

EMANCIPATION IN THE VIRGINIA TOBACCO BELT, 1850-1870

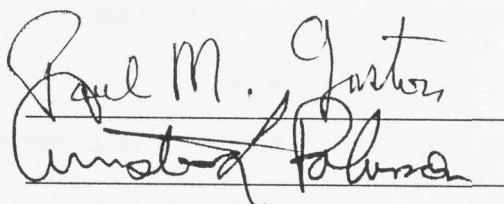
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Dissertation: "Emancipation in the Virginia Tobacco Belt,
1850-1870."

This study explores the transformation from slavery to freedom in the tobacco region that formed the hinterland for an industrially-advanced southern city. This transformation was decisively influenced by Afro-Americans who employed pieces of the slave past to shape the contours of legal freedom, showing thereby the power of black labor over the process of emancipation and the development of capitalism.

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community. Market relations accelerated during the war, and afterwards bequeathed a legacy that shortened reconstruction and facilitated the evasion of Republican government.

Because antebellum industry was the area where market relations were in greatest evidence, it had been on the cutting edge of economic change. Thus it was here that slave laborers won many concessions. Postwar industrial transition was relatively smooth, but black workers neither increased their numbers nor achieved any occupational mobility. Many lost economic status and bargaining power. By contrast, adjusting to free agricultural labor required revolutionary changes which created the opportunity for labor to force greater concessions. Thus agriculture proved more susceptible to labor pressure than did industry, and it was primarily on the plantation that freedpeople influenced the terms of their labor. The result was sharecropping, well-established by 1867.

In the South, full-blown market relations did not appear for decades; meanwhile, their development differed widely across time and place, influenced by the character of the society in which they appeared. In the tobacco belt, prior exposure to wage labor resulted in a more rapid adaptation to and acceptance of the postwar situation than was the case in cotton districts.

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VIRGINIA

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Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1855 by J.H. Colton & Co. in the Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York

Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50

EXPLANATIONS
Rail Roads
Common
Canals
State Capital * RICHMOND
County Towns •
Valeo. & Depots o Scottsville

EASTERN REGIONS

● SOUTHERN PIEDMONT
(TOBACCO BELT)

● TIDEWATER

● NORTHERN PIEDMONT

WESTERN REGIONS

VALLEY

● MOUNTAINS
(includes WEST VIR-
GINIA before 1861)

~ JAMES RIVER

RICHMOND MANCHESTER AND SPRING HILL

SCALE OF FEET
0 100 200 300 400 500

NORFOLK PORTSMOUTH GOSSPORT

SCALE OF FEET
0 100 200 300 400 500

Introduction

The emancipation in the United States of almost four million Afro-American slaves in 1865 was one of the most dramatic social revolutions in modern history. Southern emancipation formed part of a wider nineteenth-century pattern, beginning in 1833 and ending in 1888, which saw slave societies topple throughout the Atlantic community, from the United States in the north, through the Caribbean, and southward to Brazil. In each of these societies, slavery's demise was part and parcel of the acceleration of industrial capitalism. Thus, the terms "Age of Emancipation" and "Age of Capital," terms that refer to the main themes of nineteenth-century social development, reflect broad and related trends. Seen against this global backdrop, the emancipation drama that unfolded in the southern United States, while part of a larger pattern, nonetheless exhibited distinguishing characteristics shaped in part by the character of slavery in various regions.¹

¹Eric J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, 1848-1875 (New

Throughout the nineteenth century, the South had held sway as the wealthiest and most powerful of all New World slave systems. Within her 1860 boundaries lived two-thirds of all Afro-Americans, a half million free Negroes and four million slaves. From a total of about 450,000 original Africans imported into the country, most of whom came before the closing of the Atlantic slave trade in 1808, this large population had increased through natural reproduction. They represented only about 4.5 percent of the total importations brought to the New World.² Outside of pockets like the Sea Islands and coastal Louisiana, where large black majorities had lived distantly from white society, and where African importations had been greatest, southern Afro-Americans were several decades removed from their African forebears and culture by 1865. In contrast, the offspring of the huge imports to the Caribbean and South

York, 1975), and David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823 (Ithaca, 1975) together show how this period exemplified these trends. See also C. Vann Woodward, "The Price of Freedom," in What Was Freedom's Price? ed. by David G. Sansing (Jackson, Miss., 1978), pp. 93-8; Eric Foner, Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy (Baton Rouge, 1983), p. 1; Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds., Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Selected from the Holdings of the National Archives of the United States, Series II: The Black Military Experience (Cambridge, 1982), pp. xv-xvii.

²Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census (Madison, Wis., 1969), pp. 88-9.

America, where the Atlantic trade often continued well into the century, numbered a comparatively small population at emancipation.³

The slaveholding class in the South was equally distinctive. Individual southern slaveholders owned fewer slaves, on the average, than did slaveowners elsewhere in the hemisphere. While many other slave systems functioned as colonial extensions of metropolitan powers, southern slaveholders governed, in sometimes stormy tandem, with the representatives of a free labor society to their north. They also lived with a large nonslaveholding white majority. In 1860, about three-fourths of all southern whites--the yeomanry--owned no slaves. Most of them lived in the upcountry, physically removed from the plantation districts located in the more fertile black belts. Whereas in the rest of slaveholding America, nonslaveholding whites were relatively few in number, the southern yeomanry tipped the ratio of white to black toward a white majority.⁴

The emancipation that occurred in the South also differed in significant respects from emancipations elsewhere in the New World. It took a long and bloody civil war to break the chains of slavery in the United States; the

³Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," American Historical Review 85 (February 1980), 73-8.

⁴Woodward, "The Price of Freedom," p. 96.

only parallel was the successful slave uprising of Haiti in 1792. And, when it was over, the end of southern slavery marked more than the end of a labor system; it also signaled the death of a way of life.⁵ Slavery's destruction in the South therefore gave Reconstruction a literal meaning: the South in 1865 faced the necessary task of reconstituting its social and economic system.

Thus, as the war ended, the task confronting the United States was the establishment of bourgeois social and productive relationships to replace those defined by over two centuries of bondage. The ways in which freedpeople would become wage laborers and ex-masters employers were the key problems of Reconstruction.⁶ These changes represented an enormous challenge. Although shifts in power

⁵Woodward, "The Price of Freedom," pp. 97-8; Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York, 1972), pp. 1-25.

⁶W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880 (New York, reprint ed., 1935), pp. 15-6, 20, 29, first emphasized this point, which is now commonplace in the literature. See, for example, Thavolia Glymph, "Freedpeople and Ex-Masters: Shaping a New Order in the Postbellum South, 1865-1868," in Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy, ed. by Glymph and John J. Kushma (Arlington, Texas, 1985), pp. 49-50; Armstead L. Robinson, "'Worser dan Jeff Davis': The Coming of Free Labor during the Civil War, 1861-1865," in *ibid.*, pp. 12-3; Harold D. Woodman, "Sequel to Slavery: The New History Views the Postbellum South," Journal of Southern History 43 (November 1977), 520-23; and Barbara Jeanne Fields, "The Nineteenth-Century American South: History and Theory," Plantation Society in the Americas 2 (April 1983), 7-13.

did not always occur in clear directions, patterns nonetheless did emerge. Former planters' continuing control over land and their desire to minimize change did not prevail completely over Afro-Americans' ideology of labor relations. Freedpeople now worked in a nascent capitalist economy in which their labor, previously owned by another person, itself became a commodity on the market. With it they bargained for and acquired much more power than was comfortable for their former masters.⁷ Ex-slaves influenced politics through the exercise of the ballot, whereas postwar disfranchisement made the political influence of planters, for a time, very uncertain. Planters also faced competition from the growing business class. And, former nonslaveholding whites also began to enter the market economy. Together these changes laid the groundwork for free labor's inauguration throughout the South.

For some time now the broad outlines of economic reconstruction have formed a subject of controversy among historians. There is yet no consensual interpretation about the emancipation period in the South. Emancipation studies is a relatively young field composed, at this point, largely

⁷Barbara Jeanne Fields, "The Advent of Capitalist Agriculture: The New South in a Bourgeois World," in Glymph and Kushma, eds., Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy, pp. 80-5; Foner, Nothing But Freedom, pp. 40, 72-3, and "Comment," in Darlene Clark Hine, ed., The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future (Baton Rouge, 1986), pp. 77-9.

of case studies of regional economies.⁸ For as the South differed from other New World slave societies, so too did slavery within the South contain distinct regimes. Thus, the case study approach is useful for gaining greater understanding of both the diversity and the similarity of various transformations.⁹

Emancipation studies seek to understand the nature and scope of the changes wrought by the Civil War and its

⁸Armstead L. Robinson, "The Difference Freedom Made: The Emancipation of Afro-Americans," in Hine, ed., The State of Afro-American History, pp. 51-74.

⁹Published monographs and edited works include Roberta Sue Alexander, North Carolina Faces the Freedmen: Race Relations during Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-67 (Durham, 1985); Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr., eds., Toward a New South? Studies in Post Civil War Southern Communities (Greenwood, Conn., 1982); Robert F. Engs, Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia, 1861-1890 (Philadelphia, 1979); Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth-Century (New Haven, 1985); Foner, Nothing But Freedom; Walter J. Fraser, Jr., and Winfred B. Moore, Jr., eds., From the Old South to the New: Essays on the Transitional South (Westport, Conn., 1981); Glymph and Kushma, eds., Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy; Steven Hahn, The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890 (New York, 1983); Peter Kolchin, First Freedom: The Response of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction (Westport, Conn., 1972); Otto H. Olsen, ed., Reconstruction and Redemption in the South (Baton Rouge, 1980); Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment (Indianapolis, 1964); Crandall A. Shifflett, Patronage and Poverty in the Tobacco South: Louisa County, Virginia, 1860-1900 (Knoxville, 1982); Michael Wayne, The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District, 1860-1880 (Baton Rouge, 1983); Jonathan M. Wiener, Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885 (Baton Rouge, 1978).

primary result, the legal freedom of Afro-Americans. Historians often approach this problem within the context of a continuity/discontinuity debate focused on whether the changes of civil war and emancipation were insignificant or revolutionary in nature.¹⁰ Some are persuaded that uninterrupted planter control over land, ongoing coercion of black labor, and continuing poverty and racism meant that little fundamental change emanated from four years of convulsive conflict.¹¹ Advocates of discontinuity argue that the sudden end of 250 years of slavery, by destroying the pivot on which southern society turned, inevitably

¹⁰The touchstone of this debate is C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1951), which emphasizes the revolutionary nature of the war and emancipation.

¹¹For works that emphasize the importance of continued planter landholding and interpret the postwar South in terms of continuity, see Wiener, "Planter Persistence and Social Change: Alabama, 1850-1870," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 7 (Autumn 1976), 235-60, and Social Origins of the New South; Jay R. Mandle, The Roots of Black Poverty: The Southern Plantation Economy after the Civil War (Durham, 1978); Dwight B. Billings, Jr., Planters and the Making of a "New South" (Chapel Hill, 1979); A. Jane Townes, "The Effect of Emancipation on Large Landholdings, Nelson and Goochland Counties, Virginia," Journal of Southern History 45 (August 1979), 403-12; Gail W. O'Brien, "Power and Influence in Mecklenburg County, 1850-1880," North Carolina Historical Review 54 (Spring 1977), 120-44; Randolph B. Campbell, "Population Persistence and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Texas: Harrison County, 1850-1880," Journal of Southern History 48 (May 1982), 185-205; James Tice Moore, "Redeemers Reconsidered: Change and Continuity in the Democratic South, 1870-1900," Journal of Southern History 44 (August 1978), 357-78; Shifflett, Patronage and Poverty in the Tobacco South; Wayne, The Reshaping of Plantation Society.

wrought revolutionary changes.¹² I propose to chart a slightly different course, one which finds in the war and reconstruction elements of both continuity and discontinuity. This approach not only helps us better understand the reconstruction era, by allowing broad trends and tendencies to stand out in clearer relief, but also has the advantage of yielding new insights into slavery and the war as well.

It is increasingly clear that emancipation experiences varied from one crop region to another. Yet a key feature of the growing body of work on emancipation--as is also true of slavery studies in general--is its focus on the cotton South.¹³ Moreover, many studies have emphasized the

¹²Works that emphasize discontinuity include Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America; Engs, Freedom's First Generation; Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground, "The Nineteenth-Century American South," and "The Advent of Capitalist Agriculture"; Foner, Nothing But Freedom; Glymph, "Freedpeople and Ex-Masters"; Hahn, The Roots of Southern Populism; Thomas C. Holt, "'An Empire over the Mind': Emancipation, Race, and Ideology in the British West Indies and the American South," in Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward, ed. by J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York, 1982), 283-314; Robinson, "'Worser dan Jeff Davis'"; Woodman, "The Reconstruction of the Cotton Plantation in the New South," in Glymph and Kushma, eds., 95-119; Rose, "Jubilee & Beyond: What Was Freedom?" in Sansing, ed., The Price of Freedom, 3-20; Woodward, "The Price of Freedom."

¹³Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground, and Shifflett, Patronage and Poverty, are the only two works of those mentioned above that focus on a tobacco region; Foner, Nothing But Freedom, pp. 74-110, discusses the transition in

postwar period at the expense of the 1850s and the war, at best providing a snapshot of society in 1860. Consequently we are only just beginning to understand the transition in other crop regions--rice in coastal South Carolina, sugar in southern Louisiana, and tobacco in the Upper South.

Generally, we know little about how local economic and political developments during the 1850s influenced postwar society.

My study contributes to emancipation studies in three ways. It explores the transformation in a hitherto unstudied tobacco region of the Upper South, and thereby fills a gap in the literature. It examines those elements of slave society salient to the development of market relations in the immediate postwar period, and consequently provides a clearer picture of Virginia slavery, itself a surprisingly neglected topic. Finally, it analyzes the war and reconstruction from the perspective of economic and labor history. By doing so, it aims to show not only the ways in which labor reorganization influence the lives of

a rice region. The cotton South is also the focus for the econometricians, including: Robert Higgs, Competition and Coercion: Blacks in the American Economy, 1865-1914 (Cambridge, 1977); Joseph D. Reid, Jr., "Sharecropping as an Understandable Market Response: The Post-Bellum South," Journal of Economic History 33 (March 1973), 106-30, and "Sharecropping and Agricultural Uncertainty," Economic Development and Cultural Change 24 (April 1976, 549-76; Stephen J. DeCanio, Agriculture in the Postbellum South: The Economics of Production and Supply (Cambridge, 1974); Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation (Cambridge, 1977).

workers, but how workers can sometimes use a period of transition to their own advantage, and to the distinct disadvantage of those who seek to expropriate their labor. This study also shows how Afro-American social ideology fundamentally affected the broader course of Virginia history between 1850 and 1870. Lastly, it is the story of how capitalism came to Virginia, and how it developed in its early phases.

I have found that elements of market society were already present in antebellum Virginia, that they rapidly accelerated during the war, and that they bequeathed an important postwar legacy which not only shortened the reconstruction process but which also facilitated Virginia's evasion of Republican rule. At the same time, the changes in productive relations caused by the advent of capitalism led to a fundamental redefinition of labor which constituted a dramatic, revolutionary break with the past, without which Afro-Americans would have been unable to influence postwar society in the ways that they did.

During the 1850s, the Virginia economy generally presented less of a contrast to the North than did those of other southern states. The Old Dominion possessed two-thirds of the industrial capacity of the future Confederate states. Important commercial and business ties existed with northern and other Atlantic markets, and transportation expanded significantly during the prewar

years. As these changes unfolded, the interstate slave trade carried away tens of thousands of surplus bondsmen and women to the southern cotton districts. For the hundreds of thousands of Afro-Americans left in Virginia, the early stirrings of market relations demanded greater flexibility in the utilization of both enslaved and free Negro labor. Particularly in industry and transportation, an increasing number worked as temporary hired hands. The advent of market relations was a portentous harbinger of greater changes to come.

Despite the appearance of economic and social changes antithetical to slavery, Virginians on the eve of the war held the largest Afro-American population of any southern state. About half of the slaves were concentrated in plantation agriculture in the piedmont, where they numbered majorities in most counties. In 1860, black Virginians produced a record tobacco crop. This central and southern piedmont region, the tobacco belt, was thus the stronghold of slavery by the time of the war, and it continued to more nearly resemble Lower South plantation agriculture than did other Virginia regions. It was in the Tidewater that slavery had been most eroded during the nineteenth century; in the Valley and even moreso in the mountains, slavery had never been very important.

Nevertheless, as a result of the piedmont's close economic links to other regions, this large and dispersed

population of rural, agricultural plantation slaves had more than a passing acquaintance with the rudiments of wage labor by 1865. During the flush 1850s, as the Virginia economy experienced the birth pangs of industrialization, labor in all sections grew scarcer even as the so-called surplus continued to be sold southward. The expansion of slave hiring helped antebellum Virginia industrialists adapt to these changing economic realities, but sufficient labor could not always be found in regions where needs were most acute. Consequently, the surplus slave population of the tobacco belt acquired characteristics of a labor reserve for hirers in places distant from their owners. Many hired bondsmen from the tobacco belt worked in places as removed as Richmond, Petersburg, the Valley, and western Virginia's Kanawha valley. Urban areas within the belt itself generated an additional market for temporary hired slave labor. The experiences of this particularized labor force touched a wide portion of the slave community that remained on the plantation, preparing both slaves and masters for a different method of labor organization.

Ironically, the war that slaveholders waged to preserve the old ways of life had the effect of further unravelling antebellum society, in large part because mobilization fostered a process of ever greater modifications in labor organization that mocked the very object of disunion. The ferment of civil war telescoped the rudimentary changes that

were already underway in the Virginia economy during the 1850s and elevated them to revolutionary proportions, bringing tremendous demands to bear upon the labor supply. These demands in turn compelled fundamental reorganizations in the labor system. Divisions in white society, and the strategic value of slave labor to the military, enabled black Virginians to use their masters' rebellion to serve their own ends. Ultimately, the decisive loss on Virginia battlefields was due to the failure to shape Afro-American labor to the purposes of the war.

As had been true of black slave labor in the antebellum period and as was true during the war, free black labor exerted a powerful influence in the postwar period, illustrating in several different contexts that emancipation did work a great change in tobacco-belt society. The end of slavery made it unnecessary to continue to utilize the piedmont as an informal labor reserve, and most freedpeople were left dependent upon plantation agriculture for a living. Although neither southern planters nor northern whites wished it so, ex-slaves yearned to farm independently as landowners unreliant on planters for their livelihood. At first it seemed that the northern government would help at least some freedpeople acquire land titles through redistributions of confiscated and abandoned lands. That plan never came to fruition. As a result, freedpeople were instead forced to sell their labor on the market, in many

(1868-1872): A Study in Reconstruction Politics (Chapel Hill, 1970), is the standard study on postwar Virginia politics.

instances to their former masters. But when they did so, blacks utilized their knowledge and understanding of bargaining and contract to infuse working conditions with as many preindustrial concepts of labor and property as possible. In practical terms, this meant that they forced the establishment of sharecropping soon after the war. By 1867, most ex-slaves in the tobacco belt worked lands acquired under a kind of agreement which most former masters initially abhorred.

Paralleling these developments was the acquisition of the ballot during Congressional Reconstruction, a move which helped freedpeople to gain greater independence on the postwar plantations. Armed with the vote, they elected men who produced the 1868 Underwood Constitution, an innovative document that governed the Commonwealth until the beginning of the twentieth century. That victory provided blacks with an important sense of accomplishment and an enhanced sense of security, and it helped them resist planter efforts to return to old methods of labor organization. But it also spurred "moderate" Conservatives to greater action. Within two years, "moderates" had accepted black suffrage in return for home rule. The bargain that they made with the North brought reconstruction to an early end in Virginia, and eliminated the possibility of prolonged Republican rule.¹⁴

¹⁴Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives, 1869-1879: A Study in Reconstruction Politics (Chapel Hill, 1970), is the standard study on postwar Virginia politics.

After the reestablishment of Conservative rule in Virginia, blacks played a minor part in the political history of the state throughout the rest of the century. But their input into the development of the postwar social and political system had been a substantial and important one, and it continued to affect Virginia for decades. Their power to impose significant portions of their vision of freedom on the bourgeois pattern flowed directly from their altered status from slave to free laborers, and that change also affected the broader sweep of Virginia history. That was the revolution that emancipation had begun, and this study is an analysis of the early directions in which that revolution proceeded in this large tobacco plantation region of the Upper South.

CHAPTER I

What's Past is Prologue: The Virginia Tobacco Belt in the 1850s

By the last antebellum decade Virginia slavery, the oldest slave system in British North America, was far from a monolithic institution. Black slavery was over 200 years old in 1850, and it had experienced many changes over the span of two centuries. Plantation slaves had been employed almost exclusively in the production of tobacco, but since its introduction, the crop had gone through several cycles of boom and bust. Then, too, because of the heavy demands tobacco made on the soil, a westward shift in its center of production had also taken place. The period from 1820 to 1850 had been characterized by severe economic depression. But the market revived during the 1850s, and slavery too received new life. By that time, slaves and tobacco were concentrated in the central and southern piedmont region of the state. By 1860, then, plantation slavery in the upcountry was firmly rooted, and most planters and farmers were staunch proslavery advocates. But the upcountry's economy did not function in isolation from other regional

economies. The southern piedmont's ties to the rest of Virginia were multidimensional and complex, and they profoundly affected the character of tobacco-belt slavery.¹

Geography as well. The tobacco belt's distinctive character is better understood by situating its peculiar geographic, economic, and demographic features within those

Virginia's geography formed the basis of the state's pronounced regionalism and was an important factor in many aspects of her history. Geography helps explain the persistence of slavery and tobacco agriculture, the growth of manufacturing, and the durability of the slave trade. Next to Texas, Virginia was the largest state in the country

¹The authoritative work on the political manifestations of Virginia regionalism is Charles Henry Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861 (New York, 1910), pp. 1-23. Examples of other works which recognize the importance of sectionalism in Virginia history include Kathleen Bruce, Virginia Iron Manufacture in the Slave Era (New York, 1931), pp. 24-6; Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, The Negro in Reconstruction of Virginia (New York, 1926), pp. 32-4; Robert McColley, Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia, (Urbana, 2nd ed., 1973), pp. 9-16; Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1879: A Study in Reconstruction Politics (Chapel Hill, 1970), pp. 3-22; Henry Thomas Shanks, The Secession Movement in Virginia, 1847-1861 (Richmond, 1934), pp. 1-17; Alison Goodyear Freehling, Drift toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832 (Baton Rouge, 1982), pp. 11-35. Some authors pay scant attention to regional differences. See, for example, James C. Ballagh, A History of Slavery in Virginia (Baltimore, 1902), whose dated and often sociological approach neglects the importance of historical geography, and Frederic Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South (Baltimore, 1931), whose indifference to regionalism mars an otherwise excellent account of the subject. A general work is Ralph H. Brown, Historical Geography of the United States (New York, 1948), pp. 133-40.

in 1850, and her natural features varied widely.² By imposing limits on man's ability to develop them economically, these different ecologies produced a regional demography as well. The tobacco belt's distinctive character is better understood by situating its peculiar geographic, economic, and demographic features within those of the state.³

Five main regions existed in Virginia: the Tidewater or Chesapeake; the northern piedmont; the southern piedmont or tobacco belt; the Valley of Virginia; and Appalachia. Running between the Valley and the piedmont, the Blue Ridge divided these five regions into two general ones, eastern and western Virginia. Eastern Virginia was made up of the Tidewater and both piedmonts; the west comprised the Valley and Appalachia. Virginians also recognized an area

²Georgia is larger than Virginia today; before the Civil War, however, Virginia included the present state of West Virginia.

³Appendix Tables 1-9 contain the statistical information that forms the basis for the regional analysis in this chapter. All statistics in the Appendix Tables, and cited in footnotes throughout this study, unless otherwise indicated, were generated from magnetic tape data organized and distributed by the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research (ICPR), of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. This information was manipulated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). One purpose of the ICPR project was to gather and make available selected census information for all states for all census years since 1790. The codebook to the data is: Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, Historical, Demographic, Economic, and Social Data: The United States, 1790-1970, n.d., n.p.

extending below the James River which they called the Southside. Geography helped to unite the politically and economically dominant eastern regions that shared many complementary interests by the 1850s. But the concerns of the more remote western sections often clashed with those of the eastern oligarchy, although the Valley established some economic ties with the east in the late antebellum period.⁴

A fundamental feature of Virginia geography was the extensive and navigable river system of the east. The most important of these rivers were the James, the Rappahannock, the York, and the Potomac. They drain eastward, and in their passage from the piedmont to the coastal plain they enter a series of rapids and waterfalls, a boundary known as the fall line. These waterfalls impede navigation, but provide an important source of water power.

Rivers had provided the main transportation system since colonial days and were critical to settlement patterns and economic growth. They linked the large hinterland to those

⁴Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, p. 8; Jack P. Maddex, Jr., "Virginia: The Persistence of Centrist Hegemony," in Reconstruction and Redemption in the South, ed. by Otto H. Olsen (Baton Rouge and London, 1980), p. 131; Freehling, Drift toward Dissolution, p. 80; Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia, pp. 8-18; Steven Hahn, "The Yeomanry of the Nonplantation South," in Class, Conflict, and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies, ed. by Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr., (Westport, Conn., 1982), p. 31; Eugene D. Genovese, "Yeoman Farmers in a Slaveholders' Democracy," Agricultural History 49 (1975), 331-42.

towns and cities at the fall line which developed in response to the need for market centers. The most important of these entrepôts was the state capital at Richmond, located below the fall line of the James. Petersburg, Alexandria, and Fredericksburg also lay along the fall line and carried much of Virginia's trade. Norfolk, downriver from Richmond on the coast, was the major port of the state.⁵

The easternmost region of Virginia, the coastal plain, is called the Tidewater. It was the oldest settled region and was home to the state's political elite at the capital in Richmond. In bottomlands near the region's numerous streams and rivers, the land was especially fertile and capable of supporting large crops, but sandy areas were not as well-suited to staple agriculture. The growing season was long, lasting from March to October or November; the climate was warm, and rainfall usually plentiful.⁶

West of the Tidewater and stretching to the eastern

⁵Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia, pp. 1-3; Richard S. Dunn, "Black Society in the Chesapeake, 1776-1810," in Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, ed. by Ronald Hoffman and Ira Berlin (Charlottesville, Va., 1983), pp. 62-3; Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland in the Nineteenth Century (New Haven, 1985), pp. 17-21; Karl B. Raitz and Richard Ulack with Thomas R. Leinback, Appalachia, A Regional Geography: Land, People, and Development (Boulder, Colorado, 1984), p. 45.

⁶Albert E. Cowdrey, This Land, This South: An Environmental History (Louisville, Ky., 1983), pp. 31-2.

escarpment of the Blue Ridge ran the hilly upcountry piedmont. Generally the soils of the piedmont were more fertile than those of the Tidewater, particularly around the Potomac and in the region's midsection. But, because the land was hilly, erosion was often a problem, especially when poor cultivation and drainage methods were used by upcountry farmers. Higher altitude slightly shortened the growing season, and this region was susceptible to occasional drought. But generally the climate was well-suited to agriculture.⁷

The piedmont divided into northern and southern sections. Because the rivers in the north--the York and the Potomac--were navigable past the fall line, westward settlement from the Tidewater initially proceeded in that direction. As a result, the northern piedmont was settled earlier than the southern piedmont, and its soils, like those of the Tidewater, had become worn and could no longer support tobacco agriculture by 1850.⁸

To the west of the tobacco belt, across the Blue Ridge and cut off to a great extent from the east, was the middle district of Virginia, the Great Valley. This region actually held several valleys running northeast and southwest, the most important of which were the Shenandoah,

⁷Cowdrey, This Land, This South, pp. 66-7.

⁸Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 1-2; John T. Schlotterbeck, "The 'Social Economy' of an Upper South

New, and Holston. Some counties in the southern end of the Valley had contact with the east through the river system in that area, but generally this region lacked navigable water routes. Even though the soil in many areas of the Valley was among the most fertile in the state, its higher altitude, and its uneven surface interrupted by mountain ridges, limited tobacco cultivation. Also scattered through the Valley were large iron deposits.⁹

Antebellum Appalachia included the present state of West Virginia; it was subdivided into three areas, the Alleghany highlands, the Cumberland plateau, and the Ohio River district. Located west of the continental divide, Appalachia's rivers flowed west, orienting such river trade as existed in that direction. But rivers in general were shallow and swift, and did not provide adequate transportation. Because of their inaccessibility and poor transportation, the mountains were thinly settled. Altitude and topography imposed limits on agriculture; only the Cumberland plateau, where there were some fertile valleys, could support a few commercial farmers. The region also contained extensive coal and gas deposits.¹⁰

Community: Orange and Greene Counties, Virginia, 1815-1860," in Class, Conflict, and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies, ed. by Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr. (Westport, Conn., 1982), pp. 26-8.

⁹Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia, pp. 1-2; Cowdrey, This
¹⁰Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 2-3.

Situated in the middle south of the state lay the central and southern piedmont, surrounded on three sides by the other Virginia regions and bordered by North Carolina to its south. This high, rolling plain was tobacco country, where the vast bulk of the state's prodigious staple was cultivated in the 1850s. It was a large section, composed of twenty-six counties in the southern two-thirds of the piedmont plain. Although many of its rivers were too shallow and swift to navigate, one major artery, the James, was calm and deep, and had a canal constructed alongside that carried most upcountry freight to market. Much of the land was fertile, and while erosion was a problem, large planters generally owned sufficient acreage to practice rotation, thus allowing lands to lie fallow and restore their fertility. In the east of the region there were large coal deposits.¹¹

The natural resources of Virginia varied considerably, then, and divided the state into five major regions that formed the basis of the state's sectional character. Because of the limitations imposed by these different physical features, Virginia's regions also exhibited much economic variety.

Land, This South, pp. 66-7; Avery O. Craven, Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Maryland and Virginia, 1606-1860 (Urbana, Ill., 1926), p. 134.

¹¹Ibid., p. 2.

II

Regional economic differences in Virginia resulted in a web of relationships among the five sections. The relationship of the wealth-producing tobacco belt to the other regions was a particularly intricate and complex one. Like other regions, the tobacco belt developed few ties with Appalachia. But it did have important connections with the Valley, the northern piedmont, and especially with the Tidewater.

The most diversified regional economy in Virginia was that of the Tidewater. Here tobacco agriculture had begun to decline in the 1750s. By that time, soil depletion caused by decades of repetitive tobacco cultivation and by wasteful farming practices shifted the locus of staple production to the fresh lands of the central and southern piedmont. Large migrations from the Tidewater to the upcountry followed this change in the post-Revolutionary period.¹²

Chesapeake farmers of the 1850s continued to produce small amounts of tobacco, but a system of mixed general farming that produced wheat, small grains, and corn

¹²Allan Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples: Black Migrants in the Age of the American Revolution, 1790-1820," in Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, ed. by Hoffman and Berlin, pp. 143-45, 147-48.

dominated late antebellum agriculture. Market gardening also had become an important component of the economy, particularly around Norfolk and Washington, while along the bay and up the rivers many Virginians continued to fish and to harvest oysters for a living. As this shift continued, plantations and farms increased in number and decreased in size, on the average. However, among large commercial planters still engaged in staple agriculture, and owning 500 acres or more, some land concentration occurred.¹³

The general shift to diversified agriculture and cereal production required improved methods of farming. Innovators like Edmund Ruffin and John Hartwell Cocke, who disseminated their ideas through agricultural societies and journals, advanced the use of contour plowing, crop rotation,

¹³See Appendix Table 1, "Regional Agricultural Production, 1850 and 1860," and Table 2, "Farm Size by Region, 1860; Percentage of State"; Kathleen Bruce, "Virginia Agricultural Decline to 1860: A Fallacy," Agricultural History 6 (January 1932), 3-4; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 3, 5.

¹⁴Edmund Ruffin edited the Farmer's Register, in which he published many of his ideas on agricultural reform, between 1833 and 1843; Craven, Soil Exhaustion, pp. 135-61, 154-55; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 3-5; John Thomas Schlotterbeck, "Plantation and Farm: Social and Economic Change in Orange and Greene Counties, Virginia, 1716 to 1860," (Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 1980), pp. 255-59; John Hartwell Cocke, Tobacco: The Bane of Virginia Husbandry (1860); for Cocke's views on slavery, see Willie Lee Rose, "The Domestication of Domestic Slavery," in Slavery and Freedom, pp. 18-21, and Martin Boyd Coyner, "John Hartwell Cocke of Bremon: Agriculture and Slavery in the Antebellum South," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1961); Emmett B. Fields, "The Agricultural Population of Virginia, 1850-1860," (Ph.D.

drainage, and the use of fertilizers, in an effort to reclaim exhausted tobacco lands. Although only the wealthiest planters could afford to implement full-scale reform, one improvement, the use of fertilizer, had spread widely throughout Virginia by the 1850s.¹⁴

It was also in the Tidewater that manufacture and industry had made their greatest headway by 1850. This embryonic industrial and manufacturing sector centered in urban areas, notably Richmond and Petersburg. Modest by northern standards, Tidewater manufacture nevertheless established the state as the bellwether of southern industry. Among her southern comrades, Virginia ranked first in the number of manufacturing establishments, second only to Maryland in the value of her manufactured product and in the annual cost of labor used in manufacturing. During the 1850s the state increased manufacturing output by 42 percent.¹⁵

The most extensively developed and lucrative enterprises

dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1953), pp. 54-61.

¹⁵Calculated from Table 54, "Value of Capital Employed in Manufacturing, 1840, 1850, and 1860, and Value of Output, 1850 and 1860," in Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860, 2 vols. (Washington, D. C., 1933), I, 1043; Charles H. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 1850-1925: A Study in American Economic History (New York, 1927; reprint ed. 1967), pp. 9-10; Luther Porter Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860 (New York, 1942, reprint ed., 1968), pp. 177-78; Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890 (Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 5-9.

were built near rivers along the fall line to exploit water power, and they involved the primary processing of agricultural produce, especially tobacco and wheat. Richmond had the lion's share of antebellum industry. In 1860 the city held 52 tobacco factories and several flour and grist mills, including Gallego Mills, one of the world's largest such enterprises. Other manufacturing pursuits not directly tied to agriculture--Joseph R. Anderson's renowned Tredegar Iron Works, for example--enhanced Richmond's industrial dominance of the South.¹⁶

As a commercial center, Richmond shipped exports of processed tobacco and wheat, as well as cattle, lumber and naval stores for distribution to Europe, the Caribbean, Brazil, Africa, and other points in the United States. Large amounts of bituminous coal destined primarily for eastern and northern markets also left through the capital city. Situated thirteen miles to the city's west, across the fall line in the eastern piedmont, was the Richmond coal basin. Although much larger deposits existed in the mountains, technology and particularly the transportation system remained inadequate to exploit the western fields.

¹⁶See Appendix Table 3, "Regional Manufacturing in Virginia, 1850 and 1860"; Robert S. Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South (New York, 1970), pp. 21-2; Arthur Peterson, "Flour and Grist Milling in Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 43 (April 1935), 97-108; the standard work on Anderson and the Tredegar is Charles B. Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy: John R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works (New Haven, 1966).

Eastern coal's accessibility made it the only source mined for commercial and manufacturing purposes prior to 1865, and the productivity of these mines in turn ranked Virginia as one of five main coal-producing states of the antebellum period.¹⁷

Since most industry and commerce centered in or near Richmond, most of the antebellum business community also concentrated there. The merchants who governed the city's commerce were often prominent financiers as well, directing banks and funding railroad and canal projects. Typically Whiggish in outlook, their business connections placed them in increasing contact with northern capitalists, contact made easier by Virginia's geographic location midway up the Atlantic coast. Like the industrialists, merchants did not directly confront or oppose slavery--many were slaveholders themselves--and their dependence on the planters for market and labor allied them closely to that class. Still, their economic activities posed a threat to the regime, if usually only a potential one, which the planters constantly sought

¹⁷Virginia coal production expanded greatly in the 1850s, making these the most important coal fields of the South; later they would be a mainstay of the Confederacy. Still, Virginia coal lost ground to Pennsylvania's anthracite coal production in this decade. Ronald L. Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia, 1715-1865 (Westport, Conn., 1979), pp. 54-74; Bruce, Virginia Iron Manufacture, pp. 108-09; James H. Brewer, The Confederate Negro; Virginia's Craftsmen and Military Laborers, 1861-1865 (Durham, 1969), pp. 48-9; Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860 (New York, 1967), pp. 12-13.

to minimize.¹⁸

Both planters and industrialists depended heavily on the existence of suitable transportation. The James River and Kanawha Canal, the state's favored internal improvement project since the 1780s, carried four times the tonnage of the largest railroad in 1860. Tidewater merchants since the 1820s had hoped to extend the canal across the Alleghanies to the Ohio Valley, in order to tap the increasingly valuable western trade. These plans remained unrealized on the eve of the war. Not until 1840 did construction reach Lynchburg, on the western edge of the tobacco belt. It took another decade of controversy to push the canal across the Blue Ridge to Buchanan in the Valley. A small but important system of turnpikes and plank roads buttressed the canal and river system and gave farmers adjunct routes to market.¹⁹

Transportation was not limited to river, canal, and road travel. During the 1850s Virginia entered a remarkable period of railroad extension. In that decade, the Richmond government reversed its indifferent investment pattern by

¹⁸Eugene D. Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation, (New York, 1969), pp. 16-20; Genovese, Political Economy of Slavery, pp. 19-24; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 9-11; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 5-6, 17.

¹⁹Carter Goodrich, Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads, 1800-1890 (New York, 1959), p. 95; Freehling, Drift toward Dissolution, pp. 322-23; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, p. 6; Craven, Soil Exhaustion, p. 133; Robert Fleming Hunter, "The Turnpike Movement in Virginia, 1816-1860 (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1957).

agreeing to underwrite a controlling three-fifths interest in railroad stock. As a result, track mileage nearly trebled from 350 to 1350 miles by the Civil War.²⁰ Five principal roads, the Richmond and Danville, the Southside, the Orange and Alexandria, the Virginia Central, and the Virginia and Tennessee, provided service throughout the east and to the southwest corner, while several other small trunk lines reinforced the system and connected interior areas to waterways. Only the northwest remained unconnected by rail to the east in 1860, although northern connections existed.²¹ Competition between railroad and canal supporters, and among railroad contractors themselves, hindered a fuller development of Virginia's transportation network. These conflicts rendered the system inadequate for all the state's needs, and they fueled sectional discord. Still, the 1850s represent a decade of transportation growth and improvement which promoted commercial activity by opening up certain areas of the state either by rail,

²⁰Goodrich, Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads, p. 96; Allen W. Moger, "Railroad Practices and Policies in Virginia After the Civil War," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 59 (October 1951), 425-26; David R. Goldfield, Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism: Virginia, 1847-1861 (Baton Rouge, 1977), pp. 10-12.

²¹At that, the Valley remained only nominally connected by the Virginia Central. A more important link was with Baltimore, north of the Valley, through the Baltimore and Ohio line, though it only reached Winchester, in the northern Valley. Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 13-14; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, p. 17; Moger, "Virginia Railroads," p. 449.

turnpike, water, or some combination of the three.²²

In the northern piedmont, as elsewhere in Virginia, agriculture retained dominance in the 1850s. However, as in the Tidewater, the character of agriculture in this region had changed considerably over the past century, and these changes formed the basis of this region's distinction from the southern piedmont. Settlers from the Tidewater reached the northern piedmont in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. They brought tobacco culture with them, and the two regions' economies displayed roughly similar patterns of growth. But since the late 1700s, tobacco had surrendered its primacy to commercial wheat and corn production. By the last antebellum decade, these old counties of the upper piedmont had become increasingly distinguished by a consumption and production pattern revolving around the household and heavily dependent on ties of kinship and community. They formed a "social economy" among diversified farmers who lived on farms of increasingly smaller size.²³

²²Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 14; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, p. 7; Richard Graham, "Slavery and Economic Development: Brazil and the United States South in the Nineteenth Century," Comparative Studies in Society and History 23 (October 1981), 620-55.

²³See Appendix Tables 1-3; Schlotterbeck, "The 'Social Economy' of an Upper South Community," p. 5; Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples," pp. 145-46; Craven, Soil Exhaustion, pp. 76-7; Peter J. Albert, "The Protean Institution: The Geography, Economy, and Ideology of Slavery in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," (Ph.D. dissertation,

The Valley was Virginia's breadbasket. Farmers in this region produced some tobacco, but the chief agricultural products of the Valley were wheat, corn, and cattle. Farms of over 200 acres were rare. German and Scots-Irish immigrants moving south from Pennsylvania and New York settled the region in the late 1720s, and they retained important northern economic and social ties, often using Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh for market. But, by the 1850s, the Valley's ties with the east grew stronger, despite the obstruction of the Blue Ridge and a history of political differences. The development of river transportation and the extension of the canal to Buchanan redirected some of the Valley's trade eastward. Most importantly, numerous blast furnaces were scattered through this region, and several of them furnished pig iron to the eastern ironworks.²⁴

Appalachia's isolation from the rest of the state made

University of Maryland, 1976), pp. 18, 29, 31-2, and graph on p. 38 showing location of tobacco production in the post-Revolutionary period. During the 1850s the social economy eroded somewhat under the influence of a favorable market. Schlotterbeck, "The 'Social Economy' of an Upper South Community," p. 22; Hahn found a similar economic structure in upcountry Georgia before the war, in "Yeomanry of the Nonplantation South," p. 29; Donald Mitchell Sweig, "Northern Virginia Slavery: A Statistical and Demographic Investigation," (Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1982), is a thorough investigation of this region.

