent troops to occupy Alexandria. Upon entering the city, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth of New York climbed the roof of the Marshall House hotel to remove the Confederate banner — and the enraged innkeeper, James Jackson, shot him down. Ellsworth became the first Union casualty of the Civil War.

Today, 125 years after Appomattox, the Confederate battle flag remains the most pervasive and powerful of Southern

images. It is still at the center of a civil war, but this time the battles are being fought over T-shirts and license plates and baseball caps and beach towels and Klan rallies.

To many people, the flag has come to represent the worst of the South — a snarling, vicious bigotry that permeates public policy and denies blacks their full rights as human beings. Every time the flag is flown it raises haunting images of slavery and cross burnings, adding to a climate of fear and intimidation that reminds black Southerners of the all-too-real limits of their freedom.

But the flag has also been embraced by another group of Southerners — working-class whites like Keith — for whom it symbolizes nothing more complicated than home and hospitality. Many are people with little education who work two or three jobs just to make ends meet, and they cling to the flag with a fierce pride in who they are and what they have achieved. They are not bigots. Like most of us, they are simply divorced from their own history, surrounded by stereotypes that make it impossible to move beyond the lingering legacy of the Civil War.

Nikki Parkstone was 14 years old when she wore the Confederate flag to school.

"It started out at lunch one day," she recalls. "We was just starting to get into civil rights in civics, and our teacher told us about those students expelled for wearing black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam War. To me, it sounded like the controversy over the Confederate flag. Nobody had said we couldn't wear it, but everybody was afraid to."

So Nikki and some friends held a "Southern Pride Day" at Chewning Junior High. Nikki sewed the flag on her jacket, and her sister Patti tied it around her leg. Both were suspended — and both successfully sued the school board to have their records cleared.

"It just meant that I'm from the South, and I'm proud to be from here," Patti says. "It means Southern pride. Basically it means the Civil War to me — that we will fight. Even though we didn't win the war, that we will fight."

What did her ancestors fight for? "Their rights — their usual way of life. From what I've learned, the North wanted to overcome the South and make the laws, but the South wanted to make its own nation. It wasn't right. I'd never have a slave. But that was the way they lived, and they just couldn't imagine not having them. I can understand that. If I'm born into a home, I don't want it taken away from me by another part of the nation."

Nikki nodded. "I think it's kind of special to claim to be a Southerner. I'm not saying we're better than anyone else — we have our good points and our bad points. I just think Southern people are more polite — you know, hospitality. You think of going to New York, the Bronx, you think of getting mugged. What's the worst that's going to happen to you in the South? Goin' catfishin'?"

She shrugged. "The flag can mean pride to some people, I guess, and hate to others. I guess our pride in that flag can be as strong as some people's hate."

Carla Guy was also suspended for wearing the flag to school, and her mother Jean was one of the bus drivers fired. They sat on the couch in their mobile home, Carla in a Yale t-shirt, Jean in bunny slippers, a Confederate flag flying on the pole out front.

"Blacks think the flag means slavery, but it doesn't mean that to me," Carla says. "I just thought since I was born in the South, it was OK for me to wear the flag. I'm proud to be here, and the flag represents the South."

What makes the South special? "Well, for one thing, we cook fried chicken, grits and gravy," says Jean.

Carla nods. "The way we talk, I guess. Really, it all goes back to wars and things like that. To Robert E. Lee. Of course, I'm not really proud of the things he done, but he represented the South. I'm proud, but I guess he surrendered because he thought it was the best thing to do. We learned about the Civil War in the eighth grade, but I can't remember why it was fought. I think it was to free the slaves, wasn't it?"

Jean retrieves a tattered nylon flag from the closet. "I always had them since I was like a teenager," she explains. "My sister has one in her front yard, too. I've always had the Confederate flag license tag on my car. That's just us."

Jean's eldest daughter, Alesia Keith, sat in her lawyer's office with Kenneth White, the third bus driver fired for wearing the Confederate flag. White is a close friend of hers. He is also black.

"You just don't go telling people they can't wear their Confederate flags," says Keith. "People been wearing them since before I was born. I buy them for my children. I've had them since I was wee-little. My momma would give it to me and say, 'You're going to wear it,' and that was that."

White laughs. "Jean gave me a cap with a Confederate flag patch on it, and I wore it. So she must be the Klan leader."

Keith nods, deadly serious. "Oh yeah, she's a regular Grand Dragon. We keep our sheets starched."

"To me, the flag don't mean racism," says White, 21. "This is a new day, and we're just trying to get along. Bringing up the past don't help none. You gotta take it like it comes. One day we will overcome — when we get rid of all these old people who keep bringing it up."

"You have racism anywhere you go," adds Keith. "You don't have to be a member of the Klan to be a racist pig, and you don't have to live down South to be a racist.

"More than 5,000 soldiers (made especially for Confederama in South Africa) show where armies moved as guns flash in battle and cannon puff out real smoke..."

Brochure touts tourist attraction at foot of Lookout Mountain in Tennessee.

What about the American flag? What do you think all the Japanese people who live here think when they see the American flag? This is their home, and this is my home. To me, the South is everybody I know, everybody I deal with on a day-to-day basis. I think Ken and I are the best example of how you can get along, no matter what color you are."

Eugene Eder has been making flags for 40 years in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. The family firm, Eder Flag, sells $10 million worth of Confederate flags every year. They range in price from $10.10 for tiny indoor flags to $394 for giant outdoor models.

"The past four or five years it's probably sold better than ever," Eder says. "My own feeling is that it's probably a form of rebellion — a backlash against blacks. That's what I think. Some Southern states want to do away with the Confederate symbol, and some people want to rebel against that.

"It does bother me, but I'm a purveyor of flags," he says. "I suppose if you were completely honest you wouldn't sell it. I refuse to sell the Nazi flag and the Japanese flag — flags where heinous crimes were committed. But the Confederate flag has such popular acceptance. A lot of people use it without any racial connotations. It was the flag of the Confederacy, after all."

Claude Hayne has no such qualms. Sitting in his office at the National Capital Flag Company in Alexandria, Virginia, not far from where Colonel Ellsworth met his untimely end, Hayne sips his morning coffee and checks the latest sales records. He has sold only three Confederate flags in the past month.

"It doesn't bother me to sell it," Hayne says. "The media has used the racial issue to stir up trouble for a long time. They go overboard saying the Civil War was about slavery. That damn war ended 100 years ago, and it seems to me the media ought to let us forget it. I know Sons of Confederate Veterans who are red, white and blue USA through and through. They don't want to turn the clock back 100-and-some years. And I certainly don't, either."

State Representative John Buskey was one of the Alabama lawmakers arrested for trying to take down the Confederate flag. "We all thought it was just a travesty having it flying over the state capitol," he says. "It gives the state a negative image. It says that blacks are still second-class citizens."

Buskey acknowledges that "there probably are some people who don't see the flag as racist, but I don't think they understand the significance of the flag. To us, it's a symbol of racism. They used it during the Civil War, and it is a part of history. Now we ought to put it where it belongs — in a museum."

Lillian Jackson, president of the Montgomery NAACP, agrees. "The Confederate flag has a place in American history — a place you cannot erase — but it has no place over the seat of government. You cannot say you support the flag of a war that was fought to enslave people and then say you are against slavery. That doesn't make sense."

It doesn't make sense — yet many well-meaning white folks raise the flag every morning without giving slavery a moment's thought. Never mind that the Confederate flag represented a land that enslaved four million Southerners. To them, the flag means good manners and noble ancestors and a determination to fight for your family. Like a child with a bad report card, they proudly present their "A" for appearance and hope no one will notice their "F" in history.

"I don't think the average ninth grader knows what the Civil War was fought over," says Nikki Parkstone, who dropped out of school and got married the year after the flag controversy. "Somebody has got to tell them. If they learn it in a prejudiced way, then that's the adults' fault. The adults only have themselves to blame." ❑

Photo by John Spink/Atlanta Constitution

THE CONFEDERATE FLAG SENDS A MESSAGE OF HATE AND INTIMIDATION — BUT MANY SOUTHERN WHITES SAY THEY ONLY SEE PRIDE.

Eric Bates is managing editor of Southern Exposure.

"A Big, Big Day"

Winchester still celebrates Confederate Memorial Day—but townspeople disagree about what it means.

By Tim Thornton

WINCHESTER, VA.—It's a fairly simple ceremony. A crowd assembles in Stonewall Cemetery, where each of the more than 3,000 graves has been adorned with a small Confederate battle flag. There is a prayer, a speech from a visiting dignitary, some songs from a high school choir, and a volley of gunfire from men wearing Confederate uniforms. Then there is another prayer and everyone goes home.

Confederate Memorial Day has been observed here without fail every year since 1866, but some of the older residents in town say the ceremony just isn't the extravaganza it used to be.

Stewart Bell, a former mayor of Winchester, is old enough to have had an uncle who died in the Civil War. He has been a regular at the Sixth of June observance since 1914. To him, the 120 or so people who attend the service nowadays are "a rather pitiful little crowd." He remembers when Confederate veterans, Masons, marching bands, and local fire companies paraded through a downtown covered in Confederate battle flags and into Stonewall Cemetery.

"In town the shops mostly closed, at least during the morning," Bell recalls. "And the crowd gathered. Country people came in. It was a big, big day. I mean the streets were *lined*. It was just a day of celebration."

MILES AROUND

It's not unusual for former Confederate states to have a memorial day for Confederate soldiers, but the Sixth of June is Confederate Memorial Day only in Winchester. The rest of Virginia and most other Southern states honor their Confederate dead on the last Monday in May, the same day as the federal Memorial Day. But in Winchester, Confederate Memorial Day is June 6—the day Brigadier General Turner Ashby died fighting for the Confederacy.

Ashby was a fierce-looking man with a long, full beard who carried himself with a martial bearing long before he joined the Confederate army. When John Brown raided Harper's Ferry—about 30 miles from Winchester—Ashby formed a mounted unit and dashed off to defend the federal arsenal. When Virginia joined the Confederacy, Ashby and his men became part of the 7th Virginia Cavalry, and Ashby became a lieutenant colonel.

"Despite the briefness of his career as a soldier, no Southern horseman is a more picturesque character than Turner Ashby," writes Frederick Mortin, a local historian. "Had he lived through the war, he would probably have become one of the best-known leaders of the Confederate cavalry."

But neither Ashby nor his brother, Captain Richard Ashby, lived through the war. On October 25, 1866, their bodies were reburied in Stonewall Cemetery next to the grave of George S. Patton, grandfather of the World War II general.

The crowd that came for the reburial filled the cemetery grounds and hotels for miles around. Every year since then, the anniversary of Turner Ashby's death in 1862 has been Confederate Memorial Day in Winchester.

"STILL VALID"

"I was about 12 before I realized Memorial Day was not the Sixth of June," says Susan Whitacre, a Winchester native. "The Sixth of June was when we put flowers on the graves of the family. We thought of Memorial Day as the Sixth of June. We forgot the other one."

Whitacre, a pharmacist and 40-year-old mother of two, is a member of the local historical and preservation societies. She is also president of the Turner Ashby Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

She joined the Daughters, Whitacre says, because "I think history is important. I think our heritage is important. I'm proud to be a Virginian and I think a lot of the things the people fought for are still valid today. States rights was one of the important things in the war — the main reason it was fought — and I think states rights is important."

The annual Sixth of June observance, Whitacre says, is a way of "honoring your family or your ancestors."

Bell describes the event as "a memorial to the men and women who suffered ... admiration of them as people.

"The central thought as I grew up was these were great people," he says. "They had fought in defense of their country because it was invaded. I think of it as I do all this history: maintaining the identity of the community."

WHOSE IDENTITY?

But not everyone in Winchester agrees about what kind of identity the community should maintain. Blane Medley, a 19-year-old native of the area, takes issue — gently — with the talk about honoring the defenders of states rights. States rights, he believes, is "a euphemism for slavery."

"Slavery is one of the black marks on American history," he says. "To have to deal with that, to raise that issue again, is not always what they want to do. To talk about it is not always what they want to do. It's not a pleasant thing to remember."

The young man has a somewhat different perspective on the issue than Bell and Whitacre. Medley, who is black, twice performed at the Memorial Day ceremony as a member of the James Wood High School Choir.

"In some senses it was just another concert," he says. "Looking back and thinking about the service itself, the thought came to my mind that we're finally over that period. We remember it, but we're not in it. Sometimes it's good for us to look back and reflect."

Medley believes that because the men in Stonewall Cemetery fought and died for a cause — even if it was a misguided one — they deserve respect. "I think that's something you have to respect in anyone," he says.

He thinks his great-grandmother, who was born a slave, would understand: "I didn't think that my great-grandmother would roll over in her grave if I were to perform at the memorial service."

YANKEES GO HOME

Bell and others who support the service say it is intended to honor those who died fighting for the Confederacy, not to preserve some notion of white supremacy.

"It's not associated at all with 'the Confederate flag flies again' and all that," he says. "It just irks me to see the Confederate flag used in that sort of significance."

Medley agrees. The people who attend the ceremony, he believes, are "Civil War buffs" or people who have family buried among the Confederates.

Photo by W.G. Gregg

SUSAN WHITACRE, LOCAL PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED DAUGHTERS OF THE CONFEDERACY, DECORATES THE GRAVES AT STONEWALL CEMETERY.

"You don't find a lot of Civil War advocates," Medley says. "Those kinds of people don't show up at these ceremonies. They're not interested in it."

If the bitter resentment left over from the Civil War seems somewhat muted in Winchester, it may be because the memories of the war and its meaning have faded with the passing generations. Bell tells of a conversation that took place between his wife and a friend of his son years ago. As they drove down the lane that separates Stonewall Cemetery from Winchester's National Cemetery, Mrs. Bell tried, as parents will, to turn the drive into an educational experience.

She explained that Winchester was the site of several major Civil War battles and that many Confederate soldiers were buried in Stonewall, and many Yankees were buried across the lane.

"I hate the Yankees," one of her young passengers said.

Mrs. Bell told the boys that no one should hate Yankees. The war was over a long time ago, she explained, and the North and South have long been reunited into a single nation.

"I hate the Yankees," the boy repeated. "I like the Red Sox." ❑

Tim Thornton is an editor at the Winchester Star.

A Concrete Symbol

Lacking a glorious Confederate heritage, wealthy whites in New Orleans rewrote history to suit their political needs.

By Lawrence Powell

New Orleans, La. — For nearly a century the gray granite monument stood on Canal Street, its 20-foot obelisk rising from the middle of the main downtown thoroughfare. Throngs of tourists and office workers bustled past it each year, but few paused to read its modest inscription commemorating the Battle of Liberty Place and the "white supremacy" that "gave us our state."

