



DEFENDING THE SOUTH'S ROLE IN THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

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“The South seceded over the issue of slavery.”

The latest trespass on the South by the North just before the war was in regard to the expansion of slavery. Yes, it was so. This fact was pointed out in several of the secession ordinances of the Southern States. However, there were several other factors in play at the time and before, many of them also mentioned in these same ordinances. Their assault on slavery was yet another device in which the North practiced domination over the South by refusing it access to the Western Territories. In this regard, there are a few points that must be considered:

1. Slavery was legal at the time, and was an institution that the Southern economy had become dependant on. Furthermore, this dependency had been prolonged and “locked-in” by the oppressive policies enacted by the Federal government, through the actions of Northern politicians via their superior numbers in Congress. The South was paying 70% of the Federal budget, with only 10% being reinvested in the South. Where was the rest going? 90% was going North to build railroads, improve harbors, and subsidize industrial manufacturing. So, in other words, the slave-dependant Southern economy was providing immense welfare for the “free” North.
2. Taking the final disagreement between North and South as the ONLY disagreement is to deny a long history of sectional strife in regard to several issues. South Carolina nearly seceded from the Union in 1832 based on the outrageous tariffs placed on Southern imports, ever after called the “Nullification Crisis.” South Carolina maintained that any State has the right to nullify any Federal laws that it deems blatantly unfair, and the Federal government, of course, maintained that it did not. President Jackson even threatened military intervention upon South Carolina if she did not concede. His threat, in turn, was met with South Carolina’s threat to secede from the Union. A compromise was reached in this case, and effectually neither the right of nullification or the right of secession was settled. Incidentally, these same tariffs were promised to be DOUBLED with the new incoming President in 1861, Abraham Lincoln, by way of the Morrill Tariff.
3. The Abolitionists of the North were demanding of the South something that they could not bring themselves to do ... the immediate demolition of slavery. The Northern States had once also been “Slave States,” but they soon realized that the advantages of exploiting the influx of poor European immigrants, paying them meager wages, far outweighed the perpetual and complete care of slaves. This flood of cheap labor was readily at hand in the North, not so much in the South. In addition, slavery was not simply eradicated and all slaves set free in an instant in the North. There were slaves still in New England into the 1850s, the remnants of the institution that were obligated to serve their Yankee masters until their deaths. This is not to mention the fortune that was made from the Northern-based slave shipping industry on which Massachusetts, in particular, thrived. Or the fact that, in most cases, once the slave had outlived his usefulness in the North, he was sold South where his labors were imperative, which resulted in another tier of Northern profit off of slavery. All of this could hardly be considered the moral high ground on the slavery question on the part of the North, but rather several more means to satisfy Northern money-lust.

4. If the Southern States had seceded solely to preserve slavery, surely an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States protecting slavery "forever" would have brought them back into the Union. Such a proposed 13th Amendment was made, was favored by Lincoln, and was awaiting ratification by the States in April of 1861. Instead of showing interest, the Confederacy fired on Fort Sumter.

To the weak-brained and short-sighted, YES, the South seceded over slavery. But not to those who can comprehend that the issues of the day were far reaching, ancient, and multi-faceted.

So what did the South secede for? INDEPENDENCE from a ruling section of the country, SELF-DETERMINATION to care for its own interests, and to PRESERVE the vision of the country given us by the Constitution of the United States.

"The North was fighting to free the slaves."

There were some who took up arms to emancipate the slaves, surely. But this was hardly the aim of the Federal government, or of the majority of Northerners:

1. To attempt to lump the reasons why hundreds of thousands of men from either section of the country fought into one, all-inclusive reason is pure folly. It can not be done. Men fight for their own reasons, and in the case of the War Between the States, the cause of slavery, preservation or abolition, is most definitely scarce. The reaction to the Emancipation Proclamation in the North is a undeniable indicator of Northern sentiment. The New York Draft Riots, flaming editorials in Northern newspapers, and mass desertions from the Federal forces make it clear that the masses in the North had no intentions of dying for the emancipation of the slaves in the South. Furthermore, the fact that Union Generals Grant and Sherman owned slaves themselves hardly helps make the case that Northerners were fighting for abolition.

2. The reasons for the Federal government to coerce the South, even when it had not the legal authority to do so, is much easier to determine. As addressed in a previous section of this writing, the money flowing from the South to the North, and the immense power it gave the North, made the South's separation impossible to Northern eyes and pocketbooks. The case for this position can not be made more clear than was written in the Chicago Daily Times of December 10th, 1860:

"Few can estimate even the political results which would flow from a separation. The impossibility for our people to maintain the government so wisely formed for us, in a time of profound peace and unexampled prosperity, is an overwhelming proof that they are incompetent to withstand the seductions of passion and the allurements of power. It will be a practical proof that it is impossible for us, under the most favorable circumstances, to be just against our prejudices, and that we are incompetent to exercise that enlarged forbearance required to govern vast and diversified interests. Slavery in the present strife has been the means, and not the end. The underlying power that has moved this commotion has been a desire to distract and enfeeble the opposition of the weaker section, that the majority section might the more readily appropriate to itself the patronage and power of the government.