²⁴See Appendix Tables 1-3; Maddex, "Virginia: The Persistence of Centrist Hegemony," pp. 130-31; Bruce, Virginia Iron Manufacture, pp. 271-73; Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, p. 221.

it the most distinctive region of the five. In these sparsely populated mountains the plantation system did not exist. Generally whites lived independently on small farms, where they grew corn, oats, rye, a considerable amount of buckwheat, made liquor, kept orchards and raised livestock, practically all of which went for personal consumption. With two important exceptions, the Kanawha river valley where the salt works were located, and the mineral springs and resorts scattered through the mountains, Appalachians had little economic or social contact with the rest of Virginia.²⁵ Mountaineers greeted the eastern oligarchy's hauteur and governmental neglect with a bristly resentment. Few issues provoked more rancor than those concerning representation, internal improvements, and an equal share of the state's tax revenues. These factors presaged the area's separation from the state in 1863.²⁶

In the tobacco heartland, the 1850s were a decade of unprecedented staple production. When the market finally rallied, the southern piedmont produced a record crop of tobacco. Of the 123,968,312 pounds grown in 1859, over 78

²⁵John Edmund Stealey, III, "Slavery and the West Virginia Salt Industry," in The Other Slaves: Mechanics, Artisans, and Craftsmen, ed. by James E. Newton and Ronald L. Lewis (Boston, 1978), pp. 109-33; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 7-8.

²⁶See Appendix Tables 1-3; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 26; Richard O. Curry, A House Divided: A Study of Statehood Politics and the Copperhead Movement in West Virginia (Pittsburgh, 1964), pp. 16-27.

percent of the leaf came from this region.²⁷ Most other agricultural production in the tobacco belt was used in local consumption. Farmers supplemented tobacco agriculture with substantial crops of wheat and corn, though they did not match the size of these crops grown in the Tidewater, Valley, or northern piedmont. Farmers also raised fruits and vegetables, and kept livestock. Small farms predominated, here as elsewhere in Virginia, for tobacco did not require economy of scale for successful cultivation. A single unassisted man could cultivate two to three acres per year, which would yield 1500-2000 pounds to sell on the market. However, most of Virginia's largest plantations were located in this region.²⁸

Although the fortunes of southern piedmont slaveholders depended most heavily on the cultivation of tobacco, this

²⁷See Appendix Table 1. Figures on the 1859 crop show a drop in the regional share of the belt's tobacco from 90 to 78 percent since the previous census. The difference was made up in the mountains, where tobacco production increased dramatically. However, most of this increase occurred in Virginia's southwest corner, through which the Virginia and Tennessee had been extended that decade, thereby opening up new lands to tobacco agriculture. Hence the increase in tobacco production for the mountains took place in one specific area, and the notably higher figure obscures the more attenuated involvement of Appalachian farmers in the tobacco economy.

²⁸See Appendix Table 2. In the cotton districts, a single person was expected to be able to cultivate eight to ten acres of cotton; Joseph Clarke Robert, The Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market, and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860 (Durham, 1938), pp. 17-19; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 1-2.

region, like the Tidewater, harbored a small manufacturing sector. Industry was less conspicuous, and it was more dispersed through the countryside, but the differences were ones of degree rather than kind. Manufacturers processed agricultural produce, especially tobacco and wheat.²⁹ Lynchburg, the major market center of upcountry Virginia, was linked by canal to the capital and by rail to Petersburg. As the region's largest urban area and Virginia's third largest tobacco market, the city derived its unusual wealth from many of the same enterprises that distinguished Richmond. This interior entrepôt was known as "The Tobacco City" for its chief industry, carried out in 35 tobacco factories in 1850; by 1860 another twelve had been added. Eighteen flour mills also were located in Lynchburg. The growing towns of Danville, in Pittsylvania county, Farmville in Prince Edward, and Clarksville in Mecklenburg, also processed a significant amount of tobacco. Many small factories, some located on individual plantations, were scattered across the interior. Completing the industrial and manufacturing profile of this region were such other small concerns as gristmills, sawmills, tanneries, and even a few textile factories.³⁰

²⁹Manufacturing information based on the census categories of 1850 and 1860, which enumerated the number of manufacturing establishments, capital invested, persons employed, value of annual manufacturing product, cost of raw

³⁰It was said that per capita wealth in

III

In addition to regional geographic and economic distinctions in Virginia, there were demographic ones as well. Differences in the distribution of whites--both slaveholders and nonslaveholders--slaves, and free Negroes, and the regional incidence of the slave trade, mirrored Virginia's geographic and economic regional variety.

In 1860, with over 1.5 million people, Virginia was not only the most populous of the slave states, but with 490,865 bondsmen, held its largest slave population as well. The free Negro population of 58,042 was second only to Maryland.³¹ The number of slaveholders in Virginia--approximately 52,000--exceeded that of any other southern state.³² Not surprisingly, Virginia was one of the most important slave-exporting states of the Upper South

materials, and the cost of labor annually. See Appendix Table 3.

Lynchburg--presumably among whites--was exceeded by only one other town in the country, that of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Robert, Tobacco Kingdom, pp. 181-85; Bancroft, Slave Trade, pp. 91, 93-4; Peterson, "Flour and Grist Milling in Virginia," pp. 97-108; Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, 1820-1860: A Quantitative History (Chicago, 1976), p. 26.

³¹See Appendix Table 4, "Virginia Regional Population, 1850 and 1860"; Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South (New York, 1974), pp. 47-50. There were 83,900 free blacks by the time of the Civil War in Maryland.

³²See Appendix Table 5, "Slaveholders in Virginia, 1860."

in the late antebellum period, furnishing tens of thousands of slave men, women, and children to the cotton share and districts.³³

Slave distribution reflected regional economic variety. Of the total Virginia slave population, the vast majority--over 87 percent--lived east of the Blue Ridge. Most slaves had been located in the Tidewater during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But after tobacco agriculture took up a new home farther west, the slave population likewise was moved in that direction, and by 1850, the enslaved were concentrated most heavily in the tobacco belt. Numbering a majority in most counties and a significant minority in others, tobacco-belt slaves accounted for over 46 percent of all Virginia bondsmen in 1860, but the Tidewater continued to hold slightly more than 32 percent. In the northern piedmont, where tobacco also had been abandoned, the slave population had declined steadily over the course of the nineteenth century. By 1860 they represented only 9 percent of Virginia's slave population.³⁴

³³The other states that sold slaves at high rates were Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, and the District of Columbia. Richard Sutch, "The Breeding of Slaves for Sale and the Westward Expansion of Slavery, 1850-1860," in Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies, ed. by Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese (Princeton, N.J., 1975), p. 179.

³⁴See Appendix Table 4. Some tobacco belt counties had

Slavery was less important in the western regions. Most slaves who were there were found in the Valley, where on a few large plantations south of the James they were engaged in tobacco agriculture. Elsewhere, both in the Valley and in the mountains, more wealthy farmers might own the labor of a slave or two. But generally, the number of slaves and slaveholders was not only small compared with the east, but like that of the northern piedmont, undergoing an absolute decline in the 1850s.

As the tobacco belt held the highest percentage of slaves, so too was it home to most--40 percent--of Virginia's slaveholding class. Most Virginia slaveholders did not possess either large estates or large slaveholdings. About half of all slaveholders held fewer than five slaves; a quarter of them owned between five and ten. This general pattern held firm in the tobacco belt. However, of the larger slaveholdings to be found in Virginia--those with fifty slaves or more--over half could be found in this region. The belt also contained most of the slaveholders who owned between 10 and 49 slaves. One of

long had black majorities, mostly in the eastern part of the region, for example in Amelia and Nottoway. In contrast to earlier decades, whites now outnumbered slaves in a few Tidewater counties, sometimes by a comfortable margin; in seven Tidewater counties, the slave population had undergone an absolute decline. These were Norfolk, Accomac, Northumberland, Essex, Southampton, New Kent, and Mathews. Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. ix, 70; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, p. 12; Bancroft, Slave Trading, p. 386.

the largest slaveholdings in Virginia was the one of the Hairston family of Henry county, who owned over 300 slaves.³⁵

In contrast to the demographic pattern of the slaveholding class, Virginia slaves were about evenly divided between large and small slaveholding units. Slightly more than half of all Virginia slaves lived on plantations holding fifteen slaves or more; the other half lived on units of between 1 and 14 slaves. However, the tobacco belt again varied noticeably from the larger pattern. About 64 percent of all tobacco belt slaves lived on farms and plantations holding over fifteen slaves. The tobacco belt had an especially high percentage of slaves living on units of between 20 and 49 slaves. In the state, slaves on plantations of this size accounted for not quite 30 percent of all slaves. But almost 35 percent of all slaves in the southern piedmont fell into this category, and just over half of all such holdings were in the tobacco belt.³⁶

Like the slave population, Virginia's large free Negro population showed distinct regional variations. In the

³⁵See Appendix Table 5, "Slaveholders in Virginia, 1860"; J. E. B. De Bow on Samuel Hairston's estate, "The Richest Man in Virginia," De Bow's Review 18 (January 1855), 53.

³⁶See Appendix Table 3, "Slaves on Given Size Plantations, 1860 Southern Piedmont."

state the percentage of free Negroes to the total population averaged just over 3.6 percent. In 1860 over 84 percent of free Negroes lived east of the Blue Ridge, and most by far lived in the Tidewater and northern piedmont. In the former region they were especially numerous, increasing between 1850 and 1860 from 49 to over 55 percent of all Virginia free Negroes. The northern piedmont accounted for another 11 percent, bringing these two regions' total to 66 percent. By contrast, in the tobacco belt, free Negroes accounted for only slightly more than 18 percent of all Virginia free Negroes.³⁷

Viewed from another perspective, slightly over 10 percent of all Virginia Afro-Americans were free Negroes. But in the Tidewater and northern piedmont, that ratio significantly exceeded the state average. In the former region, free Negroes increased from 15 to over 17 percent of the black population during the 1850s; in the northern piedmont they represented nearly 12 percent of all blacks. But in the tobacco belt, free Negroes accounted for not more than 5 or 6 percent of the Afro-American population in most counties.³⁸

More than 85 percent of all free Negroes in the South

³⁷See Appendix Table 4.

³⁸See Appendix Table 4, and Table 7, "Percentage of Free Negroes to the Total Black Population for each Region of Virginia, 1850 and 1860."

lived in the Upper South states of North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware.³⁹ Compared to the free Negroes of the Lower South, those of the Upper South were not only more numerous, but in general included a higher proportion of blacks as opposed to mulattoes, and they were more rural than urban. Black free Negroes in Virginia especially outnumbered their mulatto counterparts in the cities, where on the eve of the war they held majorities of two or three to one.⁴⁰ As elsewhere in the South, free Negroes in Virginia displayed consistently low sex ratios. Planters emancipated women more often than men, and the free Negro population always contained an excess of women, particularly in the east.⁴¹

An important feature of Virginia slavery and demography was the state's extensive involvement in the interstate slave trade. The numbers of slaves exported from Virginia had increased markedly in the 1820s and swelled to an estimated 200,000 slaves in the 1830s and 1840s. Depressed local economic conditions, the opening of Texas lands, and

³⁹Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, p. 179.

⁴⁰Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, p. 180.

⁴¹See Appendix Table 8, "Regional Sex Ratios, Free Negroes, Slaves, and Whites, 1850-1860"; Table 9, "Regional Percentage Changes in Slave and Free Black Populations, 1850-1860." Sex ratios are calculated for that segment of the population of reproductive age, between 15 and 50 years. Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, pp. 47, 49-50, 174-81; Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 115-16.

the labor demands of the cotton South prompted this tremendous forced migration. Even during the economic revival of the 1850s, when slave labor in Virginia came into somewhat greater demand and checked the magnitude of the trade, an estimated 67,000 to 80,000 slaves, or about 12 percent of the total slave population, were sold southward or westward. Thus, on the eve of the Civil War this trade continued to give a brisk business, but it drew slaves disproportionately from different regions. Most Virginia slaves who entered the trade came from the Tidewater, the region that, since the Revolutionary period, had shown the greatest propensity to sell slaves. Slaves from the northern piedmont were also sold in high numbers. But even in the thriving tobacco belt, planters sold slaves at a rate only moderately exceeded by the two older regions.⁴²

⁴²Richard Sutch, "The Breeding of Slaves for Sale and the Westward Expansion of Slavery, 1850-1860," in Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies, ed. by Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese (Princeton, 1975), pp. 178, 181, and the appendix Table 4, p. 207. Sutch estimates that 67,716 Virginia slaves left during the 1850s, about 12 percent of the slave population. The states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, South Carolina, and the District of Columbia all had higher rates of slave exportation than Virginia. Compare Sutch's calculation with Bancroft's estimate of 80,576 for the same decade. Bancroft's estimates are regarded as unsophisticated, except to detect overall trends, as they have been used here. The tobacco belt experienced a 14 percent loss of labor in the 1850s; the Tidewater, 15 percent; the northern piedmont, 18 percent; and the Tidewater and northern piedmont together, 16 percent. Compared to Sutch's 12 percent statewide loss during this decade, these figures are obviously too high,

Few of the ex-slaves whose testimony was recorded during the 1930s, and who spoke of slave sales, had escaped contact with the interstate slave trade. If their own families had remained untouched by the trade, they typically knew of others who had not. In Albemarle county, for example, William Johnson Jr.'s master tried to avoid selling his slaves, but Johnson said that his master was an exception. "White folks in my part of the country didn't think anything of breaking up a family and selling the children in one section of the south and the parents in some other section," he noted. "If they got short of cash and wanted four or five hundred dollars--they would say, 'John, Mary, James, I want you to get ready and go to the courthouse with me this morning.' They would take you on down there and that's the last we'd see of them." In Lunenburg, Jennie Rash's five-month old son was sold for \$500 and, according to her grandson, Louis Fitzgerald, she had four or five other children who were sold from her later in life, "and she never saw them anymore."⁴³

Virginia's important role as a supplier of slaves to the

but they do show a regional pattern. Bancroft, Slave-Trading, pp. 384-86; Genovese, Political Economy of Slavery, p. 142; Phillips, American Negro Slavery, pp. 187-204.

⁴³Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds. and comps., Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves (Bloomington, 1976, reprint ed., 1980), pp. 92, 166.

Deep South suggests that the value of slave women of reproductive age was high in the antebellum period. Yet, except in the northern piedmont, Virginia's slave population in 1860 of reproductive age was not skewed toward an excess of women; in fact, there were slightly more males than females. This ratio in part reflects the ongoing importance of slave labor in the economy, but it does not mean that women were not valued as reproducers of the slave population. Studies have shown that under certain circumstances, the ratio of slave women to men was a high one. On farms holding only one slave, for example, that slave was likely to be male. But when farms with no women were excluded, a surplus of women resulted.⁴⁴ Many slaves understood that the bearing of children in many cases formed the basis of a woman's value to her master. According to ex-slave Katie Blackwell Johnson of Lunenburg, "masters were very careful about a good breedin' woman. If she had five or six children she was rarely sold." And according to William Johnson, when slave women went on the block, "bidders would come up and feel the women's legs . . . examine their hips, feel their breast, and examine them to see if they could bear children. If the women were in good condition they would bring anywhere from \$150.00 to \$500.00

⁴⁴This was the case for Virginia in Richard Sutch's study. After this factor was taken into account, the sex ratio of the slave population of reproductive age became a low one. Sutch, "The Breeding of Slaves for Sale," pp. 191-93.

a piece."⁴⁵

This overview of Virginia regionalism and the factors that produced it shows that the tobacco belt represented the stronghold of Virginia slavery and plantation agriculture in the 1850s. Its climate and soil were well-suited to tobacco culture, its transportation system was relatively well-developed, and it enjoyed the favorable influence of a boom market. The state's largest concentration of slaveholders and slaves was found here; the slaves represented the largest group of rural bondsmen still engaged in plantation agriculture in the Upper South. Reflecting the region's hostility to black freedom, relatively few free Negroes inhabited the region. Still, tobacco agriculture was not the region's sole endeavor. Although the economy was overwhelmingly rural, there was a small manufacturing sector, one important urban market at Lynchburg, and several other important small towns as well.

⁴⁵Table 8; Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, pp. 161, 166. There has been considerable controversy in the literature in the past ten years over the use and accuracy of the term "breeding" as it applies to southern slavery. Opponents of the term believe that slaveowners who "bred" slaves would by definition have had to indulge in the forced pairing of slaves. Occasionally this did happen; more often, slaveholders provided suitable conditions, at least for health and sometimes for family life, making intrusion into the personal lives of their slaves unnecessary. Slaveholders had been known to sue those who sold them infertile slave women, and had their cases tried successfully in court. Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (New York, 1956), pp. 245-51.

Nor did the tobacco upcountry exist in isolation from the rest of Virginia. Situated in the middle of the state, it had close ties with the other two eastern regions and, by virtue of the canal, some connections with the Valley as well. The region also was connected closely to the Tidewater's manufacturing sector, and this relationship in particular had important implications for the tobacco belt's experience in both slavery and freedom.

IV

Secular trends evident in different degrees in various regions by the 1850s--agricultural reform, nascent manufacturing, an expanding transportation network, a durable slave trade, increased demand for free Negro labor, and widespread slave hiring--all profoundly influenced Virginia slavery. In some ways these changes fundamentally contradicted slavery and eroded its foundation. But in other, more important ways, they created a versatile and adaptable labor force capable of meeting changing economic demand within the slave regime. In turn, these shifts provided a partial answer for a labor problem which had for decades defied solution.

The labor difficulties that vexed Virginia slaveholders resulted from the paradoxical existence of a labor shortage in the midst of a labor surplus. This paradox affected all the Upper South slave states to some extent, but none more

acutely than Virginia. The problem dated back to the 1820s, when the east, while supplying slaves to the cotton South, also embarked upon a program of general agricultural and economic reform. Although the reform impulse met with limited success, it was nevertheless costly, and as in all slave systems liquidity was a constant problem. With money tied up in land and slaves, planters had little cash for investment. The sale of slaves, then, represented the readiest way in which sufficient funds could be acquired to underwrite reform ventures. Since many planters, particularly in the more diversified regions, had surplus bondsmen, and since Lower South demand for them was high, the generation of capital through slave sales bore all the trappings of a solution tailor-made for the planters' economic woes. But slave sales, consisting as they did chiefly of prime hands, also depleted the labor force necessary to implement these programs, and they therefore undermined the reforms they were intended to support.⁴⁶ This trend was most pronounced in the Tidewater and northern piedmont, where slave sales were greatest and diversification most advanced. But its pressures also could be felt in the tobacco belt and parts of the Valley as

⁴⁶Genovese, Political Economy of Slavery, pp. 136-41, provides a more detailed analysis of this problem and discusses it within the context of the southern economy generally.

well.⁴⁷ The conflict became especially troublesome in the 1850s, when favorable market conditions, rapid agricultural and economic diversification, and renewed labor demands combined to make the labor shortage a problem of greater proportions. The increased use of hired slaves, augmented by free Negro labor, ameliorated many of the problems of labor mobilization caused by the changing nature of the economy.

Free Negroes and hired slaves were two groups heavily employed in those sectors of the economy suffering most severely from labor shortages, and whose influence on the process of emancipation would exceed their numbers. Each group inhabited the shadowy interstices of the slave regime; free Negroes were prohibited from claiming the full spectrum of citizenship rights, whereas hired slaves surreptitiously managed to acquire some of the same. As a consequence, sometimes these two types of Afro-Americans were able to breach the limits of slavery and acquire, often by virtue of artisanal skills and bargaining knowledge, a degree of autonomy and a measure of material success that other members of the slave or free Negro communities could not enjoy.

Virginia free Negroes lived under proscriptive legal liabilities that had worsened since the early nineteenth

⁴⁷Based upon regional slave trade estimates, calculated above.

century. Yet their political and social marginality was mitigated to a certain extent in the 1850s by the boom economy and the labor shortage that brought an increased demand for black labor. North American free Negroes had never constituted a petit bourgeoisie in the way that they did in the Caribbean, where there was usually no significant nonslaveholding white class to fill the intermediate positions that existed. But in Virginia, free Negroes often had supplemented slave and free white labor to a significant extent, enough to provoke white protest against expulsion and colonization schemes from time to time.⁴⁸ Especially in the 1850s, free Negro farm labor was in high demand, and those who worked as agricultural laborers significantly outnumbered skilled hands in the labor force. Still others farmed rented lands, primarily as cash tenants.⁴⁹ Often free Negroes were targeted for jobs thought to be too unhealthy for slaves, and their wages were pitifully meager. However, there was a significant proportion of free Negroes in certain skilled and mechanical positions. In 1860 free Negroes constituted a majority of the state's barbers, boatmen, and laundresses; they monopolized the plastering trade; they were a large minority among factory

⁴⁸Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 87-90.

⁴⁹Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground, pp. 3-4; Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 70, 104-09.

workers, domestics, shoemakers, and oysterers; they were represented significantly among such other skilled tradesmen as coopers and bricklayers.⁵⁰

By the 1850s, a small and select group of propertyholders and landowners, both tradesmen and farmers, managed to amass remarkable amounts of real and personal property. Through skill and determination, Virginia free Negroes owned, primarily through purchase, 60,074 acres by 1860; many lived in the tobacco belt. Peter Jenkins of Cumberland county, for example, owned 92 acres in 1859; in Brunswick, Peter Stewart owned 421 acres; Charles Wilson farmed 200 acres of his own in Campbell county. Some free Negro women owned sizeable estates. Frankey Miles of Amelia, for example, owned 1100 acres. Many of the larger landowners were successful commercial farmers, like the Anderson and Miles families of Amelia, the Wilkerson brothers of Louisa, and Jacob Sampson of Goochland. Urban free Negroes also held considerable amounts of property; the livery-stable business brought much of that wealth, as it did to Booker Jackson of Farmville. The ownership and operation of groceries and grogshops were other important occupations among free Negroes.⁵¹

⁵⁰Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 65-101, 136.

⁵¹Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 136-38; many other examples of free Negro economic success are cited on pp. 102-36, 137-70, and in James S. Russell,

Slave hiring was common throughout the nineteenth-century South, especially in urban areas, in industry, in the border states generally and Virginia in particular.⁵² By the 1850s, this method of labor deployment, integral to the diverse requirements of the Tidewater and northern piedmont economies since the 1780s, assumed an unprecedented importance throughout eastern Virginia and in parts of the Valley.⁵³ A statewide annual average of an estimated 15,000 slaves worked on plantations and farms, in households and manufactures, and in transportation, under the direction of people other than their owners during the decade.⁵⁴

From the perspective of owners and employers alike, slave hiring had several advantages. First and most

"Rural Economic Progress of the Negro in Virginia," Journal of Negro History 11 (October 1926), pp. 556-62; Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, pp. 62-4, 243-47, 344-45.

⁵²Bancroft, Slave Trading, p. 145; Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 177-79; Goldin, Urban Slavery, pp. 35-6; Goldfield, Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism, pp. 130-38.

⁵³Clement L. Eaton, "Slave-Hiring in the Upper South: A Step Towards Freedom," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 46 (March 1960), 675-76; Sarah S. Hughes, "Slaves for Hire: The Allocation of Black Labor in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782-1810," William & Mary Quarterly 35 (April 1978), 260-63; Goldfield, Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism, pp. 130-31; Schlotterbeck, "Plantation and Farm," pp. 325, 328.

⁵⁴It is impossible to quantify exactly the numbers of hired slaves in the South. Census enumerators did not record whether slaves were hired until 1860, and then they did so haphazardly. The manuscript returns of Maryland and

important, hiring alleviated one of the most economically irrational tendencies of slavery: it allowed for constant readjustments in the size and location of the labor force in accordance with the dictates of market demand.⁵⁵ Only by deploying labor, and particularly skilled labor, where demand was strong, and by making at least a part of the labor force mobile and versatile, could slaveholders hope to effect even their limited program of reform. Hiring also absorbed part of the state's labor surplus and redirected it into those sectors of the economy suffering most acutely from labor shortages--notably to the general farming districts of the east, the factories, furnaces, coal mines, railroads and canals, and urban households. Hiring spared employers the considerable expense the purchase of slaves would have required, and allowed them to invest their limited capital in other directions. Hiring also mitigated the challenge to the slaveholders' entire view of himself that was so firmly rooted in the ownership of black labor, a threat exacerbated by extensive slave sales. By providing slaveholders with a way to retain their slaves, and thereby their power and position within society, hiring allowed

Virginia are considered to be the most reliable in this respect, however, and it is from these returns for Fairfax, Fauquier, and some other counties and municipalities that Bancroft calculated his estimates. Bancroft, Slave Trading, pp. 96-7, 117, 404-05; Goldin, Urban Slavery, pp. 35-6.

⁵⁵Genovese, Political Economy of Slavery, p. 16; Wade, Slavery in the Cities, p. 38.

tradition-bound planters to hold the forces of change in their society temporarily at bay.⁵⁶

Hired slaves worked under a wide variety of arrangements. Contract periods ranged from as little as a week to as long as five years, but most often hired slaves worked under annual leases which bound them from the first week in January until Christmas. They then returned to their owners' plantations for the customary holiday when arrangements for the ensuing year were made. Most of these hired slaves were drawn from the surplus slave population on the plantation. Many also originated in the division of estates, when they were parcelled among several family members who owned few slaves, or who perhaps owned many and chose to hire out those obtained by inheritance. All employers had certain basic responsibilities toward hired slaves which some took more seriously than others. These included food, lodging, and the provision of two new suits of clothes, one for summer and another for winter, the latter furnished at the end of the contract period so that slaves would return home well-fitted to find hire again in January if they changed employers. Hirers usually bore all loss of labor owing to illness or absence since the amount of hire, paid at the end of the year or contract period,

⁵⁶Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York, 1972), pp. 1-5; Genovese, Political Economy of Slavery, p. 141.

remained fixed regardless of the circumstances. Only if a hired slave died did the owner forfeit the remainder of the slave's wages, unless the death were caused by employer neglect. Beyond these fundamental stipulations contracts had few standard features. Occasionally employers incurred the costs of medical care, as did the James River and Kanawha Canal Company, but usually planters assumed these expenses, often in the hope that their slaves would receive better care. In the event that a hired slave ran away, expenditures for recovery--newspaper and jailors' fees--were sometimes divided between owner and employer, but under other contracts owners alone met these costs.⁵⁷

Hire rates varied widely, dependent as they were on a combination of several factors. Skilled and experienced slaves brought the highest prices, and men commanded more than women. Women with children or children alone often went for nothing more than the cost of their upkeep, as did slaves whose owners hired them as apprentices to learn a specific skill. Sometimes rates of hire were calculated in some proportion to the market value of the slave. Between 10 and 20 percent of that price was a rule of thumb, but wide fluctuations were common.⁵⁸

Several students of hiring have described the system as

⁵⁷Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 38-9; Todd L. Savitt,

⁵⁸Bancroft, Slave Trading, pp. 156-58; Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 38-9, 46.

a harsh one, in part because it resembled the absentee slave ownership that traditionally was associated with exploitive conditions, and also because many industrial jobs were perilous and unhealthy. Temporary employers, like overseers, presumably lacked interest in the long-term survival of their hirelings, and drove them relentlessly in an effort to extract as much labor and hence profit as possible. Certainly Frederick Douglass's experience on a Maryland farm in 1834 testified to the cruelty that might befall the hired slave.⁵⁹ Furthermore, conditions in certain industries indisputably exceeded the severity of the cotton regime that Virginia slaves so feared. Coal miners, for instance, endured notoriously hazardous conditions. Frequently they met with injury and even death from cave-ins, fires, explosions, floods, and suffocation, all of which occurred with regularity throughout the antebellum period. Consequently, many slaveowners refused to rent their slaves to the colliers, and slave resistance in the form of shirking, outright refusal to enter the mines, and running away continually troubled mine operators.⁶⁰ Hiring also took a heavy toll on slave family life when it

Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia (Urbana, 1978), p. 188; Bancroft, Slave Trading, p. 162.

⁵⁹Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom (New York, 1855; reprint ed., 1969), pp. 222-32.

⁶⁰Ronald L. Lewis, "Black Labor in the Eastern Virginia

removed a family member, usually an adult man, from the plantation for such a long period of time.⁶¹ Considering this evidence, many historians have concluded, not surprisingly, that hiring represented an especially brutal form of slavery which bondsmen sought to avoid.⁶² Degradation certainly existed in many jobs which utilized hired slave labor, and the system had a corrosive effect on the already embattled slave family as well.

But for many Virginia slaves in the 1850s fortunate enough to be employed under less threatening circumstances, hiring could often bring a greater degree of freedom and autonomy, or an enhancement of "the conditions of life."⁶³ In many respects slave hiring could be a

Coal Field, 1765-1865," in The Other Slaves, ed. by Newton and Lewis, p. 98. For example, in 1855 at the Midlothian pits a devastating explosion killed 55 slave miners; a year later seven others drowned in flooded mines at the same location. Starobin, Industrial Slavery, pp. 46-7; Goldfield, Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism, pp. 133-35.

⁶¹Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground, pp. 27-8; Goldfield, Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism, pp. 132-33; Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 669.

⁶²Charles S. Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (Gloucester, Mass., 1933; reprint ed., 1965), p. 179; Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, p. 84; Starobin, Industrial Slavery, pp. 36-7; Samuel Sydney Bradford, "The Negro Ironworker in Ante-Bellum Virginia," Journal of Southern History 25 (May 1959), 201-06, and Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground, pp. 27-8, are all examples of this historiographical view.

⁶³For an comparative approach to the issue of slave "treatment" in the New World, see Eugene D. Genovese, "The Treatment of Slaves in Different Countries: Problems in the

"stepping-stone to freedom," an intermediate zone between slavery and freedom that extracted greater accommodation from employers and owners than either would have liked by providing important privileges and advantages which the average field hand or domestic did not possess. Many slaves actively sought to be hired to certain industries, and especially those located in the cities, where opportunities for greater freedom of movement and potential escape were most abundant, and where some had established a family within the local black population.⁶⁴

The most dramatic increase in the use of hired slave labor in Virginia occurred in the tobacco factories, where the work force rose from 5900 in 1850 to 12,843 in 1860, almost all of whom were male slaves and over half of whom were hired.⁶⁵ Other skilled and industrial pursuits and public works projects faced labor shortages in the 1850s,

Applications of Comparative Method," in Laura Foner and Genovese, eds., Slavery in the New World: A Reader in Comparative History (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969), p. 203.

⁶⁴Charles B. Dew, "Disciplining Slave Ironworkers in the Antebellum South: Coercion, Conciliation, and Accommodation," in The Other Slaves, ed. by Newton and Lewis, pp. 63-4; Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, p. 81 for a general review of the literature on this point; Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 180-81; Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 668-69; Richard B. Morris, "The Measure of Bondage in the Slave States," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 41 (September 1954), 231-39; Gray, History of Agriculture, I, 567.

⁶⁵Robert, Tobacco Kingdom, p. 197; Rachleff, Black Labor

and they used hired bondsmen to relieve them. During the decade more hired slaves than ever before built railroads, dug canals, piloted deck boats, batteaux, and packets, mined coal, forged iron, operated grist and sawmills, cut lumber, and produced salt and naval stores. Their services as carpenters, blacksmiths, barbers, tailors, weavers, machinists, coachmen, masons, tanners, wheelwrights, and coopers were in greater demand than ever before. The increased use of hiring extended even to the mountain spring resorts, playgrounds for youthful members of the planter class from across the South. Here slaves worked seasonally as chambermaids and waiters. Though more removed from the slave community than other groups of hired slaves, resort workers fared well in a material sense, for they often dressed and ate well, and usually received tips for their services. Hiring also lent itself to agricultural labor, particularly in the more diversified Tidewater and northern piedmont, though not to the extent found in skilled or industrial pursuits.⁶⁶

Of all the employers of rented slaves, tobacco manufacturers were the ones who afforded the greatest latitude to their hired slave laborers. Customary practices granted a combination of three privileges in particular

in the South, pp. 6-7; Goldin, Urban Slavery, pp. 45-6.

⁶⁶Bancroft, Slave Trading, p. 154; Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 180-81.

which most other hired slaves enjoyed only in part. By the 1850s it was common for hirelings in the tobacco factories, who worked under annual contract, to select their own employers and bargain their own terms of hire, though it was illegal for them to do so.⁶⁷

Hiring one's own time represented the most lenient of arrangements and was a privilege highly prized by those tobacco hands, skilled artisans, and urban domestics fortunate enough to possess it. Lorenzo Ivy's father, for example, a shoemaker owned by Judge George H. Gilman in Pittsylvania county, was initially hired out to different shops around the county when he first learned his trade. "Finally," Ivy recalled, "he let him hire himself out. Yessuh! Let him make his own barguns."⁶⁸ In the opinion of most whites, the measure of self-reliance which grew out of this practice and the freedoms it promoted usually rendered the slave unfit for rural agricultural labor. To the slave who arranged his own employment, however, self-hire could foster self-confidence as well as an extra

⁶⁷Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 180-81; Robert, Tobacco Kingdom, pp. 203-05. Virginia forbade self-hire in 1782 and 1808; Richmond did so again in 1859, but these statutes were widely disregarded and laxly enforced. Goldin, Urban Slavery, p. 39. See also John T. O'Brien, "Factory, Church, and Community: Blacks in Antebellum Richmond," Journal of Southern History 44 (November 1978), 509-36, for an excellent analysis of the impact of tobacco factory work on the black community.

⁶⁸Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, pp. 151-52.

measure of status and respect within the black community.⁶⁹

The semifreedom of hired tobacco factory slaves was enhanced by the provision of "board money" with which they were to find their own food and lodging. This particular relaxation of discipline often culminated in extensive interaction between hired blacks and free Negroes and local slaves. In Richmond, the practice had the unintentional consequence of fostering black business, since some blacks established cook houses and grogshops and provided quarters for factory slaves in the back alleys of the capital. A greater degree of contact with a wider part of the black community than might be reasonable to expect was one benefit that slaves who "worked out," especially in the cities and in the tobacco factories, often acquired.⁷⁰ Many tobacco factory owners also gave their hands money to purchase clothing, a practice partially adopted by James Mitchell, contractor on the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, in 1851. Having neglected to buy socks for the hands before his hirelings left for Christmas, Mitchell hastily authorized the distribution of a quarter to each that they might make the purchase themselves. They could do this easily, he

⁶⁹Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 180-81.

⁷⁰O'Brien, "Factory, Church, and Community," 533-36; Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 180-81; Robert, Tobacco Kingdom, pp. 203-05; Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, p. 7.

explained to his partner, "at any Country store as they go home."⁷¹

"Overwork" payments were common in the tobacco factories, ironworks, furnaces, and lumber camps, where employers combined the task system with extra earnings to provide incentive for higher production. Profits from work completed under the task went to the master, but any recompense resulting from work performed beyond task accrued to the hired slave. Sometimes masters even intervened with employers so that their slaves would have occasion to make more money. "David wishes you to keep in mind the pay you promised him at New Year," wrote W. R. McConikey of Franklin county to Peter Holland, a salt mine owner in Kanawha, "as he has not made anything for himself this Year - and wishes you to write in answer to this."⁷² Overwork payments varied considerably, but they usually ranged between \$1 and \$5 weekly, or they could assume the form of time off.⁷³

The potential benefits of overwork to a hired slave were several. With the money, a slave might eventually purchase freedom, supplement present material conditions, or indulge

⁷¹Robert Mitchell to John Buford, 21 December 1851, Buford papers.

⁷²W. R. McConikey to Peter Holland, 2 December 1857, Southside Virginia family papers.

⁷³Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 180-81; Robert, Tobacco Kingdom, pp. 203-05; Rachleff, Black Labor in the South, p. 7; Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 669-70.

in some form of amusement. Whatever the choice, the effect was that these slaves earned money that could be used at their discretion.⁷⁴

Tobacco factory owners and others who exercised such lax control over hired slaves did so out of necessity. Many understood from experience that dispirited workers meant low productivity and anemic profits.⁷⁵ Moreover, employers in the 1850s faced an increasingly competitive labor market and made concessions to hands with an eye toward rehiring them the following year, particularly if they were considered "good hands."

The traditional reluctance of Virginia slaveholders to compel their slaves to work at any job against their wills, lest they run away, forced the employers' hands even more. David H. Clark, for example, a slaveholder of Pittsylvania Court House, wrote to the railroad contractor to whom he hired two slaves in January 1852. "I have herewith sent on Henry and Davy the boys you hired of me and hope they will arrive in good time. . . . I regret the others were unwilling to go, for I was anxious for them to go together, as they all looked well that you had last year."⁷⁶ A

⁷⁴Dew, "Disciplining Slave Iron Workers," 74-5.

⁷⁵Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, p. 81.

⁷⁶David H. Clark to John Buford, 3 January 1852, Buford papers; Dew, "Disciplining Slave Iron Workers," 71-2; Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 666.

Franklin county slaveowner wrote to a Kanawha saline operator to report that his slave "wishes to say that he has had a rather hard berth this year at Carrolton and that he is not willing to live there next year. He wishes to be hired when my father hires his hands next year . . . to the Va. Coal & Oil Co on Point Creek."⁷⁷ Owners themselves often refused to send slaves back to employers with reputations for harsh and irresponsible treatment. "I was up to see old Caleb last week," wrote one hirer, "and he has taken it into his head that his hands shall not go on public works the present year where grading is to be done. . . . This determination has, no doubt, been produced by the misfortune of last year, altho' he made no allusion to it whatever, and finding his mind made up on the subject, I did not press the matter."⁷⁸ Employers who needed hands for especially hazardous work such as coal mining and certain aspects of railroad construction could ill afford to treat them harshly, without risking the loss of a labor force the next year.⁷⁹

The latitude granted to hired slaves evoked shrill complaints from whites upset by unseemly black demeanor.

⁷⁷W.R. McConikey to Peter Holland, 2 December 1857, Southside Virginia family papers.

⁷⁸Robert Mitchell to John Buford, 1 March 1852, Buford papers.

⁷⁹Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, p. 88.

Impudence, insolence and independence of manner were typical charges levied by agitated whites against hired slaves.⁸⁰

The most highly skilled often were considered the most insufferable, for well they understood their importance to their employers' success, and many exploited that importance at every opportunity. Slaveholders across the South had long acknowledged this maxim of slave management. South Carolina's James Hammond noted in 1849 that "whenever a slave is made a mechanic, he is more than half freed, and soon becomes, as we too well know, and all history attests, with rare exceptions, the most corrupt and turbulent of his class."⁸¹ Black artisans, craftsmen, and industrial workers in Virginia often enjoyed the semifreedom of which Hammond spoke, and used it to frustrate their owners' and employers' efforts to control them.

Hired slaves seemed clearly to understand that their status furnished opportunities to capitalize on white uneasiness and economic need. The historical record is replete with examples of hired slaves who "loafed" or remained absent from work for long periods of time, frequently without punishment. Tom Stuart, for example, a blacksmith hired to the railway, ran away in June 1851,

⁸⁰See Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 48-53, for typical complaints; also Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 666; Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 180-81.

⁸¹Quoted in Genovese, Political Economy of Slavery, p. 225.

"after getting all his pay. . . . Painter [the foreman] says he is the greatest scoundrel unhung. . . . He gave Painter no intimation of his intention to leave and was engaged in the only important job we have had in the shop since he was hired, making the spikes for the track, and after making some 100 stoped [sic], and Painter was compelled to send to Burlingame's and have the balance made. . . . Tom is a smooth tongued villian [sic], and I would certainly advise you to clear him out, unless you have some important job for him to do. But do try and get a fair pretext for thrashing him before he goes. I expect he told a mighty smooth and pretty story."⁸² William Johnson, Jr., recalled that his uncles Edmund and John, both hired slaves from Albemarle and Goochland counties, "never worked more than four months during the four or five years that they were hired out. They would go with the person who hired them, work about a month, then steal off into the woods and stay until their time was out. Then they would return to their original owners in Goochland. Of course, the master never punished them for doing this - he didn't care cause he collected his contract just the same. Edmund and John always worked all right when they were at home but they were determined not to work for anyone else."⁸³

⁸²Robert Mitchell to John Buford, 9 June 1851, Buford papers.

⁸³Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, p. 166.

This type of running away bore a strong resemblance to strike activity and it plagued hirers and slaveholders alike. Typically they had little recourse. Hired slaves were not the only group to utilize temporary absence from work as a method of resistance; slaves on the plantation also recognized the distinction between a short absence and a permanent bid for freedom. As Lorenzo Ivy put it, before "Runaways! Lawd, yes, dey had plenty of runaways. Dere was two kin's of runaways--dem what hid in de woods an' dem what ran away to free lan'. Mos' slaves jes' runaway an' hide in de woods for a week or two an' den come on back."⁸⁴

Nevertheless, hired slaves were particularly well-positioned to take advantage of this more ordinary type of running. The saga of Mose Otey, a railroad hand from Lynchburg supposed to be working on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad in 1852, is a good example of this phenomenon. In early January Otey's master sent him out to Montgomery county where he was to begin his year's work. But while in transit, Otey was sidetracked; by 13 January he still had not appeared at his employer's door. James Mitchell wrote his partner John Buford to say that he had "learned a day or two ago, that Mose Otey was still loitering about Liberty [Bedford county], when I had supposed him in Mong^{my}."

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 153. This was a phenomenon that had long characterized slavery in Virginia.

Mitchell, accustomed to tardiness especially in times of bad weather, when work ceased anyway, was not immediately alarmed, but clearly he expected Otey to give him trouble in the future. "It does not make much difference," he went on, "but it would have been as well for him to have asked leave. Mose did not behave very well about New-Years day, and if he does not mind his eye, he will get whipped before he starts to his work. I will best up his quarters in a day or two." But neither the stick nor the carrot dimmed the wanderlust in Mose Otey.⁸⁵

A week later Mitchell wrote that Otey, "a scoundrel [sic], has, I fear, dodged off. . . . I dropped a line immediately to Mr Davis to apprehend him and put him in jail or send him up to me--but the gentleman kept clear, and . . . made off and has not been seen since. He has evidently been tampered with by some one, and I fear will give us trouble, as he once ran away from Colo. Wingfield and was gone 9 months out of the 12. I was in Liberty a few days ago, and made arrangements to have him apprehended if he should again make his appearance there."⁸⁶

Two weeks later, Mitchell remained on the trail. "No news from Mose Otey yet--it is supposed he has gone to Floyd county, where he was partly raised. I will advertise him at

⁸⁵Robert Mitchell to John Buford, 13 January 1852, Buford papers.