But each September 14, on the anniversary of the battle, the monument became the rallying point for white supremacists in this black-majority city. State Representative David Duke, former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, once marched around the monument shouting "white power" and "all the way with the KKK."

Today street improvements have temporarily exiled the monument to suburban storage, but the battle over its fate is far from settled. The city reportedly plans to relocate the monument a few blocks away to ease the traffic flow along Canal Street, but the compromise has satisfied no one. The NAACP wants the monument permanently removed, while Duke and historic preservationists say they will fight to keep it near the riverfront.

Why has a simple monument sparked such a heated debate? The answer dates back to the Civil War, when white elites in New Orleans began to rewrite history to suit their political needs. Over the past century, they have fostered a mythology about the Battle of Liberty Place that has shaped social action and buttressed a climate of white supremacy that the city is still struggling to escape. The current battle over the monument involves not simply competing conceptions of the past, but conflicting visions of the present and future.

A GENTLEMAN MOB

New Orleans doesn't have a deep Confederate tradition. True, it sent soldiers and munitions to the Southern armies. Confederate veterans used to hold their reunions here, and a towering statue of Robert E. Lee, commanding a traffic circle in the heart of the city, was one of the first important Confederate monuments erected in the post-Civil War South.

But New Orleans, with its large immigrant population and substantial Northern-born business community, was a divided city during the war. The riverborne commerce of the Midwest tied the city's economy firmly to the Union. Indeed, New Orleans was only in the Confederacy for 15 months. After a federal flotilla ran the downriver batteries and entered the city in May 1862, Union generals governed the city and surrounding parishes — often with the active support of local residents.

Lacking a glorious Confederate tradition to call their own, influential whites in New Orleans had to look elsewhere for a history that would justify their attempts to dominate blacks. They turned to a bloody white uprising called the Battle of Liberty Place, which took place on September 14, 1874 at the foot of Canal Street along the riverfront.

The battle grew out of a disputed state election in 1872. Democrats used fraud to win the election, and Republicans — backed by the Grant administration in Washington — used their control of the election board to win it back. The following year, Republican leaders experimented with a biracial plan called the "Unification Movement" that envisioned splitting political offices evenly between blacks and whites.

The movement failed to take hold, but it shook the city's Southern-born and ex-Confederate element. In response, a group of upper-class Democrats who belonged to exclusive male social clubs like Pickwick and the Boston Club organized a military arm of the party known as the White League.

The goal of the White League was to unify the city's upper classes behind a standard of violent resistance that enshrined the ideal of white supremacy. The League platform, adopted in the summer of 1874, dripped with racist rhetoric: "Having solely in view the maintenance of our hereditary civilization and Christianity menaced by a stupid Africanization, we appeal to the men of our race ... to unite with us against that supreme danger ... in an earnest effort to re-establish a white man's government in the city and the State."

According to the manifesto, the white men of Louisiana had a right to resume "that just and legitimate superiority in the administration of our State affairs to which we are entitled by superior responsibility, superior numbers, and superior intelligence."

On September 14 the White League attempted a *coup d'etat*. Approximately 8,400 members led by Fred Ogden attacked state militia and police under the command of James Longstreet, a former Civil War major general under Robert E. Lee.

It wasn't much of a battle, and its political results were dubious. There were only about 30 fatalities on both sides, two of whom were bystanders who had thronged the sidewalks and balconies to watch the 15-minute skirmish. The White League won, but federal troops restored the Republican governor a few days later. It was not until the end of federal Reconstruction in 1877 that the white elite of New Orleans finally regained political control of the city.

Nevertheless, the tradition surrounding the battle came to embody the familiar nostalgia of the "Lost Cause" myth. Upper-class whites immediately began to manipulate the memory of the battle to extol social solidarity. At a celebration marking the first anniversary of the battle, one White League leader stated proudly: "If the White League is a 'mob,' it is at worst a mob of gentlemen."

A MODERATE LYNCHING

From 1877 until 1882, the anniversary day was marked by a solemn pilgrimage to the gravesites of the White League dead. Units of the state militia retraced the route of the soldiers of '74 and ended up near the river for a 21-gun salute. Many businesses closed early for the celebration, and crowds surged through streets festooned with banners and bunting.

Soon, though, the memory of the battle dimmed. Rich citizens did not return from their summer vacations in the North in time to attend the ceremony, and the crowds dwindled. Almost from the beginning "September Fourteenth" was a waning tradition.

It took a social crisis to revive the spirit of gentlemen mobs. In March 1891, a jury acquitted 11 Sicilians accused in the Mafia slaying of the police chief a year earlier. Several Liberty Place veterans called for a mass meeting, and on March 14 a huge crowd gathered at a statue on Canal Street.

"Not since the 14th day of September 1874 have we seen such a determined looking set of men assembled around this statue," proclaimed one White League descendant. "Then you assembled to assert your manhood. I want to know whether or not you will assert your manhood on the 14th day of March."

To cries of "shoot them," the respectable crowd vindicated its virility by marching on the city jail and lynching the prisoners. City newspapers congratulated the organizers for their "marvel of moderation."

The riots gave a much-needed boost to the "September Fourteenth Monument Association," which had been struggling for years to raise enough money to erect a monument at Liberty Place. At the anniversary celebration that September it was finally able to lay the foundation. Now the white elite of New Orleans had a concrete symbol around which to rally.

Engraving from Harper's Weekly

Members of the White League attacked state militia on Canal Street in what became known as the Battle of Liberty Place.

THOSE HEROIC DAYS

In the early years, those commemorating the Battle of Liberty Place kept their rhetoric of white supremacy somewhat muted, perhaps fearing federal intervention if things got out of hand. Instead, they talked about "good government" and "home rule" — by which they clearly meant the right of white men to dominate blacks without federal interference.

It wasn't until wealthy whites succeeded in disenfranchising many black and poor white voters at a constitutional convention in 1898 that they felt safe enough to drop the pretense. "We are gathered together," announced the convention president, a former White Leaguer, "to eliminate from the electorate the mass of corrupt and illiterate voters

who during the last quarter of a century degraded our politics."

As the actual events of the battle receded further from living memory the legend of Liberty Place took on almost mythological proportions. Reconstruction was an oppressive military dictatorship. "Negro domination" imposed by a Northern-controlled Congress bled the state financially. Finally, the poor people of New Orleans grew so horrified by the "negro heels on white necks" that they rose *en masse* and overthrew the despotism of an alien race and their white bosses.

Where other Southern towns and cities could celebrate Confederate battlefield valor, upper-class whites in New Orleans found it deeply satisfying to concoct a history in which their brave young men actually won the peace — and this on the ground where early in the Civil War the city fathers had been forced to surrender. The Fourteenth of September was their tradition, and they were proud of it. Fathers passed it down to children through dramatic re-tellings of those heroic days.

Hilda Phelps Hammond, a blue-blood, recalled her father's oft-told tale of "how New Orleans boiled like a kettle under insults and indignities, of how the heroic White League was formed by those citizens who decided that life without liberty was no life at all, of the flaming posters appealing to merchants to close their stores and fight for freedom." He always concluded by reading, in a firm voice, General Ogden's victory statement.

But as the mythologizing became more unreal and the white supremacy more strident, the commemoration observations died down. After 1900, the ceremony consisted of a few Daughters of the Confederacy visiting the White League gravesites. The 30th anniversary services at the monument passed practically unnoticed.

BY THE SWORD

Once again it took a perceived threat to uptown white elites to revitalize the legend of Liberty Place. This time, the threat was supplied by Huey Long, who was distributing public benefits equally to poor blacks and whites.

Upper-class citizens of New Orleans were frightened by Long and his radical programs. Sensing an eventual showdown with the Kingfish, they almost instinctively rallied around the Liberty Place Monument.

In 1932, the city added an inscription to the monument's base, etching in granite what could only be whispered when the obelisk first went up: "United States troops took over the state government and reinstated the usurpers but the national election of November 1876 recognized white supremacy and gave us our state."

When the showdown between Long and the conservative New Orleans machine came in 1934, it had all the characteristics of an old-fashioned Liberty Place shootout. Determined to elect his own candidates in city elections that September, Senator Long had his puppet governor declare "partial martial law" in the city and send state guardsmen to capture the voter registration office.

Mayor T. Semmes Walmsley, whose forebears had fought at Liberty Place, deputized 400 special policemen and armed them with powerful weapons, including Gatling guns. There was a wildness in the air. Hodding Carter, who was then publishing a paper in Hammond, wrote that only the use of "ancient methods" would curb Longism, and he hoped to God that "Louisiana men awake to these wrongs and to the sole remaining method of righting them."

The 60th anniversary celebration of Liberty Place that year was invaded by the spirit of armed resistance. The keynote speech, broadcast over the radio, closed with the orator observing that the spirits of the heroes of 1874 were peering down from above "to find out if their sacrifice has not been made in vain, if we love liberty as dearly as they did." The published version of the address boldly announced, *"SO WE FINALLY FOREVER RE-ESTABLISHED WHITE SUPREMACY IN THE SOUTHERN STATES."*

The armed violence of '74 never broke out. The city election passed with only minor scuffles at a few polling places, and the Long candidates won easily. The troops were withdrawn. The tradition of the gentleman mob, it seemed, had died completely.

But a year later Long was also dead, assassinated by a socially prominent physician with ties to New Orleans. Hilda Phelps Hammond, who had learned the White League legend at her father's knee, exulted that "he who lives by the sword perishes by the sword." She could have been describing the sentiments of 1874. There is no evidence that Long's genteel enemies in New Orleans plotted his murder. But in resuscitating a tradition that sanctioned armed violence against political opponents they certainly helped foster conditions that made his death possible.

DIXIECRATS UNITE

As the civil rights movement gained momentum, the Liberty Place legend gained new life. In 1948, faced with growing civil rights action across the country, arch-segregationists from the Deep South organized the States Rights party and pulled away from the Democrats.

Some of the Dixiecrats participated prominently at the Liberty Place ceremonies the following year. "It is one of history's tragedies that we are gathered here at a time when the ideals for which the men of 1874 fought are being viciously attacked again on all fronts," Congressman Eddie Herbert told the crowd at the monument. "The struggle for home rule must be won again."

Defenders of segregation could draw on the legend of Liberty Place to fend off unwanted social change, knowing the myth intellectually buttressed the established racial order more effectively than the shibboleths of white supremacy. After all, they reasoned, the Liberty Place tradition might edify the 1950s concerning the ruinous effect of federal intervention, black voting, school integration, and social mixing — historical lessons that were writ in the blood of patriots.

A year after the Supreme Court issued its historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision desegregating public schools, custodians of the monument helped subsidize an official history entitled *The Battle of Liberty Place*. Authored by former advertising executive Stuart Landry, a member of the exclusive Boston Club that helped give birth to the White League, the book was a conscious attempt to shore up the racial status quo.

"The Battle of Liberty Place was not a race riot nor a struggle between whites and Negroes," Landry wrote, but rather a patriotic effort "to overthrow a dictatorship of sordid politicians." By side-stepping explicit white supremacy, Landry fell back on the old New Orleans tradition of invoking a misremembered past to preserve a misguided present. In essence, it was a case of bad history being used to perpetuate bad politics.

STEVIE WONDER SQUARE

In 1879, a few years after the Liberty Place battle, the city's only black newspaper, the *Weekly Louisianian*, had warned that more than half of the state regarded "this pompous military display" as an indication of deep hostility to black liberties. The driving spirit of the battle, the editors

explained, was the refusal of whites to accept a government based upon black votes. "It is for this reason the 14th of September must always be a red flag shaken in our faces."

By the 1960s, Liberty Place was still a red flag to blacks. The city was rocked by a battle to desegregate the schools, and students staged sit-ins at Canal Street lunch counters. Blacks had little tolerance for symbols of racism and white supremacy — especially those on the busiest thoroughfare in the city.

The NAACP Youth Council, which had spearheaded the picketing of Canal Street department stores in 1960, shifted its protests to the Liberty Place Monument. Several other black groups joined in the ongoing demonstrations. Things crested in 1974, when the Rivergate convention center on Canal Street hosted the 65th NAACP National Convention, which passed a resolution endorsing local black efforts to have the monument taken down.

Caught between the NAACP and white preservationists, Mayor Moon Landrieu tried to side-step the issue. Officials covered up the 1932 inscription extolling "white supremacy" and added a bronze plaque declaring that "the sentiments expressed are contrary to the philosophy and beliefs of present-day New Orleans."

But disassociating the white supremacist language of 1932 from the white supremacist realities of 1874 was at best an act of historical amnesia. The demonstrations at Liberty Place continued. The centennial celebration in September 1974 attracted more picketers than pious pilgrims. Klan and neo-Nazi groups also started rallying around the monument.

Vandals soon tore off the marble slab covering the inscription and gouged out the mortared-in letters. Blacks and whites armed with spray paint dueled in graffiti on the monument's base. The exasperated city parks department surrounded the monument with overgrown ligustrum bushes.

The confrontation peaked in 1981 when Dutch Morial, the city's first black mayor, tried to remove the monument. Popular radio talk shows buzzed with irate complaints, and the white-majority city council passed an ordinance forbidding the mayor to remove the monument without council approval.

People had become so disconnected from the actual history that the most absurd ideas seemed to make sense. One letter to the editor seriously suggested relocating the monument next to the newly erected Martin Luther King statue in the heart of a black community because, like King's struggle for racial justice, the Liberty Place battle "was fought for all those who believe in equality above a life of oppression."

The Liberty Place controversy was no longer about the monument itself — it was about the fears of whites faced with black political power. If Liberty Place fell, some whites asked, wouldn't Robert E. Lee Circle follow?

State Representative David Duke pushed the reasoning to its most absurd conclusions. "What about Jackson Square?" he asked, referring to the city statue of Andrew Jackson. "Do we have to take that down and change the name to Stevie Wonder Square?"

Gradually, however, the tradition was crumbling, even among the ranks of White League descendants. Betty Wisdom, whose father had pushed the myth of the monument for years, publicly urged that it be taken down.

"Nothing is 'a part of history' unless it truthfully represents that history," Wisdom said. "The White League monument does not do that."

Today, officials once again hope to side-step the issue by re-erecting the monument within a block of its last downtown location. "We would not agree to removing the monument and putting it back up outside the battle area," explained Leslie Tassin, director of the state Office of Cultural Development. "It would be like putting up a sign that said, 'George Washington slept here' when he slept two miles down the road."