As the nation now stands, the money, trade, and commerce of the country all flow Northward. The South has left the shipping and carrying trade of this immense country wholly to the North. The mercantile business of the nation is done in the North. From Delaware to Texas, every merchant goes North to buy his goods. The North furnishes to the South all her manufactures, down even to pins, buttons and scrub-brooms. The result of all this is to keep the almost entire skilled and most profitable labor in the North, and to build up her wealth and power with unparalleled rapidity. It gives her the monied center, and forces all exchanges in her favor, in a word, it makes the South a vast agriculture and planting tributary to the skill and enterprise of the North.

The South does not fail to manufacture or import from any natural obstructions to these pursuits. She has within herself every element for a great manufacturing and commercial nation; but her climate and soil have been such that she could well afford to pay others to perform such labors for her. She has voluntarily accepted the part of "unskilled labor." With her immense staples, she has furnished near three-fourths of the entire exports of the country. Last year she furnished seventy-two per cent. of the whole.

This immense export balances the trade of the nation, and is again recovered back from her by the

North, by selling her goods and manufactures. It is almost impossible to estimate the amount of money realized yearly out of the South by the North. It, beyond all question, amounts to hundreds of millions. By the present arrangement, also, we have a tariff that protects our manufactures from thirty to fifty per cent., and enables us to consume large quantities of Southern cotton, and to compete in our whole home market with the skilled labor of Europe. This operates to compel the South to pay an indirect bounty to our skilled labor, of millions annually. This result would follow under any tariff, for revenue or otherwise.

Let us, for a moment, reverse the picture, and look dissolution in the face: At one single blow our foreign commerce must be reduced to less than one-half what it now is. Our coastwise trade would pass into other hands. One-half of our shipping would lie idle at our wharves. We should lose our trade with the South, with all of its immense profits.

Our manufactories would be in utter ruins. Let the South adopt the free-trade system, or that of a tariff for revenue, and these results would alike follow. If protection be wholly withdrawn from our labor, it could not compete, with all the prejudices against it, with the labor of Europe. We should be driven from the market, and millions of our people would be compelled to go out of employment. But the South will not have free-trade—even England would not ask her to do so; for the moment we are compelled to pay the same tariff with the English, instead of having the tariff in our favor, we should at once be driven from the market. Even if the South makes no discriminations by law against us, we must fail.

The operation of a Southern tariff would be at once to draw off an immense amount of our skilled labor, and to build up manufactures in the South. While this drain would be made on our skilled labor, a large portion of our shipping interest would pass into the hands of the South; and Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston and New Orleans would again become the rivals of our Eastern cities in the export and import trade. The Northern cities would be thrown back half a century in their material growth and prosperity, and a complete revolution would take place in the commerce of the American continent. These revulsions will bring in their train very general bankruptcy and individual ruin. We shall pass through the most exhausting and protracted crisis ever suffered by a trading people.

The Northwest would not only be compelled to suffer her proportion of these ills, but she will have the most palpable and peculiar grievances of her own to suffer. The natural mission of the Northwest is to become the great granary of the Republic. The South can not only feed herself, but she can become a large exporter of grain and provisions of all kinds. She requires but a single year to change her cotton and tobacco into corn and wheat. As long as we remained united, it was a matter of indifference to the South, and her people chose to expend their labor upon their great staples. When we are separated a new policy will be inaugurated. They will raise more grain in the South, and thereby become more independent, and reduce the amount of sugar, cotton and tobacco, and thereby increase its price. This policy is already comprehended and proposed at the South. Thus the Northwest will be diverted or driven from the position of “feeder of the South,” and millions on millions of money will be lost to us. Besides this we shall be cut off from the mouth of the Mississippi, or reach it through a foreign country, and be compelled to reach the tropics through Boston and New York.”

“The South was fighting to preserve slavery”

As with claiming this as the South’s reason for seceding from the Union, this argument is simplistic and foolish.

1. As with Northern soldiers, Southerners had their own varied personal reasons to fight. To throw the blanket of slavery over them all flies in the face of historical fact. Less than 7% of Southerners were slave owners. Even if you use the inflating method of using “slave-owning families,” a figure estimated around 24% of Southern families, this is hardly the majority, and who can reasonably argue that the vast majority of Southerners were putting themselves at risk of pain and death so another can keep his slaves?

Furthermore, several Southern Generals, such as Lee and Jackson, did not own slaves during the war, with Lee freeing his slaves well before the beginning of hostilities. Lee, in particular, even admonished slavery as a “moral and political evil.” In addition, a large but uncertain number of Blacks, free and slave, supported the Confederacy in many roles, including the first Black combat regiment to enlist, the 1st Louisiana Native Guard. This hardly supports the “preservation of slavery” cause.