⁸⁶Ibid., 19 January 1852.

Floyd Courthouse . . . and offer a reward of \$10 (\$5 of which the owners will have to pay) which I think will cause the gentleman to be brought in."⁸⁷ But February and most of March came and went with Otey nowhere to be found. On March 18 Mitchell concluded to advertise in a newspaper "and offer a good reward."⁸⁸

A month later an exasperated Mitchell resorted to more devious tactics. Otey had again been seen around Liberty, and Mitchell now had "some bribed negroes on the look out for him. I hope to send him over soon in irons."⁸⁹ Finally in early May a rested Otey returned to work. "I am at length enabled to send you our runaway scoundrel Mose Otey, who has been at play 4 months, and who will probably run away again soon, and stay the remainder of the year. He deserves to be kept in irons every night and every sunday, as a punishment for his villiany [sic]. I have not seen him, and do not wish to lay eyes on him, for he has acted so badly that it would irritate me exceedingly to see him. I presume he will tell you he came in &c but the fact is, I have been arranging matters for his apprehension sometime, and he made a must of necessity by surrendering himself up. Make him tell who harboured him all the while, for that he

⁸⁷Ibid., 31 January 1852.

⁸⁸Ibid., 18 March 1852.

⁸⁹Ibid., 14 April 1852.

must have been harboured during Jany. and February, there is no doubt."⁹⁰ A week later Mitchell expressed the rather forlorn hope that "our man Mose has become tired of running about, and will content himself at his work the residue of the year. He told Deardoff if you did not bear too hard on him, he would make up for lost time yet. You know what to do with the gentleman, and I am perfectly willing to leave it to your discretion, altho' I did want him to have a sound whipping for his villiany [sic]."⁹¹

Mose Otey's vacation from the Virginia and Tennessee illustrates the many ways a hired slave could manipulate his employer. Like other hired slaves, Otey possessed a thorough knowledge of the surrounding countryside, a benefit of the freedom of movement he had previously exercised. He also knew that a town or city would be a good hiding place until he was ready to go to work in the spring. Otey had already had experience in exploiting the ambiguity associated with hiring--he had left Colonel Wingfield's employ for a much longer time once before. He knew that he would be able to leave the railroad too for an extended period without risking a serious reprisal. Mitchell would likely ignore his absence at first, providing Otey with some important lead time. Afterwards information about

⁹⁰Ibid., 3 May 1852.

⁹¹Ibid., 10 May 1852.

Mitchell's moves to apprehend him would become available from other members of the slave and free Negro communities and through the newspapers. Once he decided to return, he knew that Mitchell was practically powerless to attack him physically; if he did, Otey would be able to remonstrate against such treatment with his owner. The most successful tactic would be to appeal to Mitchell's economic sensibilities and need for labor by promising to make up for the time he had lost--but only if the overseer treated him well. If, after all these calculations, Mitchell still tried to punish him, Otey might sabotage the railroad by lingering or damaging the line in some way; or he might just run away again. Unless they forfeited his pay for the remainder of the year, Mitchell and Buford would not send Otey home to Lynchburg. Because of the potential financial loss and the inconvenience of finding a replacement for him, they preferred to keep Otey on for the duration of the year in order to salvage at least part of their money's worth of hire out of him.

If Otey were a slave who had fallen to his present owner through an estate division, he might have felt at even greater liberty to test the limits of his situation at the railroad. Such had been the case with another of Buford's hired slaves named Doctor, hired to the railroad by David H. Clark of Pittsylvania Court House in 1851. Doctor escaped from Montgomery county that summer, and Clark wrote Buford to explain the slave's actions. "I regret he behaves so,"

Clark apologized; "it is owing to the division which took place last Christmas and he was drawn, so that he is not so much, he thinks, under me as heretofore." Clark thought it necessary to promise Buford, in the event of a future run, that "the same authority I formerly had over him will be rigidly exercised." But it is not unreasonable to assume that Doctor may have thought otherwise and took his time about returning to work.⁹²

V

Slave hiring in agriculture differed in significant respects from the patterns typical of industry and transportation. Agricultural hiring often took the form of short-term engagements, especially in areas where farmers and planters needed extra labor only during peak times of planting and harvesting. As the length of service differed, so too did the privileges associated with industrial and urban hiring obtain less frequently in this setting. Slaves hired out to the plantations and farms rarely bargained their own labor or received overwork, and never found their own food and lodging. Conditions in the Tidewater and

⁹²David H. Clark to John Buford, 22 July 1851, Buford papers; see also Willie Lee Rose, ed. with commentary, "A Trial of Wills between a Slave and a Prospective Employer," in A Documentary History of Slavery in North America (New York, 1976), pp. 369-72.

northern piedmont were especially conducive to this kind of seasonal employment, since general farming and market gardening made irregular labor demands through the year, but tobacco agriculture also utilized hired slaves in much the same way.⁹³ This method of labor allocation had existed in Elizabeth City county in the Tidewater as early as the 1780s, a clear response to the abandonment of tobacco and the shift to wheat culture. Between 1782 and 1810, rare was the slave who did not experience at least one year as a hireling.⁹⁴ The practice remained entrenched throughout the antebellum period, for in 1860 the same county reported that 1000 of its 2417 slaves "worked out" during the year.⁹⁵ Estimates from other counties in 1860 indicate that hired slaves represented an important part of the agricultural labor force. In 1858, for example, in the northern piedmont county of Fairfax, one-fourth of all slaves were hired out, while in nearby Fauquier, the number ranged between 10 and 12 percent.⁹⁶

Estimates of local slave hiring in the tobacco belt

⁹³Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 677; Schlotterbeck, "The 'Social Economy' of an Upper South Community," pp. 5, 11-12.

⁹⁴Hughes, "Slaves for Hire," 260-61.

⁹⁵Engs, *Freedom's First Generation*, p. 14.

⁹⁶Bancroft, *Slave Trading*, pp. 147-48; Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 675-76.

indicate that it did not prevail to the extent found in either Elizabeth City or Fairfax, but it did exist. In Albemarle, a major tobacco-producing county, 5 percent of all slaves were hired out in 1860, while in Cumberland the rate exceeded 6 percent.⁹⁷ The need for additional hands around harvest, a short period when leaves were at their peak and had to be picked, was so great that some planters who contracted their slaves stipulated their return during this season. Martin Webb of Appomattox Court House, who regularly hired his slaves to the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, made such an agreement in 1857 with Scott & Buford, contractors in Bedford county, where his slave Tinsly worked that year.⁹⁸ In addition, neighbors and relatives often made informal, reciprocal arrangements regarding slave labor which resembled hiring. Robert T. Hubbard and his brother Edward W. Hubbard, for example, large slaveholders in Buckingham and Cumberland, often exchanged slaves during times of increased need. Two of Robert's prime hands, Abel and Bias, sometimes worked at Edward's Saratoga plantation, and Edward periodically lent part of his labor force to Robert. In the fall of 1855, for example, Abel and Bias helped harvest Saratoga's unusually large crop of tobacco, and afterwards some of Edward's

⁹⁷Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 673-74.

⁹⁸Martin Webb to Scott & Buford, 10 July 1857, Buford papers; see also Gray, History of Agriculture, I, 565-66.

slaves returned with them to Robert's outlying estate Whispering, to rebuild the tobacco barns. These more casual agreements existed throughout Virginia.⁹⁹

Annual hire adapted less readily to tobacco agriculture, because planters wanted a permanent year-round labor force in order to meet the labor-intensive demands of the crop. Therefore most contact with hiring in the tobacco belt, as in other regions, occurred within the context of industrial and urban slavery. Tobacco factories in Lynchburg, Farmville, and Danville employed many tobacco belt slaves whose labor was superfluous to or could be spared from the plantation, as did the railroad contractors whenever construction passed through a given area. Others were hired by the lumber camps and textile factories through the region.

But because much industry was located in other areas of Virginia, hired slaves from the tobacco belt in the 1850s increasingly worked for more distant employers outside the region. As a result, the surplus slave population of the belt began to serve as a labor reserve for industrial and urban hirers and public works projects in other parts of the state.¹⁰⁰ Most slaves hired outside the region went to

⁹⁹Robert T. Hubbard to Edward W. Hubbard, 12 and 23 October 1855, Robert T. Hubbard papers. Schlotterbeck also found these arrangements in Orange and Greene counties in the northern Piedmont. See "The 'Social Economy' in an Upper South Community," p. 12.

¹⁰⁰Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, pp. 83-4.

the tobacco factories and private households of Richmond. Others worked on the railroad and canal, or for the colliers, ironmasters, furnace operators, resort owners, and salt boilers in the Valley and Appalachia.

Demand for labor in the Valley became especially high, and the region employed growing numbers of slaves from the east, primarily from the tobacco belt, to work on its farms, the canal, and in the iron fields and blast furnaces. The counties of Pittsylvania, Louisa, Albemarle, and Nelson, all located in the tobacco belt, were important sources of hired slaves to the iron mines and blast furnaces of the Valley.¹⁰¹ Saltmakers in the Kanawha Valley needed slave labor in the furnaces as well as in the auxiliary industries associated with salt production. Coal mining was the most important such industry, and its operators sought labor in the tobacco belt.¹⁰² According to one account, as early as 1847 three western counties--Rockbridge, Alleghany, and Botetourt--paid in slave hire "an amount almost equal to the entire slave tax of eastern Virginia."¹⁰³ Railroad

¹⁰¹Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, pp. 83-4; Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, p. 251.

¹⁰²One estimate has about 2000 slaves working in these mines alone in 1850. Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, p. 46; John E. Stealey, III, "The Salt Industry of the Great Kanawha Valley of Virginia: A Study of Ante-bellum Internal Commerce," (Ph.D. dissertation, West Virginia University, 1970), p. 433.

¹⁰³Richmond Times & Compiler, 13 January 1847, quoted in Bruce, Virginia Iron Manufacture, pp. 273-74; Lewis, Coal,

contractors James Mitchell and John Buford, for example, whose work in 1852 had reached Montgomery county, usually sought labor in tobacco belt counties. In planning for the upcoming year's labor force, Mitchell told his partner where prospects would be best. "Colo. Clark of Pittsa. writes us, that he has changed his place of hiring from Spring Garden to the Courthouse, where it will take place on the 27th . . . and that he will have some 25 or 30 hands to hire." One of Mitchell's agents, a person named Rosser, had travelled to Appomattox in search of hands, though in this case without much success. "I fear the great competition for hands, will have the tendency to keep prices up again. . . . let us come to some understanding as to the best plans to be pursued in hiring. . . . I think it important we should send some efficient man or men to points we cannot attend. From what I learn, I would not be surprised if Albemarle would not be a good point - and perhaps Nelson and Louisa. In Bedford, I think we can get some hands."¹⁰⁴ Many other men like Mitchell and Buford who were in search of hired slaves looked to the interior to provide that temporary force.¹⁰⁵

Iron, and Slaves, pp. 221-22.

¹⁰⁴Robert Mitchell to John Buford, 21 December 1851, Buford papers.

¹⁰⁵See further evidence for this observation see Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding, pp. 179-81.

Evidence from the tobacco belt suggests that a significant number of slaves possessed a ready knowledge of if not actual experience with hiring. For example, the hiring system that vividly impressed a young slave boy on a plantation in the southwestern backwater of Franklin county illustrates well the effect that hiring could have on the slave community. From the vantage point of the 1890s, Booker T. Washington recounted the impact that the experiences of his stepfather, a hired slave named Wash Ferguson, had on him and the other slaves on the Burroughs plantation at remote Hale's Ford. Ferguson was owned by a nearby farmer, but he did not live on the plantation. Washington usually saw him only at Christmastime, when he returned for holiday. Ferguson had an unusually varied experience as a hired slave, having worked in the tobacco factories in Lynchburg, on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, and in the Kanawha salines. To a young Booker he seemed incredibly worldly, and the boy would sit "for hours in rapture hearing him tell of the experiences he had had in a distant part of Virginia, where he and a large number of other coloured people were employed in building a railway." Ferguson's work gave him an awareness of the wider world in which he lived, and he shared his insights with family and friends. "Although he was employed merely as a common laborer he had learned something as to the plan and purposes for which this railroad was being built and he had some idea of the great changes it was intended to bring about,"

Washington recalled, "and he told it all with a great deal of interesting circumstance." As a slave child, Washington wondered "what interest he could have in a railway of that kind; whether or not he owned any part in it; and how it was he was so much interested in the building of a railroad that he could remain away from home for five or six months and sometimes longer at one time." Washington remembered Christmas in Virginia fondly, because it united his family and those of many other Virginia slaves. "Christmas was a season of great rejoicing," he said, "on account of the home-coming of a large number of coloured people who had been at work in different industries in different parts of the state. Some of them had been hired out to work on the farms, some were employed on the railroads, and others were mechanics, and when they came home at Christmas time they brought with them stories, anecdotes, and news of what was going on in different parts of the state."¹⁰⁶

Washington's memories of his stepfather's homecoming in the happy times of Christmas holiday illustrate the kinds of effects the hiring system doubtless had on many other slave communities. Even in a remote location near the Blue Ridge foothills, "about as near to nowhere as any locality gets to

¹⁰⁶Booker T. Washington, "[Extracts from] The Story of the Negro," and The Story of My Life and Work, both in The Booker T. Washington Papers, vol. 1: The Autobiographical Writings, ed. by Louis R. Harlan, (Urbana, 1972), pp. 10, 414-15, 418.

be," Washington had found out about a different world beyond the bounds of the plantation. Although he had never seen it, he knew of the existence of the railroad and believed that it would alter considerably the lives of both black and white Virginians in the future. He understood that still other slaves were involved in that world, and that through them even larger numbers of slaves on Virginia plantations knew, as he did, of the remarkable changes taking place in the economy. Washington's reminiscences also revealed the extent to which hiring disrupted black Virginia families, leaving them to unite only once or twice a year if the hired member worked at a distant location like the railroad, the factory, the mines, or the salt works. Washington's comments therefore show how intimately the hiring system touched many other tobacco belt slaves, at the same time that it separated them from one another for long months at a time.

Together these two groups--hired slaves and free Negroes--were unexpectedly well-prepared to meet the revolutionary challenge that war and emancipation would bring into being. Not surprisingly, much of the postbellum Virginia slavery during the 1850s fit no easy stereotypes. Regional diversity and changes in the economy made for a complex and multifaceted institution. Stagnation and decomposition may be appropriate descriptions of an earlier time and a particular region, the Tidewater, but by the 'fifties slavery had relocated in the upcountry tobacco

VI

belt, where an economic revival had pushed tobacco production to new heights. In the older region, cereal culture, market gardening, and the presence of a large free Negro population had produced a society where both the slave trade and slave hiring could thrive. Economic demand in both the Valley and the Chesapeake drew on the excess of labor in the tobacco belt, leading the region to acquire the characteristics of a labor reserve. Slaves from the belt who worked as hired hands during the last decade of slavery constituted a distinct and important minority whose experience reverberated through the slave community and conditioned them for a new set of social and labor relationships which would follow the Confederacy's defeat in 1865. Free Negroes constituted another important "anomalous group" of black Virginians who were more exposed than most Afro-Americans to the changes wrought by nascent industrialization.

Together these two groups--hired slaves and free Negroes--were unexpectedly well-prepared to meet the revolutionary challenge that the war and emancipation would bring into being. Not surprisingly, much of the postbellum black elite would emerge from their ranks. Although most southern piedmont slaves and free Negroes labored on rural tobacco plantations during the 1850s, a significant number worked in tobacco factories or private households of the cities and towns, on railroads, in the salt, coal, and iron mines, and as urban domestics, skilled artisans, and extra

farm hands. These jobs often sent them far away from their owners and the restricted world of the plantation, and gave them a hint of the world at large and the effect that market relations could have on their lives. Hiring often disrupted the black family, while also enhancing a slave's sense of individual dignity and creative accomplishment despite the physical and psychological confines of slavery. The experience of working as a hired hand, perhaps even to hire one's own labor, to develop an appreciation of the meaning of a railroad or marvel at the bustle of life in the capital, smoothened the transition from slavery to freedom. These experiences were important predecessors to the inauguration of free labor after the Civil War, and they were critical as well to the events of the war itself.

Henry M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York, 1979), p. 236; Charles H. Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States, 1850-1925: A Study in American Economic History* (New York, 1927), p. 94. W.E.B. Du Bois was the first scholar to emphasize clearly the crucial role of black labor during the war in his pathbreaking *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York, 1935; reprint ed., 1967), pp. 67-9, and passim. One contemporary, General Ulysses S. Grant, agreed with this Confederate assessment of military strategy. "The four million of colored non-combatants were equal to more than three times

CHAPTER II

Labor During the War: The Transformation Quickened

Throughout the Confederacy, Afro-Americans played pivotal roles in military operations and production during the Civil War. Their labor, including that of women and children, represented an indispensable economic resource to the Confederacy. With much of the southern labor force enslaved, the government believed that most adult white men could be effectively mobilized for combat duty. The ability to field a larger proportion of the eligible population, so went Confederate strategy, represented an important advantage over the free-labor North, where soldiers would be drawn from the ranks of the producers of society--from laborers, mechanics, and farmers.¹ This heavy reliance on slave labor placed special pressures on the less embattled

¹Emory M. Thomas, The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865 (New York, 1979), p. 236; Charles H. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 1850-1925: A Study in American Economic History (New York, 1927), p. 94. W.E.B. Du Bois was the first scholar to emphasize clearly the crucial role of black labor during the war in his pathbreaking Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880 (New York, 1935; reprint ed., 1967), pp. 57-9, and passim. One contemporary, General Ulysses S. Grant, agreed with this Confederate assessment of military strategy. "The four million of colored non-combatants were equal to more than three times

tobacco belt. In the upcountry, mobilization accentuated the region's antebellum character as a labor reserve and added crucial new burdens on this food- and materiel-producing enclave. It would be the destruction of this strategic supply network by northern armies that finally ended the war.

I

The political history of Virginia secession differed in important respects from that of the states of the Lower South. Virginia's decision to join the Confederacy was relatively slower and more deliberate because Virginia slaveholders had never supported disunion as readily as had their southern counterparts. While the deepening sectional tensions of the 1850s had provoked increasingly strident calls for secession from Deep South "fire-eaters," most Virginia aristocrats genteelly resisted that label.

Instead, they banded loosely together to espouse "moderation." That is to say, "moderate" slaveholders endorsed an orthodox belief in the theoretical right to secession, but they doubted its wisdom and preferred the

their number in the North, age for age and sex for sex, in supplying food from the soil to support armies. Women did not work in the fields in the North, and children attended school." Ulysses S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, 2 vols. (New York, 1886), II, 501.

safer approach of compromise.² Also known as "conditional unionists," "moderates" pledged to resist secession only so long as the North did not try to coerce the seceded states back into the Union. The group was cautious but not immune to paranoia and excitement. John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in the fall of 1859, for example, fanned Virginia's low secessionist flame and rekindled anxious memories in white minds of Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion and, before that, Gabriel Prosser's thwarted plans of 1800.³ But in general, Deep South slaveholders were more radical secessionists.⁴ Through the impassioned winter of 1860-61, with a secessionist majority in the legislature, "moderates," in uneasy alliance with a small group of

²Henry T. Shanks, The Secession Movement in Virginia, 1847-1861 (Richmond, 1934), pp. 120-32; 159.

³Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 85-102; Stephen B. Oates, The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion (New York, 1975); on Prosser, see Gerald W. Mullin, Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia (New York, 1972).

⁴Secession's intellectual center was the University of Virginia, regarded as the most accomplished university in the South during the nineteenth century. Many southerners had sent their sons to the superior schools of the north, especially for medical training. But in the late antebellum period, as sectional tensions grew more strained, the University's enrollment jumped from 163 in 1846-47 to over 700 in 1858-59. The school's attraction depended on its reputation as the only academy which afforded its students steady lessons in "Southern rights, Southern institutions, Southern manners, and Southern chivalry." Professors James P. Holcombe and A. T. Bledsoe were the best-known pro-southern professors; both had long advocated proslavery and the right of secession to their students. Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 71, 78.

unconditional unionists from the west, controlled the secession convention and looked to Governor John Letcher for leadership.⁵ In the November presidential election "moderates" were strong enough, barely and with the help of old-line Whigs, to carry Virginia for the southern Unionist candidate from Tennessee, John Bell.⁶

"Moderate" hesitancy had several wellsprings. Many were sensitive to the revolutionary implications of wars, and hoped for a peaceful resolution of sectional issues that would leave both slavery and the Union intact. Because they feared the potential bloodletting of a prolonged war, some had argued for a "middle" or "border" Confederacy. In February, many "moderates" anxiously awaited the outcome of the Washington "Peace Convention," a delegation from southern states still in the Union headed by Virginia ex-President John Tyler. Its supporters vainly hoped that the Convention would reach a compromise similar to the

⁵Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 120-57; Jack P. Maddex, Jr., Virginia Conservatives: A Study in Reconstruction Politics (Chapel Hill, 1970), p. 21. On the governor, see F. N. Boney, John Letcher of Virginia: The Story of Virginia's Civil War Governor (University, Ala., 1966), pp. 91-113; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 142-43.

⁶Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 115-18, 142-57, 158-78; see esp. pp. 156-58. Bell's popular margin was a slight 358. John C. Breckenridge, the secession candidate from Kentucky, was Bell's near rival. Both Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln were poorly represented in the Virginia returns. On the political atmosphere in secession Virginia, see Thomas, Confederate Nation, p. 86.

Crittenden proposal.⁷ Sentimentalists invoked memories of the deeds of the Virginia dynasty and their role in the formation of the Union. Economic ties to the North and the West, both established and hoped-for, concerned some, especially the small business community. Others were persuaded by the spectre of servile insurrection, a standard apocalyptic prediction in the South whenever crisis threatened.⁸

Only after a period of circumspection sponsored by their "moderate" compatriots could the smaller but more vocal group of immediate secessionists, or "precipitationists," impatiently shepherd the state into the Confederate fold. This "radical" wing of eastern slaveholders, led by the fiery former Governor Henry A. Wise, garnered most of its support from the tobacco belt. These men felt confident that the Northern refusal to guarantee the future of slavery and the likelihood of military coercion meant that Virginia

⁷In December Kentuckian John J. Crittenden had introduced amendments to protect slavery south of the old Missouri Compromise line extended to the Pacific, and in territory "hereinafter acquired," a phrase which especially provoked Republicans. In addition, Crittenden's bill included a federal slave code, the repeal of personal liberty laws in the North, and, as a capstone, an unamendable amendment which would guarantee slavery forever. Thomas, Confederate Nation, pp. 85-6.

⁸Thomas, Confederate Nation, pp. 136-37; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, p. 18.

would eventually secede.⁹ But the wait irritated them, and none more than Edmund Ruffin. Retired planter, agricultural reformer, fire-eater nonpareil, and self-appointed agent provocateur of secession, Ruffin was often piqued that he had to travel to South Carolina for the company of his political allies.¹⁰ Writing from that state a week before his legendary participation in the Sumter attack, Ruffin complained that he was "wearied, pained & mortified, by having to answer questions asked of me every day & almost every hour, by acquaintances & even strangers, as to the condition & designed action of Va, & the causes of her failure to unite with the South in defence of her own as well as the common rights, against the wrongs & insults from the North."¹¹ The example of the cotton states had been more to his liking. Led by South Carolina, the Lower South had seceded in a boisterous wave between December 1860 and January 1861, in direct response to

⁹Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 155-56; Craig A. Simpson, A Good Southerner: Henry A. Wise of Virginia (Chapel Hill, 1985).

¹⁰William Kauffman Scarborough, ed., The Diary of Edmund Ruffin, vol. I., Toward Independence, October, 1856 - April, 1861 (Baton Rouge, 1972), xiii, xviii-xx, 55n.

¹¹Ibid., 6 April 1861, p. 580. Supposedly Edmund Ruffin fired the first shot of the Civil War from a Tredegar-made Columbiad on the Charleston fort. Charles B. Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works (New Haven, 1966), p. 82; Thomas, Confederate Nation, p. 92.

Lincoln's election. Virginians did not join them until 17 April, three days after Lincoln requested troops in response to the attack on Sumter.¹²

During the period of "moderate" indecision, several Deep South missionaries paid court to the Virginia peerage in an effort to persuade them to embrace disunion. Three of them appeared before the General Assembly in February with long prepared speeches. Their suit reveals something of how Virginia and Deep South slaveholders conceived of the future of the Confederacy and the place Virginia might occupy either within or without it. Their remarks also underscore the potency of the slavery issue for Virginia politicians.¹³

The emissaries of the new nation begged for secession because of the status and prestige which they felt the Old Dominion would add to the Confederacy, and for the cushion which Virginia's economic resources would provide. Their first and last appeals were melodramatic ones to the

¹²Lincoln's action firmly established the employment of coercion in the minds of the "moderates," which brought the final abjuration. Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 191, 198-99. In the next month three other Upper South states--North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas--followed Virginia into the Confederacy, leaving a like number--Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri--in more or less uneasy alliance with the Union. Thomas, Confederate Nation, pp. 94-5.

¹³For another account of these three visitors to Virginia in February and early March, see Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 161-62.

celebrated revolutionary Virginia heritage. In emotional speeches these men draped Virginia in heroic dress and extolled her background as the font of liberty. South Carolina's John S. Preston believed that Virginia should "take her place which she has held for one hundred years--the foremost of all the world in the ranks of liberty and of justice. The world knows her history, and knows no history above it in the niche of fame--and . . . none dare doubt where Virginia will be when her own offspring, and liberty and justice, call her to the fight."¹⁴

More to the point were the economic entreaties brought by the second mendicant. The Confederacy desperately needed Virginia's manufacturing sector, which would more than double its total industrial capacity. The petitioner most alert to this reality was Georgia's Henry L. Benning, who flattered the legislature with what he thought was a compelling portrait of Virginia as the New England of the South.¹⁵ His proposal talked of tariffs and immigration

¹⁴Fulton Anderson and John S. Preston to the Virginia General Assembly, 18 February 1861, in George H. Reese, ed., Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861, 4 vols. (Richmond, 1965), I, 61, 88.

¹⁵Ironically, many radical secessionists seemed to conceive of an independent South as a new version of the United States writ small. These projections always cast Virginia into the role of northeast manufacturer. Willoughby Newton, for example, an immediate secessionist from northern Virginia and a man who Ruffin counted a rare political friend in the state, made such a forecast. In 1858 he advocated a tariff so "that all our waterfalls would

acts, legislation previously considered harmful to slave society, but now acceptable encouragements to Virginia's industrial development.¹⁶ Benning carefully reminded the assembly that the state could not hope for such economic favoritism from the Union, whose more advanced orbit would automatically put the Commonwealth at a distinct competitive disadvantage. He closed his bid with a threat--by then a commonplace one in many Deep South arguments--that brought the key issue to the fore: union with the North, he offered the assembly, would compel the southern Congress to halt the

bristle with machinery, and the hum of manufacturing industry would be heard in all the inland towns of the state." Newton expected that Confederate Virginia's vitalized manufacturing sector would attract an influx of hard-working immigrants such as had peopled the towns and factories of the North. He anticipated no threat to slave society in the wake of these changes, and his attitude is a good example of the extent to which Virginia slaveholders were willing to expropriate the technology of the North while at the same time decisively rejecting its culture. N.C. Standard, 21 July 1858, quoted in Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 73-4; Thomas, Confederate Nation, p. 16. By contrast, the great proslavery Virginia author from Port Royal, George Fitzhugh, who argued his case against free society, capitalism, and democracy in Sociology for the South, or, the Failure of Free Society (1854), Cannibals All! or, Slaves without Masters (1857), and in many pages of De Bow's Review, was a political moderate who feared secession, war and its economic consequences. Eugene D. Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation (New York, 1971), pp. 213-17.

¹⁶Though rare, support for tariff legislation had occasionally been voiced in antebellum Virginia, particularly by Whigs and industrialists. Joseph Anderson, for example, the master of the Tredegar, had supported a tariff since the late 1840s. Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 38-9.

interstate slave trade.¹⁷

The potential menace to which Benning referred did not catch the eastern oligarchy off guard. Slavery's preservation had always outdistanced the other misgivings which "moderates" associated with disunion. The border state with the South's highest slave population, vendor of an annual average of almost ten thousand bondsmen and women to the cotton fields for the previous thirty years, was not prepared to equivocate on the slavery issue. For these slaveowners born and bred in the cradle of paternalism, sensitivity towards slavery's viability was well-honed. Thus, in this respect no factional quarrel existed; no Virginia "moderate," any more than a Mississippi cotton planter, would compromise on slavery's future. By April 1861, there no longer existed any argument in favor of union which eastern Virginia slaveholders felt bound to honor. But a compelling one recommending secession remained. When the vote was counted, only two tobacco belt counties, Franklin and Patrick, located in the extreme southwestern

¹⁷Reese, ed., Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861, I, 70-5. Virginia had often complained of South Carolina's threats to tax the interstate slave trade, and had reacted badly as well to proposals for reopening the Atlantic slave trade, both of which represented coercion of a different sort from Lincoln's, but coercion nonetheless. Ironically, the Deep South could not have more effectively closed the interstate slave trade than by convincing Virginia to join the Confederacy, for the demand for black labor in wartime effectively stopped slave transfers to the South. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, p. 59.

corner and latecomers to the plantation economy, failed to ratify the secession ordinance.¹⁸

Virginia's westernmost mountain counties did not agree to secede. On the evening of 17 April, while Richmonders wildly celebrated Virginia's disunion in the streets, western delegates reconvened in the Powhatan Hotel and began the chain of events that would culminate in the establishment of the loyal state of West Virginia in 1863. The government they formed at Wheeling in May 1861 was known as the "Restored Government." In 1863 Congress accepted them into the Union, and in 1864 moved the government to Union-occupied Alexandria, where it was headed by Francis Harrison Pierpont, later Virginia's provisional governor appointed by Andrew Johnson. Virginians did not offer much resistance to the westerners' decision; most seemed thankful to be rid of the problem which the west had long posed for them. For, by then, the enthusiasm for the Confederate cause was so widespread that Virginia's initial hesitancy had faded from the popular memory.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 206-07; Alison Goodyear Freehling, Drift toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832 (Baton Rouge, 1982), p. 258; Ronald L. Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia, 1715-1865 (Westport, Conn., 1979), p. 234.

¹⁹Thomas, Confederate Nation, p. 93; Shanks, Secession in Virginia, pp. 211-12; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 26-8. For a history of West Virginia during the Civil War

II

If Virginia's political decision on secession followed a tortuous path, her material readiness for war charted a less dilatory course. During the winter of 1859-60, following Brown's raid, Virginia leaders quietly began some military preparedness; this buildup had accelerated after the November presidential election. Virginia Democrats became noticeably friendlier to Whig economic diversification measures. If secession did occur, no one wanted to have to mobilize the state from the bottom up; a sturdy Virginia defense would become a transcendent imperative.²⁰

Earnest mobilization began immediately after the convention passed the secession ordinance, and strategists commenced with a consideration of logistics and military

and Reconstruction, see Richard Orr Curry, A House Divided: A Study of Statehood Politics and the Copperhead Movement in West Virginia (Pittsburgh, 1964).

²⁰In the winter of 1859-60 the General Assembly authorized \$500,000 for the purchase and manufacture of arms for the state, of which a total of \$180,000 was actually used to that end, while the remainder went to furnish the Richmond Armory. A contract with Anderson's Tredegar Works ensured the supply of machinery to the Armory. Even the cautious Governor Letcher lobbied for and received stronger militia laws, the creation of a stronger military staff, expansion of Virginia Military Institute at Lexington, and the formation of a brigade of minutemen. Boney, John Letcher of Virginia, p. 93; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 20-1; Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, pp. 93-6. For a discussion of Tredegar's buildup for war during 1859-60, see Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 44-59.

geography. The state was a key component of the Confederacy, occupying a vulnerable location on the northern frontier. The South looked to the Old Dominion as its arsenal and, after late May 1861, home of the new capital at Richmond. Not far distant from her northeastern boundary sat the Union capital, and along the east the seaboard's navigable rivers extended up to Richmond and other points along the fall line. In the west lay the bountiful Valley, on which Virginia relied heavily for provisions and a supply of pig iron from the blast furnaces. Opening into northern territory in Maryland near Harper's Ferry, this region invited Union invasion and required additional defenses.²¹ Virginia's railroad network, for all its shortcomings still the most developed in the South and a vital component in the world's first railroad war, required sedulous guardianship.²² Most of these lines of supply, transport, and communication ran between the fall line and the Blue Ridge. Of those in the tobacco belt, the most important were the Virginia Central, the Virginia and

²¹James H. Brewer, The Confederate Negro: Virginia's Craftsmen and Military Laborers, 1861-1865 (Durham, 1969), p. 73; see Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 164-65, for furnaces threatened and burned by Union cavalry. The most vulnerable ones in the northern end of the Valley, where the Union commenced attacks in the spring of 1862. Most of these never went into blast because they were so pregnably located.

²²A good study of Virginia's rail system during the war is Angus James Johnston, II, Virginia Railroads in the Civil

Tennessee, the Orange and Alexandria, the Southside, and the Richmond and Danville.²³ These several considerations meant that Confederates had to garrison Virginia to the teeth early in the war, and they had to maintain it; the Army of Northern Virginia consistently held more troops and required more supplies than any other southern army.²⁴

As he began his tenure in the Confederate Army, General Robert E. Lee reckoned labor mobilization to be the bedrock of the war effort. Shortly after Sumter he wrote Letcher to commend the alacrity with which white men had responded to

War (Chapel Hill, 1961). Johnston's study illustrates the extent to which the army's fortunes rested on the state of the railroads. Deterioration, especially since southern foundries did not produce any new rail during the war, was a continual problem. The "particularism" of railroad companies--their differing gauges--accounted for many delays of troops and provisions. Inflation, corruption, disloyalty, and a scarcity of men and materiel further complicated efficient rail service. In addition, the Confederate government lacked a firm transportation policy, and lacked emergency control over its railroads, reflecting the tensions which existed between the national and state governments over issues of federal control and centralization. By contrast, the Congress granted Lincoln and his Secretaries of War the authority to administer the railroads for wartime emergencies. Johnston, pp. v-vi, 249-56. See also Robert C. Black, III, Railroads of the Confederacy (Chapel Hill, 1952).

²³ Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, pp. 1-19.

²⁴ Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command, 2 vols. (New York, 1942), I, 677-700, gives a good summary of Virginia's military geography; see also Brewer, Confederate Negro, 36-7; Tinsley Lee Spraggins, "Mobilization of Negro Labor for the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, 1861-1865," North Carolina Historical Review 24 (April 1947), 162.

the summons for war; sufficient recruits were not then his worry. The chief difficulty, he explained, consisted of "provision for their instruction, subsistence, equipment, clothing, shelter, and transportation in the field," all of which "required more time and labor."²⁵ In four years, he never solved the problem. As the war wound down to conclusion, it was scarcity of noncombat labor which most frustrated Lee. He contacted Governor Smith in February 1865 to say that only 502 of the 5000 slaves impressed the previous December had arrived in camp, leaving "no prospect of securing a sufficient force for the work needed before the commencement of the campaign. Could I have got the proper amount of labor, all the work could now have been completed, and we should have felt better prepared to resist assaults of the enemy that we may daily look for." General Ulysses S. Grant was augmenting his strength steadily, Lee went on, and Union troops appeared rested and well supplied. By contrast, Lee's soldiers were "kept constantly employed in repairing the ravages of winter storms, &c., cutting wood, procuring supplies, and watching the operations of the enemy. They cannot be called off from the lines of entrenchments to do the work for which I desire the

²⁵Robert E. Lee to John Letcher, 15 June 1861, in H. W. Flournoy, et. al., eds., Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts from January 1, 1836 to April 15, 1869; Preserved in the Capitol at Richmond, 11 vols. (Richmond, 1893), XI, 171.

negro force."²⁶ The following day Smith delivered this news to the General Assembly. "From all I can learn," he said, "the safety of this city depends upon the prompt supply of the necessary labor."²⁷

By 1862 it was apparent that Virginia labor reserves had been overdrawn. Lee's two communications reflect the gulf between the optimism of 1861, when Confederates regarded slave labor a categorical benefit, and the dark mood in early 1865, after years of unsuccessful labor mobilization. In the interim Virginia had been forced to enlist the white male population of military age more widely than expected

²⁶General Robert E. Lee to Governor William Smith, 9 February 1865, in Fournoy, et. al., eds., Calendar of Virginia State Papers, XI, 261.

²⁷Smith's desperation later led to his support of the Confederacy's eleventh-hour plan to use slaves as armed soldiers. Governor William Smith to the General Assembly, 10 February 1865, in Fournoy, et. al., eds., Calendar of Virginia State Papers, XI, 261-62; Thomas, Confederate Nation, p. 293. Slaveholder Robert T. Hubbard's remarks on this development were typical not only of him but of his class. Writing from his Buckingham county estate "Chellowe" to his brother Edward on 4 November 1864, Hubbard noted, "You have seen that lately it has been proposed to use negroes as soldiers in the army. . . . I think it bad policy, and I question the constitutional right of Congress to take our slaves for any such purpose. Men who advocate this can have probably no negroes of their own. . . . As the slaveholders are the minority, I shall not be surprised if the measure is adopted and abolition introduced by our government, which we have been striving for 30 years to strive against it by the Northern element. . . . Even now we cannot make crops enough to feed our armies and home population as the negroes do not work faithfully and are looking forward to their freedom under Lincoln. But enough of this subject now." Robert T. Hubbard to Edward W. Hubbard, 4 November 1864, Robert T. Hubbard Papers.

for combat. Consequently, they depleted the small white labor pool which, as often as not, was a skilled group of industrial workers that factory owners reluctantly released.²⁸ In the summer of 1862 the government established to protect states' rights was forced to pass the first conscription act in American history. Another followed that fall, this one containing an exemption for men in management of twenty or more slaves--the hated "Twenty-Nigger Law" which did so much to raise southern class consciousness. By war's end, the South had used 90 percent of her white male population in combat; the North never enlisted even half of its adult men.²⁹

As Confederates braced for civil war, Afro-Americans in the tobacco belt studied the behavior of their high-strung masters and other whites and noticed new diversity in their own work regimes. Free Negro and slave laborers continued to do work they had always done: extract and process raw materials, perform much of the skilled and nearly all of the unskilled labor of the society, construct and maintain public works and railroads, and produce tobacco and other

²⁸For the conflicts that Joseph Anderson had with the Confederate government about the conscription of his skilled white labor force, see Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 248-49.

²⁹Consideration of the failure of labor policy was one of the motives behind General Patrick Cleburne's Memorial of 2 January 1864, calling on the Confederacy to arm its slaves. Cleburne noted that "slavery, from being one our chief

agricultural produce.³⁰ To these labors the war added civilian and military provision procurement, foraging operations, and armament production. Blacks were needed as bodyservants in army camps, as nurses in hospitals, and workers in government shops. They constructed river batteries, entrenchments, redoubts, and breastworks, and maintained the transportation system, now a crucial wartime employment. Without black labor, the coal mines, ironworks, blast furnaces, salt mines, lumber camps, tanneries, naval yards, machine shops, nitriaries, and harness shops might not have entered production. The Confederacy brought steadily escalating demands for Afro-Americans to do the work of blacksmiths, strikers, sawyers, boatmakers, boatmen, wheelwrights, carpenters, cooks, ordinary laborers, ropemakers, shoemakers, teamsters, and much more.³¹

sources of strength at the commencement of the war, has now become, in a military point of view, one of our chief sources of weakness." Thomas, Confederate Nation, pp. 152-53, 261-62.

³⁰Confederate legislation established a maximum of 2500 tobacco plants per hand, in an effort to devote more land to the production of foodstuffs. Similar quotas were set in the cotton belt, and in both areas the law was widely evaded. E. Merton Coulter, The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865 (Baton Rouge, 1950), p. 241.

³¹See Clarence L. Mohr, "Southern Blacks in the Civil War: A Century of Historiography" Journal of Negro History 54 (April 1974), 177-95; Brewer, Confederate Negro, passim, for a wealth of detail on black labor in wartime Virginia.

Work patterns on individual plantations distant from the front also changed visibly as masters left for an unseen war, carrying personal servants with them and reordering labor regimens of the slaves left behind. When the war began, Levi Pollard was a slave waterboy on a plantation in Charlotte county. One day the overseer promoted him to plowboy. "'You know dar is war gwine on,'" Pollard recalled the overseer said, "'en de niggers dat was plowin' is gone off ter help us win de war. You is not ripe 'nough ter go; stay here en work hard sois us can feed de men at war, en sois us can look af'er de women folks en de young.' . . . I say I do de best I can." Pollard understood that slaves who were leaving went "ter war en dig fer de South, en carry things dat is too heavy for the whites," but he had no other evidence that a war was actually in progress. "Co'se I ain't know dar was no war near," he explained, "but I seed funny things. De white folks was all sad en er cryin', en dey ain't bother de niggers atal'." ³²

Several factors ordained that the tobacco belt would assume a distant and relatively quiet noncombat support role. Military geography and troop movements made the region a sheltered refuge untouched by devastation until the last months of the war, when Grant concluded that the way to

³²Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Philips, eds., Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves (Bloomington, 1976), p. 228.

defeat Lee was to ravage his support system. Lee had drawn his lines tightly in the east and north to protect Richmond, the political, industrial, and symbolic linchpin of the Confederacy, and to the west the Blue Ridge offered natural protection. Notwithstanding the early loss of much of the eastern seaboard and parts of northern Virginia--to say nothing of the secession of West Virginia--Union forces were generally kept at bay until the summer of 1864.³³ With the interior cordoned off, the army cast the tobacco belt, as it did the Valley, into a provisioner's role.