Those deciding the monument's fate might be wise to ponder her words. The monument was originally conceived as a funeral memorial for White League General Fred Ogden, and the annual rites involved gravesite ceremonies conducted by patriotic ladies for fallen soldiers.

Tassin said more than she realized in her Washington-slept-here analogy. Washington today sleeps in a cemetery — which is exactly where the Liberty Place monument belongs, perhaps next to the grave of General Ogden. May his soul, and those of his comrades, rest in peace. ❑

Supporters of former Klansman David Duke rally around the Liberty Place monument to protest its removal by the city.

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The Palm Writer

By Susan Hankla

Old Bill's husband, Jim Blane, had long ago painted a sign for her and nailed it to the biggest tree in the yard. The sign said: "Sister Wilhelmina — PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE." It was bright white with red letters, like the important parts of the Bible. A giant red hand was set at the center, and the writing floated around it. She was a palm reader. Like her sign, Old Bill's life had become rooted here, on this stretch of road between two mill towns leading to a good beach. Her house was small and celery green, situated in a stand of mimosa trees just far enough back from the road to look to a passing car like a small oasis in the August heat.

It was a Wednesday and only 9:15, but she had already seen her second customer of the day, a white lady in her late thirties, who now emerged, rather weak-kneed, from the house. Heat rippled up from the dirt driveway, where the three other ladies, all in pastel shorts sets that were new, waited, with the doors of the big blue Pontiac open and their white legs sticking out. The shrillness of their voices died down only for an instant, and that was when Jim Blane walked by with his bottle of Wild Irish Rose. Otherwise, their eyes, like those of birds of prey, stayed riveted to their friend, who stood in the shade, paying the palm reader from a heavy-looking pure white purse. When Jim Blane saw Old Bill tuck a twenty into her flowered bosom, he started humming "Amazing Grace."

Inside, the lady had asked Old Bill the usual questions: "Will I meet a man? Will I marry soon? Will I ever bear a child?" displaying a doughy palm, with shiny sweat in its creases. When the black palm reader had touched her white hand and she had flinched, Old Bill was reminded of countless other ladies who came back summer after summer, still wanting to know the future. She had seen promising lines diminish and fade with time in those who never took chances, and though her own solvency in some way depended on these people, it was still sad to witness their inertia, so she said to this wispy little lady, "They's three been working against you, and for an extra fifteen dollar, I can tell you who they be." Then Old Bill described in literal detail the three who waited outside in their hot car, so the lady would not cleave any longer to these friends.

Old Bill returned to the dark interior, to the sound of many whirring fans and screeching birds in basket cages, and took herself a long, dream-drenched nap. Jim Blane, lounging in his old blue van that was up on cinderblocks around the side of the house, tipped his bottle to his lips. He could hear Old Bill laughing in her sleep.

While Old Bill lay chuckling to herself, red birds flashed in and among the mimosas like flames. Then, a melancholy wind, saturated with the smell of a far-off rainy pavement, blew in through the screen door and startled her. Many pink mimosa puffs sifted down their blossoms, and the sky grew darker and darker. Shielding his eyes to watch, Jim Blane could feel the air growing tense, like the start of a headache. There was something urgent about it. Old Bill felt a presence coming near and prepared herself to greet it, tying up her sleep-loosed hair.

A young black girl stood at the screen trying to see in. Her hair was plaited in cornrows, hanging heavily like wet wash to her shoulders, and her face was lit with such drama, Old Bill grew attentive in a way she didn't usually have occasion to be. This life had come to

hers for protection. She cut off all her fans, feeling an electrical storm coming, and crossed the room. "Yes?" she acknowledged the face at the screen.

The young girl spoke slowly, but there was desperation in her voice. "Can you read my palm, please . . . because . . ." Her voice trailed off, as if she had run out of air. A sheen of fever covered her face and her large, topaz eyes had green- ish circles under them, as if she had slept poorly for many nights. She wore a summer dress with no sleeves, but her arms were somehow sunless and sickly. Her long fingers wore no rings, held no keys. She held nothing in her hands. She seemed to have come from nowhere. She smelled like carnations.

"How old you is?" Old Bill queried gruffly, but swung the door wide open. The girl, blind from the outdoors, stood stiffly and had to be led into the room.

"Fifteen," the girl answered.

"You too young to get your palm read," snapped Old Bill.

"But I'll give you five dollars!" the girl began to cry.

Old Bill, sighing then, but sensing something, motioned to the girl to take a seat in a folding chair, and the girl sat down. Then Old Bill pulled up a chair for herself, and they sat knee to knee. Old Bill took both hands of the girl and turned them over to look. She sucked in her breath, but not before the girl had heard it, who now looked into Old Bill as if she might disappear.

Old Bill saw palms interwoven with such a convergence of crosses and stars, it was as if the girl had inherited the hands, already hot with use, of a prophet or a martyr. She saw a child playing, making hollyhock dolls. She saw they were a wedding party. Then she saw them all fall down. She saw a young man drowning in a lake full of glistening trout. She saw every stone, every fossil on the sandy bottom of the lake where his shoes slowly fell. She saw the girl who had come up behind him, cringe back in fear, and the rock his head had hit, that was flecked with blood. She saw a funeral procession. She saw two. She saw the girl's wrists tied up with what looked like bandages, or ribbons.

"Lily!" Old Bill spoke the name of the young girl, for suddenly she knew it.

"Yes, ma'am?" answered the trusting girl.

"Close your eyes. I going to fix them palm!"

Lily nodded, saying, "Yes, ma'am," once more, as if in a trance, and closed her eyes. Without the sound of her fans, Old Bill's house had grown intensely quiet, and her caged birds slept, as if the thunder clouds darkening the horizon were a black cloth cover.

"Keep your eyes closed tight. Don't say nothing," Old Bill commanded, for a sudden intuition had seized her. Quickly, she got up to get something off the back porch, where the perpetual cook stove roared with fire. Behind her back, she gripped the white-hot crowbar as she made her way back to the girl.

"Hold out your hands!" she coolly ordered, and the girl obeyed, holding out her trembling hands, whose palms still sang their tragic future. Then Old Bill touched the center of each of Lily's palms with the blazing crowbar, screaming first in surprise, then in pain, when that fire penetrated instead her own leathery flesh.

Her palms smoked and burned, then bubbled and blistered, with a sensation of things falling from them. She felt herself float out of many shadows and enter the center of the sun, the radiant seat of love. All through Old Bill's trial, the young girl peacefully dozed, her magic palms extended still, as if to feel a raindrop. Where the crowbar touched the young girl's palms, Old Bill saw that the lines had become rearranged, and now hope glowed in each, like an opening rose.

Jim Blane woke with a start, hearing first the crack of thunder, then seeing only seconds later, a bolt of lightning strike at a tree in the yard. He had been dreaming of Old Bill, and in his dream she was young. Then he saw the sign he had painted smack the earth with great force where it fell. Pink mimosa blossoms fell upwards into the sky.

Next, he saw Old Bill, who was standing in front of the house, staring hard at her palms and laughing. Sadness, deep as her own fingerprints, was falling away from them. Then, seeing him see her, she held them out to him and he came running. ❑

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Passing the Buck

To build a mass movement in this country, we have to talk honestly about money — like they did back in 1889.

By Lawrence Goodwyn

Editor's note: One hundred years ago — in December 1889 — delegates of the Farmers Alliance and the Knights of Labor met in St. Louis to forge a union between rural and industrial workers. With its far-flung system of cooperatives and grassroots education, the new movement had already attracted hundreds of thousands of recruits. What made this convention historic, however, was the report of its Monetary Committee, an audacious program for financial reform authored by Texas leader Charles Macune.

Macune proposed creating "sub-treasuries" where farmers could store their crops and borrow against them at low interest — in other words, a system that harnessed the monetary authority of the nation on behalf of its citizens.

Last December — a century after Macune unveiled his plan — two dozen leaders of farm, labor, and civic groups convened in St. Louis to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Populist convention and discuss a contemporary program for financial reform. Nearly all the participants came to the meeting through their involvement in the Financial Democracy Campaign, a grassroots effort promoting fair and sensible solutions to the collapse of the savings and loan industry.

Among the speakers was Lawrence Goodwyn, professor of history at Duke University and author of Democratic Promise, *the landmark history of the Populist movement. A shortened version of his talk follows.*

In my profession, it is more consoling to develop a long angle of vision. If you focus on just one generation, you may not find enough to warm the spirit. Better to have four or five hundred years in your gaze and be judiciously selective within that period.

All kidding aside, certain rhythms become very clear over the long view. First, in all human societies, almost all the people have substantial grievances. Second, despite this universal sense of injustice and injury, the number of large-scale social movements is very small. In our country, the CIO mobilization of the '30s and the Agrarian movement of the 1890s — Populism — are the only movements after the Revolution that achieved genuine scale and internal organization.

How do we explain this fundamental disjunction between the widespread existence of grievance and the very rare occasions of collective assertion? The answer is deceptively simple: Large-scale democratic movements happen only when they're organized. And they're not organized more often because the entire culture of a society is arrayed against the idea of large-scale collective assertion.

The primary task of revolutionaries when they come to power is to create a society in which they can put down their guns. The first step is to take control of the past and use it to justify the revolution. The second step is to create a culture in which unsanctioned ideas are difficult if not impossible to have — a culture, in short, in which it becomes difficult for people to imagine structural change. Social space evaporates and society becomes rigid. Of course, those in power don't view it this way; they call the result "stability."

Future historians will look back and see much more of this rigidity in the societies of the 20th century than we ourselves can summon the poise to see. They will see highly stratified societies characterized by deep brooding anxieties, enormous systems of centralized bureaucracy atop an economic structure of large-scale production. And they will say, "What a narrow century the 20th century was. It was the least creative political century of the last three."

Publicly, people announced that they lived in the best society in the world. But privately they said, "You can't fight city hall... the rich get richer and the poor get poorer... all politicians sell out," or (with their teeth considerably more grimly set when they say it), "You can't fight the Communist Party... the Party gets all the goods... the Party is corrupt."

Future cultural historians will say that 20th-century people wore social

masks to conceal their private anxiety. The practical effect of this alienation is that we can no longer conceptualize democratic social relations: Can we conceptualize a democratic marriage? A democratic workplace? A democratic system of money, credit, and exchange at the heart of all our material relations, operating not for the benefit of bankers but for the benefit of society? Future historians will have to conclude that these concepts were not politically admissible within the received culture of American democracy.

WHO STOLE THE GOODS?

So, up until now, it's been a very narrow century, politically speaking. What do we do about that? Well, 112 years ago, a small group of people, not very different from the people in this room, met together. At that first meeting, they had seven people. Despite the fact that they had a number of deep economic anxieties, they had a sense of self and they talked to each other about doing something about their plight. They created what they called the Farmers' Alliance.

The opportunity they possessed was that they could talk about the society and the system of finance. There was an existing literature called the Greenback doctrine that encouraged people to think structurally about money and exchange relations. Nevertheless, they had a recruiting problem. Imagine that this is sort of a big kitchen that we're in today, and we're sitting around the kitchen table analyzing American society. We're grumbling about the Republicans and Democrats. We could say such things as, "Well, there are three institutions in America that house American workers — the Roman Catholic Church, the black church, and the American trade union movement. Those three institutions, plus us, are victimized by structures of hierarchy in the United States that systematically transfer income from the very poorest to the very richest."

We may tell ourselves that these three institutions are not internally organized to do anything about it. They're not quite sure who stole the goods. It's sort of awesome to say that both major parties or that something called Wall Street stole the goods. We wouldn't want to speculate that that great reform institution, the Federal Reserve System — a product of Populist agitation but certainly not anything the Populists wanted — now persists as an instrument of stealing the goods. We can't accuse people who donate money to the Episcopal Church, pay their taxes, and wear proper top hats and coats of stealing the goods.

We don't want to make this indictment because it's too sweeping. It breaks the paradigm in which we are trained to think. It's not culturally admissible discussion for dinner tables or even kitchen tables. In fact, to the extent that we can develop a level of candor and analysis about our society, then two contradictory things occur. Number one, we're enhanced by the sheer authenticity of the conversation. Second, we're depressed by the problem of how we are going to persuade those people out there — otherwise known as the Americans — to think seriously about the state of the Republic.

We have a recruiting problem. Our situation is perfectly analogous to what the Farmers' Alliance faced 112 years ago. They looked for a recruiting device and they found one. The collective problem of farmers was access to credit they could afford. They were paying 30, 40, 60, 80 percent — sounds unbelievable, but you might be paying more for credit today than you know; we may have breached the Biblical level of usury some time ago.

The Alliance started co-ops to do for the farmers collectively what they could not do individually: gain access to credit. People joined the Alliance Co-op. And the Alliance grew. In a county, there would be scores of sub-alliances of 20 to 50 people each. And each one had a lecturer who would help them analyze the world. There were 250,000 members in

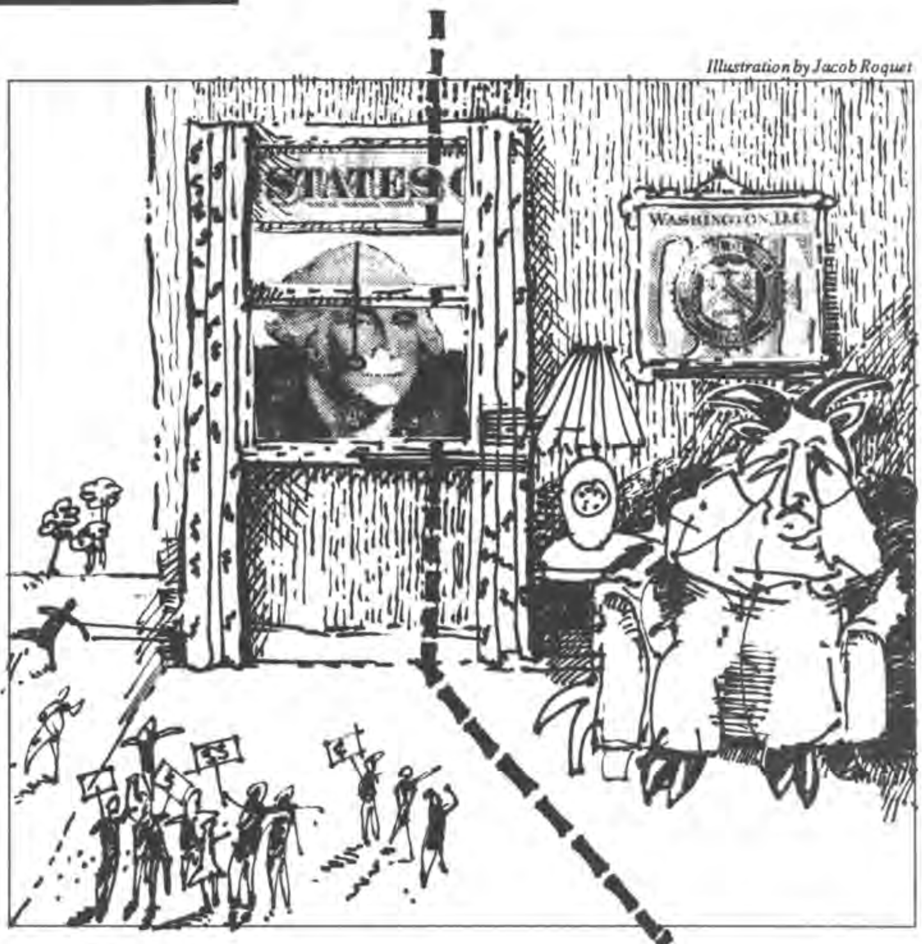


Illustration by Jacob Roquet

Texas and 140,000 in Kansas and 130,000 in North Carolina. Eventually the Alliance penetrated 42 states and recruited two million people who, in effect, developed a new way to think.