2. The Southern government had very clear reasons for fighting ... they were attacked. Yes, of course, the

Confederacy fired the first shots at Fort Sumter, but it could hardly suffer a foreign power to occupy a fortification that controlled one of its principle ports. What independent nation who wished to be taken seriously could? This circumstance was the intended outcome designed by the Lincoln administration. Now the South was the aggressor, and the North would have to respond. It did by invasion. The South did the only thing it could by defending itself militarily ... hardly an unjust action.

3. Toward the end of the war, admittedly a desperate move and one that came too late, the Confederacy approved the enlistment of slaves into the armed forces, with freedom as a condition of their service. This was what amounted to an ex facto end to slavery in the seceded States. In other words, the South was willing to end slavery and risk further economic ruin in a last ditch effort to attain the goal of freedom from the Union.

“Slavery was the issue. It is mentioned too often not to have been.”

Slavery was not THE issue. Slavery was the TOOL used to address THE issue, that being, of course, MONEY and POWER.

1. The North knew the South was pumping life into the North via its enormous burden of the Federal budget. The North also knew the South was getting sick of it. And the North knew that the treatment of the South as an “inferior” section of the country by using its power in Congress could eventually be denied through the legislative process if the South grew. This serving of justice would mean the North could no longer feast off of the South. Expansion into the West would aid the South in attaining this justice by growing its population, and thereby growing its representation in Congress. In Northern eyes, this could not be allowed.

2. This fear is where the Northern political maneuverists who cared nothing about slavery one way or the other, and the Abolitionists who did, could forge an alliance to achieve what they wanted together. The way for the North to stop the expansion of Southern interests in the West, which would be dependant on slavery the same as the South proper, was by slapping down slavery in the West. The North never made any real effort to end slavery where it already existed, only in cases where the expansion of slavery would aid the South in gaining power in Congress. After all, the slave-dependant Southern economy was what was feeding the North many millions of dollars annually. Stopping THE EXPANSION of slavery was only a tool used by the North to stop the South from gaining any power that would threaten the North's welfare check.

3. During the war, however, victory at any cost was the objective. If the abolition of all slavery could be used as a tool to subjugate the South, then so be it. After all, the usual income from the South would no longer be necessary if the South lost, because the South, as a conquered territory of the North, could be milked for all it was worth and exploited in any manner with no consequences to fear whatsoever ... and that is exactly what happened. History books now call it “Reconstruction.”

4. The best evidence that Lincoln didn't care about freeing slaves at all, except as a means to an end, is ironically the Emancipation Proclamation itself. By its wording, the proclamation legally freed absolutely no one. It “freed” slaves in areas where the Union had no control, and left slavery in tact in areas that the Union military did control. The objective of the proclamation was three-fold: 1) to pie off the European nations from recognizing and aiding the Confederacy, 2) to incite a slave rebellion in the South which would require Southern forces to be pulled from the field of battle in order to put it down, and 3) to give the demoralized Yankee soldier something more noble to fight for than forcing the South back into the Union. The effect was not what he had hoped for. It MAY have helped keep England and France out of the war, but the slave revolt never came and the switch in war goals did more damage to the Northern soldier's morale than good, as mentioned earlier in this writing.

“The South chose to be dependant on slavery, so the war is still her own fault.”

This is another simplistic and foolish view of a complicated issue. The role of slavery itself in this country's development is complex. The blame for slavery can be spread all over the world. As for America, the North and South both have shares in slavery.

1. As mentioned earlier, the North moved toward industrialization. Their economy was still heavily dependant on federal funds, SUBSIDIES, that were almost entirely paid for by the South. The Southern agrarian economy was heavily dependant on slavery, which paid for itself AND 90% of the rest of the national budget with it's 72% of the gross national product. So, if the South decided to end slavery, and thereby end a very profitable economy, who was going to pay for everything? The United States would have experienced virtually no growth at all, and the national economy may simply have collapsed.

2. The North profited off of the GRADUAL abolition of slavery, but the South was not in the position to do the same, even if she had wanted to do so. The North had a virtually inexhaustible supply of foreign immigrants to exploit, the South did not. The South could not simply free the slaves and then pay them meager wages as the North did the immigrants, for a couple of reasons; 1) if freed, there was no guarantee that the former slaves would stay in the South to work the plantations, 2) slaves could not responsibly be freed and thrown into the world to fend for themselves all in an instant en mass. It must be remembered that slaves were completely cared for by their masters. They were fed, clothed, and in all ways dependant. To suddenly throw dependent people such as the Southern slaves into a free society would largely leave them not knowing what to do to support - and protect - themselves. During "Reconstruction," this is exactly what happened. They were exploited, taken advantage of at every turn, and were used as political tools by the new ruling class in the South, the Carpetbaggers, all under the guise of freedom which lead to a wedge being driven between Southern whites and blacks that hasn't been completely overcome to this day.

CONCLUSION

The North was fighting to maintain it's control of the power invested in the Federal government, and all the money that came with it. The South was fighting to separate from this situation, reinvest her own wealth into herself, and protect her own interests. As with virtually all wars, the issue was MONEY and POWER.