The transformation of the interior was most apparent in its towns, nearly all of which became upcountry storehouses. The greatest changes overtook Lynchburg. The "Tobacco City" became the Army of Northern Virginia's undisputed upcountry quartermaster, second only to Richmond as a depot early in the war, and outranking it by the end.³⁴ Situated atop high hills, protected by the Blue

³³Hampton Roads and Hampton village on the Peninsula, for example, where Fortress Monroe was located, were never controlled by the Confederates. The white population of Hampton abandoned the town on 25 May 1861; Alexandria, near Washington, was occupied the previous day. Similarly, border areas in northern Virginia were occupied early in the conflict, and Norfolk fell to Union armies in November 1862. Robert Francis Engs, Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia, 1861-1890 (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 20-2.

³⁴Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 12, 18, 22-6. For a traveller's account of Richmond at the beginning of the war and the transformations which immediately overtook the capital, see T. C. DeLeon, Four Years in Rebel Capitals (Mobile, Ala., 1890), pp. 86-7.

Ridge and regarded safe from cavalry raids, located on the canal and with access to three major railroads, the Virginia and Tennessee, the Orange and Alexandria, and the Southside, Lynchburg provided an ideal interior depository. The Confederacy converted several tobacco factories there into hospitals, armories, tanneries, government shops, warehouses, and additional flour mills; after the fall of 1863, they added a horse and mule infirmary.³⁵ It became Lynchburg's business to stockpile food, munitions, medical supplies, and resources of every kind. New sawmills, freightyards, and boatyards appeared; residents grew accustomed to the sight of strangers passing by on wartime missions. Soldiers from across the South passed through on their way to service in the northern, western, and eastern theatres; Union prisoners bound for Andersonville or Danville were seen headed south. Slave and free Negro boatmen journeyed by on the canal, carrying large, urgent cargoes and making frequent stops as they wended their way down the 195 miles from Buchanan to Richmond. Pig iron for the ironworks and lumber for the railroads dominated their shipments, but they carried large amounts of provisions from the Valley as well. Upriver ferriage included boiler plate, railroad spikes and axles, bar iron, nails, food, forage, cattle, and other freight bound for Lynchburg. At first

³⁵Brewer, Confederate Negro, p. 14.

many of these goods went out on the Virginia and Tennessee to points as far away as Mobile, Alabama, but late in the war they were consumed locally and some items even served as currency.³⁶

Several other smaller depots appeared across the southern piedmont, all of them in towns strategically located at railroad junctions. Mecklenburg's county seat, Clarksville, was connected to Richmond by the small Roanoke Valley road. Here Confederates established a large harness shop which provided almost the entire South with bridles, collars, artillery harness, halters, saddles, and pouches. Several small local tanneries furnished the shop with leather.³⁷ In Danville, located at the terminus of the Richmond and Danville, slave laborers built and repaired wagons, worked in the foundry, maintained warehouses, conducted foraging operations, and transshipped goods from North Carolina after the critical opening of the Piedmont road into Greensboro in May 1864. One of Danville's tobacco

³⁶Joseph Anderson often paid his slave hires, for example, in bar iron or nails during 1864. Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, p. 260.

³⁷The work of tanning was arduous business requiring both skill and brawn. For a detailed account of the process, see Brewer, Confederate Negro, p. 42. In addition to the work done at Clarksville, the Tredegar owned three small tanneries, one in Covington in southwest Virginia, another in Buchanan, and a third small shoe and harness shop at its Cloverdale furnace in the Valley. These three shops provided most of the plant's leather needs. Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, p. 163.

factories became a prison late in the war. Burkeville in Nottoway county, at the junction of the Southside and Richmond and Danville roads, was an important transshipment point for goods from Tennessee to Richmond via Lynchburg, from Danville, and later from North Carolina. Another ordnance depot was located at Farmville, in Prince Edward county, on the Southside road.³⁸

The Medical Corps often entrusted patients under its care to the safety of the interior. Some facilities of necessity had to be near the front, and the largest hospital of the Confederacy was the Chimborazo in Richmond; Petersburg was another major medical center. But most army hospitals were smaller, located behind the lines where they functioned as receiving units for long-term, more seriously injured soldiers. The largest interior hospital was in Lynchburg; others were found in Farmville, Clarksville, Liberty, and Charlottesville, where the Rotunda of the University of Virginia was converted for the purpose.³⁹

Initially the Confederacy culled its nursing staff from the ranks of the enlisted. But as the numbers of sick and

³⁸Brewer, Confederate Negro, p. 26; Johnston, Virginia Railroads during the Civil War, p. 205.

³⁹Six other hospitals were found in the capital. Others were located at Manassas, Staunton, Warrenton, Fort Royal, Gordonsville, Culpeper Court House, and Orange Court House. An even smaller group of eight were scattered across the state and operated for very short periods of time in 1864 and 1865. Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 95-6, 121-22, 128-29, 184n.

wounded mushroomed while the army tapped every available soldier for combat, able-bodied white male recruits could no longer be spared. In the fall of 1861, Confederates began to hire slave and free Negro nurses and a large number of other black workers whom they employed in various ancillary jobs associated with nineteenth-century medical care. These included soapmaking, brewing, carpentry, farming, dairying and herding, maintenance of icehouses, provision of fuel, and transportation services. Army hospitals were among the most regular conscriptors of Afro-American wagon drivers and boatmen, who acquired supplies and brought in patients. Others worked as "merchants" or "scalingers" and bartered with local farmers for provisions. Much hospital work was drudgery, and so black women were found in their highest numbers in hospitals, where they worked as laundresses, cooks, bakers, maids, and housekeepers in the wards.⁴⁰

One aspect of mobilization of paramount importance centered on the production of armament. The nucleus of manufacture was the Tredegar in Richmond, but during the war the output of two smaller foundries in Lynchburg and Danville bolstered munitions output. Their success depended directly on the operations of the blast furnaces in the Valley and the coal mines in the east. They also required warehousing, transportation service by both rail and canal,

⁴⁰Brewer, Confederate Negro, p. 97.

and farms and shops to feed, clothe, and provision the labor force.⁴¹

Even with the critical addition of the Tredegar to the Confederacy, the South entered the war in 1861 embarrassingly ill-equipped to face a more diversified, industrialized, better-armed foe. Although this imbalance was never redressed, the enterprising Chief of the Confederate Ordnance Bureau, Josiah Gorgas, nonetheless did achieve a surprisingly high level of efficiency by 1864.⁴² Confederate armies prior to 1863 relied chiefly upon European arms suppliers, or captured what they could from Union armies. By 1864, after extensive modification of the Tredegar, Gorgas's efforts to arm the South through domestic production had met with considerable success. By

⁴¹Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 36-7, 49-51, 55-6, 73; Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 82, 277-81.

⁴²Frank E. Vandiver, Ploughshares into Swords: Josiah Gorgas and Confederate Ordnance (Austin, 1977), pp. 62, 240-41; Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 152-53, 175-77, for a summary of the problems the Tredegar faced under wartime conditions. The primary factor in this disparity rested less on physical plant than on an inability to exploit natural resources more effectively, particularly iron ore. Anderson had expanded the foundry during the 1850s, but at the same time many of his Valley furnaces closed down, and Tredegar began to operate with the cheaper anthracite pig iron available from Pennsylvania, rather than the more expensive charcoal pig from the remaining Valley facilities. When the war closed off supply from the North, it left Tredegar short of both raw materials and furnaces in blast. The foundry never had use of more than 8000 tons of iron annually during the war, despite an ability to consume around three times that much.

then Tredegar's output included rifles, heavy field artillery, and plate for Confederate ironclads. The Lynchburg facilities repaired small arms and added cartridges and caissons to the arsenal; breech-loading carbines came from Danville, where larger field artillery was maintained.⁴³ The one crucial product which southern foundries did not produce during the war years was rail for the railroads.⁴⁴

During the war, Tredegar became one of the largest slave hirers in Virginia, next to the railroads, and an increasing number of the company's slave laborers came from the tobacco belt. With much of northern Virginia and the eastern

⁴³By the summer of 1864, the expansion of the Tredegar had been almost counterbalanced by the destruction of furnaces in Union cavalry raids, which in turn further shortened the supply of metal. Along with the unwillingness of slaveholders to hire hands for fear of losing them to the Federals, and the growing inability to provision hired slaves once they did find them, these factors had all but closed the Tredegar and the other two foundries by late 1864. Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 152, 166-72. For an account of the 1864 raids, slaveholder reaction to them, and the effect on the hiring market, see *ibid.*, pp. 258-60; Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 41-2.

⁴⁴This omission proved to be a disastrous one, and illustrates the administrative inadequacy of the Confederacy as it tried to adhere to states' rights doctrine. A self-imposed policy of attrition--that is, denying recovery from wartime losses by compelling engineers to destroy smaller roads in order to repair the main lines, and consequently restricting supply zones even further, represented a grave strategic error which would weigh heavily on the ultimate outcome of the war. See Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, pp. v-vi; Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 271-74, on the many reasons, chief among the lack of equipment, why the Tredegar could not begin production of rolled rail late in the war.

seaboard occupied or in the main combat theatre, Anderson directed his hiring agents into the piedmont, the Valley, and even other states in search of labor. Tredegar's ancillary operations in the blast furnaces, coal mines, and on the canal claimed an additional black labor force estimated to have been between 500 and 600 in 1863. Still other hired slaves labored at Tredegar's Buchanan wharf where they stored iron at the warehouse and dredged the docks. By 1865, Anderson advertised for 1000 slave men and boys, for whose labor he met keen competition, primarily from the military and the railroads.⁴⁵

Racial redistribution of the labor force within the plant was a byproduct of wartime adjustment. Tredegar's hired slaves had constituted a minority in 1860, numbering eighty out of a total work force of nearly eight hundred.⁴⁶ Slaves and free Negroes worked in only two shops, the rolling mills and the blacksmith department, when Sumter was attacked; in the foundries, machine shops, and engine and locomotive works, white labor, mostly of foreign birth, dominated. After secession, many of these skilled

⁴⁵Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 250-51, 262-63; Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 71-5.

⁴⁶In this, of course, the Tredegar was an extreme example. Most hirers, such as the railroads and canal, worked with slave majorities, while the tobacco factories employed large slave minorities. Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 27-8.

immigrants left for the North, and the military absorbed most of the white labor that remained. Consequently, more slaves entered all phases of Tredegar's operations. In 1862, 131 slaves turned out Confederate arms and munitions; the next year, Anderson employed 226 slaves; by 1864, slaves counted for well over half of all plant workers.⁴⁷

Managing this larger, more skilled slave labor force was a task which steadily claimed more of Anderson's attention. He instructed his agents to flatter, cajole, and reason with touchy slaveholders, and at all times to be as flexible as possible in meeting their terms.⁴⁸ But the job of wartime hiring agent was neither easy nor enviable.⁴⁹ Agents

⁴⁷Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 262-64.

⁴⁸Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 71-3; Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 251-52; 258-59. Anderson's letter to Philip A. Bolling in Farmville in December 1862 is representative of this tactic. "We are pleased at the prospect of getting this Year a large number of Hands, and will say that we can employ all that you can hire & on reasonable terms, say within the limit you name. We need the greater portion of the hands at our Blast furnaces in Botetourt county, considered one of the most secure positions in the state. For these men we have made most ample provisions to supply them with clothing & the very best food. We also need men to work on our farm in Goochland County & at our Coal pits on the same premises. There too every arrangement has been made for the Comfort of the Negroes. Those who prefer their hands laboring in this city can be employed in our work here." Joseph Anderson to P. A. Bolling, 29 December 1862, Tredegar Company Letter Book, p. 171.

⁴⁹The position was not restricted to Tredegar's operations. Most industrial and transportation establishments relied on the services of hiring agents, and the army hospitals employed them extensively. Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 123-25.

prevailed against increasingly hidebound owners troubled about losing their chattel to the Union army, and fearful of hiring's increasing leniency and the implications of that trend for the slave regime. Anderson therefore granted a position as overseer to agents who employed thirty or more hands on their expeditions, an appointment which brought exemption from the army under the "Twenty-Nigger Law."⁵⁰

Anderson's letters and advertisements reveal the extent of the problems he faced in the labor market. Appeals to slaveholder patriotism were standard features. They reminded slaveowners of the extent to which their status rested on sufficient slave labor to provision the army. Anderson wrote William A. Bibb of Charlottesville imploring his aid in locating a Greene county slaveholder who had told Anderson he would have hands to hire in 1864. "It is of infinite importance that we obtain hands for our Blast furnaces and Coal pits now so important to the Confederacy in her struggle & if you can aid us in any way in this important matter you will aid the Govt very much," Anderson wrote.⁵¹ If this brand of civic pride failed to move them, pointing out the expense of maintaining slaves on the plantation sometimes worked. Tredegar agents usually tried to outbid other employers, and Anderson's oft-repeated

⁵⁰Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, p. 251.

⁵¹Joseph R. Anderson to William A. Bibb, 24 December 1863, Tredegar Company Letter Book, p. 221.

promises regarding the physical and material well-being of the slaves hired to his establishments were commonplace for the first two years of war. By 1863, however, slaves in the Valley furnaces and along the canal had begun to abscond to nearby armies with some frequency. To one slaveowner whose slaves had left the furnace, Anderson explained in June 1863 that "the demoralization among the negroes here . . . is a source of much disquietude to us who have contracts with the government for iron [upon which] the fate of the country may depend."⁵² Later that month an official referred to what appeared to be "almost a stampede among your hands" at one Valley furnace, and the acceleration of Union raids into the Valley in the summer of 1864 resulted in still greater losses. By Christmas, Anderson had to confess that "this has been a rather disastrous year for the hirers and owners of slaves, so many having run off to the Yankees, a large portion from within the fortifications of this city."⁵³ [Richmond] Still, at the Tredegar he could point to the runaway record with confidence. Slave security there was a matter of pride before 1864; after then, escapes from the ironworks climbed significantly.⁵⁴

This pattern--increased reliance on black labor, more

⁵²Quoted in Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, p. 138.

⁵³Ibid.; Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 250-61.

⁵⁴Ibid.

urgent hiring forays into the interior and beyond, appeals to patriotism, promises of good treatment, higher wages, and protection from the Union army--characterized wartime labor management, in whole or in part, in the railroads, factories, blast furnaces, salt mines, collieries, on the canal, and the other industries and businesses that employed slaves. The competition for slave laborers among wartime employers escalated sharply, and each could argue credibly that their needs for labor were essential for the existence of the Confederacy.⁵⁵

Transportation services on the railroads and canal, both of which were heavily subsidized by the state, were major employers of wartime slave labor. The competition which they brought to the labor market was keen, and like the Tredegar they drew a large portion of their slave labor force from within interior Virginia. Railroads transported troops and supplies, and they linked Richmond to its vast supply zone in the hinterland. The most important line was the Virginia Central, which hauled about half of all Lee's supplies out of the Valley and the piedmont. Next in

⁵⁵Despite combinations with the railroads and other industries to keep competition to a minimum, Tredegar and others met with ruinous rates in the market. "We have conferred with all the Rail Roads and other important interests here and all have Concluded that \$300 will be their ultimatum. . . . From all the information we have there will be a large Number offering six to nine, a great number are being sent here from the exposed Portions of the state." Joseph Anderson to Col. R. L. Owen in Lynchburg, 10 December 1863, Tredegar Company Letter Book.

importance was the Virginia and Tennessee, which tapped a more distant western supply area in Tennessee and brought salt from Saltville in southwest Virginia.⁵⁶ The Southside and its adjunct into Greensboro, the Piedmont, gave southern access, as did the Richmond and Danville. For these four roads, plus the others in the east, Virginia Confederates required a very large labor force indeed, numbering in the tens of thousands. Substantial numbers of them performed the menial labor of maintenance, which included cutting timber and crossties, pumping water, and loading and unloading freight. Many other Afro-American railroad hands labored in skilled capacities as boilermakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, mechanics, brakemen, and firemen. They built bridges and trestles, drained and cleared the roadbeds and laid down gravel, graded, and constructed depots and other structures. They worked as section and depot hands and on repair gangs. Because many free Negroes were skilled mechanics, and because their employment created no conflict with slaveholders, they were especially sought by the railroad companies. The James River canal was a crucial adjunct to the rail system. During the war its use was given over almost entirely to the

⁵⁶Saltville's strategic importance cannot be overestimated, since the secession of West Virginia deprived Virginia of the country's single most important source of salt in the Kanawha Valley. A good study on this subject is Ella Lonn, Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy (New York, 1933).

needs of the Tredegar. The canal employed 455 people in 1861, almost all of whom were black. Among this group of transportation workers could be found drillers, quarrymen, blacksmiths, stone cutters, masons, boatmen, dock hands, dredgers, and messengers.⁵⁷

It did not take long for the government and the army to realize that voluntary compliance from slaveholders in furnishing slave labor would never meet their enormous needs. In antebellum days, slaveholders had often refused to rent slaves to employers considered harsh, dangerous, or irresponsible, nor had it been unusual for owners to defer to a slave's individual wishes concerning his employment. This tradition continued during war, but now decisions made on the plantation concerning employment, sometimes between master and slave, were increasingly overruled by the military and the government. War had changed nothing about the dangerous conditions of the coal mines, or of some aspects of work in the blast furnaces or along the railroads, except perhaps for the worse. Yet the government now compelled slaves to enter these positions not only against their own wills but against those of their masters as well. Slaveowners began to object more strenuously to transportation labor because the potential for escape or capture was so much higher there; but again, their power to

⁵⁷Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 74-94.

keep their chattel from such employment was increasingly limited by that time as a result of impressment legislation.⁵⁸

From the outset of hostilities, the antebellum slave hiring system assumed great salience in the southern war effort. As a method of labor allocation, slave hiring offered obvious strategic advantages. Many of the jobs for which Confederates sought slave labor were ones which, during the 1850s, had been filled with hired slaves. The system had been used primarily in industry, transportation, and in areas where agriculture had diversified from staple to cereal production and truck farming. Generally, slave hiring had been a hallmark of economic sectors characterized by altered labor markets and limited economic reform. During wartime, mobilization made these issues central concerns of the Confederacy. An independent nation had to rely more heavily on the production of its own foodstuffs, and it had to reduce acreage formerly used in the production of cash crops. Industrial demands also increased, and transportation became critically important to the army. Such changes required greater flexibility in the use of labor, a challenge for which hiring had always been used as a solution. Basic military needs--hospital labor and noncombat service, for example--also adapted well to the

⁵⁸Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, p. 128.

hiring system. Therefore, when Virginia Confederates commenced the reorganization of black labor, they had an institutional framework already established through which they could begin to reallocate labor to meet the demands of war.⁵⁹ Thus did the inroads which market relations had made prior to 1861 become vital to the survival of the Confederacy.

Hiring provided the elasticity needed to mobilize effectively. But in the long run, the expansion of hiring had, from a Confederate viewpoint, more insidious effects. By widening the wedge through which market relations had begun to enter into society, hiring further eroded the slave regime and compromised the goals of the war. Other factors greatly aided this process. Preeminent among them was the ill-founded confidence which Confederates placed in the loyalty of the slaves. Tens of thousands of Afro-Americans embarrassed the war effort by escaping to nearby Union armies and, failing that, by withholding labor through temporary absence or malingering. Stubborn conflicts erupted between slaveholders and the government over slave impressment, hiring's compulsory cousin employed by the government when voluntary efforts failed to produce sufficient military labor. Nonexistent or inflexible government policy fostered disputes with railroad men and

⁵⁹Brewer, The Confederate Negro, pp. 22-3.

industrialists, ruptures which often reduced the available labor force. These disagreements arose in part from the debate over the authority of the central government. Because states' rights limited the role of the central government, this ideology hampered the Confederacy's ability to administer efficiently a whole series of war-imposed economic changes. As a result, economic mobilization was often an unwelcome, usually misunderstood, and frequently ill-managed task. Most importantly, these conflicts reflected slaveholders' displeasure with the government's increasing interference with the master-slave relationship, and the fear that more extensive hiring would undermine the masters' power and authority.⁶⁰

By the beginning of the 1863 campaigns, effective labor mobilization had become an impossible task. The rebels experienced successive reverses on the battlefields; the North achieved an important psychological victory with the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation; and slave losses mounted in eastern and northern Virginia, much of which was

⁶⁰Thomas, *Confederate Nation*, pp. 32-3, 240-41, 298; Barbara Jeanne Fields, "The Advent of Capitalist Agriculture: The New South in a Bourgeois World," in *Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy*, ed. by Thavolia Glymph and John J. Kushma (Arlington, Tex., 1985), p. 79; Armstead L. Robinson, "'Worser dan Jeff Davis': The Coming of Free Labor during the Civil War, 1861-1865," in *ibid.*, p. 38.

under Union occupation.⁶¹ Labor competition between industry and the military grew keen, and problems of supply and provisioning steadily worsened. By late 1864 the Union blockade grew strong enough to add another challenge to Virginia's productive capacity.⁶² Severe labor shortages in several key sectors of the wartime economy had appeared. Shortfalls resulting from diversions of slaves and free Negroes from industrial to military labor were aggravated by the maze of impressment legislation passed in response to the labor problem. The number of slaves available for agricultural and industrial needs declined significantly, leading to increased conflicts between slaveholders and the government.⁶³ Together these issues frustrated Confederate efforts to commandeer Virginia's large Afro-American population to satisfy noncombat demands.⁶⁴

⁶¹The counties of Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, were under occupation by the beginning of 1863. Spraggins, "Mobilization of Negro Labor," 193.

⁶²Spraggins, "Mobilization of Negro Labor," 164; Thomas, Confederate Nation, pp. 127-28, 147; Brewer, Confederate Negro, p. 35; Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 197-209; Robert Carse, The Civil War at Sea (New York, 1958).

⁶³Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 4, 29-30; Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, p. 59.

⁶⁴Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 161, 243, 282-84, explores the problems which Anderson faced in provisioning Tredegar's labor force during 1864 and 1865, problems which undermined his ability to furnish the army. On the general situation in 1863, see Thomas, Confederate Nation, p. 250.

As a result of these conflicts, the Confederacy came to depend heavily on impressed slave labor by 1862, and remained dependent on it for the remainder of the war. When labor became dearer, military needs more pressing, the unwillingness to hire slaves to the army more widespread, and free Negroes resistant to military employment, both the Confederacy and Virginia enacted a series of impressment laws to meet labor demands. Between February 1862 and February 1864 five such statutes were passed, three by the state legislature and two by the Confederacy.⁶⁵

The first impressment law was passed in Virginia in February 1862. It attempted to assuage slaveholders by subjecting free Negroes, who had thus far escaped impressment, to a draft of 180 days' duration.⁶⁶ Five months later the General Assembly acted again. This law called for a census of "able-bodied" slaves between the ages

⁶⁵Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 6-14, for a review of the impressment legislation.

⁶⁶About 5000 of the total 27,771 free Negro males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five in Virginia fell liable for service. By the time the Confederate government began to proscribe them in 1864, well over half had already worked on behalf of the Confederate cause. Demand for free Negro laborers was extremely high and supply was never satisfactory for the army. Over seventy percent of all free Negro conscripts worked for the engineers, quartermasters, and ordnance chiefs. The remainder were found in literally every kind of labor performed in the state, both military and civilian, including ambulance drivers, depot hands, railroad hands and firemen, grooms, machinists, mechanics, messengers, millers, sawyers, shoemakers, teamsters, wagon makers, and wheelwrights, and more. Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 11-4.

of eighteen and forty-five, but it limited the number liable to draft to either 10,000 or five percent of the slave population of any city, town or county. Impressed slaves were to work for sixty days, receive the familiar compensation of rations, clothes, and medical care, and owners were to be paid \$16 per month, unless they provided some part of their slaves' upkeep. In the event of death or escape, the government agreed to reimburse the owner for the market value of the slave. Reflecting the growing difficulties of provision procurement, this law excused slaves who worked exclusively in the production of grain.⁶⁷

In March 1863, with labor and provisions more scarce and slaveholders questioning the legality of impressment more often, the legislature drew up a lengthy list of new exceptions and exemptions that made the law confusing and contradictory. Entire counties involved in grain production, or those near the front, were ordered left untouched by the impressment officer's hand. Individual slaveholders living near the lines who had lost one-third of their slaves to the enemy, counties which had lost one-fourth of their slave population, anyone owning but a single slave, and widows with enlisted sons or whose husbands had died in service, were not required to furnish slave labor. Owners who had already hired slaves to the War

⁶⁷Ibid.; Flournoy, et. al., eds., Calender of Virginia State Papers, XI, 224-25.

Department or to such key industries as the Tredegar also escaped impressment. However, the law did not provide exemptions for slaves already in industry, and the labor force there was subject to impressment regardless of the peculiar nature of work performed by any individual worker.⁶⁸

Unsatisfied, the Confederate Congress passed two additional impressment laws. The first, in March 1863, came shortly after Virginia's third impressment law and met with disfavor from slaveholders and officials alike. The law vested the authority of impressment in President Jefferson Davis, rather than the governors, and it allowed designated military officials the right to ignore these regulations when deemed necessary. States' rights slaveholders, already sensitive to the advancing trend toward nationalization, hostile to state impressment, and ever mindful of their loosened grip over the slave population, greeted this legislation with more than a little disdain.⁶⁹ Governors

⁶⁸The last act also established fines for noncompliance as well as penalties for unauthorized impressments. Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 256-57; Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 6-10.

⁶⁹See Thomas, Confederate Nation, pp. 259-66, for a summary of the nationalistic measures which the Confederacy was forced to pass late in the war, and slaveholder dislike of them. Fully 85 percent of the total requisition for Virginia made under this law came from tobacco belt counties. Calculated from Table II, "Requisition for Slave Labor in Virginia, by Counties, March 11, 1863," in Spraggins, "Mobilization of Negro Labor," 174.

in turn held little expectation that the straitened Confederate government would improve upon the labor situation which already plagued the states and eluded happy solution.⁷⁰

Out of the widespread dislike for and weakness of the 1863 measure, the Confederacy passed another impressment law in February 1864. This time the government tried to placate slaveholders by issuing a call for all able-bodied free Negroes, and only after a thorough exhaustion of this source of labor did they authorize an impressment of up to 20,000 slaves throughout the South. Under the auspices of this law, Secretary of War James A. Seddon in September 1864 was forced to call for another 14,500 slaves, with 2,500 of the levy to be furnished by Virginia. In November Davis conscripted an additional 40,000 slave laborers, 4,500 of whom were to come from Virginia; and on 14 December, Lee requested an additional 5,000 slave conscripts from the Commonwealth.⁷¹

The repeated frustrations which both Virginia and Confederate authorities met in their impressment attempts

⁷⁰Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 6-14. When slaves from the Valley fell under the aegis of this law, their agitated owners angrily reminded the Confederate Congress of the importance of these laborers to the production of food that fed the army.

⁷¹This law also included the establishment of a Bureau of Conscription, and raised the monthly rate of pay to \$20. Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 6-11, 150; Spraggins, "Mobilization of Negro Labor," 175.

derived partly from the lengthening list of exceptions and exemptions embodied in the series of laws. Designed to cool slaveholders' growing anger, they instead generated confused and strained relations with loyal slaveholders because many masters exploited every loophole available. Consequently, in early January 1865 when Governor William "Extra Billy" Smith began to call up the slaves impressed under the December requisition, he first streamlined his job by imposing a flat one-tenth levy on every county, regardless of the status of its slave population. This brought him face to face with an obdurate slaveholding class intent on avoiding the latest draft. The citizens of Lynchburg especially provoked him. Smith expressed to the Clerk of the Hustings Court there his anger at the response he had received to his requisition, "hirelings to the Confederacy or agents, railroad hands, &c., not excepted." How could it be, Smith wanted to know, that "your large and crowded city" had but 101 resident slaves between 18 and 55 years of age, and that of those, but thirty were "capable of ordinary labor"? He reminded the Clerk that only the Confederate government could exempt slaves from impressment, and he added his "deep regret at the manifest reluctance of the Counties, cities and towns in filling these requisitions called for the public defence. At a time when the slave institution is in peril, and our inability to hold Richmond would make our interest in slave property worthless, a call made at the instance of Gen'l Lee to enable him to hold this

city is too frequently responded to with such coldness and reluctance as to fill the hearts of those deeply anxious for our Liberty and Independence with anguish if not despondency."⁷²

Another month of vying with slaveholders forced an exasperated Smith to take his case to the legislature. Compelled by "the extensive ravages of the Enemy, and the great disturbance of the industrial interests of the several counties, and the irregularity of past impressments . . . combined with the indisposition which too frequently prevails to obey such requisition," the Governor proposed to eliminate all exemptions and to enforce his across-the-board 10 percent draft. He complained of counties in which certain districts had lost many slaves to the enemy, leaving other areas intact, but the entire county exempt under the one-fourth provision. Nor did he cast much favor on the exemption tendered slaveowners who hired slaves into other counties or to industry. The implementation of Smith's proposal would end the avalanche of excuses and bits of sophistry daily sent to Richmond by slaveowners from across the state. Since December, Smith explained, he had been "overwhelmed with claims set up by the different counties. . . . I soon saw that if I undertook to adjust the

⁷²Governor William Smith to the Clerk of Lynchburg Hustings Court, 23 January 1865, in Flournoy, et. al., eds., Calendar of Virginia State Papers, XI, 259.

conflicting views of the several counties, the object of Gen'l Lee would be defeated."⁷³ Clearly, impressment had failed to remedy the many complicated problems posed to the Confederacy by slave labor. Eventually it had become so divisive an issue that it vitiated patriotism among many slaveholders, making impressment a major factor in the defeat of Lee's army.

If conditions associated with hiring had worsened in some respects, they had grown milder in others. Greater leniency toward the slave population was increasingly evident as Confederates prepared for war, and many aspects of Virginia slavery softened further as the rebellion progressed. The immediate cause for greater tolerance resulted in Afro-Americans' recognition that their labor had acquired a greater value to their owners, and especially to their employers, than before. Anderson, for example, had never borne a reputation for harshness, and he relaxed discipline at the Tredegar and in his Valley furnaces even further during the war years. "Negroes expect much indulgence now," Tredegar owners explained to their furnace managers in 1863, "and whenever we can do so, it may be best to concede something as it may aid hereafter."⁷⁴

One of the most tangible results of this moderating

⁷³Flournoy, et. al., eds., Calendar of Virginia State Papers, XI, 259-61.

⁷⁴Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 255, 263.

trend was seen in the more frequent practice of providing "overwork" payments. Previously restricted to a few skilled slaves whose labor most directly affected production in key industries, "overwork" became common in most industrial jobs and intrinsic to the operations of hospitals, where service during customary Christmas holiday could be insured only through supplementary payments.⁷⁵ Coal mine operators were also prominent "overwork" providers. At Dover, a Tredegar mine, eighty-six hands received a total of \$1400 in 1864, paid in cash and extra clothing to both the miners and the farm hands.⁷⁶ Likewise, at the Tredegar itself the "overwork" system assumed greater importance. Some hirers began to issue extra money or goods simply for constancy and quietness. Furnace operators in the Valley, for example, amended the old system to customarily pay some slaves \$1 per month if they "worked and behaved well."⁷⁷

Other palliating aspects of antebellum slave hiring did not survive into the war. Hiring one's own time and finding room and board seem to have largely disappeared, casualties of mounting slaveholder paranoia. But the lessons had been learned. When slaves escaped to Union armies, they carried their bargaining skills with them. Northern soldiers often

⁷⁵Brewer, Confederate Negro, p. 101.

⁷⁶Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, p. 120.

⁷⁷Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, p. 255.

commented on Virginia slaves who entered into contract with them, and on their understanding and expectation of wages. Edward Washburn Whitaker had one such refugee working for him in camp, "a Slave boy about 16 years old who ran away from his master and offered to work for me for his rations and a small compensation a month. He takes care of my horse and equipments, blacks my boots etc. always stays with me ready to do anything I want him to. He has grey eyes and light skin."⁷⁸ The next year, at another camp near Bell Plain, Whitaker reported that he and the men "live high, having a colored cook who does nothing else and was once in employ of Senators at Richmond. A first class cook and arristocrat of 'Darks.'"⁷⁹

But, more often than had been true in the antebellum period, much of the labor of wartime hired slaves was more than a little disagreeable. Military labor on the front lines and fortifications was often the most brutal, dangerous, and unhealthy kind performed. Slaves impressed there were often poorly treated, clothed and fed, the objects of opprobrium from soldiers and, to their owners' consternation, much more likely to escape. Masters remarked on slaves returned in poor health, without clothing and

⁷⁸Edward Washburn Whitaker to his sister Adaline, 26 June 1862, Edward Washburn Whitaker Civil War Letters, typescript (1901), p. 106.

⁷⁹Ibid., 3 January 1863, p. 144.

blankets, and of slaves never returned at all. Slaves themselves often complained of their treatment at the hands of the military, and masters released them reluctantly and sought to retrieve them if at all possible.⁸⁰ In 1864 Lunenburg county whites sent a petition to the governor very different in tone from the one they had forwarded three years earlier calling for immediate secession. This resolution protested against the frequency with which impressed slaves returned "in a feeble and exhausted condition" from their service in the military.⁸¹ Lancelot Minor's comments from his Amherst county plantation were typical. "John who has been 'in the Service' as they call it ever since 17 of Sept. greatly to my pecuniary inconvenience and injury," wrote this immediate secessionist in his diary in late 1863, "is again called away to Richmond from which I scarcely expect him [to] be returned alive because of Small pox & other diseases." This experience caused Minor to grow dubious of the government's support of the slaveholding class.⁸²

⁸⁰Coulter, Confederate Nation, pp. 258-59; Brewer, Confederate Negro, p. 155; Spraggins, "Mobilization of Negro Labor," 176.

⁸¹For this and other slaveholder complaints, see Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 154-55. For Lunenburg's secession petition, see Reese, ed., Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention, pp. 655-57.

⁸²Lancelot Minor Diary, 30 December 1863, Minor family papers.

Hampton, or "Freedom Fort" as it was known among the
 slaves.⁸² It was here that commanding General Benjamin F.

Even though the disorder that characterized wartime labor appropriations stymied the governments, it benefited many black Virginians. They manipulated the chaotic scramble for their labor to achieve a greater measure of freedom, to undermine the slave system, and to compromise the war. Some ameliorated their immediate conditions; others, like their counterparts throughout the South, turned proximity to the Union army to good account by absconding to the Yankees whenever possible. The high level of mobilization in Virginia and the large number of defensive troops in the state minimized large-scale escape from the tobacco belt until the summer of 1864, when Grant began his relentless Virginia campaign and sent more troops to the interior.⁸³ Still, thousands of black Virginians from the tobacco belt fled their bondage before Grant and his cavalry commander General Philip H. Sheridan eased the way for them in the summer of 1864 and the spring of 1865.

One of the destinations most preferred by runaways in the Union lines of occupied Virginia was Fortress Monroe at

⁸³In December 1863 Virginia's Auditor of Public Accounts, J. M. Bennett, tried to put the best face on the situation and reported to the General Assembly that slave losses to date had not been as bad as he expected. From the counties he found that 30,250 had escaped; from "corporations," 7,456; for a total of 37,706. Brewer, Confederate Negro, pp. 14-5.

Hampton, or "Freedom Fort" as it was known among the slaves.⁸⁴ It was here that commanding General Benjamin F. Butler, in May 1861, established what would become a key Union policy by designating three slaves escaped from a Confederate labor battalion "contraband of war." Three months later Fortress Monroe held 900 "contraband," and more arrived daily.⁸⁵ The lure of "Freedom Fort" had drawn over 10,000 refugees by 1865. Other large groups of freedmen were located at camps in Elizabeth City and York counties and at West Point.⁸⁶ By the end of the war the American Missionary Association counted some 25,000 blacks in the camps with another 15,000 elsewhere on the Peninsula.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America, p. 63.

⁸⁵Building on these developments, the Federal Congress passed the First Confiscation Act on 6 August 1861, which authorized the seizure of all "property" which supported the rebellion, including slaves used on military fortifications and vessels. On 17 July 1862 a second Confiscation Act passed; this one expropriated all Rebel property and was identical in substance to the Emancipation Proclamation issued a year and a half later by Lincoln on 1 January 1863. Spraggins, "Mobilization of Negro Labor," 177-78, 181-83. Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds., Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Series II: The Black Military Experience (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 3-4, shows how Butler arrived at his decision on contraband policy primarily as a means to thwart enemy strategy. His behavior did not spring from any overweening concern for the situation of blacks. Northern emancipation policy always came wrapped in these political and military motives throughout the war.

⁸⁶Engs, Freedom's First Generation, p. 38.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 46.

Washington, D.C., and Maryland were other popular destinations from the outset of the war.⁸⁸ In a letter to his sister Adaline in Ashford, Connecticut, in July 1861, Edward Whitaker remarked on this northward exodus while stationed at Camp McDowell near Falls Church in Fairfax county. "Runaway slaves come into camp every day," Whitaker wrote. "All are smart and the happiest beings you ever saw to get free from oppression and threats of being carried to the trenches to protect the 'sogers' from 'Mr. Linkums army.' They have trouble to get all their brothers and sisters safe with them," he continued, "because they are owned by different masters. They are sharp on calculations as any one would be when their lives were at stake. For instance: a man came in Sunday and told us when and from what way his wife, his only boy and brother would come in, and they did come according to his program. . . . Some have an idea we came expressly to free them, which they get from their masters, as none are allowed to read."⁸⁹ In early January 1863, shortly after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Washburn wrote that the "slaves are all going to Washington, leaving the brutal masters and overseers and lazy mistresses to raise their own crops and dress

⁸⁸Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century (New Haven, 1985), p. 108.

⁸⁹Edward Washburn Whitaker to his sister Adaline, 9 July 1861, Edmund Washburn Whitaker Civil War letters, p. 57.

themselves. One man had 53 all go in one night, taking cooked poultry, etc, eatables to last several days, besides their oxen and waggons. While he, pistol in hand, stood at the window all night, watching his 500 dollar horse hitched in yard front, etc, etc, -- Emancipation!! How the darkies rejoice."⁹⁰

It was not easy to escape from interior Virginia, and some Tidewater owners hired their slaves to the interior precisely for this reason.⁹¹ Upcountry runaways therefore had to make their way with special care. They constituted a minority in the northern and eastern refugee camps, where most slaves hailed from the Tidewater or northern Piedmont regions or from the cities of Richmond and Petersburg. These low country slaves sometimes entered the camps after their masters or mistresses had abandoned the plantation, leaving their slaves free to go at will, or when the Federals occupied their neighborhood.⁹² Such events were rare further inland. The road east was particularly dangerous, the route to the Valley only slightly less so.

⁹⁰Ibid., from Picket Station on the Rappahannock, at "Leden's Farm" six miles below Falmouth, 8 January 1863, p. 148.

⁹¹In a letter to Col. R. L. Owen of Lynchburg in late 1863, Anderson noted that "a great number" of slaves were being sent to Richmond and to the furnaces "from the exposed Portions of the State." Joseph Anderson to R.L. Owen, 10 December 1863, Tredegar Company Letter Book, p. 131.

⁹²Spraggins, "Mobilization of Negro Labor," 187-88.

Those who attempted it fled their plantations secretly and usually alone, travelled at night and braved tight fortifications to steal away on foot, or along the canal or rivers. Such were Henry's choices in July 1863, when he determined to run away from his master John R. Woods in Albemarle county. "I shall regret it exceedingly if I find he has escaped," Woods wrote to his son Micajah, in the army. "The moral effect on the balance of my negroes will be very pernicious." When Henry was captured near New Market in Nelson county, at the foot of the Blue Ridge, his master planned to use him as a lesson to his fellow slaves by selling him south, "where he will have but little chance to get to the Yankees."⁹³

One type of upcountry runaway, however, often could afford to travel less furtively. These were the hired or impressed slave laborers who duped their owners and employers by invoking the ambiguity which hiring or impressment conferred. Moreover, if slaves had been sent to work in factories, foundries, and coal mines near the front lines, their masters or the government had placed them closer to the Union armies. Railroad hands and boatmen, with their greater mobility, easier access to information about the army's movements, and familiarity with the

⁹³John R. Woods to Micajah Woods, 2 July 1863 and 18 July 1863, Micajah Woods papers.

countryside, were particularly adept at escape.⁹⁴ These slaves could often make their way to Fort Monroe, Washington or Maryland, with less trouble than their friends in the interior.

Hired and impressed slaves frequently used their status to facilitate escape. Abram, a slave hired by the railroad whose master was militia captain John Buford, erstwhile contractor for the Virginia and Tennessee, used this ruse. He decided to leave for the excitement of Confederate camp in the spring of 1862. One W. B. Jones wrote Buford from Camp Lee in Richmond to say that he had seen Abram with the army at Centreville in December. "I would have . . . arrested him," Jones explained, "had I have known him to be a runaway, but he told me that he had been hired by you to a Capt of a company (which he did not name) as cook. . . . I have heard since I have been here in Richmond that he was here, and I think it probable that he is now around Richmond with some of General Johnston's army."⁹⁵ Eliza's experience provides a rare instance of a single woman with a

⁹⁴Fleeing boatmen in the Tidewater so perplexed the Virginia government that it passed a law on 13 March 1862 to try to prohibit their escape. The law was entitled "An Act to prevent the escape of slaves in the Tidewater Counties" and permitted courts to remove and destroy boats, if necessary, to keep slaves on the plantation. Spraggins, "Mobilization of Negro Labor," 179.