Along the way, in their struggle to get large-scale co-ops functioning, they discovered that the bankers would not cooperate. The problem of the individual farmer became the problem of the Alliance: access to credit. One of their number, Charles Macune, felt the pressure of this failure more acutely, because as spokesman for the Alliance he had made projections for people — "Join us, and collectively we'll try to change the way we live."

So, in the summer of 1889, brooding about the political trap he was in, brooding about the plight of the nation's farmer, brooding about the structure of the American economic system, Macune came to the Sub-Treasury Plan — which is just as logical and humanitarian and democratic now as it was then. He thought you could mobilize the capital assets of the nation in an organized way to put them at the disposal of the nation's people.

That is a democratic conception that is not part of contemporary debate. It is beyond our imagination. It is not on the agenda of the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. In fact, we're in an era where those tiny pieces of the nation's capital assets that somehow were smuggled to sectors that are not rich are slowly being shipped away. Since 1980, the lowest 20 percent of the American people in income have had a real income drop of nine percent. And the top two percent have had a real income gain of 29 percent.

We have just witnessed the largest redistribution of income in American history from the very poorest to the very richest — and there's not a single institution of large scale in the country that says this economic fact should be at the center of public debate. Now that's more than stability. That's rigidity.

"THEY DON'T LIE"

There is another society in our time — "the East," or what is sometimes called "actually existing socialism." For about 40 years, since Stalin imposed this system on whole populations, an idea floated around in people's heads over there. The idea was, "We will try to create some space where we can talk to each other and affect the world we live in. To do that, we're going to have to combat the leading role of the Party."

On the Baltic coast, in the 1950s and 1960s, workers in shipyards would say to each other, "We have got to create a trade union independent of the Party." Now that was an unsanctioned idea; it was frightening even to say it out loud. They'd only say it around the kitchen table, around carefully selected brethren and sistren. And the idea would go away, because it was unsanctioned.

But then there would be another horrible accident in the shipyard, another insane adjustment of work routines, and the idea would come back, simply because it was the only idea that made any sense. "Work organized by the Party is insane, Poland is insane, our social life is insane. We've got to have a union free of the Party."

Over 35 years of self-activity the world has not known about — any more than the world knew about how the Farmers' Alliance organized Populism — the people of Poland found out how to do it. And in 1980 they did it. The single most experienced organizer in the shipyard in Gdansk, who spent 12 years organizing and going to jail and brooding about a union free of the Party, the single most credentialed worker, based on his own activity, is Lech Walesa. There's a certain logic in history every now and then.

Let's see if we can begin to educate ourselves about the idea of a democratic system of money.

By its simple existence, Solidarnosc sent a wave of hope across Eastern Europe. It combated the mass resignation that was the dominant political reality of social life in those societies. And it became the nucleus of a mass movement, one of those rare moments in human history when people get back in touch with their own subjectivity. That is to say, they don't lie in public. They say what they mean. They're not trying to give speeches. They're trying to be clear, like two people in a marriage struggling not to be political with each other but to be candid.

Because Solidarity stayed alive and because a man named Brezhnev was replaced by a man named Gorbachev, who would not put down Solidarity, the leading role of the Party is going into the dustbin of history all over Eastern Europe.

BACK TO 1889

Now back to our recruiting problem. What if we were to suggest to the American people that we can't do anything about the homeless, or the crisis in the cities, or the inability of the children of (once unionized, now "de-industrialized") workers to own a home, or America being sold to foreign creditors — we can't do anything about any of these matters if we don't democratize the financial system in this country? In other words, we can't do anything until we get back to being as advanced as we were in 1889 when the sub-treasury system was first introduced.

The idea will be scorned as too much. It's not properly modest. "Why, you people sound as if you're as crazy as those people in Eastern Europe." But if you have the long-distance view, if you say, "Give ourselves 20 years. Let's see if we can begin the process of educating ourselves and the American people about the idea of a democratic system of money that will save what is left of the American family farm, that will pump life into the cities, that will permit the young to dream that they might own a home of their own, that might somehow begin to chip away at the culture of corruption that is now the norm in public life...."

If we can do that, if we can say what we know, clearly, and endeavor to act quietly and firmly on what we say, then I think we're living a valid political life. We may not change the world. But, then again, we might. ❑

For a booklet on the St. Louis conference, send $2 to the Southern Finance Project, 329 Rensselaer, Charlotte, NC 28203.

EARTH DAY REPORT

The Green Scorecard

Ranking the South's environment

By Bob Hall

There's much to be said for picking up the trash. And for planting a tree, recycling our newspapers, and avoiding styrofoam. With the 20th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22, we're hearing a lot about what we can do, each one of us. After all, we're either part of the problem or part of the solution.

But there's also something to be said for scale. Your trash and mine pale in comparison to the surge of garbage spewed from the Union Carbide factory pictured here in Texas City, Texas.Each week, the plant pours 200,000 pounds of chemicals into the air, making it number 121 on the Environmental Protection Agency list of the nation's biggest toxic polluters.

"I call this Toxic City," says Rita Carlson, a Texas City native who lives 12 blocks from Carbide. "We have eight plants like this one here, and 29 lined up along Galveston Bay to Houston.

"We're told that what they make — the plastics, pesticides, oil products — is essential to the nation, and that we shouldn't worry," she continues. "But I say this is a national sacrifice zone. If people don't wake up to what's happening along the Texas and Louisiana coast with all these chemicals, we're going to lose the nation. The air we all breathe comes from the ocean, and that's where this waste is going."

Give Carlson a few minutes and she can put the "Litter Control" sign outside Carbide's gate into proper perspective. A pool of groundwater tainted by 35 chemicals has left the plant and is headed for parts unknown. At another site, Texas officials estimate that Carbide has contaminated water supplies with more than 700,000 barrels of poisons. Meanwhile, the company distributes slick bulletins as part of its "good neighbor" program, assuring people that it cares about the environment, too. Just look how clean it keeps the highway it adopted.

"We've got to stop this nonsense and start getting to the nitty gritty," says Carlson. "There could be a 90-percent reduction of what these companies discharge, using methods already available — if they would make the commitment."

Photo by Sam Kittner

UNION CARBIDE PLANT IN TEXAS CITY — THE NATION'S 121ST LARGEST TOXIC POLLUTER.

HOMEGROWN RESISTANCE

Why don't giant companies like Carbide take every available step to reduce their toxic littering? Or, better yet, why don't they devote their expansive public relations talents toward selling America on clean, healthful alternatives to chemical byproducts?

Part of the reason goes back to the matter of scale. When we try to propose solutions, the discussion narrows to an issue of "personal convenience." And when we try to point to the problems, the talk turns to technical debates over what constitutes an "acceptable risk level" to this or that species of snail darter.

Measuring the emissions — and omissions — of firms like Union Carbide

is concrete enough. But evaluating the overall condition of our environment is far more elusive. What about the health of Rita Carlson's children, who doctors say have abnormal lymph glands and a "strange" blood disorder? What about the health of the workers in the paper industry, which has an illness and injuries rate 50 percent higher than the national average? And what about the fate of the invariably poor, usually black communities that hug the edge of America's toxic factories?

Fortunately, ordinary citizens like Carlson have made the connections between disappearing snail darters and the health of their children. It's not the unknown they worry about; it's what they *do* know that keeps them going. Because of their efforts — often belittled as a "not in my backyard" psychosis — new energy has flowed into the environmental movement. It now has the potential to be a truly mass movement, one that engages farmers and mothers, jobholders and the jobless, lovers of our coasts and dwellers in our toxic slums.

To reinforce these ties, the Institute for Southern Studies has developed a Green Scorecard that measures the relative rank of the 50 states using a comprehensive approach to environmental health. It recognizes, as do the Greens in Europe, that vital connections exist between economic justice, public health, and environmental integrity. A society that sacrifices one of these risks losing them all. Public and private policymakers who undervalue one ultimately jeopardize the others.

Nowhere are the interrelations more plainly visible than here in the South. The reason has less to do with the fact that the region is poor than with the legacy of policymakers who *promote* the proposition that everything in the South is cheap — available for the taking, no questions asked. As the articles in this section demonstrate, this historic economic development policy has produced a devastated environment, inequitable tax structure, and corrupt politicians — as well as a brand of homegrown resistance that offers enormous potential for change.

AT THE BOTTOM

According to the Scorecard, the Northeast and Great Lakes regions score poorly on our Poisons Index, which ranks standard measures of pollution like air quality and the per capita number of Superfund toxic waste sites. But many of these same states have abandoned development strategies that sell themselves short. Relying on a relatively educated population and a higher standard of public accountability, they have taken aggressive actions to address their problems. As a result, they score highest on the index we created to evaluate innovative policies and energetic political leadership. They also do well on our Worker Health Index, which includes a review of state laws protecting workers graded by the Southern Labor Institute of the Southern Regional Council.

By comparison, states in the Mountain region score very poorly in nearly all areas related to government initiative and planning, holding fast to the frontier belief that the less regulation, the better. Fortunately for them, they don't have the pollution levels of other regions, although their rapidly increasing economic reliance on minerals and other natural resources promises escalating trouble.

Of all the regions, only the South maintains a backward resistance to environmental problems in the face of extraordinary levels of poisons. In a ranking of states from 1 to 50, Southern states take the bottom slots in every Index on our Green Scorecard.

The region has six of the ten states with the highest per capita amounts of toxic chemical discharge, seven of the ten producing the most hazardous waste, 92 of the 149 facilities that pose the greatest risk of cancer to their neighbors, and 30 of the top 100 industrial sources of ozone-depleting chemicals.

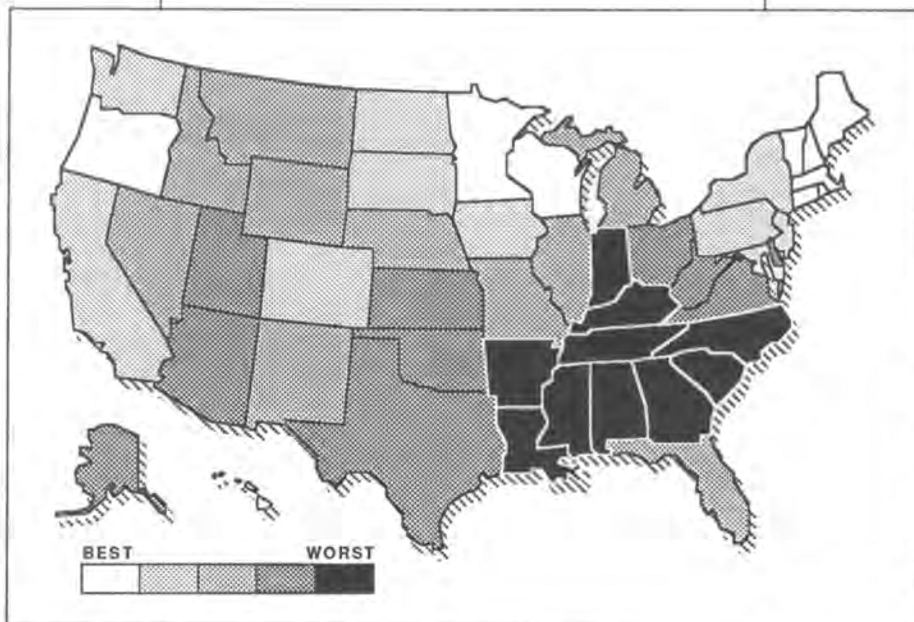
The South also has six of the ten states with the highest unemployment rates,

ABOUT THE SCORECARD

The chart on the opposite page is adapted from our report that measures the nation's environmental health in more than 100 areas. Values are given, generally in a form that minimizes differences in population or size, and states are ranked 1 to 50, best to worst, in each area.

Most of the 35 measures presented here come from government reports for 1987. The Index and final Green ranks reflect each state's position after rankings in the individual areas are totaled and compared. Thus, while Alabama is not dead last on any index, it scores so consistently bad that it winds up at the bottom nationally when these 35 measures are viewed together.

To receive the full report, including a complete listing of data sources, send $5 to Green Scorecard, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. The report is free to sustainers of the Institute for Southern Studies.