⁹⁵W. B. Jones to John Buford, 1 May 1862, Buford family papers.

child who used her hired status to escape bondage, and shows as well how refuge with the army could sometimes turn to tragedy. Eliza's master, John J. Roach, left Southside Virginia for Kentucky in 1862, carrying many of his slaves with him. "Having too many Servants Some 40 in number," Roach hired several, including Eliza and her children, "to select places," from whence Eliza "ran off with her young in her arms." But the protection of the fort could not defend her from disease, and Eliza and her child became unlucky victims of smallpox soon after they made their way to freedom.⁹⁶

If slaves were not actually hired, clearly some realized that feigning that status would work to their benefit. On 10 September 1864, while the Union cavalry advanced up the Valley, Richard J. Wade's slave woman Margaret, "a tall, slim bright mulatto . . . rather down cast look when spoken to," left Lynchburg on her way to the Yankees across the Blue Ridge. Margaret's plan became known to other slaves, and Wade discovered it. "She intended dressing in mens clothing and hire herself to some soldier going to the army," he advertised, "and make her way up to the Yankees in that way. She may attempt this mode of deception and go

⁹⁶John J. Roach to Capt. Thomas Jackson, 2 May 1868, from Roaring Spring, Ky., registered letters received, RG 105, BRFAL.

over the Orange and Alexandria Railroad."⁹⁷ Davy employed a similar plan, albeit unsuccessfully, in 1862. Hired out through F. J. Sampson, a Danville agent, to the Richmond and Danville railroad, he maintained when he was caught headed into the Valley that he belonged to Joe Wright of Pittsylvania county, and was on his way "to wait on his young master."⁹⁸

When Union raids pierced deeper and more frequently into the Virginia interior in the summer of 1864, they resulted in a growing number of southern piedmont refugees. These raids began with the Valley campaign as Grant took his first aim against the interior support system. After General Franz Sigel's early defeats, Grant sent Major General David Hunter into the Valley, with orders to move east and take Lynchburg. On his way, he destroyed crops, livestock, three of Tredegar's furnaces--Grace, Mt. Torry, and Cloverdale, the South's largest producer of gun metal--and much of the Virginia and Tennessee.⁹⁹ He proceeded to Lynchburg by a route which took him over the Blue Ridge to Liberty, in the piedmont, and from there he planned to march south and meet General W. W. Averell's troops at Lynchburg as they moved

⁹⁷Wade offered a \$200 reward for Margaret's return. Lynchburg Virginian, 14 September 1864.

⁹⁸Southside Virginia family papers, n. d., but ca. 1864, Slavery Miscellaneous Box 5.

⁹⁹Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 154-65.

north from Lexington. Arriving at Lynchburg to face General Jubal A. Early's cavalry, Hunter found himself short of ammunition and decided to retreat westward into the Kanawha Valley of West Virginia. As Hunter slipped back into the mountains, he carried with him a number of slaves from the tobacco belt who had joined his forces en route to Lynchburg and in the town itself. One of them was Wash Ferguson, Booker T. Washington's stepfather. Hired by the Kanawha salt works prior to secession, Ferguson's master had brought him back to Franklin county at the division of the state and placed him in a tobacco factory in Lynchburg. From there Ferguson joined the Union army, returned to West Virginia, and got his old job back, this time as a freedman.¹⁰⁰

Replacing Hunter with Sheridan, Grant gave curt instructions to scorch the Valley, destroy the railroads and canal, and then move across the central piedmont, destroying the railroads, on his way to join the Army of the Potomac in the east. During this second phase of the Valley campaign from July to October, Sheridan conducted a series of

¹⁰⁰Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, pp. 215-16. For an account of the Lynchburg campaign under Hunter's command, see U.S. War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, ser. 1, vol. 37, pt. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1880), pp. 93-160, and see especially David Hunter to General U. S. Grant, 8 August 1864, *ibid.*, p. 98, on "negro refugees." Louis R. Harlan, Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901, (New York, 1972), p. 25.

devastating raids up and down the Shenandoah, destroying the harvest, barns, furnaces, leaving twisted and burning rail in his wake, and capturing livestock and other provisions for his army. His aggressive invasion preceded Sherman's famous March to the Sea later in November, and his rout of Early's forces at Cedar Creek on 19 October was credited with aiding Lincoln's reelection in a war-weary North.¹⁰¹

These attacks afforded numerous opportunities for escape, and the Lynchburg newspaper ran long lists of runaways, most of them young and male. A group of six slaves, for example, belonging to Amandus N. Walker, who lived near Forest Depot in Bedford county, left their plantation in early August, an unusual group since it included two young black women."¹⁰² On 2 August an office boy working for J. B. Hargrove & Co. left his Lynchburg post. "He is about 12 or 13 years of age," noted the advertiser, literate, "and will no doubt attempt to pass himself off as being a white boy."¹⁰³ Bryan Aker's slave William, a "15 or 16 year old boy," hired out to Bill Padgett in Bedford county, also chose the summer of 1864 to

¹⁰¹Thomas, Confederate Nation, p. 283-84; Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, p. 200.

¹⁰²Lynchburg Republican, 2 August 1864.

¹⁰³Hargrove & Co. continued to search after Ferdinand two months later. Lynchburg Virginian, 6 August 1864; 3 October 1864.

escape his bondage.¹⁰⁴

Sheridan's incessant assaults also opened up eastern avenues of escape. The general sent some two thousand refugees from the interior to West Point in June 1864 after they joined the Union cavalry as it headed toward White House.¹⁰⁵ The numbers of men, women, and children, "with bundles of all sorts containing their few worldly goods . . . increased from day to day until they arrived at West Point. Probably not one of the poor things had the remotest idea," Sheridan remarked later, "when he set out, as to where he would finally land, but to a man they followed the Yankees in full faith that they would lead to freedom, no matter what road they took."¹⁰⁶

Grant was unable to achieve his goal in 1864. After winter camp near Winchester in the Valley, Sheridan resumed his raids with even greater effect in the spring of 1865, as the Union army tightened the noose around Lee's tattered

¹⁰⁴Lynchburg Republican, 2 August 1864.

¹⁰⁵Most of the refugees joined him at Trevilian Station in Louisa county, where one of the major raids of the summer occurred on 11 June 1864. Gen. P. H. Sheridan to Bvt. Major General John A. Rawlins, Chief of Staff, Headquarters, Armies of the United States, Washington, D.C., 13 May 1866, War of the Rebellion, ser. 1, v. 36, pt. 1, p. 797.

¹⁰⁶Philip H. Sheridan, Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan, General United States Army, 2 vols. (New York, 1888), I, 428-29.

army and poised for a final assault.¹⁰⁷ On his second march across the tobacco belt, Sheridan encountered another large group of slaves who followed his victorious army eastward. In this passage, Sheridan's men struggled across the countryside on Virginia's notoriously bad roads, roads which had become swollen rivers of mud from the spring thaws and rains. Periodically Sheridan had to halt to allow his supply trains, mired somewhere behind him, to catch up. One of these stops was a two-day occupation of Charlottesville in early March, and Margaret Terry's mother took her to town that spring to see the liberators first hand. "They were just coming in droves," she recalled. "I sat on a gate post on High Street, looking over into the yard of General Sheridan's headquarters."¹⁰⁸ Eliza Brown, another slave girl in Charlottesville that spring, had vivid memories of both the army and the weather. "Was in '65 it was, an' de heavy rains had swel up de rivers 'cross dey banks," Brown reminisced. "De blue coats come swarmin' round at our house, an' de one on de bigges' horse of all dey say was General Sheridan. Horse an' de General was all one

¹⁰⁷A good account of the 1865 campaigns in Virginia can be found in Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, pp. 224-48.

¹⁰⁸Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, p. 286; Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, pp. 235-36.

color--both covered from head to foot with mud."¹⁰⁹

Recalling this grueling campaign in his memoirs, Sheridan noted that his army "would have been forced to abandon most of the wagons except for the invaluable help given by some two thousand negroes who attached themselves to the column. They literally lifted the wagons out of the mud." Along with a capture of mules from Early's disintegrated command, these refugees helped turn the campaign into a success.

When General, troops, and refugees crossed the Pamunkey river on 19 March, Roger Hannaford, a Union soldier from Ohio, watched emotionally as, not a group of slaves, but free men and women, followed the column over the bridge. They came "first by ones & two[s] then by squads, at last a constant stream. I stood and watched them as they flocked by. . . . It was curious to observe how each seemed affected, old men & women that could after their exhaustive journey scarcely totter, would go by, the tears rolling down their withered cheeks, looking upward crying 'thank God I am free'; most of them seemed however almost wild with joy, singing & dancing as they hurried down to the landing."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, p. 59.

¹¹⁰Sheridan, Memoirs, II, 121; The War of the Rebellion, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1, p. 478; Roger Hannaford's "Reminiscences," quoted in Stephen Z. Starr, ed., The Union Cavalry in the Civil War, 2 vols. (Baton Rouge, 1981), II, 385; Starr, ed., "The Last Days of the Rebellion," Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin, 35 (1977), 7-30.

The Union's encirclement strategy began achieving results weeks before the surrender at Appomattox Court House on 9 April. As Grant pursued Lee's broken army from the east, Sheridan's troops closed in across the muddy piedmont, leaving great devastation in their path. Canal, railroads, and bridges were destroyed, and few provisions remained behind. He left \$1 million in property damages and crippled the Virginia Central, Lee's main artery of supply, and 100 miles of the canal beyond recovery. By his own account this second march "destroyed the enemy's means of subsistence, in quantities beyond computation."¹¹¹ According to plan this time, he joined Grant at White House near Petersburg. Lee, meanwhile, had been unable to offer any resistance to Sheridan's advance; Early's troops were gone, and Lee had to defend Richmond and Petersburg from Grant.¹¹²

With two supply lines still open to Lee--the Southside and the Richmond and Danville roads--Confederate forces at Five Forks were caught by surprise and overwhelmed on 1 April, leaving Lee now with but one road, the Richmond and Danville.¹¹³ Unable to hold Richmond, Lee gave the order to evacuate on 2 April. He left capital residents to face

¹¹¹Sheridan, Memoirs, II, 123.

¹¹²Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, pp. 235-48.

¹¹³The Confederate generals in charge at Five Forks, Fitz Lee and George Pickett, were attending a private shad bake

the occupying Union army as best they could, a force that included several detachments of black troops.¹¹⁴ With this behind him, Lee retreated to the southwest, vainly hoping to find provisions before Grant caught him.¹¹⁵ But Union troops intercepted Lee's supplies and stopped his supply trains. Having now been marching for over 72 hours without sleep or food, Lee's troops began large-scale desertion. Of the 60,000 Confederate soldiers who left Richmond and Petersburg nine days earlier, fewer than 8000 witnessed the surrender at McLean's farm.¹¹⁶

Now scenes that had taken place in many other areas of the occupied South began to be played out on individual plantations across the tobacco belt. When news of Richmond's evacuation reached the Dover Pits, "all the negroes" went "quick for Richmond," and desertion became "the order of the day," compelling the operator to close the

at the time of the assault. Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, p. 239.

¹¹⁴These were the 5th Massachusetts Cavalry, who were the first soldiers to enter the capital after the evacuation. Following them came General Godfrey Weitzel's XXVth Army Corps, an all-black corps of thirty-two regiments. James A. McPherson, ed., The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War for Union (New York, 1965), p. 223.

¹¹⁵Johnston, Virginia Railroads during the Civil War, pp. 237-38.

¹¹⁶Desertion had been a growing problem for the previous year. Thomas, Confederate Nation, p. 302; Johnston, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War, pp. 130-31.

mines.¹¹⁷ George White, slave of John and Lucy Young of Danville, delighted when the Yankees came to levy justice on his harsh master.

When de war was goin' on, some Yankee soldiers came to our place an' master hid, an' mistress went up stairs an' locked herself up. De soldiers opened de corn house an' th'owed all de corn out, an' der horses an' mules et all dey wanted, den tramped de rest of it. Dey went in de smoke house an' got hams an' cut dem up, took what dey want an' give us some an' said, 'Dis is your labor an' not deirs.' Dey went in de house an' got some of Lucy Young's best dresses an' dipped dem in de slop barrels, an' thew dem out in de yard, an' told us dat it was our labor an' not hers. Mistress was 'fraid to say a word but jes' stayed in de room. We was two days cleaning up de mess dey thew out. Mama washed dose dresses but dey never did look de same.¹¹⁸

And in Appomattox county, the heart of tobacco country where Lee concluded his agreement with Grant, Fannie Berry recalled a popular song that celebrated the surrender that slaves had done so much to bring about:

Mammy don't yo' cook no mo',
Yo' ar' free, yo' are free.

Rooster don't yo' crow no mo',
Yo' ar' free, yo' ar' free.

Ol' hen don't yo lay no mo' eggs,
Yo' free, yo' free.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷Quoted in Lewis, Coal, Iron, and Slaves, p. 137.

¹¹⁸Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, p. 311.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 38.

which market relations made prior to 1861 also worked to the benefit of masters. The IV

Nowhere in the Confederate South were slaves better positioned to undercut the war effort than in the tobacco belt of Virginia, for the failure of the interior supply network, of which slave labor was the foundation, helped insure the final collapse of the Confederacy. A burgeoning number of hired and impressed slaves from the Virginia heartland were put at work on behalf of the war to preserve slavery. Blacks, especially those who were hired or impressed, those in cities, those who were labor literate, and those near the lines of combat and from the communication, understood the nature of the war and the strategic importance which their labor represented in the conflict. They exploited these conditions sometimes to force more concessions from their masters and employers, and sometimes to extricate themselves from bondage labor altogether by escaping to nearby Union armies, thereby depriving the Confederacy of their labor. Hired or impressed slaves knew that they possessed a unique armies advantage over the rest of the slave population because they could use their ambiguous status to deceive their owners in a number of instances. Initially, the ingress interior of the Confederacy.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 38.

which market relations made prior to 1861 also worked to the benefit of masters. The established presence of a slave hiring network already geared toward industry and transportation at first enabled the military to mobilize the Commonwealth with considerable dispatch. But the advantage that hiring at first tendered slaveowners systematically resolved into an unforgiving handicap. Because slaveholders understood the inherent dangers posed by wider slave hiring, serious confrontations with the government and military over labor allocation resulted, conflicts which themselves greatly injured the war effort. In a sense, the archaic dominance of slave labor within the economy doomed the slaveholders' cause from the outset. The spread of market relations within the wartime economy ironically hastened the downfall of a slave system already eroded--and buttressed--by similar economic developments of the antebellum period. Conversely, the attenuated experiences that slaves had had with wage labor steadily enhanced their wartime goals. Unlike their brethren in occupied regions of the South, Virginia tobacco slaves could not depend on the presence of armies hostile to their owners to help them achieve freedom until the end drew near. But just as surely did they know how to promote emancipation from their remote location in the interior of the Confederacy.

CHAPTER III

1865

It was all foolish, bizarre, and tawdry. Gangs of dirty Negroes howling and dancing; poverty-stricken ignorant laborers mistaking war, destruction and revolution for the mystery of the free human soul; and yet to these black folk it was The Apocalypse. The magnificent trumpet tones of Hebrew Scripture, transmuted and oddly changed, became a strange new gospel. All that was Beauty, all that was Love, all that was Truth, stood on the top of these mad mornings and sang with the stars. A great human sob shrieked in the wind, and tossed its tears upon the sea, -- free, free, free.--W. E. B. Du Bois¹

Gramma used to tell dis story to ev'ybody dat would lissen, an' I spec' I heered it a hundred times. Gramma say she was hired out to de Randolphs during de war. One day whilst she was weedin' corn another slave, Mamie Tolliver, come up to her an' whisper, "Sarah, dey tell me dat Marse Lincum done set all us slaves free." Gramma say, "Is dat so?" an' she dropped her hoe an' run all de way to de Thacker's place--seben miles it was--an run to ole Missus an' looked at her real hard. Den she yelled, "I'se free! Yes, I'se free! Ain't got to work fo yo' no mo'. You can't put me

¹W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880 (New York, 1935; reprint ed., 1967), p. 124.

in yo' pocket now!" Gramma say Missus Thacker started boo-hoo in' an' threw her apron over her face an' run in de house. Gramma knew it was true den.--Ex-slave²

When the war ended in the early spring of 1865, black and white Virginians alike were anxious about the reorganization of a society shorn, by defeat, of its old cornerstone, slavery. Freedpeople sought autonomy and independence from whites, primarily through landownership; ex-masters yearned to reestablish old powers through a quick reconciliation with the victors and renewed control over black labor. Each group achieved some of its goals; neither acquired everything. By the end of 1865, blacks had discovered that, despite some beneficent aspects of northern occupation, their march toward freedom would proceed under an enormously restrictive set of circumstances in which the North joined hands, not with the emancipated, but with their erstwhile masters in the name of property rights. Planters, though supported in key respects by Union policies, had learned that their powers as slaveowners were forever broken. During these first uncertain months of freedom,

²Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, comps. and eds., Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves (Bloomington, 1976), p. 180. According to Horace Muse, a former slave from King George county in the Tidewater, slaves used the phrase "put me in yo' pocket" to mean that your master or mistress had "give you to a mean man to wuk fer." Ibid., p. 215.

everyone waited to see what plans a yet uncertain North would unveil as it restored the former Confederacy to the Union, and in what ways southerners would respond to and influence their reconstruction. By Christmas the contours of the process had begun to take definitive shape, and in Virginia as throughout the South, these new arrangements centered around control over freed blacks' labor.³

I

As Virginians began to rebuild in 1865, the waste laid by the traffic of armies was the most immediate and overwhelming fact of life. All of the southern states were in economic turmoil, but Union armies had exacted especially heavy suffering from Virginia, leaving the inhabitants to embark upon reconstruction in a land later dubbed "the Flanders of America" by one New South leader.⁴ Damage was most extensive across the central tobacco belt, in the east, and especially in the Valley, where the Yankee torch spared few propertyholders. Large sections of railroad track lay in ruins; both factory and plantation often bore testimony

³On the uncertainty that governed Northern policy in 1865, see Eric L. McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (Chicago, 1960), pp. 48-52.

⁴"Imboden Report," House Executive Documents, 1886, Serial 2476, pp. 23-4.

to the events of the last four years. People were homeless and hungry; no other southern state required as many emergency supplies and rations as did the Old Dominion.

Some 70,000 freedmen and refugees occupied Tidewater camps or abandoned farms, where disease, poverty, and unsanitary conditions, especially near Norfolk, Hampton, and Richmond, were common.⁵

After surrender, one former Confederate recollected, "our horses and cattle, our fencing and buildings . . . were gone. Our banks were all insolvent, our industries all

⁵See, for example, Col. Orlando Brown, Asst. Commr., to Major General Oliver Otis Howard, 30 November 1865, letters received, V119, Brown's Summary Report from Richmond, microfilm 553, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (hereinafter cited as BRFAL), for the Assistant Commissioner's report of the conditions he found on assuming his office in June; Whitelaw Reid, After the War: A Southern Tour, May 1, 1865, to May 1, 1866 (London, 1866), pp. 325-26; James E. Sefton, The United States Army and Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (Westport, Conn., 1980), pp. 9-10; Peter J. Rachleff, Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890 (Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 3-33, for remarks on Richmond's Afro-American community after the war; John T. O'Brien, "Reconstruction in Richmond: White Restoration and Black Protest, April-June 1865," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 89 (July 1981), 259-81, provides information on the immediate aftermath of war in the capital; and Leslie Winston Smith, "Richmond During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1974); Robert Francis Engs, Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia, 1861-1890 (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 85-8, describes the desperate plight of many freedpeople on the Peninsula in 1865; John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War (Chicago, 1961), pp. 1-14, and Dan T. Carter, When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867 (Baton Rouge, 1985), pp. 96-146, provide general overviews of conditions immediately following the war throughout the South.

destroyed, our fields growing up in weeds and briars. . . . We had no ready money, and nothing that would command it but the scarred and furrowed acres of the desolated Commonwealth."⁶ An 1877 committee estimated Virginia's war losses, including the value of slaves, at \$457,000,000.⁷ Currency was the scarcest of commodities. William F. Taylor, the auditor of public accounts, reported to the General Assembly in December that "money is the great desideratum." He outlined the work ahead: "farms must be restocked, dwelling-houses and barns rebuilt, fences put up, labor paid for, and numberless other things must be done, all of which require money."⁸ Two years later the

⁶"Imboden Report," 23-4.

⁷Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives, 1867-1869: A Study in Reconstruction Politics (Chapel Hill, 1970), p. 36; Charles Chilton Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven, 1917), p. 7n. The figure also included internal improvements, banking capital, circulation, state interest in banks, personal property, and realty. This approach, of course, takes no account of the shift in wealth, rather than its extermination, from ex-master to freedman. See Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation (New York, 1977), pp. 44-7, 52; Harold D. Woodman, "Post-Civil War Agriculture and The Law," Agricultural History 53 (January 1979), 319.

⁸Taylor recommended the abolition of usury laws so that rates of interest could rise, but these measures designed to attract northern capital would not pass for another five years. The Conservative government permitted a 12 percent interest rate to take effect on loans in 1870, but it later reduced the rate to six percent. Enforcement was lax, however, and rates often exceeded the specified maximum.

Commissioner of Agriculture reported that "such has been the waste of war in Virginia that 'unimproved' lands have encroached upon cultivated areas until nearly all the State is 'wild' land."⁹

Most spectacular of all the physical devastation visited on the Old Dominion was the ruin of Richmond. The end of the war found this preeminent symbol of Confederate resistance in ashes, a fire set ironically by her own retreating troops. In an attempt to prevent confiscations by onrushing Union occupiers, fleeing rebels gutted the business district and destroyed bridges, railroads, and depots. The Tredegar's master, Joseph Anderson, persuaded the military to spare his ironworks. Within hours after Jefferson Davis and his entourage left for exile, much of the rest of the city was consumed by flames that Federal troops eventually extinguished. When Lincoln paid a surprise visit to the capital on April 4 and 5, he found a confused spectacle: the smoldering evidence of a hasty

Report of the Auditor of Public Accounts to the General Assembly (Richmond, 1865), p. 6; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 169.

⁹U. S. Department of Agriculture, Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, House Executive Document, 40th Congress, 2d Session, serial number 1347, p. 112; Allen W. Moger, Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville, Va., 1968), pp. 4, 13; James Douglas Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction, 1865-1870: A Political, Economic and Social Study (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1968), pp. 165-93, 194-226.

retreat just two days earlier, ecstatic freedmen wildly cheering him along the streets, and a group of sober and prominent whites, including Anderson, ready to meet and begin the process of Reconstruction by first bringing a halt to the war in Virginia.¹⁰

Surrender and the destruction of the Confederate capital made hot copy, and many northern journalists, travellers, and observers set out to chronicle the compelling situation of the vanquished. Often they began these southern tours with a train trip from Washington to Richmond, thence to fan

¹⁰Their plans, of course, were rendered useless by events which took place four days later at Appomattox. Charles B. Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Ironworks (New Haven, 1966), p. 291; Benjamin Quarles, Lincoln and the Negro (New York, 1962), pp. 235-38; O'Brien, "Reconstruction in Richmond," 261-62; James G. Randall and Richard N. Current, comp., Lincoln the President, 4 vols. (New York, 1945-55), IV, 353-59; John T. Trowbridge, The Desolate South, 1865-1866: A Picture of the Devastated Confederacy (New York, 1956), ed. by Gordon Carroll, 83-105; Michael Les Benedict, A Compromise of Principle: Congressional Republicans and Reconstruction, 1863-1869 (New York, 1974), pp. 98-9; Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction," pp. 218-19; Smith, "Richmond During Presidential Reconstruction," pp. 26-39, 41-2; William M. E. Rachal, ed., "The Occupation of Richmond, April 1865: The Memorandum of Events of Colonel Christopher Q. Tompkins," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 73 (April 1965), 189-98; J. H. Averill, "Richmond, Virginia. The Evacuation of the City and the Days Preceding It," Southern Historical Society Papers 25 (January-December 1897), 267-73; Thomas Ballard Blake, "Retreat from Richmond," Southern Historical Society Papers 25 (January-December 1897), 139-45; H. W. Bruce, "Some Reminiscences of the Second of April, 1865," Southern Historical Society Papers 9 (May 1881), 206-11; R. T. W. Duke, "The Burning of Richmond," Southern Historical Society Papers 25 (January-December 1897), 134-38; T. M. R. Talcott, "From Petersburg to Appomattox," Southern Historical Society Papers 32 (January-December 1904), 67-72.

out for various southern destinations. Some travelled westward. Bound for Lynchburg from Richmond in late July, John Richard Dennett, special correspondent for The Nation, "could not help being impressed with the desolateness of the scene as we rode over the pits and gullies of the road. Up or down the narrow valley I could see no dwelling and no cultivated field. . . . High aloft on our left hand broken fragments of trestle-work projected into the empty air between the last pillars of the bridge. We passed over a little bridge of logs, whose timbers were blackened by fire and burnt nearly through. . . . Everything around seemed to have felt the fire and sword of the war."¹¹ Even physically unscathed Lynchburg testified to defeat. "Trade is dead," Dennett wrote hyperbolically of the old "Tobacco City," "the people have no money, nor is there a prospect of their soon getting any. . . . The shelves of the shops are scantily supplied with poor goods, and several times after purchasing some small article I have been obliged to leave it untaken, because the merchant was not able to give me change for a five-dollar note."¹² Whitelaw Reid, a New York journalist who travelled widely through the postwar

¹¹John Richard Dennett, The South as It Is, 1865-1866 (New York, reprint ed., 1965), ed by Henry M. Christman, p. vii. Dennett was a superintendent of plantations in Port Royal, South Carolina, during the war.

¹²Ibid., pp. 37-8.

South, also described dismal conditions. Between Richmond and Gordonsville, "abandoned fields alternated with pine forests, destroyed depots, and ruined dwellings," sights which provoked him to add that the road back to economic prosperity would be neither simple nor easy.¹³

Yet many, including Reid, offered sanguine prospects, and scattered reports of rejuvenation soon appeared.

Overall Reid felt that "the desolation of Virginia, even in the regions most exposed to the ravages of war had been overrated," and he doubted whether any whites, at least, would have to shift much for food. He found sporadic evidence of northern money in urban areas; in contrast to Dennett's testimony, Reid found Lynchburg "swarming with representatives of Northern capitalism. . . . Baltimoreans were also found frequently among them." In the fall Reid commented on the robust presence of northern capital in Richmond, and the enthusiasm with which the capital-starved business community welcomed northern investors. For their part the courted moneylenders stressed economic enterprise, stability of the labor force, and readmission to the Union as prerequisites to greater favors. It was plain to Reid that Virginia businessmen everywhere yearned to see their factories return to production, and interest in southwestern

¹³Reid, *After the War*, pp. 328-29, 330-38; Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (New York, 1926, reprint ed., 1969), p. 69.

mineral lands, a feature of the postbellum boom in extractive industry, had already sparked speculation in that section of the state.¹⁴

Railroads had figured conspicuously among the targets on which the Union army spent its final fury. Because they linked the agricultural hinterland with market centers, they were critical and immediate components of economic recovery. In April 1865 long stretches of gnarled rail and burned or rotting ties interrupted many lines, compounding the prewar dilemma caused by differing gauges. To be made serviceable again the network needed large infusions of capital and labor--resources which the prostrate government did not have.¹⁵ Yet railroads soon restored functional service with the help of northern loans and, in some instances, northern takeovers. The demobilization of the Union army in Virginia further expedited their rapid

¹⁴Reid, After the War, pp. 322-23, 331-32. See also Ransom and Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, on this subject. In their detailed economic analysis of the postwar South, these authors agree with Reid's general observations. Chapt. 3, "The Myth of the Prostrate South," emphasizes that the desolation occasioned by war had been exaggerated, and that transportation and manufacturing in particular made rapid recoveries after surrender. According to Ransom and Sutch, the decisive factor in the sluggish postwar recovery in the five cotton states included in their study was the withdrawal of black labor from the work force. By their calculations, a decline of between 28 and 37 percent occurred in the postwar black labor force. See especially pp. 40-2.

¹⁵The state continued to hold a controlling, though diminished, interest in railroad stock. Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 143-65.

repair.¹⁶

Only a few months after Appomattox travellers began crossing the piedmont, though they met with little more than rude arrangements. Roads reopened with their limited rolling stock in poor repair. Many lines stopped at burned bridges and ferried passengers across ravines and rivers. Warehouses and repair shops no longer existed, and delays, mean accommodations, and high adventure usually awaited the unexperienced passenger to upcountry Virginia. One traveller to Lynchburg that summer saw "every few yards a rail bent outward . . . while half of them were crushed at the ends, or worn off the face till scarcely half an inch remained for the wheel to touch. . . . Twelve miles per hour . . . was in many places a very unsafe rate of speed." Similar--though ultimately less successful--attempts to repair the James River canal also began soon after surrender.¹⁷

¹⁶The president of the Richmond & Danville, Colonel Lewis E. Harvie, and the president of the Virginia Central, Colonel Edmund Fontaine, were both ousted in the summer of 1865 by one or another combination of Union military figures, the Board of Public Works--under new northern-appointed direction--and private stockholders. Most military takeovers were temporary; during the summer, the army gradually relinquished control over the roads the Board of Public Works. Angus James Johnston, II, Virginia Railroads in the Civil War (Chapel Hill, 1959), pp. 249-56; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 37.

¹⁷Allen W. Moger, "Railroad Practices and Policies in Virginia after the Civil War," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 59 (October 1951), 430; Robert C. Black, III, The Railroads of the Confederacy (Chapel Hill, 1952), pp.

It was clear, therefore, in the first few months after emancipation, that economic reconstruction in Virginia would be a challenging task. Still, there were signs that repairs were underway, particularly in industry and transportation; significantly, few people had remarked on progress in the agricultural economy. Encouragement had been most forthcoming for the nascent industrial sector, and it was not surprising that the industrialists took the early lead in economic recovery in 1865.

II

As they reentered production during the summer of 1865, the operators of tobacco factories, blast furnaces, coal mines and flour mills, and the managers at the Tredegar, emerged as the most successful users of freed black labor.¹⁸ It was no mere coincidence that all of the

287-92; Reid, After the War, pp. 324-25, 330-31; Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction," pp. 262-64, 278-79; Dennett, The South As It Is, pp. 34, 36-7; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 161-64; Peter C. Thomas, "Matthew Fontaine Maury and the Problem of Virginia's Identity, 1865-1873," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 90 (April 1982), 213-38; Mark W. Summers, Railroads, Reconstruction, and the Gospel of Prosperity: Aid Under the Radical Republicans, 1865-1877 (Princeton, 1984), p. 4; see the Daily Lynchburg Virginian, June-September, 1865, for advertisements by the canal's directors in search of labor; Wayland F. Dunaway, History of the James River and Kanawha Canal (New York, 1922).

¹⁸See Joseph Clarke Robert, The Story of Tobacco in America (Chapel Hill, 1949, reprint ed., 1967), p. 129;

industries which found it a straightforward matter to employ freedmen after the war had cut their teeth on hired slave labor before the war. Tobacconists, who had the closest prewar associations with hiring, boarding out, and overwork payments, saw little difference between the new and old systems, and what had changed struck them as an improvement over the past. Relieved of management responsibilities of security and upkeep, many expected free labor in the factory to provide them with the opportunities to expand their fortunes in ways they never could under the slave regime. One of Danville's leading tobacco manufacturers, William T. Sutherlin, for example, resumed operations quickly and, through newspapers and in agricultural conventions, he recommended black employment to his peers in both industrial and agricultural pursuits.¹⁹

Correspondingly, this pattern of rapid transformation in manufacture from slave to free labor meant that a sizeable

Smith, "Richmond During Presidential Reconstruction," pp. 10-11; Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 118-19; Sir George Campbell, White and Black, The Outcome of a Visit to the United States (New York, 1879), p. 285; Trowbridge, The Desolate South, p. 105; Charles B. Dew, "Disciplining Slave Ironworkers in the Antebellum South: Coercion, Conciliation, and Accommodation," in The Other Slaves: Mechanics, Artisans, and Craftsmen, ed. by James E. Newton and Ronald L. Lewis (Boston, 1978), pp. 78-82; Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 303-15; Dew, "Sam Williams, Forgemaster: The Life of an Industrial Slave in the Old South," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward (New York, 1982), p. 231. Everything was
¹⁹Quoted in Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 75-6; see also pp. 122-23.

number of Afro-American workers, especially those who were highly skilled artisans, retained those jobs in which they had engaged in large numbers before and in some cases during the war. These included, most conspicuously, positions in the tobacco factories. But black workers also continued to work for the railroads, in the coal mines, salt and blast furnaces, in less skilled positions in the iron foundries, and in the flour mills--in short, in most areas of industry where they had been found in antebellum days.²⁰

Thus, the reorganization of traditional Virginia manufacturing interests under free labor proceeded relatively smoothly and entailed few immediate changes in traditional labor organization. Still, the harbingers of greater changes to come began to appear that summer and fall as the revolutionary impact of defeat and emancipation began to pull the first poor whites into the market economy. Many Virginians of a New South bent approved. A Lynchburg newspaper urged "all persons needing the services of

not smooth sailing; Anderson, for example, acquired capital for the Tredegar by selling his Dover coal pits and drawing upon savings held in London. Although the ironworks were temporarily reduced by Anderson's political disabilities and Union directives on the kinds of work the Tredegar could accept--they limited orders to the repair of bridges, railroads, and kindred peaceable endeavors--the foundry eventually resumed profitable production through Anderson's shrewd management and his continued accumulations of capital from northern sources.

²⁰Robert, Story of Tobacco in America, p. 129; Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 118-19; Dew,

mechanics to hire white men in preference to blacks," because their work, though more expensive, was superior to that of the freedmen, and because "many of them are needy."²¹ Although a railroad hirer told Dennett in July that white men were "too damned proud to work," he correctly predicted that they would "have to come to it. I've had to pull off my coat since peace came," he explained, because he had lost all of his tobacco in the Richmond fire. Repeating the current wisdom, Dennett's informant told him that whites were better and more reliable workers than blacks, when they could be found, and that no black mechanics--only wood choppers--were employed under his supervision. Dennett acknowledged that "the number of idle white persons" was "much too great" and would "account for much of the pilfering complained of by the newspapers."²² Sutherlin, the tobacconist who boosted the employment of black labor and a prominent New South spokesman in the state, likewise thought it important to impress white men with the need to find gainful employment.²³

Ironmaker to the Confederacy, pp. 303-15; Dew, "Disciplining Slave Ironworkers," pp. 81-2.

²¹Dennett, The South As It Is, p. 85.

²²Dennett, The South As It Is, pp. 39-41, 45.

²³Robert, The Story of Tobacco in America, p. 129; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 76-7. The experience of southern yeomen both before and after the war has been a neglected topic. A pathbreaking article was Carter G. Woodson, "Freedom and Slavery in Appalachian

The trend was evident in agriculture as well, though not to the extent that characterized industry. By the end of the year, when contracts for 1866 were being drawn up, an occasional planter like Sam Brindle of Pittsylvania county decided to hire white laborers. Others, believing that uncoerced black labor might do for the truck farmers--as one Virginian told Dennett--but would never rejuvenate the tobacco economy, entertained fond hopes that white immigrants would soon provide the bulk of Virginia's labor.²⁴ But white immigrants did not come to Virginia in

America," Journal of Negro History 1 (April 1916), 132-50; Roger W. Shugg added to our knowledge with Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers During Slavery and After, 1840-1875 (Baton Rouge, 1939); Frank Lawrence Owsley's Plain Folk of the Old South (Baton Rouge, 1949), was a contribution that came from a traditionalist heritage. The only modern works on white nonslaveholders are Eugene D. Genovese, "Yeoman Farmers in a Slaveholders' Democracy," Agricultural History 49 (1975), 331-42, and the important studies of Steven Hahn, including The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890 (New York, 1983), which is the most detailed study of the ways in which the revolution engulfed the white yeomanry. See also Hahn, "Hunting, Fishing, and Foraging: Common Rights and Class Relations in the Postbellum South," Radical History Review 26 (1982), 37-64; Hahn, "The Yeoman in the Non-Plantation South: Upper Piedmont Georgia, 1850-1860," in Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr., Class, Conflict, and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies (Westport, Conn., 1981), pp. 36-67; and Hahn, "Common Right and Commonwealth: The Stock Law Struggle and the Roots of Southern Populism," in Kousser and McPherson, eds., Region, Race, and Reconstruction, pp. 51-88.

²⁴Ann S. Hairston to her husband Marshall Hairston, from Beaver Creek to Mississippi, 19 December 1865, Hairston-Wilson papers; Dennett, The South As It Is, p. 48. One such experimenter with immigrant labor was the former president of the Richmond & Danville railroad, Lewis E.

significant numbers, and black workers did not begin to die off once the protection of their owners was removed and they assumed responsibility for their own welfare, as many predicted.²⁵ On the contrary, blacks and especially black men, after the first exultant months of freedom, returned to the labor force in large numbers. Especially if skilled and experienced, some continued to work in higher-paying manufacturing and transportation jobs. Even under the best of circumstances, however, these positions accommodated only a minority of the black male work force. Furthermore, the need to utilize the interior as an informal labor reservoir for the Tidewater and Valley disappeared after emancipation, and as a result the great majority of tobacco-belt freedmen were left dependent on agriculture for a living.

Thus it was primarily on the postwar plantation, rather than in the factory or the mine, that freedpeople in interior Virginia began to define their liberty and recast their relationships to their former masters. But the goals of the two principal actors in this struggle could hardly have been more opposed. The freedpeople wanted release from

Harvie, who in January 1866 contracted with nineteen German, English, and Swiss immigrants to work for one year at "Dykeland," his home in Amelia county. Harvie papers, section 10, agreements, 1866-76, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia. See also Bert James Loewenberg, "Efforts of the South to Encourage Immigration, 1865-1900," South Atlantic Quarterly 33 (October 1934), 370, and Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 178-83.

²⁵Carter, When the War Was Over, pp. 166-75.

compulsive labor and freedom to define their own lives; in an agricultural economy that meant that they needed land to end their dependence on planters. By contrast, the perceived needs of the planters, who continued to own most of the land, ran directly counter to those of the freedpeople. To reclaim even a part of their former status, ex-masters had to have tractable labor and cheap capital.²⁶ With the early battlelines thus drawn, tobacco-belt Virginians set about testing the limits and expanding the boundaries of the freedom that Appomattox had formalized but had not brought into being.

III

To monitor the reorganization of the economy and to instruct and chaperone southerners in the transformation to freedom, the federal government established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, or the Freedmen's Bureau, as it was commonly known. Created by Congress and approved by Lincoln on March 3, 1865, the Bureau operated somewhat ambiguously and not always easily through the War Department. Initially chartered for one year, subsequent legislation extended its activities until 1869. Throughout

²⁶A discussion of continuity in landowning among the planter class appears in Chapter 5.

the agency's tenure Major General Oliver Otis Howard headed the Bureau as Commissioner in Washington. Under him were assistant commissioners who functioned as heads of the state bureaus.

Between 1865 and 1869 Virginia had three different Bureau chiefs. Howard first appointed Colonel Orlando Brown, a Yale-educated physician who had managed freedmen's affairs at Norfolk for a year and a half under the direction of General Benjamin Butler.²⁷ Headquartered in Richmond, Brown governed the Old Dominion until 13 June 1866. He was replaced by Major General Alfred H. Terry who, as Commander of the Department of Virginia, had directed the military occupation of the state since surrender. Held in high esteem in Republican councils, but regarded by white Virginians as unduly sympathetic to the freedpeople and known for his Radical political tendencies, Terry's job as Bureau chief lasted only three months. Major General John M. Schofield, one of the most conservative of all Bureau officials and a man who later exercised a major influence over the terms of Virginia's restoration, then governed Virginia from 15 August 1866 until the passage of the

²⁷George R. Bentley, A History of the Freedmen's Bureau (New York, 1944, reprint ed., 1970), p. 57; William S. McFeely, Yankee Stepfather: General Oliver Otis Howard and the Freedmen (New Haven, 1968), pp. 65-7; William T. Alderson, "The Influence of Military Rule and the Freedmen's Bureau on Reconstruction in Virginia, 1865-1870," (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1952), pp. 29-30.

Reconstruction Acts in early March 1867. At that time he became Commanding General of Virginia, then designated by Congress as Military District Number One, and Brown resumed office as Assistant Commissioner.²⁸

In July 1865, the Bureau divided Virginia into eight districts, each headed by a superintendent. Districts were divided further into subdistricts--usually individual counties, though two, three, and sometimes four counties were yoked together under the supervision of a single officer.²⁹ This grassroots agent attended to the

²⁸Terry may have been something of a hero in Virginia, but his behavior after reconstruction shows just how much an agent of the Federal government he really was. Like many U. S. Army officers, Terry was part of the genocidal campaigns conducted against the Indians in the late nineteenth century; he was Custer's superior at Little Big Horn, for example. Sefton, The United States Army and Reconstruction, pp. 17, 74, 201-02; William T. Alderson, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Virginia," (M.A. thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1951), pp. 25-6, 31, 34-5, 45-8; Bentley, History of the Freedmen's Bureau, p. 216; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 47-8; James L. McDonough, Schofield: Union General in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Tallahassee, 1972), pp. 167-88.

²⁹After the passage of the Reconstruction Acts in March 1867, districts became known as subdistricts, and subdistricts became divisions. Virginia's eight districts became ten subdistricts a month later. The 2nd, 4th, and 7th subdistricts comprised the tobacco belt, with headquarters in Petersburg, Gordonsville, and Lynchburg respectively. Pittsylvania, Mecklenburg, Albemarle, and Halifax each had a single officer, since their black populations exceeded 5000. All other counties were combined with others, usually so that two formed one division. Prince Edward, Cumberland, Buckingham, and Charlotte counties formed the 6th division in the 2nd subdistrict,

day-to-day business of the Bureau, sometimes with the help of a small staff, if he were fortunate. Particularly under Schofield's administration, local agents often doubled as Provost Marshalls, leaving them to be known familiarly by the title of "provo." The assistant superintendent was almost always an army officer detailed by the War Department, and his responsibilities, particularly in the interior and in locations distant from the railroads, were heavy. The work of "provo" required much energy and made for few dull moments--it was at the same time often lonely, and productive of social ostracism and not a little personal danger.³⁰

When the Bureau and its agents entered upon their duties

however, and Campbell, Nelson, Appomattox, and Amherst counties the 1st division of the 7th subdistrict. Supposedly counties holding fewer than 5000 blacks could be joined together with another county into a single subdistrict, but shortages of men and materiel often undermined this rule. General Oliver O. Howard, Circular 8, 15 April 1867, BRFAL.

³⁰After most remaining officers were mustered out of service in 1868, many remained behind as civilian agents. Circular 6, 12 April 1867, BRFAL; Alderson, "Military Rule," pp. 31-2; McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 158-59; Sefton, The United States Army and Reconstruction, p. 121. For a detailed account of the experience of an assistant superintendent, see James Smallwood, "Charles E. Culver, A Reconstruction Agent in Texas: The Work of Local Freedmen's Bureau Agents and the Black Community," Civil War History 27 (December 1981), 350-61. For a view on how isolated the interior of Virginia could be, see John Hammond Moore, "Appomattox: Profile of a Mid-Nineteenth Century Community," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 88 (October 1980), 478-91.

in 1865, they were disorganized and confused as to exactly what they were supposed to do, and they never clearly defined all of their goals. Dennett commented that the agents he had met in upcountry Virginia had "no certain knowledge of the precise nature and extent of the power lodged in their hands." From the outset, the establishment of free labor ideology and practice had been the paradigm of Bureau policy, but exactly what that meant on a practical daily basis often puzzled the Bureau in 1865. By the end of the year, policy had evolved so far as to bring many Bureau activities into harmony with the aspirations of landholders; the Bureau can be regarded as an agency which ultimately delivered the black labor force back into the hands of the planters in the interests of establishing free labor. But in some cases it was possible for the Bureau to ameliorate the worst excesses practiced by hostile whites against the freedpeople, and especially in 1865, ex-slaves expected that the agency would be a powerful agent for their own good.³¹

The principal reason for freedpeoples' optimism centered on what they had heard about the planned disposition of abandoned lands--that third component of the Bureau's name. Few freedpeople mistook Bureau staff as crusaders for equal rights. But it was their understanding, in the summer of

³¹Dennett, The South As It Is, p. 52; McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 3, 84-5; Eric Foner, Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War (Oxford, 1980), pp. 101-02.

1865, that by the beginning of 1866 the Bureau would distribute small tracts--the famous forty acres--to each male freedman out of the government's holdings of confiscated and abandoned lands. Such an outcome would have left the Bureau lionized by the freedpeople of the South, for the acquisition of land represented that indispensable component in the ex-slaves' cosmography of independence, the one ingredient calculated to bring the greatest degree of autonomy and self-determination to their lives. It was a dream they shared with preindustrial peasant cultures the world over, and with many white Americans as well, who since Jefferson's day had idealized the life of the yeoman and the independence and self-sufficiency it accorded.³²

Blacks' expectations of imminent land redistribution were based on both law and practice. Several pieces of legislation, coupled with the actions of the Bureau and the military, clearly indicated that land redistribution plans were not only receiving serious consideration, but in some places had even been implemented. Many confiscated buildings throughout Virginia, as in other states, were being used as hospitals, orphanages, and asylums for the destitute. On some abandoned farmlands in the east, refugee freedmen had been established as renters from the Bureau and

³²Foner, Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War, pp. 105-11; Carter, When the War Was Over, p. 116.

had planted a crop. If events in their own state were not totally convincing, Virginia freedpeople had but to look to the Sea Islands of South Carolina to find encouragement for their own future. There, hundreds of freedpeople had been working for up to three years as independent farmers on the abandoned lands of the cotton and rice gentry. Moreover, in the early summer other South Carolina freedmen were instructed that they would be receiving their allotments presently.³³

The Congressional act that established the Bureau authorized land redistribution. It placed the Commissioner in control of all abandoned lands in the South, and instructed him to partition them into forty-acre parcels for lease to loyal refugees and freedmen at 6 percent of their appraised 1860 value for a period of three years. At the end of the lease renters became eligible for preemptive

³³For the story of this experiment in land redistribution, see Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment (Indianapolis, 1964), pp. 199-216; Rose, "Jubilee & Beyond: What Was Freedom?" in What Was Freedom's Price, ed. by David G. Sansing (Jackson, Miss., 1978), pp. 11-14; McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 101-03; Edward Magdol, A Right to the Land: Essays on the Freedmen's Community (Westport, Conn., 1977), pp. 139-73; Claude F. Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule: The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Land Ownership (Baton Rouge, 1978); and Martin Abbott, "Free Land, Free Labor, and the Freedmen's Bureau," Agricultural History 30 (October 1956), 150-56. Some redistributions also had occurred in Mississippi. See Janet Sharp Hermann, Pursuit of a Dream (New York, 1981), and Hermann, "Reconstruction in Microcosm [Davis Bend, Mississippi]: Three Men [Benjamin Montgomery, Samuel Thomas, and Joseph Davis] and a Gin," Journal of Negro History 65-66 (Fall 1982), 312-35.

option to buy the land at its 1860 value. Because the rents formed an important part of Bureau income, Howard had more than a moral stake--though he had something of that too--in seeing that the land policy was carried out.³⁴ On 22 May he issued Circular 3, pertaining specifically to Virginia, and strongly reminded agents that lands were not to be restored to returning Confederates under any circumstances, nor were freedmen to be cheated out of the proceeds of the crops they had planted on those lands.³⁵ Two months later, on 28 July, Howard's Circular 13 directed his Assistant Commissioners to bring the land allotment policy across the South into operation.³⁶ Although these orders were never implemented, their significance lies in the fact that between 28 July, when Howard issued the Circular, and

³⁴McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 23, 96.

³⁵General Oliver O. Howard, Circular 3, 22 May 1865, BRFAL, microfilm 552, University of Virginia. See LaWanda Cox, "The Promise of Land for the Freedmen," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 45 (December 1958), 413-40, for a detailed analysis of the events and ideas which preceded the decision to grant land to the freedpeople. The most immediate precedent for the action of Congress had occurred earlier that year with General Sherman's famous Field Order 15, issued on 16 January. Field Order 15 was Sherman's answer to the problem posed by the huge train of refugees who attached themselves to his command as he made his way across South Carolina. Field Order 15 set aside a tract below Charleston in the Sea Island area as a repatriation zone for these freedmen. See also William McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 85-106.

³⁶General Oliver O. Howard, Circular 13, 28 July 1865, BRFAL, microfilm 552, University of Virginia; McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 102-06.

12 September, when Andrew Johnson cancelled it, not only freedpeople, but ex-masters and army officers too believed that the government's intended policy toward abandoned lands was one of eventual redistribution to as many ex-slaves as there was land to go around.³⁷ A Nelson county planter was but one of several who noted that "it is manifest that [the freedpeople] expect to be provided with homes & land by the Yankees at the close of the year."³⁸ Reid, too, found this expectation universal around Lynchburg in the summer of 1865.³⁹

In Virginia, the hopes of freedmen for land ran particularly high because the Bureau held a substantial amount of confiscated and abandoned land in the Tidewater and northern piedmont regions, where the Union army had sustained a long-term wartime presence.⁴⁰ Of the 800,000 acres over which the Bureau exercised control in the South in 1865, Virginia holdings, most of them in the Tidewater, initially totalled 85,647 acres and grew to 96,752 acres by

³⁷Since the Bureau controlled about 800,000 acres of abandoned lands, that would have amounted to about 20,000 freedpeople. McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 103-06; Carter, When the War Was Over, pp. 103-04.

³⁸William T. Gordon diary, 7 August 1865.

³⁹Reid, After the War, pp. 335-36.

⁴⁰Alderson, "Military Rule," pp. 46-7, 50. Confiscated lands were concentrated in Elizabeth City, Prince William, Loudoun, and Fairfax counties, and in the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth.

November.⁴¹ Under the terms of the act of 3 March and Circular 13, some freedpeople had already been established on some 203 separate tracts, most of them dating back to Union occupations, and the monies they paid for rent provided an important component of the agency's income.⁴²

But by the fall of 1865 these hopeful developments had been completely undermined by the dawning realization on the part of Conservative Republicans that property seizures and redistributions in the South held implications for the North. As one savvy Virginia planter correctly noted, "the fact is . . . the Northern people are apprehensive that if confiscation begins at the South it will spread ultimately over the whole North."⁴³ Buttressing this retreat from confiscation was the fact that, by the fall, Andrew Johnson's plan of reconstruction, composed partly of animosity toward the freedpeople and partly of embittered intentions to humble--though not destroy--the wealthiest members of the planter class he so despised, had begun to

⁴¹General Orlando Brown to General Oliver O. Howard, 30 November 1865, letters received, V 119, Brown's Summary Report, BRFAL, microfilm 553, University of Virginia; Alderson, "Military Rule," pp. 46-7; McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, 99-102.

⁴²McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, p. 96; Bentley, History of the Freedman's Bureau, p. 97.

⁴³Robert T. Hubard to Edward W. Hubard, 14 August 1867, Robert Thruston Hubard papers; John G. Sproat, "Blueprint for Radical Reconstruction," Journal of Southern History 23 (February 1957), 41-3.

take effect.⁴⁴ He began by issuing the Amnesty Proclamation of 29 May. With some exceptions, this proclamation restored most rebel property, except slaves, to those who would take an oath of allegiance to the federal government. The proclamation exempted fourteen classes of people from taking the oath without special application to the president himself. These exempted, most importantly, persons owning over \$20,000 in taxable property. Johnson then kept a large cadre of clerks busy while he accepted petitions on a pro forma basis. Throughout the summer and fall, he restored ex-Confederate officers' property with impunity, apparently with the goal of impressing them with his power over their present fortunes.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Johnson hailed from the southern poor white class of Tennessee; he grew up poor and illiterate, his wife later taught him to read, and he taught himself the law. His friendlessness toward the freedpeople is said to have resulted primarily from his intense hatred of their masters. Johnson's real loyalties lay with the yeomen, and despite his actions as governor of Tennessee, when he advocated black rights as a wartime measure for political ends, as president he brooked no compromise on the issue of white supremacy. "Damn the Negroes," he had said of the Emancipation Proclamation. "I am fighting these traitorous aristocrats, their masters!" Quoted in Carter, When the War Was Over, p. 29; see also pp. 24-5, 28; McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 92-3; Lawanda Cox and John H. Cox, Politics, Principle, and Prejudice, 1865-66: Dilemma of Reconstruction America (London, 1963), pp. 151-55; Lawanda Cox and John Cox, "Johnson and the Negro," in Kenneth M. Stampp and Leon F. Litwack, eds., Reconstruction: An Anthology of Revisionist Writings (Baton Rouge, 1969), pp. 59-82.

⁴⁵The Amnesty Proclamation also set the precedent for establishing provisional governments by appointing William W. Holden governor of North Carolina and explaining his

Continuing this mild and basically friendly policy toward ex-Confederates, Johnson produced another conservative-minded measure on 12 September in Circular 15, neutralizing Howard's Circular 13 and permitting only condemned lands already sold under court order to remain exempt from restoration.⁴⁶ Most confiscated land in Virginia had not been condemned by the time of Circular 15's appearance. This meant that most freedmen located on these lands had not lived there the three years necessary to enable them to take advantage of preemption. Through his plan for provisional government, Johnson allowed considerable room for the southern states to "self-reconstruct" with minimal interference from the federal government; this lenient approach was the emblem of "Presidential Reconstruction" in the South.⁴⁷

jurisdiction, and it outlined qualifications for officeholding and suffrage by permitting the legislature established under the provisional guidelines to prescribe them. McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, pp. 48-51, 85-92; John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War (Chicago, 1961), p. 33, 39-40. For the text of the Amnesty Proclamation, see Harold M. Hyman, ed., The

⁴⁶Circular 15, General Oliver O. Howard, 12 September 1865; General Orlando Brown, General Order 19, 16 September 1865, BRFAL, outlined the restoration procedure for agents. On Johnson's land policy, see McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 92-7. Condemned lands were those abandoned or confiscated lands whose title had already been contested in court and awarded to a different owner. Very few of these cases had been heard by September.

⁴⁷Bentley, History of the Freedman's Bureau, pp. 49, 93-7; McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 133-34.

By the time in the fall that this confusing chain of events had vitiated Howard's initial policy, the Bureau found that it had its hands full convincing freedpeople that land redistribution was no longer a part of the future. In an attempt to put the "rumor" to rest once and for all, Howard issued a strongly-worded circular that left the impression that he had never been supportive of land redistributions in the first place. "It is constantly reported," he wrote, "that the Freedmen have been deceived as to the intentions of the Government. It is said that Lands will be taken from the present holders, and be divided among them next Christmas or New Years. This impression, wherever it exists, is wrong." Howard directed his agents to "take every possible means, to remove so . . . injurious an impression," and to instruct the freedpeople "that it is for their best interests, to look to the property holders for employment." Notices to that effect, complete with instructions on how to go about reclaiming property, soon appeared in post offices across the Old Dominion. Thus were the hopes of freedpeople for a more independent life through landownership brought to an end a few short months after emancipation.⁴⁸

Radical Republicans and Reconstruction, 1861-1870
(Indianapolis, 1967), pp. 246-56.

⁴⁸General Oliver O. Howard, Circular letter, 11 November 1865, W3, written from Jackson, Mississippi, BRFAL; General Orlando Brown, General Order 19, 16 September 1865, BRFAL.

IV

After the fate of Congressionally-mandated land distribution had been resolved, the Bureau acted as overseer of free labor. Bureau officers approached the economic component of their work primarily through the enactment and enforcement of labor contracts, and by steady tutelage of the freedpeople in free labor ideology and practice. During most of 1865 these obligations, though plainly in evidence, had been shrouded by the issues surrounding land policies and the uncertain direction in which reconstruction would proceed. They now emerged as the principal feature of Bureau policy.

The establishment of free labor under the contract system was not a straightforward matter of approving and enforcing written agreements between planters and ex-slaves--enforcing contracts itself was far from simple. Working for the Bureau was a business that brought numerous auxiliary responsibilities. When under the supervision of idealistic and thoughtful individuals, the agency could sometimes function as a protector of the freedmen's ideals and interests--though admittedly as workers rather than landholders.⁴⁹ Aside from adjusting labor disputes, the Bureau adjudicated small claims and black criminal cases,

⁴⁹Occasionally some freedmen were able to strike a middle path between wage labor and independent landholding and rent a farm in 1865. Frederick and Spencer Rivers were among the

and it curtailed litigious and violent tendencies among whites in special Freedmen's Courts, which were established until civil courts admitted black testimony.⁵⁰ But when national policies antithetical to the freedpeople's ideas of freedom were combined with the local administration of inefficient, insensitive, or powerless personnel, the Bureau's performance as an administrator of social justice and welfare left much to be desired. At its best, the Bureau could ensure the integrity of black testimony in both Freedmen's and civil courts, protect ex-slaves from violence and fraudulent employers, help reestablish families, sanction marriages, foster education, and provide some relief to the destitute. At its worst, it forced freedmen to remain in ruinous contact with dishonest planters--although sometimes it was helpless to prevent such outcomes--and at times agents actually fractured family ties to an extent that rivaled the effects of the internal slave trade. This unsavory outcome it accomplished through the

few who managed to enter such an agreement. In August they leased "Kentuck," with house and garden, from John D. Malone in Brunswick county, for which they paid \$20 and one-fourth of the crop. Henry Daniels papers, Freedmen's Bureau volume for Brunswick county, contracts for 1865.

⁵⁰These courts were adjudicated by three members, one of whom was the assistant superintendent, plus one member chosen by the white community and another who represented the black community. General Orlando Brown, Circular Letter, 27 September 1865, BRFAL. Freedmen's courts were abolished 10 May 1866 through Circular 20, after black testimony was legalized in Virginia as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1866.

indenture of freedchildren, oftentimes involving children whose extended family members or even their parents anxiously sought their custody, but whose claims the Bureau rejected as illegitimate. This apprenticeship policy was one of the most hated aspects of the agency's authority.

But the struggle to define the nature of free labor outpaced all others, and the focus of Bureau activities always remained on labor relations. Assistant Commissioner Brown duly emphasized the centrality of this issue in his first circular letter. In order "to protect the negroes in their rights as freemen," he explained, agents were to supervise the contract process closely, and prevent unjust and oppressive punishments reminiscent of slavery, such as whippings. They were instead to promote more refined manipulations of labor through the cash--or often the crop--nexus. Officers were to explain to all citizens "the relations that exist between capital and their labour, and how each is dependent upon the other." The Bureau regularly published in the newspapers its general orders and circulars pertaining to labor.⁵¹

Thus, freedom was defined by the Bureau, the military, and northern lawmakers as the necessity for blacks to sell their labor to the planters. But agents soon discovered

⁵¹General Orlando Brown, Circular Letter, 15 June 65, "Plan of Organization," vol. 1, BRFAL. The Lynchburg Daily Virginian, for example, ran these directives regularly during 1865.

that they worked with people who defined freedom differently--and, in their view, incorrectly. Comments that the freedpeople, shackled by an ignorance bred of enslavement, failed to comprehend the meaning of freedom were legion. Most troubling of all, agents often discovered freedpeople who confused freedom with a license to "leisure." Both freedpeople and ex-masters understood something of the ways in which northerners intended for them to reorder their economic lives. But the conceptions of the meaning of market relations--the heritage borne of antebellum experience brought by Virginia freedpeople--coexisted with strong preindustrial notions concerning the content of freedom, property, and ownership that struck a common chord with southern freedpeople everywhere. Ex-slaves felt that their labor--past, present, and future--justified their access to land, and hence formed the basis of their independence. But the Bureau and the white elite knew that property and ownership did not necessarily flow from the expenditure of human labor. These relations resulted as well from an array of other privileged circumstances that required an elaborate set of laws to preserve. This bourgeois notion of property generally seemed most difficult for agents to instill in the freedpeople.⁵²

⁵²E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial

From the beginning, military directives had addressed these preindustrial "delusions" harbored by rural freedpeople. "Their error," explained Major General Hartsuff from his post in Petersburg in April 1865, "consists mainly in the belief that with their liberty they acquire individual rights in the property of their former masters." Many felt, he continued, "that they are entitled to live with and be subsisted by [their former masters], without being obliged to labor or give any remuneration for their support." Some went so far as to think that "the entire property of their former owner belongs now to themselves, and that the owner remains with them only by their sufferance." The "operations of existing laws," Hartsuff underscored, "is to make them FREE, but not to give them any claim whatever upon, or rights in connection with the PROPERTY of their former owners."⁵³

Capitalism," Past & Present 38 (December 1967), 56-97; Foner, Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War, pp. 105-11; Foner, Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy (Baton Rouge, 1983), pp. 18-21; Barbara Jeanne Fields, "The Nineteenth-Century American South: History and Theory," Plantation Society in the Americas 2 (April 1983), 19; Fields, "The Advent of Capitalist Agriculture: The New South in a Bourgeois World," in Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy, ed. by Thavolia Glymph and John J. Kushma (Arlington, Tex., 1985), pp. 73-94; for studies on the Caribbean peasantry, see Sidney W. Mintz, Caribbean Transformations (Chicago, 1974).

⁵³Major General Hartsuff, General Order #11, 24 April

When Hartsuff, Brown, and other Bureau agents tried to explain the relationship between labor and property, they did so, almost without conscious thought, out of an ideology created by emergent northern-style industrial capitalism. These agents sought to persuade freedpeople that their best interests lay in an unquestioning acceptance of a style of labor relations which would have left them without effective recourse in struggles against those who owned capital assets, that is the landowners and the industrialists. The most fundamental and important of these conditions was a dependency relationship which placed the interests of capital antecedent to those of labor. In a free labor economy, capital cannot exist apart from the process whereby it extracts surplus value from labor. Without workers forced to sell their labor beyond that amount of time that they consider necessary to their upkeep--and who thus produce surplus value--capitalism not only lacks a means of reproduction, but has no existence at all.⁵⁴

There was a special urgency to the union of capital and labor in the reconstruction South. Former masters and former slaves had to reconcile in order to revive the

1865, from Headquarters in Petersburg; copy in Letters Received, Buckingham co., microfilm 784, University of Virginia.

⁵⁴Maurice Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism, (New York, 1947, reprint ed., 1963), pp. 1-11, esp. p. 8.

economy and keep demands on government revenue at a minimum. In practical terms this meant the resurrection of plantation agriculture, a plan destined for failure without tractable black labor.⁵⁵ Therefore, idleness or vagrancy became a serious infraction of the new social order, and it brought stiff penalties wherever it was discovered. Under Brown's authority, for example, vagrants, "after being admonished," were to be turned over "to work under some military guard, without payment," until they were ready to work "for themselves."⁵⁶

⁵⁵Thavolia Glymph, "Freedpeople and Ex-Masters: Shaping a New Order in the Postbellum South, 1865-1868," in Glymph and Kushma, eds., Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy, pp. 50-61; Fields, "Capitalist Agriculture," pp. 73-94; Armstead L. Robinson, "'Worser dan Jeff Davis': The Coming of Free Labor during the Civil War, 1861-1865," in Glymph and Kushma, eds., Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy, pp. 11-44; Woodman, "Post Civil War Agriculture and the Law," 95-119; Woodman, "Sequel to Slavery: The New History Views the Postbellum South," Journal of Southern History 43 (November 1977), 523-24. On the need to keep the budget balanced, see J. Thomas May, "Continuity and Change in the Labor Program of the Union Army and the Freedmen's Bureau," Civil War History 17 (September 1971), 248; O'Brien, "Reconstruction in Richmond," 267-68.

⁵⁶General Orlando Brown, Circular letter, 15 June 1865, "Plan of Organization," Letters Received, vol. 1, BRFA. Most southern state legislatures in 1865-66 enacted Black Codes of varying degrees of severity which invariably included vagrancy statutes. Virginia's Black Code was not passed until January 1866, and when it was, Major General Alfred H. Terry, military governor of the state, soon declared the Vagrancy Act contained therein illegal. Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia (Richmond, 1866), pp. 90-3; Edward McPherson, ed., The Political History of the United States of America during the Period of Reconstruction, (From April 15, 1865, to July 15, 1870,) ... (New York, 1875, reprint ed., 1969), pp. 41-2.

If Bureau officials were uncertain about many of the other aspects of their authority, they were rarely at a loss for words when it came to the freedmen's obligations under the rubric of free labor. Significantly, Brown emphasized this point again in November, once the controversy over land had been resolved in favor of the planters. "While the Freedmen must and will be protected in their rights, they must be required to meet these first and most essential conditions of a state of freedom, a visible means of support, and fidelity to contracts. . . . The good of all classes," he went on, "require that the lands should be refenced and cultivated; but it is impossible for the farmer to pursue this work successfully" without the presence of laborers upon whom he could rely "to remain with him to the end of their engagements."⁵⁷ As Hartsuff had gone on to emphasize, freedmen had to be made to realize that "they must WORK for their support now, the same as before they were free; in some instances, perhaps, even harder,--The difference," he explained, "now being that that they have the entire wages of their labor to themselves."⁵⁸

⁵⁷General Orlando Brown, Circular letter, 4 November 1865, BRFAL; see David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872 (Urbana, 1981), and Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, and Free Men, pp. 11-39, on free labor ideology.

⁵⁸Major General Hartsuff, General Order #11, 24 April 1865, from Headquarters in Petersburg; copy in Letters Received, Buckingham co., microfilm 784, University of

Ex-slaves rarely set their ideas about free labor and property to paper. But their behavior did leave behind considerable evidence of how they felt about labor issues. Thus we know that an elderly freedwoman named Grace was "guilty" of the kind of misconception about which Bureau officers so often complained. When she left the wealthy Hairston plantation in Beaver Creek in April with her granddaughter, Grace's attitude provoked her former mistress to comment haughtily, "I reckon she thinks that she made us rich."⁵⁹ Similarly, it is clear that the freedpeople working for C. E. Miller in Riceville in Pittsylvania county believed that their labor invested them with rights that Bureau officials did not recognize. There, a determined group of freedmen "took up an arronious Idea that the land and every thing upon it belonged to them." They made short work of Miller's attempt to hire an overseer, and chased off a neighbor "authorized by him to geather frouit [fruit], saying Mr Miller had no right to sell or dispose of it in any way." Women and children stayed at home, the entire community came and went at will, "& now," wrote the justice

seedbeds to the prepared hills in the field. Regular tasks

Virginia. This directive was a regular feature of the Lynchburg Daily Virginian in the summer of 1865.

⁵⁹Bettie Hairston to her sister in Mississippi, December 1865, Hairston-Wilson papers. For more information on the Hairstons, see Elizabeth Seawell Hairston, The Hairstons and Penns and their Relations (Roanoke, 1940), and Peter W. Hairston, "J. E. B. Stuart's Letters to his Hairston Kin, 1850-1855," North Carolina Historical Review 51 (July 1974), 261-333.

of the peace who related the situation to the Bureau agent, "they have forces him to sell out & rent the Land in Self defence."⁶⁰

Ex-slaves also left evidence that showed they knew how to employ bargaining skills on the postwar plantation. One of the most widespread early demands in agriculture focused on the length of labor contracts. Complaints that freedmen refused to hire for an entire year were common, and their reluctance caused the planters great consternation. Given the long and tedious process of tobacco production, planters who were depending on a tobacco renaissance to restore their fortunes and power wanted to settle the issue of labor conclusively in late December. They felt this would assure that the crop would be cared for throughout the year. Labor-intensive tobacco required close attention nearly all year round, and during the months of May, June, and July the marketing of the crop overlapped with the beginnings of the next year's planting. Production began with the arduous process of preparing and clearing the land. In May or June came the transplantation of tiny seedlings from their seedbeds to the prepared hills in the field. Regular tasks of worming, suckering, topping and weeding throughout the

⁶⁰A. W. Thompson, Military J.P. of the 2nd District, to Capt. Wilcox, 24 January 1866, Record Group 105, 3948, Letters Received, box 14. Similar occurrences took place across the South. See, for example, Carter, When the War Was Over, p. 209.

summer followed. In late fall, as close to the killing frost as possible, came harvest, and then the process of curing, prizing, and grading the leaf began.⁶¹

Many freedmen, especially single young men without families, found annual contracts, which were so desirable to the planters, to be extremely restrictive and productive of mischief as well. If it happened that they contracted with a fraudulent planter--not an uncommon occurrence--they wanted to be able to leave his employment as soon as possible. Those were Martin Carter's motives when he agreed to work for Thomas McDerman in the summer of 1865. "I only hired myself by the month," he wrote the Danville agent who had ordered him back to the plantation after McDerman brought complaint against him. "I was to stay one month and at the end . . . if I was dissatisfied I could leave." McDerman's partner persuaded Carter to remain a while longer until other arrangements had been made, "and I staid the second month what he never paid me for. I know if you knew the circumstances of the case you would not compel me to come back to mr McD."⁶² Sometimes, reported one assistant

⁶¹See Joseph Clarke Robert, The Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860 (Durham, 1938), pp. 32-50, and Nannie May Tilley, The Bright-Tobacco Industry, 1860-1929 (Chapel Hill, 1948), pp. 37-93, for detailed descriptions of the requirements of tobacco agriculture.

⁶²Martin Carter to Capt. Wilcox, 2 August 1865, RG 105, 3948, box 14, Letters Received, Danville, BRFAL.

superintendent, freedpeople believed that "they would not get 'holidays'" if they contracted before the first of January or for long periods of time.⁶³ It was also charged that the attitude resulted from the rumors of land redistribution abroad earlier that year, expectations that whites felt retarded agricultural recovery because it encouraged freedmen to contract only for short periods, if at all.⁶⁴

Another common dispute focused on the kind of work to be expected of laborers who had contracted with planters for a share of the crop. "We beg leave to report," wrote three confused farmers in Buckingham county, "that our hands refuse to seed our crops of wheat and do any work that is not immediately connected with the crop for the present year. And we wish to have your advice as to the steps proper to be taken in the premises."⁶⁵ Over at Pittsylvania Court House, workers at John L. Hurt's plantation refused to build a chimney to a house which he had rented to another man in the summer of 1865. The renter subsequently built the chimney himself, sent the bill to

⁶³Capt. W. F. White to Capt. Stuart Barnes, 30 December 1865, letters and orders received, RG 105, 3881, box 10, BRFAL.

⁶⁴Reid, After the War, pp. 335-36; Carter, When the War Was Over, p. 209.

⁶⁵John C. Gilliam, Sandy Holman, and Moses A. Spencer, to the Provost Marshall, 16 October 1865, Letters Received, Buckingham co., BRFAL, microfilm 784, University of Virginia.

Hurt, and Hurt asked the Bureau for aid in holding the freedmen on his plantation responsible for the chimney's costs.⁶⁶ A similar dispute ended tragically for Washington Greene of Louisa county. Greene had remained on the plantation of his former master, James Quisenberry. That summer, Quisenberry instructed Greene to cut some shingles for a neighbor, a Mrs. Pleasants. Quisenberry agreed with Pleasants to have his wheat threshed in return for the shingles. Greene approached Quisenberry several times about payment for his labor at Pleasants' property, requests that annoyed Quisenberry greatly and eventually pushed him over the edge. Greene tried to settle again on 27 October. Quisenberry angrily told him to go away, that "at the end of the year, I will do what is right." But Greene persisted, and against Quisenberry's warning followed his employer down to the hog pen, where Quisenberry drew a knife and killed Greene with a blow to the neck.⁶⁷

During 1865, then, Bureau officers in Virginia discovered just how difficult a job the establishment of free labor would be. After the possibility of land

⁶⁶John L. Hurt to Capt. Wilcox, 21 January 1866, RG 105, 3948, box 14, Letters Received, Danville, BRFAL.

⁶⁷The case went to civil court in April 1866, where Quisenberry was acquitted. "If this verdict is allowed to stand," concluded Lt. James Ashworth, "I will feel ashamed of the office I occupy and of looking a Freedman in the face." Lt. James Ashworth to Capt. Crandon, 21 April 1866, Letters Received, C 341, BRFAL. Notice of the case was sent on to Howard. Letters Received, 21 April 1866, V279,

redistribution had passed, the Bureau promoted contract labor on the plantations. But ex-slaves fought against that goal because they held different visions of what the rights of free labor entailed, and what the basis of property actually meant. After the government's betrayal over land redistribution, many ex-slaves showed that they had no intentions of permitting the Bureau or the planters to further undermine their status without a fight. These were important early battles that illustrated the coexistence of a preindustrial peasant consciousness with a relatively sophisticated awareness of market relations.

V

Reuniting employers and laborers preoccupied Bureau officials and their allies. The freedpeople, however, had different priorities. One of their most important goals was the reconstitution of their families. It was already difficult just to locate family members as a result of the workings of the slave trade. Not only were family members scattered across Virginia, but many could be found living in the cotton South as well. Then too, the Bureau often created another obstacle to efforts at family reunion--the

microfilm 553, University of Virginia; see also Ashworth's Monthly Report, Lt. James Ashworth to General Orlando Brown, 30 April 1866, Louisa co., BRFAL.

indenture of freedchildren to white planters. Efforts to exploit this relic of slavery were nearly as widespread among former tobacco-belt masters in 1865 as was the determination of freedpeople to resist them.

Although occasionally the Bureau would rescue indentured children from the grip of former masters, generally the Bureau's role in apprenticeship was an unhelpful one. In early 1866 the Virginia statute on apprenticeship was amended to make the law color-blind; that is, black indenture was permitted under the same conditions that governed white children. This meant that apprentices had to be fed, clothed, and taught to read, write, and understand arithmetic. During 1865, Bureau officials merely instructed local agents to approach cases individually. Officers routinely approved indentures whenever children in question had no parent to claim them. Only rarely did agents search for parents; they never looked for extended family members, and they did not relinquish freedchildren, in most cases, even to their grandparents. Indenture bound female children until the age of eighteen, and males to the age of twenty-one. These contracts were often difficult to break; although the Bureau sometimes annulled them, most parents were told to take their cases to state court, a remedy that was too expensive for most.⁶⁸

⁶⁸Acts of the General Assembly, 1865-1866 (Richmond, 1866), p. 86; see, for example, Capt. Stuart Barnes to Lt.

These guidelines invited abuse, and Thomas T. Tredway, a wealthy citizen of Farmville and a former Virginia representative, was but one of many who sought to exploit the vagueness in the law. In December, as he made ready to appropriate the labor of between four and eight children born to his former slaves, all single mothers who had remained on his plantation, Tredway thought it proper to inquire into Bureau policy. Promising to teach his black charges to read and write, though doubting that they could ever learn arithmetic through "the Single rule of three," Tredway announced that five or six years of the childrens' labor would justify his welfare. Tredway felt that this type of freed family--single mothers with many children--would best benefit from the rules applying to apprenticeship.⁶⁹

Most planters, though, did not seek advice, but

William F. White, 31 December 1865, in response to Lt. W. F. White to Capt. Stuart Barnes, 30 December 1865, Amelia co., RG 105, 3881, box 7, Letters and Orders Received. Barnes simply noted that "no general rules can be laid down to cover all cases. . . . send all your indentures to this office for approval." Mississippi set the precedent for apprenticeship law in the fall of 1865. See Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground, pp. 153-58, for the history of apprenticeship in Maryland; Glymph, "Freedpeople and Ex-Masters," p. 54; Wilhelmina Kloosterboer, Involuntary Labour Since the Abolition of Slavery: A Survey of Compulsory Labour Throughout the World (Leiden, The Netherlands, 1960), p. 58; Daniel A. Novak, The Wheel of Servitude: Black Forced Labor After Slavery (Lexington,

⁶⁹Thomas T. Tredway to General Orlando Brown, 21 December 1865, RG 105, 3972, box 16, unregistered Letters Received, Farmville.

proceeded to bind as many children as possible before freed parents from distant locations could arrive to claim them. Isaac R. Barksdale of Scottsville, for example, followed such a course and then refused to hand over thirteen-year old Morris and his younger sister Sallie when their father, Minus Paris, called for them in late 1865. Paris's wife Rebecca formerly had belonged to Barksdale's brother Claiborne of Charlotte county, to whom she and the children were sold in late 1859; Rebecca died soon after. When Paris appeared for his children in the winter of 1865, Barksdale justified his refusal on the grounds that Paris was less able than he to provide materially for Morris and Sallie.⁷⁰ Samuel Grinn travelled from Yanceyville, Georgia, in the fall of 1865 to bring away his only child, twelve-year old Litha Ann, from the plantation of George Jones of Pittsylvania county, his former master. Not expecting Grinn, and hoping to buy time, Jones argued that as Litha Ann was his wife's only servant, and since he had not yet found the child's winter clothing, Litha Ann's

1978), pp. 3-5, 15-16, 22; apprenticeship is a neglected topic in William Cohen, "Negro Involuntary Servitude in the South, 1865-1940: A Preliminary Analysis," Journal of Southern History 42 (February 1976), 31-50.

⁷⁰Paris sought the intervention of the Bureau which, through Lt. Louis Ahrens, attempted to secure their release. Minus Paris to Lt. Louis Ahrens, 10 February 1866, RG 105, 3979, box 11, Letters Received; Lt. Tidball to Isaac R. Barksdale, 22 June 1866, Albemarle co., RG 105, Letters Sent, vol. 128, pp. 95-6, BRFAL.

father should allow her to remain until Christmas. At that time, Jones promised to deliver her suitably outfitted. Grinn consented, and Jones immediately went to the Bureau office in Danville and had Litha Ann bound to him without her father's knowledge.⁷¹ When Nelson Tinsley of Amherst Court House learned that his children, sold away from him, had been bound out in Georgia, he asked the Bureau to issue transportation orders to return them to him. But officials responded that the children were "comfortably situated," and transportation was denied. Tinsley was outraged, but he sought Bureau assistance no more. "He says he has purchased 70 acres of land, wants his children with him & expects soon to be able to transport them himself," wrote the Amherst agent.⁷² Clary Turner summed up the feelings of most of the freedpeople when, after her protests against the indenture of her thirteen-year old Jane to her former master William Turner fell on his deaf ears, she wrote to "His Honor, Supt F Bureau" to request help. "I am told that I am free," she wrote indignantly, "if so, I think I ought to have my children."⁷³

⁷¹Jas. M. Neal (Grinn's employer in Georgia), to Capt. Wilcox, 31 January 1866, RG 105, 3948, box 14, Letters

⁷²Howard to ?, and Stevenson to Lacey, n.d., endorsement 22 December 1865, RG 105, 4084, box 35, registered Letters Received.

⁷³Clary Turner to "His Honor, Supt F Bureau," Richmond, 20 May 1866, Letters Received, T 54, from Henry county, BRFal.

Family reconstitution was an important objective behind the widespread early migrations away from the plantations, not only in the immediate aftermath of war but well beyond. Movement was a response to freedom exhibited by ex-slaves all across the South, and black Virginians were as taken with physical freedom as any other group of southern freedpeople.⁷⁴ As Booker T. Washington noted, "most of the ex-slaves left the plantation for a few days at least, so as to get the 'hang' of the new life, and to be sure that they were free." But as he went on to illustrate, family reunion was often closely tied to the desire to travel. Washington's stepfather, Washington Ferguson, who had left Lynchburg with the Union army in 1864 for West Virginia, sent a wagon to Franklin county to bring his family to Malden soon after surrender. Young Washington, his brother John, sister Amanda, and mother Jane arrived ten days later, and the boys soon went to work with Ferguson in the salt furnaces.⁷⁵ Planters and the Bureau took a dim view of what they considered high-spirited purposeless wandering, and they censured it primarily because it disrupted labor supply and retarded economic recovery. "The unsettled

Received, Danville, from Yanceyville, Caswell county, Georgia, BRFal.

⁷⁴Carter, When the War Was Over, pp. 157-60.

⁷⁵Booker T. Washington, The Story of My Life and Work, in The Booker T. Washington Papers, eds. Louis R. Harlan and

condition of these people will be likely to give you trouble," Brown had warned his agents. Travel was permitted for the purpose of reuniting families, but otherwise agents should "discourage their wandering propensities, except so far as changes may be necessary for labor to find its best market."⁷⁶

Some ex-masters hoped that their antebellum reputation for "kindness" to their former slaves would keep their former slaves on the plantation; in some cases they were correct. Levi Pollard felt that his former master, Charles Bruce, had treated Pollard and his family well. "Mars Charles was gooden he cum en tell all de niggers dey wuz free jus' es soon es he find out hisself." Some of the other freedpeople left the Bruce plantation, but the Pollards decided to stay on "where us wuz born en bread, en us live in de same fine house en do de same kinda work, but us git real money fer hit, a hundred dollars a year. Den, us wuz us own boss, en could [come] en go like us any white, jus' so's us put in time dat us wuz paid fa. En on top er dat, us could have crops, en a garden 'round de house, sho's you bawn."⁷⁷ But not all planters were as fortunate as

John W. Blassingame (Urbana, 1972), I, 13-14; Louis R. Harlan, "Booker T. Washington's West Virginia Boyhood," West

⁷⁶General Orlando Brown, Circular letter, 15 June 1865, "Plan of Organization," Letters Received, vol. 1, BRFAL; Dew, "Disciplining Slave Ironworkers in the Antebellum South," p. 79.

⁷⁷Pollard described the slave house in which the family

Bruce. As a traveller in Amelia county reported of a man with a "kind" reputation, but six of the more than one hundred former slaves on his plantation chose to stay on his lands. When he asked others why they left, some simply said, "'we 'bleege to go, massa,'" and "so they went, and I have been working my crop with Negroes that I have hired, and I suppose somebody else has hired mine."⁷⁸

Freedpeople also hoped to improve their personal and economic lives by leaving the country for town or city. Urban centers like Richmond, Petersburg, Lynchburg, Danville, Farmville, and Charlottesville became magnets for those in search of greater personal autonomy from whites and, perhaps, employment in the tobacco factories or in some

Virginia History 32 (January 1971), 63-85.

remained as "a two story high house. . . . Upstairs yo could stand up in de middle en on de sides yo can't . . . part er de chillun stay up dare. . . . Dey was two rooms downstairs, one de kitchen, en mammay en pappy en de other chillun sleep in dat other room, en in de kitchen too. Dey was fourteen chilluns in all. . . . Us house was a mighty fine house. En us had us three rooms, en only us lived dare." Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, pp. 226-29.