THE GREEN RANK FOR ALL 50 STATES, BASED ON THE FACTORS FROM THE SCORECARD

THE GREEN SCORE CARD: HOW THE STATES RANK

	AL	AR	FL	GA	KY	LA	MS	NC	SC	TN	TX	VA	WV
POISONS INDEX Rank	**49**	**35**	**27**	**46**	**38**	**50**	**40**	**28**	**41**	**47**	**32**	**33**	**31**
Land: pesticides applied (pounds per capita)	2	9	1	3	3	3	7	3	3	2	2	1	1
radioactive waste stored (% of U.S. total)	5.2	2.3	6.1	1.7	0.0	0.4	0.4	4.4	10.4	1.1	0.0	4.8	0.0
military waste sites (#)	246	77	330	185	70	131	84	91	140	122	560	312	33
Superfund, other hazardous sites (#)	512	118	868	641	267	268	303	780	63	768	116	171	305
Air: toxic chemical releases (pounds per capita)	24	23	4	15	14	31	22	15	19	28	14	22	19
high-cancer-risk facilities (#)	5	1	7	11	3	17	2	7	3	7	33	2	5
carbon emissions (tons per capita)	7.9	6.8	5.8	4.6	8.9	12.7	5.7	5.2	4.8	6.6	10.2	4.4	16.3
violating EPA standards (% pop. affected)	24	0	51	37	41	59	0	7	17	43	47	25	26
Water: toxic chemical releases (pounds per capita)	139	74	12	84	24	174	184	42	115	61	49	48	49
sewer systems violating EPA permits (%)	4	20	19	10	7	23	5	8	13	11	6	17	18
public systems violating Safe Drinking Water Act (%)	21	4	43	37	27	14	27	9	6	43	21	15	5
potential pesticide contamination (% pop. affected)	39	16	67	27	45	26	25	32	41	39	12	21	5
Total toxic chemicals released (pounds per capita)	203	157	36	106	67	387	250	69	151	124	167	75	90
Total hazardous waste treated (pounds per capita)	3,778	614	127	12,496	4,424	6,555	1,875	452	3,175	384	5,055	8,760	12,443
PUBLIC HEALTH INDEX Rank	**49**	**42**	**21**	**45**	**38**	**48**	**50**	**46**	**47**	**43**	**27**	**44**	**29**
Cancer incidence (per 100,000 population)	433	383	367	406	414	422	438	408	418	408	313	440	409
Premature deaths (per 100,000 population)	1,579	1,412	1,366	1,530	1,455	1,558	1,627	1,478	1,638	1,446	1,308	1,346	1,517
Public health spending ($ per capita)	7.54	11.75	15.13	16.61	11.48	6.60	5.90	13.31	21.65	15.22	9.39	13.92	59.98
People without health insurance (%)	23	21	20	24	19	24	25	22	24	21	23	22	18
State Medicaid program (graded by Public Citizen)	45	46	55	56	56	50	38	51	52	52	49	49	55
Homes without complete plumbing (%)	4.2	4.2	1.1	3.2	6.5	2.4	5.9	4.1	4.1	3.7	1.9	4.2	5.7
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	12.2	10.3	10.6	12.7	9.7	11.8	13.7	11.9	12.7	11.7	9.1	10.2	9.8
WORKER HEALTH INDEX Rank	**47**	**40**	**30**	**46**	**31**	**35**	**50**	**45**	**49**	**41**	**38**	**33**	**28**
Occupational deaths (per 100,000 workers)	8.4	11.8	10.0	12.4	14.0	12.2	14.9	7.9	7.0	8.5	13.2	11.3	17.2
High-risk jobs (% of workforce)	5.0	2.5	1.0	2.4	5.9	7.1	2.8	3.1	5.6	2.6	5.6	2.3	12.0
Laws protecting workers (graded by So. Reg. Council)	0	45	42	42	73	30	0	30	12	52	52	33	67
Workers' compensation (average $ benefits)	6,850	5,707	10,017	6,086	10,128	11,262	6,313	6,612	4,833	5,295	6,808	8,453	7,822
Unemployment benefits (average $ paid per worker)	136	183	65	103	135	322	144	80	79	100	202	63	263
Unemployment rate	7.2	7.7	5.0	5.8	7.9	10.9	8.4	3.6	4.5	5.8	7.3	3.9	9.9
Union members (% of manufacturing workers)	15.3	12.0	8.9	12.0	23.1	20.4	8.1	4.6	3.1	13.5	15.1	12.2	29.8
POLITICS & POLICIES INDEX Rank	**49**	**50**	**22**	**35**	**39**	**48**	**45**	**28**	**36**	**44**	**46**	**32**	**18**
Congressional delegation grade:													
League of Conservation Voters, 1985-1989	30	48	58	51	31	22	24	43	49	54	33	37	59
Public Citizen's Nuclear Scorecard, 1986-1988	7	21	34	6	5	9	3	25	26	25	27	7	7
State spending, all environmental programs:													
$ per capita	14.88	12.81	14.65	11.31	23.74	16.24	23.42	12.19	14.79	14.77	6.05	15.07	24.09
as % of total budget	0.99	0.88	0.98	0.83	1.51	1.12	1.83	1.04	0.97	1.18	0.55	1.04	1.60
Rating by Renew America of state programs for:													
drinking water protection	20	10	40	50	20	10	40	80	60	10	40	70	60
solid waste and recycling	20	20	80	40	30	20	10	30	10	20	30	40	30
land-use and growth management	20	10	80	60	30	20	10	70	40	20	40	50	10
OVERALL GREEN RANK	**50**	**45**	**30**	**44**	**41**	**48**	**49**	**42**	**47**	**46**	**40**	**39**	**32**

seven of the ten with the lowest rates of health insurance protection, and nine of the ten with the highest rates of premature deaths. Ten of the South's 13 states already have above average incident rates of cancer, and we're catching up fast with the higher rates of the more poisoned Rustbelt.

The numbers should make anyone question the wisdom of our leaders' traditional approach to economic development. Yet the February edition of *Site Selection* magazine still brims with ads from Southern recruiters enticing manufacturers to take advantage of Florida's "overabundance of land and virtually non-unionized labor force," Mississippi's "old-fashioned work ethic and refreshing spirit of cooperation," Georgia's "one-stop environmental permitting convenience," and Kentucky's "low land costs and tax incentives."

BROWN IS BEAUTIFUL

In a political climate where the South's people and environment are so shamelessly peddled to major manufacturers, industry has no incentive to search for cleaner alternatives. Some of the most dangerous polluters in the South today are the giant paper companies like International Paper. These huge firms produce dioxin — one of the deadliest chemicals in the world — as they turn wood pulp into bleached white paper. The colossus IP mill in Georgetown, South Carolina rains corrosive dust on homes in the nearby black community and its Booker T. Washington Community Center.

With its vast resources, the company could easily adopt techniques already used in parts of Europe to reduce dioxin. Better yet, it could cut back the bleaching and start marketing brown milk cartons, envelopes, paper plates, and toilet paper under the slogan that "Brown is Beautiful." Instead, International Paper and the rest of the industry are pressuring Southern states to relax their meager dioxin standards.

Faced with such gigantic adversaries, the South's homegrown environmental pioneers have much to fight — and much to offer the rest of the nation. From Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, who have linked demands for fair taxes and fair land-use, to the interracial coalition leading its second Great Toxics March in Louisiana, practical wisdom and vision is all around us. Grassroots leaders like Rita Carlson have made environmental justice a mainstream issue, attracting widespread support and a growing number of political opportunists.

The challenge remains one of scale. We can't let our efforts be confined by small-minded solutions for misnamed problems. We must continue making the connections between pollution and disease, between poisons and poverty, between racism and the politics of siting dangerous factories and toxic dumps. We must keep building in our communities, but we must also knit our local protest groups into a collective enterprise capable of reshaping the terms of environmental debate.

In a society dominated by large-scale enterprises, we know it's not enough to simply clean up the mess — "waste management" and "litter control" won't solve the problem. Positive action requires stopping the mess before it happens, a radical change in production and marketing, thinking and doing. This Earth Day, and every day thereafter, let's pick up after ourselves, but let's also keep naming names, promoting bold programs, and building a stronger movement to define life as we would like it for ourselves and our children. ❑

Bob Hall is research director of the Institute for Southern Studies.

Photo by Sam Kittner

A TANK CAR EXPLOSION AT THIS UNION CARBIDE PLANT IN TAFT, LOUISIANA FORCED THE EVACUATON OF 18,000 PEOPLE IN 1985. RESIDENTS IN A NEARBY HOUSING PROJECT COMPLAIN OF EYE, MOUTH AND NOSE IRRITATION, AND THE EPA SAYS NEIGHBORS FACE CANCER RISKS AS HIGH AS 1-IN-100 FROM THE PLANT'S ETHYLENE OXIDE.

LOUISIANA

Good-Bye, Good Hope

An entire community disappeared, thanks to policies that subsidize giant petrochemical polluters.

By Zack Nauth

New Orleans, La. — Charles Andrews was a newlywed in 1932 when he bought a house for $2,000 in Good Hope, a tiny French Catholic enclave on a bend of the Mississippi River. He knew everyone in town, and together they watched their children and grandchildren grow up and settle down in the quiet community.

A half century later, Andrews and his neighbors lost their homes — not to a hurricane or flood, but to the voracious appetite of GHR Company, the Good Hope Refinery.

"The first security I had, they took it away from me. That's the way I figure it," said Andrews, 77, who now lives miles from his closest friends. "I got some neighbors living around here now. I don't know too much about them."

Charles Robicheaux and his family lived in another of Good Hope's 130 homes, about 25 miles upriver from New Orleans. They had gotten so used to being evacuated because of the frequent fires and explosions at the refinery that they kept packed suitcases next to their beds. One year their Christmas dinner burned in the oven and toys were sprayed with oil during a fire and forced evacuation.

A few hundred feet from their home, towering flares turned night into day and filled the air with smoke. Toxic runoff floated in the ditches and ran into the surrounding marshland where many residents hunted and fished.

Despite the danger, Robicheaux loved Good Hope's close-knit community, and he joined his neighbors in a bitter fight to block GHR's expansion plans that would force everyone to leave. It was a losing battle. GHR had a habit of getting what it wanted.

Already the nation's largest independent refinery, GHR was processing 250,000 barrels of high-sulfur crude oil worth $6 million in sales each day. It employed hundreds of workers, paid $500,000 in taxes to the parish, and plied elected officials from the courthouse to the statehouse with jobs for their families, contracts for their businesses, and generous contributions for their political campaigns.

One year, GHR violated its water pollution permit 311 times; the state finally took action when the company dumped five tons of phenol, a caustic poison, into the Mississippi River. Facing a possible $7.9 million fine, GHR's attorney sent a letter to state officials warning, "An injudicious exercise of judgment resolving this matter by the Environmental Control Commission could fatally affect the refinery, its operations and employees."

The state decided on a $260,000 fine. That same year, GHR boasted a $50 million profit.

Hungry for more, the company broke the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union at the plant and relied on an ever-changing lineup of transient workers whose lack of skill and stake in the surrounding communities led to more disasters. As the refinery's daily operations wore down local resistance, GHR pressed parish officials to rezone Good Hope so the refinery could expand. The company reminded officials that an earlier decision to move its corporate headquarters to the parish was based on a "pledge to assist us in any way possible to assure the most profitable operations here."

On a September night in 1980, 500 residents from Good Hope and nearby towns packed the council chambers. Over their protests, the council decided Good Hope was standing in the way of progress: The entire town and all its people would have to move to make way for the refinery.

Most of the residents got enough money for their homes to buy brand new houses on another street in another town. But the money didn't make up for the loss of friendships, the loss of their way of life.

But the ultimate indignity was yet to come. Less than a year after the pain of uprooting and relocating, GHR closed its Good Hope refinery. It remains closed to this day, a rusting monument to short-term corporate and political priorities.

"It makes you feel an emptiness after

Photo by Sam Kittner

AN EXXON REFINERY NEAR THE LOUISIANA STATE CAPITOL EXPLODED LAST CHRISTMAS EVE, INJURING WORKERS AND SHATTERING WINDOWS SIX MILES AWAY.

all we went through for all these years," said Charles Robicheaux. "For what? It's just a letdown to see that all the houses are gone and the industry too."

Robicheaux pointed to his new residence. "This is my house," he said. "My home is in Good Hope."

CANCER ALLEY

The destruction of Good Hope is not an isolated incident in Louisiana. Rather, it stands as a metaphor for the dashed hopes and devastated habitats left by the state's economic development policies.

Perhaps the ultimate symbol of how distorted the policy has become happened four years after the Good Hope Refinery shut down: the Louisiana Board of Commerce and Industry gave GHR local property tax breaks worth $40 million — even though the company provided no jobs and even though it still owed the state $90,000 in air pollution fines. GHR made more than $1 billion from what flowed from the earth at Good Hope, but gave only a tiny part back to the residents. The Earth itself got even less respect.

The roots of this policy are deep. Since Louisiana was colonized by France, England, and Spain, its natural resources have been exploited by outsiders and compliant local officials. Northerners and Europeans, using slave and cheap black labor, grew and exported sugar cane and cotton. Then came the timber companies from the East and Midwest to strip the hardwood forests and cypress swamps. In the latest round, giant petrochemical firms have sucked 12 billion barrels of oil and 113 trillion cubic feet of natural gas from the ground, turning much of it into bulk chemicals and plastics for cars, clothes, and home conveniences.

The results of this reliance on the petrochemical industry have been devastating:

▼ According to data from the Environmental Protection Agency, Louisiana ranks first nationally in the per capita levels of toxic chemicals spewed into the air — 31 pounds per person or 138 million pounds total.

▼ Of the 25 counties with the most toxics released into the air, land and water, more are in Louisiana than any other state.

▼ Three of the six most toxic facilities in the nation are located here — American Cynamid, Shell Oil Co. and Kaiser Aluminum.

▼ Another EPA study shows that Louisiana is home to 13 of the 32 plants where the cancer risk from breathing a single chemical is 100 times the acceptable level. The plants where the risk was estimated to be 1-in-100 or 1-in-1,000 included the big names in American industry: DuPont, Exxon, Shell, Dow, Copolymer, Union Carbide, Formose, Firestone, BASF, Vulcan, Occidental, and Crown Zellerbach.

▼ Every day, 21 Louisiana residents die of cancer and 41 new cases are diagnosed — rates well above the national average. Not surprisingly, the parishes located along the Mississippi River's "Chemical Corridor," where most of the plants sit, rank in the top 10 percent in lung cancer deaths in the United States, giving the region its nickname, "Cancer Alley."

▼ Other studies show that people who work in the state's petrochemical and paper pulp industries, or who drink from water supplies fed by the Mississippi (like New Orleans residents), all have significantly higher death rates from cancer. A state task force estimates the disease and its treatment costs Louisiana $176 million each year.

The problems have gotten so bad that industry itself is feeling the bite. Ozone levels in Baton Rouge are so high that plants are forbidden to expand unless they reduce their emissions, and two new chemical plants were recently prohibited from building altogether.

With the damage so widespread, it's fashionable these days to say that Louisiana sold its environmental soul to the petrochemical industry in exchange for jobs and prosperity. Les Ann Kirkland, president of the Alliance Against Waste and Action to Restore the Environment, disagrees.

"That's bullshit," Kirkland says. "They didn't tell us what the price was. You didn't know what was at stake until it was too late."

"A TRAGIC LEGACY"

The hidden cost of the lax regulation of the petrochemical industry mounts each time there's a discovery of a contaminated drinking supply, ruined tract of wetland, or leaking storage tank. In Louisiana, those discoveries come almost daily.

About five miles from Good Hope, close to a public school, a highway construction crew recently found themselves in the middle of an abandoned oil refinery that had been closed in the '50s. The site turned out to be loaded with high levels of asbestos, heavy metals, and toxic chemicals. Construction of another highway in north Louisiana was also stopped by an abandoned site.