⁷⁸Dennett, The South As It Is, p. 14; for similar occurrences in other parts of the South, see Leon F. Litwack, Been In the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery (New York, 1979), pp. 230-31, 297-98, 299-300, 305-14; Peter Kolchin, First Freedom: The Response of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction (Westport, Conn., 1977), pp. 3-23; Lawrence Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Thought from Slavery to Freedom (New York, 1977), pp. 261-66; Michael Wayne, The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District, 1860-1880 (Baton Rouge, 1983), pp. 45-6; Rose, "Jubilee & Beyond," pp. 8-9, 18-19; Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground, pp. 33-5.

other skilled or industrial position. A black Lunenburg resident, Charles Crawley, arrived in Petersburg two weeks after surrender with his mother and aunt; once there, the two women purchased a home from a black woman in the city.⁷⁹ Katie Johnson's mother likewise left from Lunenburg for Petersburg soon after surrender, and once Johnson "got up some size," she too moved, going to Plainfield, New Jersey, where she worked as a domestic for "some English people" for the next twenty years.⁸⁰ William Johnson, Jr., a former hired slave from Albemarle who later escaped his master during the war and fought on the side of the North, spent out the balance of 1865 in Washington, D.C. But at Christmas, he felt a tug to return to the plantation for holiday--he was received warmly by his former master and together they rollicked over the details of Johnson's escape--and then he moved on to Richmond in January, where he previously had been hired as a butler. This time he found employment as a hod carrier in a local brickyard, a job which he kept for another decade while he acquired skill as a master bricklayer.⁸¹

While some freedpeople dislocated by the war, like

⁷⁹Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, p. 78.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 162.

⁸¹Eventually Johnson opened his own business in 1907 and became a leading brick contractor until 1932, when illness forced his retirement. Ibid., pp. 169-70.

Johnson, returned to Virginia, and others relocated within the state, like Crawley and his family, others chose to leave Virginia altogether. Sam Osborne of Danville, for example, went to Waterville, Massachusetts, and once settled there, he sent for his wife Mary and their child.⁸²

Emigrations such as Osborne's were actually encouraged by the Bureau, because they removed freedpeople from an environment that Brown was persuaded suffered from a labor surplus. He believed that the departure of 50,000 freedpeople would bring supply and demand into harmony and relieve the Bureau of destitute dependents and complicated labor arrangements.⁸³

During 1865, there was much other evidence that freedpeople took the initiative to reorder their lives upon a more independent and self-sufficient footing. Most freedmen's schools did not begin to appear in the upcountry until late in the year; when they did, ex-slaves flocked to them with the great enthusiasm that was common among other southern freedpeople. They were especially anxious for

⁸²Brown to Lacey, 28 July 1865, Letters Sent, vol. 1, p. 75, BRFAL.

⁸³Brown hoped to employ the Southern Homestead Act of February 1866 to resettle many of these freedpeople on lands in Florida. But few freedpeople, lacking the tools and capital that such a move would require, ever relocated on southern homestead lands. See, for example, General Orlando Brown to General Oliver O. Howard, December 1865, Letters Received, microfilm 553, V131, BRFAL; Bentley, History of the Freedmen's Bureau, p. 97.

their children to acquire learning, and when the Bureau or northern philanthropists were unable to establish a school in their neighborhood, they often established one themselves. Churches, too, became an important focus in their lives, as the old "invisible institution" of slave days came out of hiding and provided freedpeople with a community network that helped them restructure their lives.⁸⁴

VI

The intensity of the labor struggle between planters and freedpeople, and the readiness with which freedpeople assumed responsibility for their own lives, left planters feeling uneasy about their altered relationship with former slaves. Their bargaining behavior reflected those apprehensions. Two months before Christmas 1865 approached, when contracts for 1866 would be signed, Robert T. Hubbard shared his misgivings and problems as employer of freedmen with his brother Edward. On 7 November, a late date by his calculation, he had made no arrangements for labor for the upcoming year, "because I thought they would infer that I was very anxious to get hands and would therefore ask high compensation for their labor." He planned to contain his

⁸⁴These developments are discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

anxiety a few weeks more, see if he could uncover the plans of his former slaves--particularly those of his best hand, Abel--and contract from a position of greater strength. He asked his brother to "learn what the farmers generally are doing--whether they are now making contracts or not, and upon what terms." Hubbard understood that most freedmen preferred to hire by the month rather than year, since "they will need some money from time to time to buy clothing, and that if they have an interest in the crop of 1866, they cannot get any money until the year is half over." He conceded that there was "some little weight in this view," and suggested that "those farmers who object to hiring by the month & wish to give only an interest in the crop, might agree with their hands to advance every 3 or 4 months, a small sum in money to each hand." This annual employment would work well enough for those hands considered reliable, but if "unstable & restless," as he felt many were, Hubbard too preferred monthly agreements that he might dismiss workers quickly if he chose.⁸⁵

Emboldened by the unexpectedly generous atmosphere produced by Johnson's lenient policies--by late 1865, support for his government among the defeated was running at high tide--planters began to seek political solutions to the

⁸⁵Robert T. Hubbard to Edward W. Hubbard, 7 November 1865, Edward W. Hubbard papers; for similar accounts see Carter, When the War Was Over, pp. 210-11.

problems they were experiencing with free black labor. They had begun this process soon after surrender through self-effacing moves calculated to persuade their victors of their readiness for peace and reconciliation. Most early reports of the vanquished planter class commented on this widespread resolve, and while in this they differed little from war-weary planters all across the South, the apparent intensity of Virginian conversions struck many as singular among southerners of their class.⁸⁶ Virginia planters appeared resigned to the reality of defeat, said most. They soberly accepted the changes that had taken place in a country which, in their absence, had passed most of the long-sought economic measures promoting industrialism and nationalism that antebellum southern Democrats consistently had blocked. Now, Virginia planters held silent as northern capitalists benefited from a high protective tariff, a federally-subsidized transcontinental railroad, a national banking system, excise taxes, homestead legislation, and even--to add insult to injury--taxes on tobacco.⁸⁷

⁸⁶Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 35-7; McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, pp. 8-9; Paul M. Gaston, The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking (New York, 1970), is a masterful study that shows how southern white business leaders made the adjustment to the new economic order more palatable by developing a rationale for reunion along lines that formerly would have been condemned as heretical.

⁸⁷On these nationalistic measures, see C. Vann Woodward, "The Political Legacy of the First Reconstruction," in Reconstruction: An Anthology of Revisionist Writings, ed.

Bourgeois
Anti-Union
at 175!
Went!

Nevertheless, planters knew they had no choice but to seek integration into the system. If sometimes they acted with bad grace, their truculence left them no less smitten with the prospects of stability. Most were ready "to accept, as final, whatever orders the government might issue, and to make haste to do their part in obeying them. . . . The first want of Virginians was a settlement; something fixed on which capital could rely," and it was "considered politic" to keep Confederate officials and military leaders safely out of sight and sound.⁸⁸ Many now professed relief at the end of the troublesome responsibilities they felt slaveholding had caused them. They applied for pardons in droves, reestablished ties to old northern friends, and sought the patronage of Washington's political elite. Insofar as they could they peddled political largesse to friends, and bargained or paid for more. The Lynchburg Daily Virginian reported on 22 May that taking the oath "has been the principal business of the

by Kenneth M. Stampp and Leon F. Litwack (Baton Rouge, 1969), "The Political Legacy of Reconstruction," p. 522. Cotton planters also faced higher taxes on their staple. In Virginia, the impost on manufactured tobacco went from just under eleven cents per pound in 1863, to just over twenty-two cents in 1865 and over thirty-four in 1866. A decline set in after that date, but in 1871 the tax was still over twenty-six cents, and between thirty and forty cents for chewing tobacco. Benjamin J. Arnold, Jr., History of the Tobacco Industry in Virginia from 1860 to 1894 (Baltimore, 1897), pp. 21-2; Barbara Jeanne Fields, "The Advent of Capitalist Agriculture," pp. 79-80.

⁸⁸Reid, After the War, pp. 320-21.

town for the last two or three days Saturday the office of the Provost Marshal was the scene of busy operations. A constant stream of citizens poured in all day, to renew the pledge of their allegiance to the Government of the United States. The officers and their clerks were kept under pressure all the time. It is best that the matter be gotten through with as soon as possible, in order that business and civil authority may be restored to their accustomed channels."⁸⁹

But none of this maneuvering for political and economic position meant that planters had turned their backs entirely on the past or had been divested of traditional views and behavior. As a correspondent for the Nation described one Virginia ex-master, "a wealthy slaveholder and a veritable descendant of Pocahontas," pride prevented him from accepting anything "less than complete deference" from his workers, for he believed "that the blacks were born for slavery, and. . . . In short . . . wishes still to be master, is willing to be a kind master, but will not be a just employer."⁹⁰

Certainly the freedpeople were left unpersuaded by the

⁸⁹Lynchburg Daily Virginian, 22 May 1865; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 35-7; Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930 (Charlottesville, Va., 1968), pp. 24-5; James C.

⁹⁰Quoted in Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, p. 19; from The Nation, I, 299.

attempts of their former masters to enter the good graces of the North. At the Colored State Convention held in Alexandria in early August 1865 to protest the increasing restraints placed on black freedom, Rev. William E. Walker of Petersburg, arguing for the extension of the ballot to blacks, delivered a penetrating critique of planter motives. "We know these men," he stressed, "know them well - and we assure you that, with the majority of them, loyalty is only 'lip deep.'" The planters' volte-face was but "a cover to the cherished design of getting restored to their former relations with the Federal government." Once obtained, planters would, "by all sorts of 'unfriendly legislation,'" transform freedom into something "more intolerable than the slavery they intended for us." Walker warned the government against entering into any bargains with former slaveholders; such agreements would poison the results of a hard-won fight and provide a serious setback to the cause of freedom. There could be no room for accommodation. "You have only in your omnipotence to say 'let it be done,' and it will be done," Walker observed. "It is this quibbling and compromising that have ground us to powder in the past, and plunged you into the vortex of civil war; and you have by the Living God [the power] to deliver us from a repetition of this grinding process, and

Roark, Masters without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction (New York, 1977), p. 134.

your children from the recurrence of your late calamities."⁹¹

Williams's warnings fell on deaf ears. As 1865 progressed, the Bureau, the military, and the federal government became increasingly sympathetic toward planters' analysis of their problems and needs, all to the detriment of freedpeople. Johnson's policies had been the planters' single best sign that their political disabilities eventually would be removed. But the role of the Bureau and the military was also important. Their duties had never been limited to issues of economic reorganization. The Bureau and especially the military already had developed a close relationship with the civilian government of Virginia, an acquaintance that dated back some two and a half years for the military.⁹²

⁹¹Rev. William E. Walker, "An Address to the Loyal Citizens and Congress of the United States of America," delivered at the Colored State Convention held in Alexandria Aug. 2, 3, 4, 5, 1865, delivered 5 August 1865, in Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840-1865, 2 vols., ed. by Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker (Philadelphia, 1980), II, 271-73. Blacks across the South convened in similar groups to protest their treatment during 1865. Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War, p. 56. Many of the men who attended the Richmond convention later participated in politics and held influential positions in the community. These included Nichols Richmond, a former free Negro and a Baptist preacher; blacksmith Peter A. Cross, also a former free Negro and an officer in the Baptist church. Former slave Ossian Johnson heard Walker deliver his address that August, as did Fairfax Taylor. Both of these men had purchased their freedom and

⁹²Carter, When the War Was Over, pp. 31-2, 213-14.

In 1863, Lincoln and the Congress had recognized the "restored government" of Virginia, directed by the seceded Unionist state of West Virginia. The 1861 Wheeling convention that brought the "restored government" into being at the same time chose Francis Harrison Pierpont as its governor, a lawyer employed by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the manager of a coal mine, tannery, and firebrick business. Pierpont was an unconditional Union Whig whose objections to the Democracy rested less on the party's stance on slavery than on its anti-manufacturing policies. His government never enjoyed much popular support, nor did it ever become very powerful; reflecting its tenuous position, the military often ignored it, and none of its members was ever represented in either Congress or the national Republican convention.⁹³

Nevertheless, the presence of Pierpont as a figurehead was important to Lincoln and, later, Johnson. Because they

were active in the church; all lived in Albemarle county. See chapter 4 for a more detailed description on the black elite and class formation among the freedpeople. Luther Porter Jackson, Negro Office-Holders in Virginia, 1865-1895 (Norfolk, 1945), and Reports of Prominent Whites and Freedmen, March 1867, BRFA.

⁹³Jack P. Maddex, Jr., "Virginia: The Persistence of Centrist Hegemony," in Otto H. Olsen, ed., Reconstruction and Redemption in the South (Baton Rouge, 1980), p. 118; McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, p. 126; Charles H. Ambler, Francis H. Pierpont: Union War Governor of Virginia and Father of West Virginia (Chapel Hill, 1937), pp. 261-76, 277-79; Hamilton James Eckenrode, Political History of Virginia during Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1904), pp. 28-33.

needed Pierpont to show that theirs would not be a heavy-handed rule, neither did much to foster unrest against him. In 1864 they had permitted him to move his residence to Union-controlled Alexandria, from where he theoretically administered occupied Virginia along with West Virginia. But Pierpont's government never outgrew its strict subordination to the military either before or after the end of the war. After Lincoln's assassination, Virginia stood as one of the few restored governments possessed of a civil component. However, the role played by that civil government was little more than token and always tainted by a sense of weakness and illegitimacy.

Still, Pierpont's was not a completely impotent government, nor was the governor a man insensitive to the forces of change around him. Many of the men who joined the restored government in 1863 and 1864 were destined to play prominent roles in reconstruction politics. Among them were Judge John C. Underwood, whose name would grace Virginia's new 1868 constitution and who would be widely recognized as the leader of the Virginia Republican party; the Rev. James W. Hunnicut, editor of the Richmond New Nation, controversial leader of the Radicals and the only vocal white supporter of black suffrage in 1865; and Joseph E. Segar, who along with Underwood was elected in October, though not seated, to the United States Senate. In 1864 these men created a new Constitution that abolished slavery,

reduced the three-year residency requirement for voting to one, disfranchised Confederate officeholders, and required an oath of allegiance to both the United States government and the restored government. Their government ratified the Thirteenth Amendment, while also disallowing black testimony in the courts.⁹⁴

Johnson officially recognized Pierpont's regime as the provisional government of Virginia on 9 May 1865, and on 26 May Pierpont arrived in Richmond to take up residence as the governor. Despite the latitude afforded provisional governors, Pierpont often worked in clear subordination to military authorities in the state; realizing his unpopularity with the mass of white Virginians, he eschewed reelection.⁹⁵ In June he called for a special session of the legislature, which became known as the Baldwin legislature after the speaker of the house, John B. Baldwin. The Baldwin legislature met later that month and legalized black marriage, provided political rights to Confederates who took Johnson's amnesty oath, increased the

⁹⁴Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 26-8; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 8-9; Patricia Hickin, "John C. Underwood and the Anti-Slavery Movement in Virginia, 1847-1860," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 73 (April 1965), 156-68; Hunnicutt authored The Conspiracy Unveiled (Philadelphia, 1863), a collection of his editorials from 1862 and 1863, that explained his opposition to slavery and secession.

⁹⁵Ambler, Pierpont, pp. 258-62; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 37; Benedict, A Compromise of Principle, pp. 105-06.

property tax, and called for general elections. The legislature hoped that by passing these measures they would escape the imposition of black suffrage by the federal government.⁹⁶

After the October elections, the Baldwin legislature met again in December. It was dominated by former Whigs who felt that their antebellum political activities invested them with something akin to divine right to rulership in the postwar era. They assumed that they would be hailed as a progressive element, but their actions placed them unmistakably in the traditionalist heritage. By the end of the year, the Baldwin legislature gained distinction as a motive force behind the Congressional backlash over the ascendancy of former Confederates in the reconstruction process. Ignoring the advice of Pierpont, the Baldwin legislature rescinded the act recognizing the state of West Virginia, and requested a repeal of the test oath from Congress as well as the release of Jefferson Davis from prison. They even suggested, vaguely, that Robert E. Lee should be installed at the governor's mansion. They did repeal the slave code, but they allowed for black testimony only in cases involving black plaintiffs and defendants.

Lastly, they passed a vagrancy act that so savored of

⁹⁶Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 35-7.

slavery that Terry quickly annulled it early the next year.⁹⁷

VII

Emancipation had set in motion an irreversible chain of events whose ultimate outcome remained far from clear by the time of the first Christmas in freedom. In April 1865 the potential for revolutionary change in Virginia through the vehicles of the Bureau and the military had seemed great. But eight months later freedpeople realized that their ideals and conceptions of freedom had been seriously compromised--probably irrevocably so. By then it was plain that they lived in a world where their erstwhile friend, the federal government, had begun to use its power not to encourage an independent black landowning peasantry, but to place the freedmen back on the plantation under the direction of their former masters. Bereft of land, with few opportunities to rent, and limited in trades and manufacturing, with racism pervading the white community and

⁹⁷Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 38-41; McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, p. 37. Of the 97 members of the House in the Baldwin legislature, 96 were former Whigs; their representation in the Senate was also high. Carter, When the War Was Over, pp. 66, 215-31; Thomas B. Alexander, "Persistent Whiggery in the Confederate South, 1861-1877," reprinted in Stampp and Litwack, eds., Reconstruction: An Anthology, pp. 282-83; Eckenrode, A Political History, pp. 41-4.

sometimes accompanied by bitterness and even violence, many freedmen had no choice but to reenter agriculture as hired laborers.

It was a bleak and disappointing outcome. Yet within it the freedpeople's actions spoke the volumes they could not always write as they began to carve out room, just as they had during slavery, where their culture survived and grew and where their freedom, compromised as it was, could come alive. Great energy was exerted to reunite families. Freedpeople took to the roads and highways to test their freedom of movement, and women and children withdrew their labor from the fields. Hard battles were fought against the apprenticeship system. Education was actively pursued, and the church became a visible institution in and important support for the black community. Freedmen showed that they did not intend for employment on the plantation to be an agreement that abrogated all of their rights or one which spelled their wholesale capitulation to the planters. Ex-masters often complained of the terms which labor had commanded and of the inconveniences that their employees caused them. But the template was in place. Freedpeople who had been renting abandoned lands in May from the Bureau were about to be evicted at Christmas under Johnson's policies, to be cast out in midwinter without resources of any kind save their labor in a state still beset by the adverse effects of war. Virginia ex-Confederates seemed to

have taken long strides toward political rehabilitation by the end of the year, although their gains irritated an increasingly disapproving Congress whose members were preparing to take the force out of presidential reconstruction. The country expectantly awaited the next moves in the Reconstruction drama; Congress and other northerners were obviously dissatisfied with presidential reconstruction and were preparing to replace it with a more exacting variety that would better ensure the rights of the freedpeople and the fortunes of the Republican party. "November winds already blew sharply," Reid concluded as he left Virginia for Tennessee, "--what might be expected before the winter was over?"⁹⁸

⁹⁸Reid, *After the War*, p. 327.

CHAPTER IV

Striking the Next-Best Bargain: The Political Economy, 1866-1868

God's gwine 'rod dem wicket masters. Hit 'taint
'em what gits hit, hits gonna fall on dere
chillun.--Mrs. Minnie Folkes--¹

By the time the first free-labor crop year got underway in January 1866, the major elements of postwar political economy had taken more definite form. Parallelling the Bureau's shift to a position of clientage vis a vis the planters was President Johnson's conservative policy. That policy had permitted Virginia traditionalists to grow in power and influence, increasingly free to call upon both northern business and the president for counsel and support. But between 1866 and 1868, a series of compromises and shifts in power between freedpeople and ex-masters, northern and southern elites, and Congress and the

¹Mrs. Minnie Folkes, Chesterfield county, in Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., and comps., Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves (Bloomington, 1976), p. 94.

president, altered these early processes of reconstruction. Although politically and economically these changes often favored landholders and businessmen, they did not always increase the power of capital. The shift from the president's "self-reconstruction" to the stricter, more impatient approach of Congressional reconstruction impeded planter momentum by providing freedpeople with temporary but demonstrably greater bargaining power. In 1867 freedmen acquired the ballot, with which they increased their power and influence. By 1868, freedmen had also forced the establishment of the sharecropping system, an economic compromise that maximized autonomy for the landless majority. A black elite emerged, whose influence grew out of their economic and social status as skilled laborers, propertyholders, and religious leaders. These changes reflected important shifts in power in the Virginia upcountry. In turn they prompted moderate centrists to lay the groundwork for the ultimate bargain with the North, namely, Conservative home rule in exchange for manhood suffrage. Here was the compact that would shape Virginia's political economy for decades to come.

I

The year 1865 had been both a testing ground of reconstruction policy, and a hothouse of accommodations to

free labor. The remark of a Southside lawyer in July of 1866 suggests that these trends continued to accelerate. "The abolition of slavery is just now about to fully realize in this part of the State," observed George K. Shellman of Campbell county. "Most of the Negroes remained with their old masters until Christmas."² Certainly 1866 brought no lessening in the search for family members, no diminution in the movement of freedpeople about the state, and no abatement of indenture cases.³ The establishment of

²Bruce Stephen Greenawalt, ed., "Virginians Face Reconstruction: Correspondence from the James Dorman Davidson Papers, 1865-1880," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 78 (October 1970), 454.

³Lt. William F. DeKnight expressed reservations about the operation of orphan law in July 1866, and he recommended reforms that would allow uncles and aunts to take custody. DeKnight to General Orlando Brown, 31 July 1866, Amherst, Monthly Report, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned (hereinafter cited as BRFAL). The number of indenture cases led Col. G. B. Carse to report in January 1867 that "much dissatisfaction now exists among the colored people from the fact that a large number of freed children are bound or apprenticed to their former owners without the consent of the children's parents having been obtained." Carse thought the matter important enough to submit a special report recommending annulment when parents were present to care for their children. Col. G. B. Carse to Gen. Orlando Brown, 1 January 1867, Pittsylvania county, Monthly Report, BRFAL. For similar accounts of the abuse of freedpeople and their children through the apprenticeship system in Maryland, see Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York, 1972), pp. 402-12; Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland in the Nineteenth Century (New Haven, 1985), pp. 153-56. In Maryland, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 was used as the basis for release of many apprenticed children. See also Eric Foner, Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy (Baton Rouge, 1983), pp. 50-1.

churches, schools and political societies claimed the ardent attention of many blacks. Planters' complaints about the withdrawal of women and children from the labor force increased in both intensity and number, and the freedpeoples' struggle to rearrange the terms of their labor along lines most consistent with their ideas of freedom only redoubled. These escalating trends gave the ring of accuracy to Shellman's implication that the results of emancipation had only just begun to appear on many plantations--particularly in remote areas like the Southside, where some ex-slaves were just discovering that they were free.⁴

The first indication of trouble in labor relations on the plantations came in early 1866, when Bureau agents began to hear a rash of complaints from freedpeople about nonpayment of wages for 1865. This issue would reappear each January over the next three years. "Not more than one-third of the Freedmen as near as I can gather from observation & inquiry have been properly recompensed for

⁴Fannie Berry of Appomattox county, for example, was one such slave uninformed of her freedom for several months. Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, pp. 36-7; other instances of this phenomenon are found in Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery (New York, 1979), pp. 183-85; and Peter Kolchin, First Freedom: The Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction (Greenwood, Conn., 1972), pp. 30-1.

their work during last year," read a typical report.⁵ Agent Jerome Connolly "found some of the freedmen greatly dissatisfied and not disposed to labor with the energy or interest their contracts required. Upon investigation I ascertained that this dissatisfaction was caused by the dishonest conduct of several of the employers in failing to pay them for last years labor."⁶ In Bedford county, according to another Bureau official, there were "daily complaints made to me by colored people that their employers have not yet & are unwilling to compensate them for the labor of last year."⁷

Also in early 1866, some planters began to evict physically weaker members of the work force from their lands--the elderly, women and children, pregnant women, and the sick. Although the week between Christmas and New Year's traditionally had been holiday season remembered fondly by many ex-slaves, it became a time of sorrow in the winter of 1865-66 for many old and disabled freedpeople, who were evicted with nothing to rely upon, often after a lifetime of labor for their ex-masters. "It is rumored that

⁵Capt. James Ashworth to Brown, 1 February 1866, Louisa county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁶Capt. D. Jerome Connolly to Brown, 27 February 1866, Prince Edward and Cumberland counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁷B. T. Shaum to Brown, 30 May 1866, Bedford and Botetourt counties, Monthly Reports, BRFAL.

many of the citizens contemplate turning out of doors the helpless, and infirm Freedmen at the first of the year," Brown wrote the agents in late December, instructing them to report the names and residences of any person who did so.⁸ But evictions continued throughout the year, often at such predictable times as late summer and harvest, and picked up again around Christmas; these evictions lasted well into 1868. "Some former owners that have fed the aged and infirm," wrote the Goochland agent in May 1866, "now insist that they have kept them throughout the winter, & that they can do so no longer on account of means & all their able bodied having left them."⁹ A Fluvanna man in June 1867 sent a 16-year old freedgirl through nearly a year of imprisonment on the charge of infanticide when she gave birth in the woods alone after her employer drove her away, "telling her she should not be confined on his premises."¹⁰

The able-bodied were not exempt from eviction. Complaints of nonpayment followed by dismissal on slight or nonexistent grounds once the crop matured, by planters who

⁸Colonel Orlando Brown, and James K. Bates, Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Circular Letter, 28 December 1865, BRFAL.

⁹J. T. Wilson to Brown, 30 May 1866, Goochland county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

¹⁰This case was eventually nol prossed and the girl taken in by her lawyer. E. C. Morse to Brown, 31 January 1868, Goochland county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

"refuse to allow them anything for their services," began to be heard in the summer of 1866 and remained a feature of the rural economy for years.¹¹ In early 1867 the Pittsylvania agent, reporting the annual revival of nonpayment complaints, estimated that some 1000 freedmen in his county had not been paid for their labor in 1866.¹² In the Southside in May 1868, "complaints continue to be daily made by the Freedmen of their inability to collect the wages due them for last year's work, & altho the people are poor in consequence of the small crop raised last year, yet I cannot but think from all I see & hear, that the failure to pay results as much from the disposition not to pay as from the poverty of the debtors."¹³ "There is a growing disposition," said W. F. DeKnight from Lynchburg, "on the part of a large class of unprincipled Farmers, despite of contracts voluntarily made & entered . . . to turn off their hands, on the slightest, & often without any provocation whatsoever, as soon as the crops in which they are usually more or less interested begin to mature, & a word of protest is almost sure to invoke the most violent castigations,

Agent Jerome Connelly of Lunenburg believed that

labor laws were the protection all laborers require against

¹¹W. B. White to Brown, 4 July 1866, Amelia, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

¹²Col. G. B. Carse to Brown, 1 February 1867, Pittsylvania county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

¹³W. H. Stowell to Brown, 31 May 1868, Lunenburg county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

while the vilest vituperative abuse, accompanied fully by threats of death, is the rule, & not the exception."¹⁴ In Lunenburg, a Southside county notorious for labor-related violence, the freedpeople "complain bitterly of the manner in which they are treated," said one of the many agents assigned there.¹⁵

The state's judicial system did little to discourage late-year evictions, and this inaction hampered the agents' abilities to prevent evictions. The longer into a contract year that a freedman labored on a plantation, the more successful might be the planter who illegally turned him away without pay. If the disputed wage exceeded \$50, about half a year's wages for a "prime hand" in the tobacco belt, the freedman had the choice of bringing suit in a higher court--a choice that entailed long waits and attorney's fees--or he could settle for \$50 in return for a speedier and less expensive hearing before a magistrate, even though such a "settlement" did not properly recompense his labor. Such behavior prompted some agents to recommend that the government establish a labor lien to prevent this type of fraud. Agent Jerome Connolly of Lunenburg believed that labor liens were "a protection all Laborers require against

¹⁴Lt. W.F. DeKnight to Brown, 1 June 1866, Lynchburg, Campbell and Amherst counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

¹⁵Capt. D. Jerome Connolly to Brown, 31 October 1866, Lunenburg county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

a class of drinking worthless spendthrift employers."¹⁶

Evictions, fraud, and the inability to gain redress through the courts only begin to describe the extent of the agricultural contract worker's difficulty in upcountry Virginia. Individual acts of physical violence against the freedpeople constituted one of the perennial problems that Bureau officers faced.¹⁷ Many ex-masters refused peaceably to accept the changes that gave freedpeople direct influence over plantation production through the use of labor as a bargaining tool or, worse, by planter standards, the withdrawal of their labor and that of their families from the market entirely. "The plain fact that Freedmen are free & not subject to them," wrote the Albemarle agent, "cannot be realised by the Whites." He profiled the kind of argument he often heard from planters in his county: "'If the Freedman, the man whom I employ, support and pay, will

¹⁶Capt. William L. Tidball to Brown, 31 August 1866, Albemarle county, Monthly Report, BRFAL; and Letters Received, 13 October 1866, Monthly Report forwarded to General Oliver O. Howard, Microfilm 553, University of Virginia, BRFAL. Captain William A. Tidball in Albemarle and Major William K. Morse of nearby Goochland both urged labor lien measures. Capt. William L. Tidball to Brown, 31 August 1866, Albemarle county, Monthly Report, BRFAL; Major William K. Morse to Brown, 28 February 1868, Goochland county, Monthly Report, BRFAL; Capt. D. Jerome Connolly to Brown, 6 June 1867, unregistered Letters Received, RG 105, 3910, box 10, Nottoway and Lunenburg counties, BRFAL.

¹⁷For an excellent analysis of the role of violence in postwar southern society, see Edward L. Ayers, Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South (New York, 1984).

not do as I tell him," said a typical employer, "if he on my scolding him, 'sauces' me, am I not justified in having recourse to physical power & striking him.'" A reply in the negative usually brought more hostility instead of reformation; planters steadfastly remained "unwilling to curb their long uncontrolled passions."¹⁸

In May 1866, three months after the agent submitted the above report, freedpeople in Charlottesville drew up a petition which they sent to General Howard, requesting Federal troops to protect them from their ex-masters. "We are struggling against a tide of bitter opposition on the part of that smaller fraction of the people here have formerly claimed to be our owners. . . . Every day and hour giving fresh proofs of the virulence of those who by the results of the war have been deprived of what they termed their property," stated the author, N. Richmond. He noted that black efforts at independence and uplift, "by education, by industrial pursuits, or by owning property," were "frowned down and discouraged on every hand by our employers whose displeasure for the sake of our families, we cannot afford to incur." Richmond reminded Howard of the loyalty of the slaves during wartime. White violence, he said, had been "augmented a thousand fold in consequence of

¹⁸James Joyes, A. S., to Brown, 28 February 1866, Albemarle county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

our loyalty to the Union and the aid we have rendered to Union soldiers at the Hospitals in the woods elsewhere at the most fearful risk to ourselves." Richmond closed by "earnestly entreat[ing] that we may not be left in the utter helplessness to which slavery has rendered us without the protection of Federal troops." Although the names of thirty-nine other freedmen appeared at the end of Richmond's petition, Howard never sent additional officers to the county.¹⁹

The firm basis in fact for these complaints was reflected in the effort the next Albemarle agent expended combatting beatings and whippings for minor offenses, especially petit larceny. Even James C. Southall, editor of the Charlottesville Chronicle and a man who as a youth was considered "the most finished and promising student" the University of Virginia had yet produced, saw nothing amiss in printing the names of offenders and their prescribed number of stripes as a matter of course. This habit of his provoked the agent to write the paper in protest.²⁰ These whippings, said the agent in a report, were "barbarous,

¹⁹N. Richmond, et. al. to General Howard, 28 May 1866, Letters Received, R60, BRFal.

²⁰Richard G. Lowe, "Virginia's Reconstruction Convention: General Schofield Rates the Delegates," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 80 (July 1972), 360n. Southall was a delegate to the convention. Charlottesville Chronicle, 11 August 1866.

indecent" punishments "not in accordance with the enlightened spirit of the age." Planters who favored whipping, "and they are very numerous in this county," argued that it minimized the jail population and was therefore preferable to imprisonment. "I have no doubt that the rack and wheel would be quite as summary. . . . Why not pinch and burn as well as whip?" the agent rejoined. Yet court-ordered remedies themselves could lead the victim to accept the pain and humiliation of stripes. When a teenage freedgirl was brought before the Albemarle court for taking six ears of corn from a white man's field, she agreed to her complainant's suggested settlement: a whipping at his hands rather than the prospects of both a whipping and three months in jail if convicted at the next court.²¹ And although "information of such unfairness spread[s] like lightening thru all the race of Freedmen," according to another, few freedpeople were so materially situated in 1866 that they could boycott the farms of all such men, as the agent felt they should. "See we was bound to eat," as Arthur Greene explained it, "so fer a while we took anything 'till we straightened ourselves out."²²

²¹Capt. William L. Tidball to Bates, 20 August 1866, Letters Received, v. 1, M517, BRFAL.

²²James Joyes to Brown, 31 March 1866, Albemarle county, Monthly Report, BRFAL; Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, p. 126.

Freedpeople were not the sole targets of white animosity and violence; reports of white hostility toward Bureau agents were nearly universal. As Lt. Wilson from Goochland put it, the "Bureau is not a popular Institution so far as I can learn."²³ Lt. James Powell told of a speech made by a Mecklenburg citizen that had "inveighed in severe & mischevious language against the Bureau, saying . . . 'The devil is a more respectable personage than the Provost Marshals.'"²⁴ When he tried to disperse a Martinsville crowd that was "beating and knocking" a local freedman "with cries of kill him, kill the damn negro," Lt. Fernald felt a sharp chill when the shouts changed to "kill the Yankee and [the] negro too."²⁵ In concluding a report in May 1866 on his opposition to the attempted lynching of a jailed freedman in Louisa, by none less than the freedman's father and former master, Lt. James Ashworth wrote that his "position here is becoming Exceedingly unpleasant. I have endeavored always to conduct myself as an officer and a gentleman . . . and it is mortifying after all this, to feel that I cannot walk through a crowd without meeting hostile

²³J. T. Wilson to Brown, 30 March 1866, Goochland county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

²⁴Lt. James Powell to Brown, 30 May 1866, Mecklenburg county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

²⁵Lt. Fernald to R. S. Lacey, 29 June 1866, Letters Received, L162, BRFAL.

looks and . . . hearing insulting language." Ashworth told his superior that if he did not receive the support he felt he needed, he would prefer to resign. "I will be a 'peace offering' no longer," he concluded.²⁶

As these comments suggest, local agents frequently shouldered their dangerous responsibilities with little power behind them and with too few material resources at their disposal.²⁷ Continuing his report on the lynching incident in Louisa, Ashworth emphasized that lack of support often prevented him from seeing that peace was kept or justice done. "The agent has no means at his disposal to inquire into & better the conditions of things," he wrote. "A single man in a community whose white population is unanimously hostile to him, & whose Black population is powerless to aid him, he is unable to protect himself from insult & abuse." Agents were usually "contemptible in the eyes of the whites because we are unsupported, & in the eyes of the Blacks because we cannot protect them. To punish a Negro is no difficult matter, for the white population would rise to aid, but to punish a white man is not so easy with the tools we have been furnished with--Verily," he preached,

²⁶Capt. James Ashworth to Capt. T. Frank Crandon, 16 May 1866, Letters Received, C375, BRFAL.

²⁷George R. Bentley, A History of the Freedmen's Bureau (New York, 1970, reprint ed., 1974), pp. 136-39.

"we have been set to making Bricks without Straw."²⁸ Ashworth's colleagues echoed his despair. Largely owing to his insufficient power, the condition of Lunenburg freedmen, wrote Jerome Connolly, was "truly lamentable," and he felt his post was a "very humiliating one."²⁹

Thus, even a compassionate Bureau agent could redress relatively few of the numerous wrongs he saw. When civil courts abruptly tried important cases many miles from an agent's office on short notice, for example, or when an already overworked agent lacked the staff to arrest parties against whom freedpeople had brought complaint, or if he was without a horse to get to the outer reaches of his jurisdiction, unjust behavior often went unopposed. His problems were only compounded if--as was increasingly the case--he governed two or more counties, for invariably counties that lacked officers were the ones in which contracts most often went unenforced, where freedmen were regularly beaten, defrauded, charged with impudence and laziness, and evicted without compensation. Rapid turnover among sometimes demoralized agents worsened the situation

²⁸Capt. James Ashworth to Brown, 27 February 1866, Louisa county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

²⁹Capt. D. Jerome Connolly to Brown, 31 October 1866, Lunenburg and Nottoway counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

further.³⁰ Those who stuck it out often lacked even the most fundamental articles of business. "I avail myself of the last half sheet of paper in my possession," wrote one testy agent in August 1866, "to inform you that I am entirely out of stationery of every description. Unless furnished some before the close of the month, I shall be unable to render my monthly reports. I am already over twenty dollars out for expenses, and can not get them back. I can not afford to add to this amount."³¹

The frustration was sometimes keen. "I am almost heartsick at the present state of affairs," wrote agent Yeckley from Lunenburg in the spring of 1866, a time when Bureau authority was uncertain and planter confidence running at high tide. "Outrages on the Freedmen are alarmingly on the increase, a most aggravated case has just been reported to me. An old woman came from Mecklenburg county after the child of her daughter in this county (Lunen). I sent her, with an order to the man who had the child to give her up." When the man threatened to kill the

³⁰As of November 1865 few agents held their same positions for as much as three consecutive months, and between 1866 and 1868 more turnovers coupled with increasingly large jurisdictions made efficient supervision almost impossible in many areas. Col. Orlando Brown's summary report presented to Congress, 30 November 1865; to Gen. Oliver O. Howard, Letters Received, V119, microfilm 553, University of Virginia.

³¹Capt. William L. Tidball to Maj. William R. Morse, 27 August 1866, Albemarle county, Letters Sent, v. 128, p. 269, RG 105, BRFAL.

woman, Yeckley sent a policeman, whose visit elicited the promise "to give up the child if I would send her back. I did so, and she has just returned. They knocked her down several times, put a rope around her neck, dragged her to the fence & choaked her, 3 men then took their whips & whipped her on her bare back. This is chivalry," he exploded in disgust. "Unless I have power . . . to give these poor people protection, self respect will compel me to resign."³²

As this example clearly reveals, the establishment of free labor in the tobacco belt of Virginia was accompanied by violence, illegal evictions, fraud, and nonpayment of wages. In early 1866, the Bureau possessed little power to redress these wrongs, because President Johnson had shown that he had little intention of providing relief for these problems. However, one powerful body of northerners took note of these trends and treated them more seriously. The Congress began to cast a more critical eye on the process of reconstruction in the postwar South, and the reforms they enacted would be of tangible benefit to the free black laborers of upcountry Virginia.

³³William S. McFeely, *Yankees Stepfather: General Oliver O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven, 1966), pp. 290-92.

³²Lt. J. Arnold Yeckley to Capt. Stuart Barnes, 19 April 1866, Mecklenburg county, Letters Received, B317, BRFAL. In June, after a transfer to Lunenburg county, Yeckley made good on his threat and left the army and Virginia. Yeckley to Brown, 27 June 1866, Lunenburg county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

III

From the fall of 1865 onward Republican congressmen had listened, with growing displeasure and objection, to reports of treachery coming from agents throughout the South. The Congressmen felt distressed by the lenient plan that permitted former Confederates so much authority in their own reconstruction--a policy which, not coincidentally, did nothing to enhance the power of the national Republican party.³³ Therefore, in the winter of 1865-66, members of the Thirty-Ninth Congress began to take notice of the reactionary state of affairs in the South. They found much to dislike. Most troublesome of all were the Black Codes. Because these legal congeries had revived the spirit if not the name of slavery, they had elicited widespread disapprobation in the North.³⁴ Establishing a joint committee to study the errant directions in which Presidential Reconstruction had proceeded, Congress prepared to confront an executive whose behavior steadily grew more objectionable. In January 1866 national politics thus stood

³³William S. McFeely, Yankee Stepfather: General Oliver O. Howard and the Freedmen (New Haven, 1968), pp. 200-02.

³⁴Mississippi had guided the way with her Black Code passed in the fall of 1865. One by one during the winter of 1865-66 the rest of the South followed suit; the Baldwin legislature concocted its code in December and January. Theodore Brantner Wilson, Black Codes of the South (University, Ala., 1965), pp. 63, 100-02.

poised for a fundamental shift that would result in the passage of the Reconstruction Acts in March 1867, acts that enfranchised the freedmen, formally ended Presidential Reconstruction, and instituted military rule in the South.³⁵

Formed in December 1865, the Joint Committee on Reconstruction began its business in January. The Committee's primary objective was to determine whether the Freedman's Bureau should be extended beyond its original tenure of one year. To accomplish this, the Joint Committee inquired into the attitude of former Confederates and it tried to judge the need for an ongoing military presence in the South.³⁶

What the Committee eventually learned was even more disturbing than even the Radicals had expected. Certainly most of the witnesses from Virginia left none but the worst impressions. Asked about the ultimate motives of the former slaveholders, Lynchburg native Jaquelin M. Woods, a shoemaker and United States assessor, came straight to his point. The "class that really produced this revolution," he said, "intend--while they cannot reorganize slavery exactly

³⁵John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War (Chicago, 1966), pp. 58-61.