In Bossier City, residents of an apart-

ment complex smelled strange fumes in their homes. They eventually discovered that the complex was built on top of another abandoned waste site. The state has about 500 such sites. The cleanup costs are unknown.

Just east of Good Hope is Bayou Trepagnier, its bottom thick with wastes from 60 years of refining and chemical production at the Shell complex next door to GHR. Shell's wastewater treatment plant is still allowed to discharge hundreds of pounds of toxins into the productive marshland each year. Cleanup of the bayou has not yet begun.

Throughout the state's wetlands — the most productive renewable natural resource — are tens of thousands of oilfield waste pits, filled with chromium, benzene, and radioactive wastes. By an act of Congress, they are called "non-hazardous waste sites" and are therefore exempt from federal monitoring standards. Louisiana has more of these sites — some 200,000 — than any other state.

The Congressional reclassification of these sites in 1980 saved the petrochemical industry millions of dollars. Its chief sponsors included powerful Louisiana Senator J. Bennett Johnston. The result is what the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* called "a tragic legacy, an environmental nightmare of appalling dimensions" that threatens underground water supplies and estuaries that produce one-fourth of the nation's seafood catch.

Photo by Sam Kittner

THE GREAT LOUISIANA TOXICS MARCH FOLLOWED THE "CANCER ALLEY" OF PETROCHEMICAL POISON FROM BATON ROUGE TO NEW ORLEANS.

BIG BREAKS

Louisiana's economic dependence on petrochemicals — and its inability to clean up the mess left by the industry — dates back to the tax policy of Huey Long, the Depression-era governor who gained national attention for his bold promises to "Share the Wealth" of corporate America. His popular program depended heavily on an increase in the severance tax on oil production to pay for new roads, school books, state hospitals, and old-age pensions.

As the oil business boomed, so did the state treasury. Even in good times, the cozy arrangement made lawmakers and regulators reluctant to bite the hand that fed them. But when the industry went bust in the early 1980s, everyone suffered.

This July, Louisiana faces a $700 million deficit. State-supported hospitals have cut back services, and have refused to deliver babies in some locations. Unemployment, which continues to top national levels, long ago depleted state reserve funds.

With basic human services cut to the bone, there's little left for the environment. The total state budget for regulating hazardous wastes was $3 million in 1986, less than a fourth what New Jersey spends for problems caused largely by a petrochemical industry about the same size as Louisiana's.

Louisiana's revenue problems are compounded by the fact that its historic reliance on the severance tax was offset by massive property tax subsidies. In the midst of its current crisis, the state has continued to pursue an industrial policy that gives business and industry about $500 million a year in tax breaks. The biggest breaks go to the petrochemical industry, which is allowed to write off $200 million a year in local property taxes.

The result: The state is subsidizing the very corporations that are destroying its natural resources and sending its citizens to the hospital with cancer. Not only does state policy encourage pollution that leaves huge cleanup bills, it also grants tax breaks that make it impossible for state and local governments to pay the bills.

"The companies have given us environmental problems, and we have paid for them through these exemptions," said Carl Crowe of the state AFL-CIO. "Environmental problems left behind by bankrupt companies are cleaned up with taxpayer dollars."

The South as a whole has often used "tax incentives" to attract industry, and studies show that Louisiana outranks its neighbors in granting corporate concessions. Yet many studies also question whether the tax breaks actually work, citing evidence that companies simply play state against state in a bidding war to cut themselves the best deal.

"None of the overall tax requirements in any of the states varied sufficiently to change operating costs more than .2 percent," wrote James Cobb in his study of industrial development, *The Selling of the South*. "Competitive tax cutting or exemptions negated the advantages any particular locale might have had in attracting new industry."

The real reason industries came to Louisiana, Cobb found, was for its cheap oil and natural gas, its access to markets via the Mississippi River, and its cheap, unorganized labor. "One of the reasons for the South's success is that developing nations like Germany and Japan decided to export their heavy, polluting indus-

tries," Cobb said. "Foreign investors appreciated not only the South's cheap labor and low taxes but also its apparent ability to absorb industries that produced large amounts of wastes and contaminants."

Louisiana has paid dearly for these deals. A study by Oliver Houck, an environmental law professor at Tulane University, found that two-thirds of the industrial tax breaks granted in 1984 — about $14 million — went to companies that had violated environmental laws.

"We are simply underwriting pollution and significant health risks," Houck said. "Even though the permit levels are permissive, you still have a high violation rate. Local governments are being forced to sacrifice schools so that industry can locate there and pollute them."

According to Houck, violators are receiving tax breaks that are about 10 times greater than the potential fines they face. Placid Oil was fined $625,000 for 310 violations in 1982, but recouped several times that amount in local tax breaks.

What economic benefits do the citizens of Louisiana reap from these tax breaks to industry? The study by Houck showed that petrochemical companies receive 80 percent of all industrial tax exemptions but create only 15 percent of all permanent jobs.

A study set for release this spring by Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice found that tax breaks often exceed the wages paid new permanent employees — and that many companies receive tax breaks for projects that create no permanent jobs. On average, the study found, local governments pay a subsidy of $100,000 for every permanent job created.

Average citizens not only foot the bill for the subsidies to industry, they also pay higher taxes to make up for the lost revenue. Louisiana officials have repeatedly raised excise and sales taxes on items like food and drugs — a tax which hits the poor the hardest.

THE GREEN RANK: LOUISIANA

How Louisiana ranks among the 50 states:

Toxic chemical pollution	50
Cancer causing facilities	49
Carbon emissions	46
Pesticide use	36
Premature deaths	47
People without insurance	47
Public health spending	43
Occupational deaths	36
Unemployment rate	50
Environmental voting record	47

TOXICS MARCH

The deadly state of the environment has started to anger many citizens who feel that state industrial policy is shaped less by visionary, long-term thinking than it is by the demands of the existing business power structure in Louisiana. Lax regulation and outright corruption have unleashed a backlash of citizen revolt — often spontaneous and haphazard, but sometimes effective in challenging the petrochemical industry. About 25 grassroots environmental groups have banded together under the banner of the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, uniting workers, tenants, and civil rights activists across the state.

In Geismar, where chemical giant BASF locked out 300 workers for over five years, the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Local put the company on trial for its environmental and safety record. The union spearheaded a coalition that included community and environmental groups, broadening the attack against the German-based corporation. The campaign worked, and workers won their jobs back earlier this year.

Last year, with the help of the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and the National Toxics Campaign, citizens organized the state's first-ever Toxic March from the Superfund site in Baton Rouge, down the "cancer alley" of chemical firms along the Mississippi River to New Orleans.

People's outrage began to reach elected representatives. Bills were passed mandating that toxic air emissions be cut in half, taxes on hazardous waste be increased, and municipalities recycle 25 percent of their solid wastes. Funding for the state environmental department was doubled. The regulatory realm also responded, approving tougher rules for hazardous waste injection wells and water quality standards — over the objection of the state's most powerful oil, chemical, and business lobbyists.

But while much has changed, much remains the same. Industry sued to block the injection rules and had them temporarily suspended. The air toxics bill named no specific chemicals, leaving that to the drawn-out regulatory process. The state Commerce Board still refuses to take the environment or any other factors into account before granting millions of dollars in tax breaks. Louisiana industries continue to legally emit millions of pounds of known disease-causing chemicals into the environment.

Organizers are planning a second Toxics March to coincide with Earth Day, vowing to keep up the pressure on elected officials. The fight for a healthy environment goes on, but many citizens caught up in the struggle say they will never be the same.

Camille Weiner moved out of her home in Good Hope when the GHR refinery expanded a decade ago. Today she lives in a new town.

"The neighbors are nice and everything, but it's not like Good Hope," she says. "It'll never be like Good Hope." ❑

Zack Nauth, a former reporter for the New Orleans Times-Picayune, *is director of the Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice.*

MISSISSIPPI

"The Greed in These Woods"

The Army and several well-connected developers want control of a national forest, but citizens say they can't have it.

By Alan Huffman

Camp Shelby, Miss. — A contest for control of valuable public timber lands in south Mississippi is under way in the De Soto National Forest, and residents with roots going back two centuries say they're on the losing end.

The U.S. Army and a handful of well-connected developers are vying for the title to prime tracts of pinelands that sprawl across 500,000 acres of rolling hills. In the process, residents say, families are being pushed off their land, wildlife refuges face destruction, and counties are being robbed of millions of dollars in timber revenue needed for schools and roads.

At the heart of the controversy is a push by the military to swap 16,000 acres of grassland it owns in Pinyon Canyon, Colorado for 32,000 of the U.S. Forest Service's wooded acres in De Soto. Officials at nearby Camp Shelby say the Mississippi National Guard needs the public forest land for tank maneuvers.

But the proposed land swap has unearthed deep resentments among local residents over Camp Shelby expansions, Forest Service mismanagement, and land and timber speculation by businessmen with political connections to U.S. Senator Trent Lott.

"My family has been here since the Indian days," said a Forest Service employee upset about the land deals but afraid of being identified. "My daddy worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps planting pine trees during the Depression. From when I was born, he taught me the beauty of these woods. In this job, I've learned their value. But I didn't know about the greed in these woods until now."

CIVIL WAR BOYS

The De Soto National Forest — the largest in the state — is made up primarily of lands replanted after timber companies exploited the virgin forests around the turn of the century. It also adjoins Camp Shelby, where the military has slowly but doggedly been assimilating local holdings since World War II.

The military already holds a special-use permit to conduct maneuvers over 100,000 acres of the forest, which it bulldozes to make way for 60-ton M-1 tanks and artillery shells. Now the Army wants clear title to the land — part of its nationwide push to add 3.4 million acres of public land to the 19 million acres already designated for military training.

The Forest Service initially balked at the De Soto swap, which would exchange Colorado land valued at $2.3 million for Mississippi pinewoods worth $46.7 million. But Ken Johnson, state director of the Forest Service, now says he is considering the deal "as a result of congressional interest."

Local residents are furious at being treated as incidental to the wheeling and dealing of federal officials over the large tracts of land. "It's political," said Lamar Sims, a Perry County supervisor. "We've got 10,000 people in Perry County, and they're ignoring us. The people I represent get all the guns shooting and the bombs bursting and the F-4 fighters flying over our schools tree-top high, and we're being ignored."

Sims fears that if the Camp Shelby land swap goes through, the county will lose much-needed revenues from Forest Service timber sales, a quarter of which go to school and road budgets. Last year alone, timber revenues contributed nearly $2 million to 10 Mississippi counties.

Oscar Mixon, a Perry County resident, said the Camp Shelby swap is part of a land-use trend that often leaves residents on the outside. His own family was forced off their land by the military in the 1940s and moved down the road, only to find themselves in the path of yet another proposed expansion.

"In 1958, the U.S. marshals brought eviction papers and just kicked us off," Mixon recalled. "I live 10 or 11 miles from there, and now they're coming down here after us."

In some places, families are barred from stepping foot on their homesteads by locked gates and signs that warn of live ammunition rounds. Along Mississippi

Photo by Alan Huffman/Clarion-Ledger

F.H. MCREE SITS ON THE STEPS OF WHAT WAS ONCE A CHURCH IN THE DE SOTO NATIONAL FOREST. MILITARY EXPANSION AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS THREATEN THE HOMES OF MCREE AND OTHER RESIDENTS.

29, signs caution motorists that live shells may pass overhead.

The tank maneuvers and artillery practice have destroyed thousands of acres of forest land where people once lived. F.H. McRee, whose family watched their home become part of the De Soto National Forest after they lost it to debt during the 1930s, pointed to the place where an errant tank ran through Sweetwater Cemetery a few years back.

"I saw those tombstones laid out on the ground," McRee said. "Those were the graves of people who settled this area, and that tank just rolled right over them — busted them all to hell. Some of them were Civil War boys."

BEARS AND SNAKES

Opposition to the land swap also centers on its natural beauty and unique habitat. The land Camp Shelby wants includes the state's only designated wilderness area — the Leaf River Wilderness — and adjoins its only Wild and Scenic River — the Black Creek.

"I think they picked this area because it's sparsely populated," said Walter Sellers, manager of the Leaf River area. "It's the largest tract they could find with the least resistance."

State wildlife officials say that if the swap goes through, they may be forced to abandon the Leaf River preserve — the oldest and most popular in Mississippi. Recreation and hunting, they say, simply cannot co-exist with tanks.

Louie Miller, conservation chair of the state Sierra Club, also fears that wildlife will not survive tank assaults and artillery shelling. Miller and other environmental leaders said the transfer would wreck habitat for endangered and threatened species that include the black bear, the Indigo snake, the gopher tortoise, and the red cockaded woodpecker.

Military officials discount the potential for environmental damage, citing federal guidelines that would require reparations. National Guard Adjutant General Arthur Farmer said private land could remain within the tank maneuver area if the swap goes through, and that hunting would still be allowed.

Farmer, however, was stripped of most of his duties in January following revelations that he and two other men bought land adjacent to Camp Shelby. Governor Ray Mabus, who appointed Farmer, ordered him to resign for appearing to use his office for personal gain. Farmer refused, and Mabus stripped him of his command.

Documents also reveal that Farmer and the National Guard have designs on more than the 32,000 acres they have requested. In a letter to U.S. Representative Jamie Whitten, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Farmer noted that the Guard eventually hopes to take over 116,000 acres of the De Soto Forest for military use.

FRAT BROTHERS

The military isn't alone in seeing opportunity in the De Soto woods. The public forest comprises a valuable timber reserve that has caught the eye of real estate investors, several of whom have political connections in Washington.

The Forest Service often trades public land for private property to expand and consolidate its holdings. Sometimes it exchanges land with mature standing timber for clear-cut private holdings that include as much as twice the acreage. Since 1980, the Forest Service in Mississippi has transferred 14,000 acres of woodlands to private individuals in exchange for 23,000 acres.

Such trades are a good deal for developers. They clear their own property of timber, swap the barren land for national forests worth up to $1,000 an acre, cut and sell the public timber, and then resell the stripped land to the highest bidder.

Long before the controversy over the Camp Shelby proposal, residents were chagrined over the private deals. "People have been grumbling about these transfers for a long time, but not doing anything about it," said I.A. Garraway, who operates a timber business near Janice. "What it boils down to is there are a few individuals fattening their pockets off of public land. I think a federal investigation ought to be done."

Some of the largest public-private transfers were made to oral surgeon Dr. Bennett York and realtor J.W. McArthur. Both call Hattiesburg home — and both have close ties to Republican Senator Trent Lott. York was a fraternity brother of Lott and a contributor to his campaign, and McArthur's wife Nevie served on Lott's campaign staff.

In the largest single transfer to date, York swapped 5,189 acres of private land valued at $3.2 million for 2,796 acres of the De Soto National Forest with standing timber. In all, York has traded a total of 9,218 acres for 4,708 acres of Forest Service land.

Forest Service officials deny that po-

litical connections influence land deals. "Let me tell you what they say," said Joe Duckworth, a De Soto Forest district ranger. "They say you've got to be a friend of Trent Lott to get land. But that's not true. I've never gotten a call from Trent Lott, period."

Joe Clayton, land and minerals officer for the Forest Service in Mississippi, admitted that private individuals interested in making transfers "often let you know how much political influence they have to bolster their case. Lots of them do that."

But Clayton insisted that such name-dropping does not affect land transfers — at least not at the local level. "If political pressure came to bear, it would be further up the line," he said. "I wouldn't feel it directly. It would be, for instance, the chief of the Forest Service or the Secretary of Agriculture."

A spokesman for Lott's office said the Senator, whose previous House district included the De Soto Forest and who supports the Camp Shelby land swap, has never intervened in public-private transfers.

York and McArthur agreed. "I have never, never asked Trent's help, nor have I received it," McArthur said. "I'm not sure he would have intervened anyway."

Local residents remain unconvinced. "There's so many facets of these transfers that people don't know anything about," said retired Army Colonel Pete Denton. "The more we look into it, the dirtier it gets. Any way you look at it, the people are losing."

LARGE LANDOWNERS

Whether or not political connections paved the way, local residents say influential landowners like McArthur and York get preferential treatment from the Forest Service. Oscar Mixon said that when he approached the agency about acquiring two 40-acre tracts next to his farm, "they told me in no uncertain terms it wouldn't be traded. Then J.W. McArthur got it and when I asked why, I was told in so many words that I didn't have money to deal with the Forest Service in trading land. In my opinion, it's not right."

Clayton said the idea is that large landowners are better able to put together an attractive package to trade with the Forest Service. He said the public has the right to protest any exchange to the Forest Service or their congressman.

But Lewis Posey Jr. of New Augusta, who retired last year from 32 years with the Forest Service, said he doesn't believe the protests would be heard.

"In my opinion, the transfers I saw weren't done fairly," Posey said. "The man that had the political pull got what he wanted. Dr. York got a lot of land that local people couldn't get. He just picked what he wanted.

"It's just not giving the local people a fair shake," he added. "And they're the ones who helped grow this forest and protect it."

THE GREEN RANK: MISSISSIPPI

How Mississippi ranks among the 50 states:

Toxic chemical pollution	49
Cancer causing facilities	22
Carbon emissions	26
Pesticide use	44
Premature deaths	49
People without insurance	50
Public health spending	45
Occupational deaths	43
Unemployment rate	47
Environmental voting record	45

McArthur, who traded 724 acres of private land for 525 acres of public forest, also thinks he got a good deal. "The Forest Service may have been happy as they can be with the exchanges I made, but I think they benefited me more than they benefited them."

F.H. McRee wasn't so lucky. When he tried to get back his family's land that was sold to the Forest Service in the 1930s, the agency traded it away to a developer instead. McRee was finally able to buy the land back from the developer — but not until the timber had been cut and sold.

Angered by private deals and the Camp Shelby trade, local residents have organized a group called Citizens Against the Swap. Headquartered in the kitchen of retired Colonel Denton, the group has gathered more than 2,000 signatures on a petition asking Governor Mabus not to yield any more forest land to the military.

Residents united once before to save De Soto, successfully opposing a plan to store nuclear waste inside the forest. Their current effort has prodded Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran to suggest safeguards against the abuse of land swaps, and Colorado Senator Timothy Wirth has introduced a bill that would give the military's Pinyon Canyon grassland to the Forest Service — with nothing in return.

Still, McRee and other residents say they feel betrayed. His daughter Patricia summed up the prevailing mood in an essay she circulated among her neighbors.

"As I look at the map which shows the land to be acquired, I see so many little rectangle shapes with numbers," she wrote. "Correct me if I am wrong, but do these not represent private lands that have already been 'terminated'? I think the shape is appropriate. They look like graves or coffins and that's what they represent to me. Because they are what's left of the people who settled and lived in this area's dreams. They are now 'dead and buried.' The people can no longer pass on their inheritance because it has been taken away by our own government." ❑

Alan Huffman is a freelance writer in Bolton, Mississippi.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Toxic Tremors

Neighbors to one of the nation's biggest waste dumps have become movers and shakers in the politics of poison.

By Sandy Smith

Sumter County, S.C. — Between the logging trucks and the endless stream of toxic waste trucks, Highway 261 stays in a perpetual state of disrepair these days.

The logging trucks are a recent phenomenon, the legacy of the bizarre swath of destruction that Hurricane Hugo left across the state last fall. The acres of snapped pine trees seem a bleak metaphor for the economic depression of the area. Driving through the county, you pass destroyed mobile homes and farmhouses with plastic patches on unrepaired roofs. Folks say federal disaster relief has been too little, too late.

But the toxic waste trucks have been a fact of life here for more than a decade. From his small woodframe house in an open field off the highway, the Reverend J. B. Hodge watches the huge tarp-covered dumptrucks rumble by — 50 of them a day, three-quarters with out-of-state license plates. At night 20 or more trucks line up outside the gate to the GSX Chemical Services hazardous waste landfill a half mile down the road.

Standing at his back door, the purposeful, rotund minister pointed out the line of trees a few hundred yards away where the "No Trespassing" signs begin. The landfill contains three billion pounds of carcinogens and poisons buried 200 yards from the shores of Lake Marion, making it the second-largest toxic waste dump in the Southeast. It also sits atop four underground rivers, one of which supplies drinking water to much of the state. If the dump opened today, federal regulations would prohibit such a proximity to wetlands.

Unlike most of the 700 or so people in Rimini, the community closest to the dump, Hodge is outspoken about his opposition to GSX. He recounts tale after tale of neighbors, mostly children, who have suffered health problems they believe are related to contamination from the dump. Their fears were heightened when a study of seven children turned up toxic chemicals in their blood.

In 1986, the same year the blood studies were done, GSX found toxins in three aquifers beneath the 279-acre dump. The company insists the landfill is not to blame, but state and federal agencies have yet to locate the source of the contaminated groundwater.

"I don't like what's happening, what it's done to the people in the area," said Hodge. "I always tell my boys that if people start dyin' they should pack up and get going — but just make sure that the place you go to don't have no dump."

Angered by the lack of action, Hodge and thousands of Sumter County residents have organized their own grassroots group called Citizens Asking for a Safe Environment (CASE). Members want the state to curb the amount of waste that GSX can dump at the site and to phase out all toxic waste landfills in South Carolina.

Amazingly, supporters in the state legislature say measures proposed by CASE have a good chance of passing. In a state where the words "crazy" and "environmentalist" are often uttered in the same breath, CASE has been remarkably successful. In its first five years it has helped expose the devastating public health consequences of lax environmental regulation in South Carolina. Along the way, it has uncovered a trail of greed and corruption that leads to the highest levels of state government.

BLOOD AND POISON

The Reverend Hodge first became concerned about GSX after his 1986 survey found 50 cases of unexplained health problems that Rimini residents linked to the dump. Several people reported their hair coming out in swatches. Some children had rashes, sores that wouldn't heal. Others were listless; one little boy was so tired he could only sit and watch while his friends played at recess.

With the support of CASE, Hodge rounded up 10 children and five adults with recurring ailments and took them to the Medical University of South Carolina for examinations. When they arrived at the state clinic, they were surprised to see TV crews waiting. They were also surprised when doctors performed only rapid, perfunctory physicals — without any blood tests.

"They just went through the motions like a show and then said, 'Don't worry about anything, folks,'" Hodge recalled. "I feel like it was planned."

His suspicions seemed confirmed when CASE obtained a letter to the president of the Medical University from a top official at the state Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), the agency responsible for regulating GSX. The letter — which was sent prior to the exams — warned that "health examinations are not a useful approach and at best will be misleading."

Dr. Jim Ingram, a private physician and a member of CASE, was outraged by the DHEC intervention and the handling of the physicals. "If they were going to do exams they should have looked at whether the people were poisoned," he said. "They should have done the blood work, and without that they shouldn't have said the exams were reassuring."

Disappointed, CASE secured Medicaid coverage to pay an independent lab to do comprehensive work-ups for seven of the children. Six of the seven blood tests revealed high levels of the organic solvent toluene, which depresses the central nervous system. The blood samples also contained high levels of cancer-causing trichloroethane (TCE) and DDT, a deadly pesticide that was banned long before the children were born.

All of the chemicals in the children's blood are also found in the GSX landfill. Toluene and TCE were among the contaminants found in groundwater at the site that same year.

Dr. Paul Epstein, an occupational and environmental health specialist at the University of Illinois School of Public Health, interpreted the results for CASE. He recommended "an immediate suspension of operations" at the GSX facility and independent medical testing of local residents and GSX employees.

Four years later DHEC has taken no action other than to criticize CASE for protecting the identities of the children tested and to impugn the competence of the laboratory that conducted the tests.

Sam Moore, a GSX spokesman, also dismissed the suggestion that the cursory exams at the state university were incomplete. "If there was a real problem here it could be solved before dark," he said. "Do you really believe that two state agencies would conspire to defraud citizens and defend industry? If that's the case we should put environmental pollution aside and work on the pollution of our morals."

The technical arguments and official reassurances aren't much comfort to Ann Clark, a Rimini resident who lives only a mile from the dump. The lab tests found toxins in the blood of her nine-year-old son, Mandrake. "I didn't believe the rumors until I took Mandrake to the doctor," said Clark, a home health nurse.

Clark also suspects the dump could have something to do with why her infant son breaks out in so many rashes and why her five-year-old was born with a defective hand. "I feel like my children are victims," she said. "We've considered moving, but we can't afford it."

STILL ALIVE

Unlike Clark, many residents of the small, economically depressed communities of Pinewood and Rimini are unwilling to talk to reporters. Jobs are scarce, and GSX is the largest employer around. The company has been generous with local folks, hauling dirt for free and sponsoring the annual Possum Trot.

In Pinewood, the clerk at Big A Auto Parts refused to comment on the landfill: "They do a lot of business around here." Next door at the Gulf Station an attendent shrugged: "You gotta put the stuff somewhere. GSX gives money. They've done a lot for the town."

D.P. Elliott, who runs his own auto parts store, crawled out from under the hood of a car to put in a good word for the landfill. His father, Dargon, leases the dump site to GSX.

"I like it," Elliott said. "I make my living off it. No one says the good things about GSX. I don't believe that stuff about it leaking. I live right next to it, I drink the water and I'm still alive!"

But the GSX largess has not bought everyone. A recent survey by two psychologists revealed that 90 percent of local residents believe the waste dump will cause health problems in the future.

"There'd be something wrong with us if we didn't worry about it," said Mark Smith, the cashier at Sym's Grocery. "We know it's going to leak some day. There hasn't been a landfill that hasn't leaked, has there?" Smith said he doesn't talk much about his concerns at home, since two of his brothers work for GSX.

UNUSUAL ALLIES

Despite the company's influence among local residents, CASE has grown to over 7,000 members, most of them educated, middle-class residents of Sumter, nearly 20 miles from the landfill. It has also gained the support of some influential people in state government, including Senator Phil Leventis of Sumter.

"To an extent, the watershed of citizen involvement on this issue was bound to happen given South Carolina's history as a dumping ground," Leventis said. "It has become a symbolic issue."

Joe McElveen, state representative from Sumter, said South Carolina residents are tired of being "the nation's pay toilet." The state is home to the massive Savannah River Nuclear Plant, a low-level nuclear waste dump, two hazardous

Photo by Andy Lavalley/The Item

A TRUCK DUMPS A LOAD OF HAZARDOUS WASTE AT THE GSX LANDFILL. MORE THAN THREE BILLION POUNDS OF POISONS ARE BURIED AT THE SITE.

waste incinerators, and an infectious waste dump — which all cater primarily to out-of-state military and industrial interests.

According to federal statistics, South Carolina imports more than three times as much hazardous waste as it exports to other states. The sheer volume has taken the state beyond the familiar "not-in-my-back-yard" complaints, creating a groundswell of popular opposition to hazardous and radioactive wastes.

CASE has played a pivotal role in organizing that opposition and focusing it on realistic goals. The group's proposal to curb dumping at GSX is being taken seriously in the statehouse, a testament to CASE's success in forcing legislators to consider environmental concerns. As an editorial in the Sumter *Item* observed, "In an election year no legislator is willing to risk the consequences of voting against curbs on toxic waste."

Even Governor Carroll Campbell jumped on board the anti-waste bandwagon last year by declaring a highly-publicized ban on waste imports from states that lack their own toxic landfills. It was a short ride. When other states promised to submit plans for building their own facilities, the governor quietly rescinded the ban and signed a regional dumping pact with Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

Campbell, a Republican running for re-election, continues to talk about controlling toxics, but has yet to act on his words. Political observers say he is determined not to let Democrats claim the environmental issue as their own.

Other Republicans are also joining the anti-waste chorus, giving CASE some unusual allies. Ken Corbett, a Republican state senator from Myrtle Beach, made the GSX landfill a major issue in his campaign. Myrtle Beach gets its drinking water from an aquifer that runs under the landfill.

"All the experts agree there will be a leak," Corbett said. "There's not enough money in the world to clean up and reclaim the wetlands of central South Carolina. We are slowly but surely dismantling the infrastructure that caters to out-of-state dumping."

Another measure of how far the environment has moved into the mainstream is the support of Pete Gustafson, lobbyist for the South Carolina Farm Bureau, which has historically resisted land-use regulation. "We'd like to see the landfill closed," said Gustafson. "Farmers are concerned about what may happen to that lake. The ultimate decision on this will be made by the public."

FAST-FOOD LOBBYING

Janet Lynam and Carol Boykin, the president and vice-president of CASE, try to make the hour drive to Columbia twice a week when the legislature is in session. The two homemakers put on their "lobbying suits," arm themselves with expert studies on violations at GSX, and leave their husbands notes telling them to pick up fast food for dinner.

Although Lynam and Boykin have the support of most voters and an increasing number of lawmakers, they still face an uphill battle when they enter the carpeted enclave at the statehouse. GSX employs nine lobbyists, more than any other interest group roaming the legislature.

On this particular day, Lynam and Boykin approached John Rogers, the speaker pro tempore of the House who opposed the CASE proposal to phase out the GSX landfill. Buttonholed in a hallway, Rogers nervously explained that North Carolina was thinking about opening a hazardous waste dump across the border from his district. "I don't want to do anything to encourage them," Rogers said.

Three times during his five-minute conversation with the women, Rogers glanced hopefully at passing colleagues. "Are you looking for me?" he shouted.

Finally, he excused himself and hurried into his office. "Look!" Lynam gasped, spotting a GSX lobbyist. "There's Ken Kinard sitting in there waiting for him!"

Boykin and Lynam headed for the House Ethics Committee to browse through the files. Rogers' campaign reports showed that Kinard spent "more than $100" entertaining him at one conference in late 1987 and "more than $200" at two others. Rogers reported he did not know the total sums. Rogers had also accepted a $200 campaign contribution from GSX in 1985.

Such gifts pale in comparison to John Felder, a Republican representative who led the opposition to CASE's legislation. Felder received $1,100 in contributions from GSX and $800 from an association of textile firms that dump their wastes at the landfill.

Ethics rules require lawmakers to report all gifts of $100 or more, but sources in the legislature have told Boykin that thousands in cash are often passed under the table. GSX reported paying about $100,000 in salaries to one full-time and eight part-time lobbyists last year, plus $50,000 in "expenses."

"I used to believe that government agencies and the legislature were protecting the public," said Boykin. "But that's not true. Mostly what's protected is industry, because people are not as powerful as industry. Lobbyists wine and dine legislators and give money for their campaigns. How are citizens going to fight that? The average person puts in a 40- to 60-hour week and is busy trying to live his life."

According to Senator Leventis, the profit margins for

Photo by Bruz Crowson/The Item

MEMBERS OF CASE MARCH AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE GSX LANDFILL TO PROTEST OUT-OF-STATE WASTES BEING DUMPED IN THEIR BACKYARD.

waste dealers is second only to the illicit drug industry. "An accountant friend of mine estimated that the GSX landfill generated a $16 million profit each year, which mostly went to pay debts it has with Laidlaw, its parent company in Canada," the senator said. "Even the profits that stay in South Carolina are plowed into lobbying efforts to keep the dump legal instead of research and development on waste reduction and recycling."

Ethics laws in South Carolina are among the loosest in the nation, and officials from the state Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) often wind up on the payroll of the company they are supposed to regulate. "Every site manager at GSX is a former DHEC official," complained Leventis. "Our laws are so spongy its outrageous."

The current GSX president, William Stilwell, was in charge of engineering at DHEC when the agency first considered whether to issue the landfill a permit to dump. Stilwell went to work for GSX three days before the permit was granted.

AT THE EPICENTER

When the GSX dump first opened in 1978, the state did almost nothing to monitor its operation. There was no state inspector at the dump, and officials rarely tested waste coming in.

Since then regulations have tightened, and GSX has become more sophisticated. Even its opponents agree that the landfill employs "state-of-the-art" technology. Visitors to the dump are treated to a slick promotional slide show. "Welcome," croons the narrator over a swell of upbeat music, "to the next generation in waste management." The show goes on to tout GSX, which runs numerous facilities across the South, as "the third-largest waste management company in North America."

Sam Moore, the GSX engineer in charge of public relations, has been with the company since it opened the landfill. "Waste slipped up on all of us in industry," he said, using a break-apart model to illustrate how the landfill works. Each "fill" — roughly the size of a football stadium — contains a thick plastic liner over five feet of impermeable clay. Since 1984 the company has employed a "leak-detection" system with a second plastic and clay liner beneath the first and a pumping system designed to detect any toxins that breach the upper liner.

For 15 to 20 years after each fill is sealed, GSX must pump out all the "leachate" — contaminated water that was trapped in the waste — until the fill is dry. "The EPA has learned from us, they have adopted our standards," Moore said.

Unfortunately, Section I of the waste dump, the part closest to Lake Marion, was filled before the company started using a second liner and leak-detection system in 1984. When asked about that section, Moore grew more sober. "I live here in Sumter County," he said, "and I will never feel comfortable with Section I until we can no longer get any leachate out of it. A dry landfill doesn't leak."

And what happens when the upper liners that keep rainwater out of the fill degrade in an estimated 25 to 50 years? Moore insisted that the slope of the site will ensure that water will run off instead of soaking into the buried waste. "What if there's an earthquake?" he quipped, throwing up his hands. "There are no guarantees in life."

In fact, the GSX landfill lies in an area that is prone to earthquakes. Geological surveys put the epicenter of one 1972 quake almost directly under the land where the GSX landfill now stands. When James Watt took over the Interior Department eight years later, however, federal officials "resited" the epicenter about 15 miles from the dump.

In the first two months of this year, Sumter County experienced four minor earthquakes measuring more than two on the Richter Scale. State seismology experts predict that a "moderate" quake registering five or more will hit the area within 50 years.

Few residents in Pinewood or Rimini have the time or education to interpret geological surveys or environmental risk assessments. Besides, even if cancer-causing toxins from the landfill are already seeping into local water supplies, it could be 20 years or more before they cause those who live near the GSX dump to fall ill or die.

Ann Clark still worries about her sons. But there's no money in her budget for luxuries like bottled water. She has little time or money to lend to CASE's efforts, but she supports them.

"I hope things get better," Clark said. "There's no room for worse, especially for the children. They're our future, and if things don't change, there's not going to be nothing left here for them." ❑

Sandy Smith is an investigative reporter with the Institute for Southern Studies.

THE GREEN RANK: SOUTH CAROLINA

How South Carolina ranks among the 50 states:

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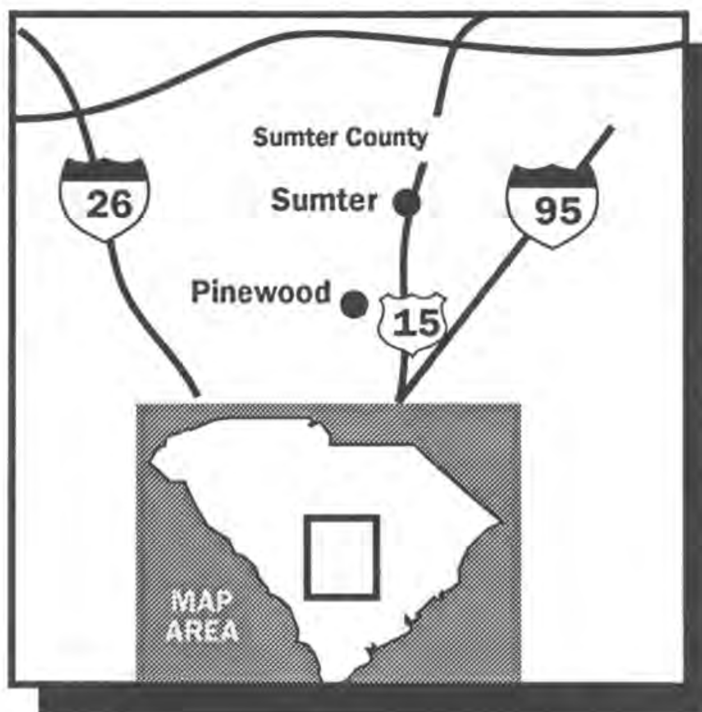
Environmental voting record	28



THE LAST WORD

A NEGATIVE LIGHT

I feel I must clarify some of the information in David Ramm's article "Over Committed" (SE Vol. XVII, No. 3). On page 14, you say that in South Carolina, "citizens can be held for three weeks with no chance to contest their confinement. All it takes is two signatures — neither of which need to be from someone experienced in mental health care."

The article goes on to say that "under South Carolina law, all it takes to commit someone to a state hospital for 20 days is two signatures."

In this state, an application for commitment requires two signatures, one of which must be that of a doctor. A person experienced in mental health care must be consulted by the certifying physician to comply with the state screening requirement.

A person can be held for 20 days from admission without a hearing if two designated examiners (one of whom must be a medical doctor) find the person is mentally ill as defined by law.

Also, reports must be filed by designated examiners within seven days of admission, and unless two designated examiners find the person to be mentally ill as defined by statute, the person must be released immediately.

A second area I feel needs clarification has to do with patients' rights for periodic review once they're committed. On page 15 you say, "Three of the blackest and poorest states in the nation — Mississippi, South Carolina and Alabama — have the loosest commitment laws, allowing citizens to be confined to mental hospitals indefinitely, without judicial review."

The fact is that under South Carolina law, every patient must be given notice every six months that they are entitled to petition the probate court for a re-examination and review hearing.

A third and final point: On page 16, you say a judge committed a man who had not yet arrived for his hearing. South Carolina law says a person has a right to be present at the commitment hearing, and such right may be waived only by the person or the person's attorney.

I commend your efforts to examine the issue of whether race plays a role in commitment to mental hospitals. But I feel South Carolina was portrayed in a negative light because of inaccurate statements. I realize our commitment law may not be up to the standards reached by other states, but it's not as the article made it appear. It's important to report accurately on such an important and difficult subject.

—*Joseph J. Bevilacqua*
Commissioner, S.C. Mental Health

FORCED INJECTIONS

Congratulations on breaking the silence on psychiatric racism (SE Vol. XVII, No. 3). It was great to see summaries of your investigative reporting surface in the national media.

I've been active in the little-known, international movement of psychiatric survivors for 13 years. This is one tough issue, but by forming coalitions with other oppressed groups we can win.

Obviously, this huge subject cannot be covered in one issue. But a few points need to be raised:

▼ The most frequently used family of psychiatric drugs are the "neuroleptics" — with brand names such as Thorazine, Stelazine, Mellaril, Haldol, and Prolixin. These drugs can kill and can cause brain damage.

▼ The newest trend is to court-order individuals living in the community to report to the local mental health center for neuroleptic injections regularly, against their will. It's called "outpatient commitment." Frankly, I consider this out-and-out fascism.

▼ Electroshock is on the rise.

▼ Many people have been helped by alternatives that consider the whole person and add to the individual's feeling of empowerment.

I edit a letter called *Dendron News* that regularly covers these issues and our movement. Your readers are welcome to write us for information at: Dendron, P.O. Box 11284, Eugene, OR 97440.

—*David Oaks*
Editor, *Dendron News*

A RACIST ATTACK

I regret the intrusion of racism in the cartoon and the short item under it on page three of "Dateline: The South" (SE Vol. XVII, No. 4). Is the purpose to express opposition to a Japanese elementary school in the United States? Or is it some negative feeling about Japanese companies and citizens coming to Atlanta?

We must remember that the United States has its own schools in Japan. In Europe, U.S. citizens are educated at U.S. schools in U.S. military enclaves.

The cartoon itself is blatantly racist. The two characters are stereotypical, though not as viciously so as the anti-Japanese stereotypes of World War II.

If you printed the item to point out the commercial imperialism of Japan in the U.S., you should have done it in the context of the growing economic imperialism of the Netherlands, Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, and other nations aided and abetted by big U.S. corporations.

What you did is a simple racist attack on a widespread business process. This kind of racism has resulted in the physical attack — and even death — of Asians. Racism is not only found in African-American/white relationships, but is any form of discrimination based on ethnic or cultural differences. We have to work together for justice and freedom in all areas. Let us not have the same divisive tactics which corporations and governments try on us.

—*Marii Hasegawa*
Richmond, Va.

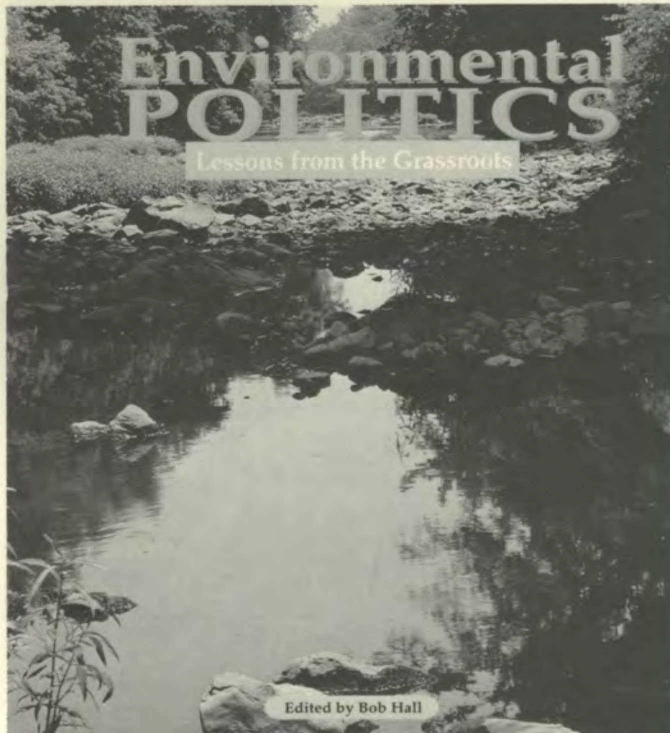
I recently resumed my subscription, and was very happy that my first issue arrived today. However, I was disgusted to see Steven Cragg's caricature of slant-eyed Japanese. It is an extremely offensive cartoon. I had certainly assumed *Southern Exposure* would fight Japanese-bashing, not promote it.

—*Caroline Wang*
Berkeley, Calif.

We welcome letters from our readers. Send your comments and criticisms to The Last Word, Southern Exposure, *P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.*

ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS...

"...tells the inspiring stories of struggle and success, and how people did it. Anyone working in a conservative state, especially in rural communities, will learn from and be uplifted by this remarkable book." *—Lois Gibbs, Love Canal leader and president of the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste*



Environmental Politics, edited by Bob Hall, focuses less on the grim threats each community faced than on *why* people respond, *what* they do to win, and *how* grassroots activism and electoral politics combine to produce institutional change in a conservative state.

In addition to an in-depth essay on the context and significance of each lesson, the book features a dozen local and statewide campaigns covering nearly every aspect of environmental politics – wetlands, land-use, incinerators, air pollution, strip mining, waste dumps, and much more.

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#1 — The key is connecting the environmental issue to its broader public health, economic, and/or recreational significance for a specific constituency.

#3 — A moral undercurrent in each campaign sustained its inner core of activists and attracted empathy from a larger body of supporters.

#6 — Public education programs were aimed directly at the group's primary constituencies and did not depend on the biased filter of the mass media.

#10 — There is no substitute for direct organizing, door-to-door, person-to-person.

#14 — Breaking down racism requires developing concrete working relationships over a long period of time.

#19 — Activists in issue campaigns inevitably confront the fact that they need better public officials and must learn how to elect them.

#21 — Phone banks, canvassing, and targeting of precincts are essential ingredients for identifying and mobilizing sympathetic voters.

Send $7 for each book to Institute for Southern Studies, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702

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