³⁶Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War, pp. 57-8; Eric L. McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (Chicago, 1960), pp. 279-84; Hamilton J. Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1904), pp. 45-7.

as it was, and call it slavery, and buy and sell as they did before--by a hocuspocus arrangement [to] get the service of their former slaves, and tyrannize over them and the poor white people as formerly. They intend to do so by legislation, by declaring every man who will not make a contract at \$4 a month a vagrant, and selling out his services as such. . . . The negro will have to go and put himself under the protection of some white man who will take him as a sort of master." A week later Assistant Commissioner Brown spoke to the Committee. "If they had an opportunity, would they reduce the negro again to slavery?" he was asked. "If I can believe their assertions, I should hardly think they would; I think they would prefer to hold him . . . in a situation which would be slavery in effect but not in name, so as to have the benefit of his labor without the responsibility of supporting him." "That smacks of a piece of Yankee ingenuity?" came the next question. "Why, sir," Brown replied, "in that respect, they out-Herod Herod."³⁷

On 20 June the committee concluded that the leniency characteristic of Andrew Johnson's reconstruction policies had been a mistake. Committee members recommended the replacement of the president's plan with one that would better safeguard the results of emancipation before the

³⁷Joint Committee on Reconstruction, Report, Virginia, II, Jaquelin M. Wood's testimony, 9 February 1866, p. 86; testimony of Colonel Orlando Brown, 15 February 1866, p. 126.

southern states could be readmitted. They called for the abolition of the Black Codes, and the renewal and expansion of the Bureau, since the bill doing this had received a presidential veto the previous February. The Committee buttressed the recent Civil Rights bill, passed on 27 March over another presidential veto, with a set of resolutions that formed the basis of the Fourteenth Amendment. Lastly, they helped keep alive agitation for extension of the Bureau until a second bill eventually passed--over another Johnson veto--on 16 July.³⁸

At the close of a year during which Republican opposition toward Johnson-style reconstruction grew, Virginia's provisional Baldwin legislature convened for the last time. Governor Pierpont accurately assessed the national mood and he tried to influence the legislature to act accordingly. But, against his advice, the Whiggish legislature clung to its traditionalist tendencies and refused to pass the Fourteenth Amendment. Their action ensured the continued rejection of Virginia readmission by Congress.³⁹

By the time Pierpont called a special session on 4 March

³⁸Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War, pp. 59-60; McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, p. 232; for the text of the Civil Rights bill, see Walter L. Fleming, ed., Documentary History of Reconstruction: Political, Military, Social, Religious, Educational, and Industrial, 1865 to the Present Time, 2 vols. (Cleveland, 1906), I, 197-201.

³⁹Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 43-5.

1867 to give the legislature a final chance to consider the amendment, Congress had seized control of the Reconstruction process through the first of its Reconstruction Acts that passed on 2 March. This act made disfranchisement of ex-Confederate leaders and passage of the Fourteenth Amendment prerequisites to readmission. It called for the convening of biracially-elected constitutional conventions so that the southern states might write new constitutions that enfranchised black males and were otherwise acceptable to Congress. The Bureau agents were empowered as registration officials and instructed to put the freedmen as well as "loyal" whites on the local rolls. Congress instituted military rule in the South by dividing it into ten districts--of which Virginia formed the first--and investing General Grant with power over the reconstruction process. In Virginia General John M. Schofield was appointed military commander. Although the Bureau had resumed on a firm legal footing the previous July, the advent of military rule significantly weakened its influence during the next year; by the end of 1868 its mission would be scrubbed almost entirely, and its activities limited to the promotion of freedpeoples' education.⁴⁰

⁴⁰The first Reconstruction Act included two other important acts that struck out against the president's authority. The Army Appropriations Act hobbled Johnson's authority as commander-in-chief by enabling only the General of the Army to issue military orders, who in turn could not be removed without the Senate's approval; the Tenure of Office Act, which also made the removal of all other civil

These policy shifts bore important implications for freedpeople in Virginia. Congress's more proscriptive approach toward former Confederates allowed Radical whites and ex-slaves to win more control over the political process. In Virginia, these groups seized that initiative and they exercised an important influence over political affairs during the next two years. In turn, their gains also forced white moderates to accept some of the changes brought about by emancipation as irreversible. Having done so, however, Conservatives began to seek some way to minimize freedpeople's advances, while at the same time appearing to comply with the demands of Congressional reconstruction.

IV

Excitement over the coming election and preparations made on its behalf began that summer, although Schofield did not announce until the middle of September that it would be held on 22 October. "Registration officials" enrolled a total of 225,933 voters, 120,101 whites and 105,832 blacks.

officers subject to Senate approval. In the second Reconstruction Act on 23 March the Bureau and the military were instructed to begin the registration of voters. Michael Perman, Reunion without Compromise: The South and Reconstruction, 1865-1868 (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 270-72; McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, p. 13; Eckenrode, Political History, pp. 51-2; McFeely, Yankee Stepfather, pp. 291-97.

During the months of August, September, and October, agents gave their regular reports over almost entirely to the political agitation in their jurisdictions. Freedmen everywhere organized into political societies known as "Union Leagues" or "Loyal Leagues," and public lectures and campaign speeches acted like hypnotics. "Political candidates are disturbing the agricultural interests of Nelson county very much," came a representative report. "The canvas is going on very lively, almost daily meetings are being held in which men, women & children flock indiscriminantly."⁴¹ The Goochland agent commented on the effect politics was having on race relations. "The prejudices between the 2 races was shown more decidedly during the past month than ever before," he wrote, "and may be said to be deep rooted & strong in both races."⁴² But according to others, the election united some poor whites and blacks. Although he had registered a white majority in Franklin county by July, Lt. DeKnight felt that "the indications are . . . that as a large class of the whites--the poorer classes especially--will act with the colored, they will have a majority in their favor."⁴³

⁴¹Stevenson to Brown, Nelson, 31 August 1867.

⁴²J. T. Wilson to Brown, 31 October 1867, Goochland county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁴³Lt. William E. DeKnight to Brown, 30 July 1867, Monthly Report, BRFAL; see Jack P. Maddex, Jr., "Virginia: The Persistence of Centrist Hegemony," in Reconstruction and

De Knight was, in a measure, correct. The results, when tallied in October, favored the Radicals and placed them in control for the first and only time during the entire course of Virginia reconstruction. Of the 105 members chosen, Radicals sent 73 delegates--24 of them black, 33 of them whites of northern or foreign birth--while conservatives chose but 32 representatives. Although white registrants had outnumbered blacks, in the election whites cast 76,084 votes against a black vote of 93,145; about 44,000 unreconstructed whites had refused to participate in an election that permitted black suffrage, while about 15,000 agreed to the call for the convention. "The freedmen," said the agent in Mecklenburg, "are delighted at the result."⁴⁴

The Convention of 1867-68 assembled in Richmond on 3 December and elected Judge John C. Underwood as president. The deliberations of this body produced a liberal document that, with some amendment, governed the state until the 1901-02 disfranchising convention. The Underwood Constitution of 1868 ratified the Fourteenth Amendment and

Redemption in the South, ed. by Otto H. Olsen (Baton Rouge, 1980), p. 114, on the potential for a black and white alliance in the Virginia upcountry.

⁴⁴Alexander D. Bailie to Brown, 30 October 1867, Mecklenburg county, Monthly Report, BRFAL; Eckenrode, Political History, pp. 83-4; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 54-5; James Douglass Smith, "Virginia during Reconstruction: A Political, Economic and Social Study, 1865-1870 (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1968), pp. 62-116; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 221-22, 227-42.

it included a test oath and disfranchising clause designed to bar civil and military officers of the Confederacy from politics. The constitution established free public schools and directed that they have sound financial support; it replaced vive voca voting with the secret ballot; it reduced the residency requirement for governor from twenty to ten years of United States residence, and from five to three years of Virginia residence. It gave the governor the veto and exclusive pardoning power; adopted the township system; established the election of judges through the legislature; made land taxes the basis of most of the state's revenue; and included a \$2000 homestead exemption. The state was no longer allowed to invest in internal improvements, and interest rates in excess of 12 percent were forbidden. Having thus produced a constitution strikingly innovative in approach, the convention adjourned and waited for Schofield to set the date on which the voters would ratify the document they had produced.⁴⁵

Scandalized by what they called the "Negro Constitution" written by a body variously decried as a "Convention of Kangaroos," the "Mongrel Convention," and--the most popular

⁴⁵Richard L. Hume, "The Membership of the Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868: A Study of the Beginnings of Congressional Reconstruction in the Upper South," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 86 (October 1978), 463-70 for a detailed analysis of events in the Convention and the members and their voting patterns; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 57-60.

epithet--the "Black Crook Convention," moderate Conservatives and Republicans alike were horrified by this turn in political events. Alerted to a "plebian specter," between the fall of 1867 and the winter of 1868 these reactionaries increasingly set aside their differences and began to organize to rid the government of men they considered vulgar, dangerous interlopers and parvenus. Few in number both in relation to the radicals and the traditionalists, moderates nevertheless had a powerful friend in General Schofield, although they did not always realize it. Schofield was a conservative Republican who had opposed the Fourteenth Amendment but reluctantly urged its passage as inevitable. He now believed that the test oath and disfranchising clauses would only result in an insufficiency of citizens capable of conducting the affairs of state. He also opposed the township plan, which would result in black city and town officers in areas with black majorities; several such areas existed throughout eastern Virginia.⁴⁶

With his hands on the purse strings, in late April Schofield therefore cancelled the election scheduled for

⁴⁶James E. Sefton, ed., "Aristotle in Blue and Braid: General John M. Schofield's Essays on Reconstruction," Civil War History 17 (March 1971), 45-57; James L. McDonough, Schofield: Union General in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Tallahassee, 1972), pp. 184-86; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 227-28; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 60-1.

August 1868, and although some Conservatives charged that he did so because he expected the rejection of the Constitution, in all likelihood Schofield feared its passage. Shortly before he had replaced Pierpont, whose term as governor had expired and who often had remonstrated against Schofield's conservative policy, with Henry H. Wells, a native New Yorker and general in the Union Army. Two months later, against Grant's advice, Schofield accepted the post of Secretary of War under the recently-acquitted Johnson and resigned his post as Military Commander of Virginia. After Schofield left for Washington in June, his successors, General George Stoneman and General E. R. S. Canby, continued his conservative policy, and Congress did not reschedule the election.⁴⁷

Although Conservatives officially opposed suffrage and the disabling features of the constitution, some leading moderates now realized that the time had arrived for them to swallow the next dose. Leading the "cooperation movement" that described this group, Alexander H. H. Stuart, an antebellum Whig from Augusta county in the Valley, took a key step by publishing a letter under the name of "Senex" in the Richmond Dispatch and the Whig. His controversial piece

⁴⁷Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 60-3, 66; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 223-25; William S. McFeely, Grant: A Biography (New York, 1972), pp. 272-73. Schofield's acceptance of the Cabinet position later resulted in a distant relationship between he and Grant.

appeared on Christmas day and urged black suffrage in return for universal amnesty.⁴⁸

Aware that he would encounter a strong reaction from traditionalists, Stuart explained calmly and reasonably why this compromise would not spell the ruin of white Virginia. "The inherent inferiority of the race and their want of education and property," Stewart wrote of the freedpeople, "will necessarily place them in a position of subordination to the superior race. . . . Knowledge is power. Property is power. Would it not, therefore, be strange if the superior intelligence and accumulated property of the superior race should not exercise a controlling influence over the ignorance and penury of the inferior? It seems to me a contrary apprehension must be ill-founded, because it is opposed to reason and human experience." Stuart acknowledged that it might take a while for the dust to settle. "Matters may not work altogether smoothly for a time," he acceded. "We may have some trouble in portions of

⁴⁸Tobacconist William Sutherlin had encouraged his editor friends at these papers to accept Stuart's letter, although the Enquirer steadfastly refused to print it. Alexander H. H. Stuart, A Narrative of the Leading Incidents of the Organization of the First Popular Movement in Virginia in 1865 to Reestablish Peaceful Relations between the Northern and Southern States, and of the Subsequent Efforts by the "Committee of Nine," in 1869, to Secure the Restoration of Virginia to the Union (Richmond, 1888), gives Stuart's view on these events; Eckenrode, Political History, pp. 109-13; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 68-9.

the State, but it will be temporary. The influx of whites from abroad, and the efflux of blacks . . . will soon establish Caucasian preponderance on a firm basis."⁴⁹

By the close of 1868, the balance of power had changed significantly. But the ultimate outcome remained far from certain. Radicals had trimmed Conservative sails during the past year, but no one knew when an election might be held, though everyone campaigned hard for it during the summer. What would result from a rejection of the Underwood constitution could barely be imagined. Reports of violence and evictions escalated, and the Ku Klux Klan made its appearance in several counties.⁵⁰ In November Grant, the man who had levelled Virginia four years earlier, became president of the United States, and although some Conservatives correctly predicted that he might prove to be as much a friend as they could reasonably expect, the outcome frightened most.

V

The inclusion of freedmen in the political forum of Virginia naturally had repercussions on race and labor

⁴⁹"Senex" to the Richmond Dispatch and the Richmond Whig, 25 December 1868, and reprinted in Stewart, Narrative, p. 22; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 68-9; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 247-48.

⁵⁰Reports of Klan activity came from Bedford, Albemarle,

relations. As one planter noted, when blacks were enslaved, "we were free; property & life were as secure as under any system in the history of the world. . . . No isms crept in for the reason, that the laboring class was not a voting class."⁵¹ But now that "the laboring class" did have the vote, tensions emerged, and they furnished planters with a new rhetoric to defraud black laborers should they show any inclination to vote. "There have been several instances," said the Goochland agent, "where Freedmen have been turned out of Employment since the Election," and especially, he noted, for those not on annual contracts.⁵²

Although conscientious exercise of the ballot was a dangerous thing for freedmen, the franchise instilled confidence in many, encouraging them to stand by their principles and use the ballot to expand upon their freedom.

Orange, Buckingham, and Appomattox counties as well as from Lynchburg in Campbell county. J. F. Wilcox to Brown, 30 May 1868, Bedford and Botetourt counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL; T. F. Wilson to Brown, 30 April 1868, Lynchburg (Campbell county), Monthly Report, BRFAL; Maj. Marcus S. Hopkins to Brown, 30 March 1868, Albemarle and Orange counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL; Capt. Thomas Jackson to Brown, 29 August 1868, 7 September 1868, Letters Received, J219, BRFAL, on the Klan's appearance in Maysville, Buckingham county on 28 August; Charles M. McMahon to Wilson, 30 April 1868, Letters Received, RG 105, BRFAL, on an attack on a teacher in Appomattox county. See below for a full account of a Klan attack in Appomattox county against leading black figures.

⁵¹John McCue, draft of a "letter to the editor," n. d., but ca. the summer of 1868, McCue family papers.

⁵²J. T. Wilson to Brown, 31 October 1867, Goochland county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

"Since the election," said one agent, "many have been discharged, & many more are threatened. . . . The Freedmen are undergoing a severe trial, in consequence of having voted according, as I believe, to the dictates of their own consciences. . . . The same treatment . . . has been meted out to poor laboring white men by their more wealthy employers, for the same causes. Never, since the close of the war, has the spirit of disloyalty, been so apparent, as it is, at the present time."⁵³ But as the convention vote had shown, these risks did not prevent freedmen from using their newly-won political rights to alter the power structure in Virginia.

The ordeal of Fleming Johnson and John North of Appomattox county in the spring of 1868 illustrates the class-based political tensions that flared in the wake of enfranchisement. One night in April, the Klan paid a visit to Johnson's and North's homes. Johnson was a preacher; North was a leading member of Johnson's church and had participated in the fall registrations and election. On the night of the 26th, Johnson was aroused "by a tremendous thundering at his door" and shouts for him to come out or have his house set afire. When he opened the door, "three objects dressed mostly in white having their faces bound

⁵³B. T. Shaum to Brown, 30 October 1867, Bedford and Botetourt counties, Monthly Report, BRFAI; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 223-24.

with white and begringed with Smut, rushed in." Brandishing pistols, they knocked Johnson around and told him that they were "soldiers who were killed at Manassas and who having seen that the radicals & niggers were about to destroy the country had now come out of their cold graves to avenge their country's wrongs by punishing all leading radicals and niggers." They put a rope around his neck and "demanded of him all he knew about the Union League." When they pressed him for money, Johnson's wife instead offered them a pound of pork, which only whetted their anger. After "commanding the pastor to keep away from the meetings of the League and threatening to kill him if he told anything of their visit, they left him and his family thoroughly frightened."

Sometime that same night these men also terrorized North who, alerted by his dogs, went out with his gun and saw "a white object upon a white horse dressed in white" coming toward him. When he levelled his gun at the figure, the rider "cried 'Dont Shoot, dont shoot' and North finding it to be a veritable man" went inside. The men pounded on his house, threatening to kill him if he did not open the door. Out of fear for his family he did so, but as he emerged he rushed one of the men and the two struggled for a few moments; soon the other two joined their comrade and overpowered North. He "was told the Same Story about Manassas cold graves" and "questioned about the Union League." The men asked North for money, and questioned him about Johnson and the northern teacher who lived nearby.

They then dragged him away to the woods, placed a rope around his neck and told him they were going to hang him for "giving out tickets at Hubson church at the Election last fall." After a few minutes of tightening the rope without lifting him off the ground, they settled on a whipping and inflicted fifteen stripes before ordering him back to his house "at double quick," and then, "they were gone in a twinkling." Other influential members of the black community, or politically active freedpeople, faced similar threats during the spring and summer of 1868.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, by 1867-68, freedmen were in a measure protected by possession of the ballot and other measures passed under Congressional reconstruction. But the policy instilled into the Bureau and the military under the Johnson administration continued to work in the interests of white landholders even under Congressional reconstruction. With the widespread white dissatisfaction over the shift in

⁵⁴Chas. W. McMahon to J. T. Wilson, 30 April 1868, Appomattox county, Letters Received, M140, BRFAL; and McMahon to Wilson, 4 May 1868, Appomattox Court House, Letters Received, M 164, BRFAL. McMahon was the schoolteacher referred to in the account. This and scores of similar stories raises doubt about the oft-made assertion that postwar Virginia politics was a relatively quiescent affair. For comments about the overall calm nature of politics, see Maddex, "Virginia: Persistence of Centrist Hegemony," pp. 113-14; Allen W. Trelease, White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction (New York, 1967), pp. 65-8, discusses the Klan's presence in Virginia in 1868. According to Trelease, the absence of Republican rule made the Klan a short-lived phenomenon. It appeared only at the time of Radical triumph during March and April.

reconstruction policy, only the occasional person recognized that Bureau activities had a positive effect on planter objectives. None other than the old proslavery drumbeater and avowed enemy of democracy and free labor, George Fitzhugh, understood this point. Fitzhugh's acquaintance, Edmund Ruffin, responded to the war's outcome by committing suicide. But Fitzhugh accepted a post with the Freedman's Bureau as associate judge on the Richmond Freedman's Court, beginning in October 1865, when the government functioned under the mild stewardship of Johnson; he remained until late 1866.

After a year at his new post, Fitzhugh defended his position for the readers of DeBow's Review. The fact was, he said, that in establishing the Bureau, the North had accepted a cardinal tenet that white southerners had long endeavored to impress upon them: blacks needed management, not only for their own good but that of society as well. When surrender finally had proven this rule, the North instituted "a distinct and separate government" for the welfare of the freedmen--thus the Bureau, "merely a negro nursery," replaced the master. Although he essentially disapproved of his employer, Fitzhugh could call the Bureau "an admirable idea of the Federals." He predicted that it would take only a little more time before the North dismissed the freedpeople as "irreclaimable 'mauvais sujets,'" and would gladly "turn the affair over to the

State authorities. . . . We can bear it for two years longer, but after that time we must have negro nurseries of our own."⁵⁵

In part, Fitzhugh was being self-serving and sarcastic when he wrote this piece on the Bureau. But that his interpretation of Bureau policy contained a large measure of truth was reflected in the seriousness with which officers took their roles as the teachers of freedom. Major John Jordan allowed "no opportunities . . . to pass by unimproved, wherein to convince the Freedmen that the Bureau was not only established for the purpose of protecting them," but to "promote industry by which to make them a self sustaining race."⁵⁶ Lt. George Buffum in Halifax spoke regularly to the freedpeople of his district "upon their duties & obligations, as well as their rights," hoping "to instill in them the necessity of greater economy & particularly how absolutely necessary it is that every member of each family who was able to do so should

⁵⁵Paul F. Paskoff and Daniel J. Wilson, eds., intro., The Cause of the South: Selections from DeBow's Review, 1846-1867 (Baton Rouge, 1982), pp. 291-97, reprinted from Vol. II, After the War Series (October 1866), 346-55. On Ruffin's death see James L. Roark, Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction (New York, 1977), pp. 120-21.

⁵⁶Major John W. Jordan, 31 May 1866, Pittsylvania county, Monthly Report, BRFAL; Jordan, 1 July 1866, Prince Edward and Cumberland counties, Letters Received, forward to Gen. Oliver O. Howard, microfilm 553, University of Virginia.

work."⁵⁷ By April 1867 Lt. Clinton was able to report that, as a result of his teachings, freedpeople in his jurisdiction had finally grasped the meaning of freedom. Most had come to realize "in a measure that labor is wealth and money is power & can be made of the greatest possible use, & that it is not what they make but what they save that will enable them to grow rich."⁵⁸

Clearly, then, the power of the ballot, unaided by economic independence, could not arrest ongoing efforts to put freedpeople back to work on the plantations. Toward this end, the Bureau and the military continued to aid planters by instructing freedpeople in bourgeois rules of free labor relations. Lacking other choices, most freedpeople continued to contract with the planters. But when they did so, they influenced the terms of that bargain as much as possible with their own ideas of independence.

VI

During the first two years of emancipated labor, freedpeople became increasingly aware that they had little chance to become independent freeholders or escape

⁵⁷Lt. George Buffum, 1 December 1866, Halifax county, Monthly Report, BRFAAL.

⁵⁸J. B. Clinton, 31 April 1867, Amelia and Powhatan counties, Monthly Report, BRFAAL.

employment with the planters. At the same time, they saw that their political power was growing while that of the landholders was being undermined. While these circumstances prevailed, freedpeople began to strike for the next-best bargain on the plantation. Their efforts culminated in the establishment of sharecropping, a common transitory method of labor allocation known to bridge systems of slavery and full-fledged capitalist agriculture in many emancipation societies.⁵⁹ Sharecropping hardly equalized access to the factors of production between freedpeople and landholders. But from the ex-slaves' perspective it opened a passageway to that which they most needed--land--while in turn it gave landholders that which they required to reenter production--labor.

Under a sharecropping agreement, the landowner paid to the laborer some fraction of the crop, usually a fourth, grown on an individual plot in return for labor; sometimes a given freedman brought a horse or some tools to the bargain and thereby increased the portion to a third or a half. Sharecroppers occupied and farmed distinct portions of the plantation, the greater the distance from the home of the landlord the better, where they could live in some reasonable amount of privacy and self-direction. In part

⁵⁹See, for example, Wilhelmina Kloosterboer, Involuntary Labour Since the Abolition of Slavery: A Survey of Compulsory Labour Throughout the World (Leiden, The Netherlands, 1960).

sharecropping reflected the ongoing scarcity of currency, but it also illustrated the desire on the part of the freedmen to assert as much control as possible over themselves, their families, and the management of the lands they worked.⁶⁰

Several studies have identified a short-lived system in the cotton districts that existed between surrender and the establishment of sharecropping there. This was the use of share wages, a form of wage labor bearing a superficial resemblance to sharecropping, whereby parts of the crop were paid to laborers as wages in return for various intervals of

⁶⁰For descriptions and analyses of these different systems of postwar labor, see Harold D. Woodman, "Southern Agriculture and the Law," *Agricultural History* 53 (January 1979), 320-22 and passim; Woodman, "Sequel to Slavery: The New History Views the Postbellum South," *Journal of Southern History* 43 (November 1977), 551-54; Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation (Cambridge, 1977, reprint ed., 1978), pp. 81-105; Ransom and Sutch, "Sharecropping: Market Response or Mechanism of Race Control?" in What Was Freedom's Price? ed. by David G. Sansing (Jackson, Miss., 1978), pp. 55-6; Thavolia Glymph, "Freedpeople and Ex-Masters: Shaping a New Order in the Postbellum South, 1865-1868," in Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy (Arlington, Tex., 1985), ed. by Glymph and John J. Kushma, pp. 52-4; R. Pearce, "Sharecropping: Towards a Marxist View," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 10 (April 1983), 43-70; Ralph Schlomowitz, "The Origins of Southern Sharecropping," *Agricultural History* 53 (July 1979), 557-75; Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1985), pp. 177-82; Fields, "The Nineteenth-Century American South: History and Theory," *Plantation Society* 2 (April 1983), 18-27; Dan T. Carter, When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867 (Baton Rouge, 1985), pp. 207-10; Litwack, Been In the Storm So Long, pp. 408-20.

labor. One of the key features of share wages was that they were not necessarily associated with annual contract, making them particularly attractive to many ex-slaves in the uncertain days of 1865, when short contract periods were preferred. Like sharecropping, share wages typically did not involve cash, making the plan an attractive one to strapped planters. Initially, ex-slaves too favored the arrangement, because they expected it to provide them with a measure of interest and involvement in the management and disposition of the crop. However, planters did not hold notions of shared management; they expected share wage arrangements to differ but little from slavery. Former slaves would continue to work in gangs under close supervision as they had previously. As a result, the expectation of partnership in farm management, as well as the greater autonomy and physical distance from their employers which freedpeople's visions entailed, promoted the evolution from share wages to sharecropping, which brought the autonomy that share wages had not. It is not always clear from extant contracts that share wages existed in the tobacco belt--contemporaries rarely made the distinction themselves--but the likelihood that they did is high, given the overall similarities of sharecropping in both cotton and tobacco areas. Possibly the Bureau agent in Charlottesville referred to share wages when he made a distinction between those who "cropped land this year . . . and those who worked

by the year, [who] are now anxious to crop."⁶¹

The outlines of the freedpeoples' settled compromise on the plantation were clear by the beginning of the 1867 crop year, when Bureau agents almost to a man reported that working on shares on annual contract was the dominant form of agreement for black families across the tobacco belt. The most common alternative to sharecropping was the payment of a cash wage, but again partly owing to the currency shortage, money payments were rare.⁶² Usually when the call for cash payment appeared it was associated with skilled and short-term labor, and particularly with more mobile single male workers as opposed to families or women with children.

Moreover, most freedmen preferred the more prevalent sharecropping contract, said many contemporaries, over money wages. This preference resulted from the coveted partnership in the plantation management that sharecropping brought. The agreement also provided the tools, seed, and stock freedpeople often lacked; it eliminated the ongoing

⁶¹Capt. William L. Tidball to Brown, 31 December 1866, Albemarle county, Letters Sent, v. 129, pp. 41-2, RG 105. On share wages see especially Glymph, "Freedpeople and Ex-Masters," pp. 52-6; John David Smith, "More than Slaves, Less than Freedmen: The 'Share Wages' Labor System," Civil War History 26 (September 1980), 256-66; and Woodman, "Post-Civil War Agriculture and the Law," 322-25; Woodman, "Sequel to Slavery," 551-53.

⁶²Edward W. Hubbard's Farm and Account books for 1866 and 1867, for example, show that he was one of the few planters who paid cash wages to his hands. Edward W. Hubbard papers.

uncertainty over specie; and freedpeople hoped that it would entail less risk of fraud and eviction. In Nelson county in early 1866, "wages [were] no temptation to the Freedmen to give up a cropping contract."⁶³ Most agents believed that sharecropping was the best and only way to rejuvenate Virginia agriculture given the economic constraints of the time, but others openly disliked its tendency to bring freedpeople into debt; they shrank especially from the partnership aspect of the agreement. "I discourage the renewal of the system of working shares," wrote one agent, "because designing men can take advantage of the ignorance of the freedmen in so many ways. . . . Besides in the event of a failure in the crop, the Negro, by the system of working on shares, is turned out in the winter with nothing

⁶³R. S. Lacey to Brown, 6 February 1866, Letters Received, vol. 1, L55, enclosing Stevenson's January Monthly Report, Lynchburg, Campbell county, BRFAL. The following list of monthly reports represents those agents who reported the predominance of sharecropping or working for share wages over money wages between early 1866, when the first contracts were drawn up, and late 1868, when the last crop grown while the Bureau was in Virginia was being harvested and stored for market: Capt. D. Jerome Connolly, 29 February 1866, Prince Edward and Cumberland cos., and 1 August 1866, 30 December 1866, 31 January 1867, 31 March 1867, 30 April 1867, and 31 July 1867, Nottoway and Lunenburg cos.; Lt. J. F. Dengler, 28 February 1866, Buckingham co.; Lt. Louis Ahrens, 30 March 1866, Charlotte co.; Maj. John W. Jordan, 30 May 1866, 31 July 1866, and 30 December 1867, Prince Edward and Cumberland cos.; Lt. J. M. Kimball, 31 June 1866, Brunswick co.; Lt. Isaac P. Wodell, 30 June 1866, and 31 July 1866, Campbell and Appomattox cos.; Lt. William F. DeKnight, 31 May 1866, Campbell co.; Lt. George Buffum, 31 July 1866, 31 August 1866, 30 October 1866, 31 November 1866, and 30 December 1866, Halifax; Lt. Louis W. Stevenson, 30 July 1866, and 31 August 1866, Nelson

to go upon."⁶⁴ In Amherst county a justice of the peace concurred. "Now sir in relation to these crop contracts," he wrote to the agent, "they will give rise to an unlimited amount of Litigation. . . . It will be much better for both parties that money wages be paid."⁶⁵ By 1868 Thomas Jackson thought cropping agreements "fraught with great danger to the freedmen" because they brought the croppers into debt. But sharecropping injured the landholder, too, "because it takes from him in a measure the power of intelligent direction of farming operations."⁶⁶

co.; Lt. Cullen, 30 October 1866, Mecklenburg co.; Lt. B. T. Schaum, 31 October 1866, Bedford co.; Lt. David P. Scott, 30 December 1867; Lt. W. H. Stowell, 31 June and 31 September 1868; Lt. Rutherford, 30 March 1868, Halifax co.; Lt. J. T. Wilson, 31 December 1866, Goochland co., and 28 February 1867, Goochland and Fluvanna cos.; Lt. George Cook, 31 January 1867, Mecklenburg co.; Lt. Alexander D. Bailie, 31 August 1867, Mecklenburg co.; Lt. Andrew Mahoney, 30 October

⁶⁴Lt. Louis W. Stevenson to Brown, 31 August 1866, Nelson county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁶⁵Jessie Adams, justice of the peace, to Lt. William F. DeKnight, agent in Amherst, 30 June 1866, Letters Received, L167, vol. 1, BRFAL; see Glymph, "Freedpeople and Ex-Masters," p. 55; Roberta Sue Alexander, North Carolina Faces the Freedmen: Race Relations During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-67 (Durham, 1985), pp. 108-10.

⁶⁶Thomas P. Jackson's 2nd Quarterly Report, 1 July 1868, from Farmville, Prince Edward county, BRFAL.

⁶⁷Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, p. 106-07, cites a case of such combination in Buckingham county in 1866. Planters concocted similar schemes to hold down wages--practices that had begun in 1865--in many areas, but the Bureau tried to stop these practices whenever it found them. See, for example, Gen. Oliver O. Howard, Circular Letter, 17 November 1865, BRFAL, microfilm 553, University of Virginia.

One alternative to a sharecropping contract was tenancy, that is, a rental agreement between landowners and the landless. Rental contracts had been rare in 1865, when individual whites often had refused to lease land to blacks and, in some counties, entered combinations to prevent rentals to freedmen by their neighbors.⁶⁷ But between 1866 and 1868 some freedpeople escaped the sharecropping cycle and through combinations of luck, cooperation, and determination, advanced into this more preferable form of tenancy.

Renting outranked sharecropping or working for money wages as an avenue to greater independence, though it was of course less desirable than landowning. A renter became a tenant who paid to the landowner some fraction of the crop he grew, usually a fourth, though sometimes a sum of money, in return for his unobstructed use of the land and its improvements.⁶⁸ "I have heard it said," reported one

1867, 30 November 1867, and 31 January 1868, Pittsylvania co.; Lt. J. B. Clinton, 30 November 1867, 30 December 1867, 30 January 1868, 29 February 1868, Amelia and Powhatan; Lt. Newton Whitten, 30 November 1867, Franklin co.; Thomas Leahey, 31 August 1868, 30 September 1868, Charlotte and Prince Edward cos.; Lt. William Austin, 31 August 1868, 30 October 1868, Lunenburg co.; and E. B. Morse, 28 February 1868, 31 August 1868, Goochland and Fluvanna cos. See also Thomas P. Jackson's 2nd Quarterly Report, 11th Subdistrict, 1 July 1868, from Farmville, Prince Edward county, BRFA. The 11th subdistrict included Prince Edward, Cumberland, Buckingham, Mecklenburg, and Halifax counties.

⁶⁸Tenantry often bears a superficial resemblance to sharecropping, the confusion arising from the exchange of a portion of the crop between renter and landlord. The

agent, "that there is a general desire on the part of the freedmen to 'do for themselves'--that is, to rent pieces of land & work upon their own responsibility."⁶⁹ Freedpeople had "a mania for renting," according to another officer, "& when one rents a place, he gets all of his 'kinfolks' to join him that he possibly can, regardless of his ability to provide the wherewith necessary to make a crop."⁷⁰ "There is an increasing desire among them to rent land & cultivate the same on their own account," reported agent Rutherford in Nottoway and Lunenburg counties in January 1868, "and many have made arrangements to do so the present year."⁷¹ Too often land which whites were willing to rent to freedmen was of poor quality, and when freedpeople lacked livestock, fertilizer, seed, and tools, rental agreements resulted in

difference between the two forms is significant, however, because the portion involved in the payment of rent is directed from the renter to the landlord, rather than vice versa as in the case of sharecropping. Therefore renting brings with it much more independence that results from greater responsibilities and control over management decisions. In addition, renters own more property, usually, in the form of horses, tools, and other factors of production. Glymph, "Freedpeople and Ex-Masters," pp. 64-6; Woodman, "Post-Civil War Southern Agriculture and the Law," 326-28.

⁶⁹Lt. Edwin Lyon, 30 April 1866, Charlotte county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁷⁰Copy of Lt. Louis W. Stevenson's Monthly Report, 31 January 1866, Nelson co., in Letters Received, L55, General Oliver O. Howard, BRFAL, microfilm 553, University of Virginia.

⁷¹Lt. Rutherford to Brown, 29 January 1868, Nottoway and Lunenburg counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

low yield, debt, poverty, and eviction. As a result, some agents discouraged rental contracts since they felt these contracts ultimately swelled the relief rolls. When freedpeople had "the will & tools to work" their rented lands, however, they did "verry well," according to the Louisa agent in the summer of 1866.⁷² One such man was Dabney Calloway of Campbell county, who rented two farms in 1866 of "3 or 400 acres each" which he managed with the help of four sons, one of whom was a blacksmith; he hired additional hands when needed. Calloway supplemented his income as "a good rough carpenter."⁷³

An important trend in postwar black labor history of the tobacco belt was the widespread withdrawal of women and children, particularly young and female children, from the labor force. Planters generally preferred to hire families because, as one agent put it, "the young men generally, are not reliable, & having no family ties, have but little respect for the obligation of a contract."⁷⁴ But even so employers complained loudly about the work habits of the

⁷²Lt. Jacob Roth, 29 August 66, Louisa county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁷³J. R. Hutter to Capt. R. S. Lacey, 9 November 1866, Letters Received, BRFAL; Lacey to Brown, 3 and 4 May 1866, Letters Received, H234; John Wildman, A. S. Hillsman, John C. Hillsman, Tony Perkinson, James M. Baird, Samuel Baird, Brackenridge Case, Robert A. Vermilion, and Luke Wade, Jr., to Col. Orlando Brown, 19 March 1866, BRFAL.

⁷⁴Lt. Edwin Lyon, 30 April 1866, Charlotte co., Monthly Report, BRFAL.

women and children who, at best, would labor "outdoors" only in peak seasons of planting and harvest, and met requests for house service with outright refusal.⁷⁵ Their withdrawal left planters feeling that they had to support entire families "in idleness" while only one or two of its members worked for the plantation. It was a sensitive issue that could provoke strong feelings. On William J. McGehee's plantation a dispute over the issue of family labor resulted in a general strike when a freedwoman "positively refused" to comply with one of his orders in the summer of 1866. McGehee held her husband responsible for her disobedience and deducted an amount from the man's contract. Outraged, the husband vowed that he "would not stand to it" and then "threw down his hoe." His fellow workers left the fields with him, "came home and have not hit a lick since." Their retaliation left McGehee "in the grass and bushes both corn and Tobacco my wheat now perfectly ripe and not a hand." These demands on family labor indicated that planters felt they held the upper hand over their employees; the freedpeople's successful resistance showed that such was not always the case.⁷⁶

⁷⁵See, for example, William A. Smith's assessment in May 1866, in answer to a questionnaire issued to planters by Edwin Lyon in Charlotte county the previous month. Lt. Edwin Lyon to Brown, 30 May 1866, Charlotte co., Monthly Report, BRFAL. Ransom and Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, pp. 45-7.

⁷⁶Pearce, "Sharecropping: Towards A Marxist View," 55;

By a perversion of the same token, unmarried women with children, particularly several children, faced the toughest of all labor markets. Because few people would hire them, they appeared often on the lists of the destitute maintained by the Bureau. "The only class of Freedmen for whom no labor can be found," wrote one district supervisor, "are women with families of children."⁷⁷ When Jeff Stanfield's former master evicted his sister and her several children in Halifax county after the war, Stanfield, fearing they would be unable to find a home, left with them. He entered successive sharecropping agreements to support the family, even though he probably could have found work in a Lynchburg tobacco factory, where he had previously worked as a hired slave, had he not opted to remain with his sister and her family.⁷⁸

Ever alert for idleness, Bureau agents strongly sympathized with planter criticism of the withdrawal of family labor. Agents often tried to stop the practice because they feared that a nonworking family would end in poverty, and that poverty would escalate demands for government supplies. "One of the strangest developments of

Wm. J. McGehee to Maj. John Jordan, 6 June 1866, in Farmville, Prince Edward county, unregistered Letters Received, RG 105, 3972, box 16.

⁷⁷R. S. Lacey to Brown, 6 February 1866, Lynchburg (Campbell co.), Letters Received, vol. 1, L55, BRFAL.

⁷⁸Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, p. 280.

Negro character under the free system," wrote a Southside agent, "is their indisposition to work their wives and children," a habit which "even the most industrious freedmen" encouraged, "so that field labor is materially affected thereby."⁷⁹ The Halifax agent expected that the hard circumstances many families faced at the end of the 1866 crop year would provide them with the "salutary lesson" which only the market could teach. "A large number" had kept their families out of the work force that year, he wrote, "receiving advances from their employers of Provisions &c. . . . [They] now find that they have consumed all they have made & have nothing coming to them, & in some instances they are in debt."⁸⁰ The very situation which he described would eventually result in the reentry of women and children into agriculture in larger numbers, particularly since many phases of tobacco production readily lent themselves to the labor of women and children.⁸¹

⁷⁹Lt. Edwin Lyon, 30 April and 29 May 1866, Monthly Reports, Charlotte co., BRFAL; see also, for example, Lt. Robert Cullen, 31 August 1866, Mecklenburg co., Monthly Report, BRFAL; Lt. George Buffum, 30 March 1866, Halifax co., Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁸⁰Lt. George Buffum, 30 November and 30 December 1866, Halifax co., Monthly Report, BRFAL; in February 1867 Buffum noted that many women had returned to work, "instead of being as they have heretofore been an incubus" upon their husbands and fathers "& thereby remaining one of the great evils that existed here." Buffum, Monthly Report, 28 February 1866.

⁸¹Delores Janiewski, "Women and the Making of a Rural Proletariat in the Bright Tobacco Belt, 1880-1930," The Insurgent Sociologist 10 (Summer 1980), 16-26.

Observations on the allegedly misspent labor of women and children often reflected pejorative judgments about husband-wife relations among the freedpeople. Husbands, it was said, failed to understand and execute the responsibilities of headship, and as the case of the dispute on William McGehee's plantation illustrated, planters felt justified in charging husbands for the perceived faults of wives and children. So did Lt. Jordan interpret the issue in early 1867. "I have found," he wrote, "that to some extent the freedwomen are seized with the idea of living indolently & independent of the authority of their liege lords." Jordan planned to stop "this evil" by explaining "the relations existing between the colored husband & wife," which he ironically went on to describe as "precisely the same as those existing between the white husband & wife. . . . I am satisfied . . . that these troubles are attributable to an ignorance of the true nature & obligations of the married relation & will disappear in the ratio in which these people advance in civilization & intelligence." But even when husbands did exercise the male prerogatives urged upon them, and instructed wives to enter the labor market, some wives seemed "determined on resisting the authority" of their spouses, and they defiantly stayed at home with their children.⁸²

⁸²Major James W. Jordan, 27 February 1867, Prince Edward, Cumberland, Buckingham, Charlotte cos., Monthly Report.

The availability of other types of non-agricultural wage-work aided efforts to strike better bargains with landholders, because it meant that freedpeople were not entirely restricted to agriculture for employment. Alternate opportunities existed especially near towns and cities, where factory work, notably in tobacco, absorbed part of the work force. Charlottesville, Clarksville, Farmville, and especially Danville and Lynchburg represented the most significant of the non-agricultural labor markets in the interior--and, not surprisingly, from them often came the loudest complaints from planters that freedpeople would not work. Railroads too gave an outlet, both within and outside of the state. Around Lynchburg in early 1866, for example, many freedmen found wages good enough--fifty cents per cord cutting wood ties--to keep them off of the plantation.⁸³ "Railroads in Kentucky and Tennessee are taking away the better class of hands," reported the Nelson agent in May 1867. "This is gradually advancing the price of wages. Several Northern enterprises which have been started in my Division are paying wages which the community

⁸³Capt. R. S. Lacey to Brown, Letters Received, v. 1, L55, Stevenson's Monthly Report for January 1866, sent 6 February 1866, from Lynchburg, Campbell co., BRFAL; Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 114-15, 128; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 143; Allen W. Moger, "Railroad Practices and Policies in Virginia after the Civil War," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 59 (October 1951), 448n.

looks upon as ruinous, especially as they settle weekly."⁸⁴

But alternatives to agricultural labor did not solve all the problems by any means. Jobs were too few in number to accommodate more than a small number--perhaps only 5 percent--of working-age freedmen. In addition, tobacco factory work, because it was seasonal, generated other problems. Factories employed men only between early spring, after marketing, and November or December, when factories closed again until April or May. Factory workers were then unemployed, and many went into the agricultural labor market in search of a temporary livelihood. Sometimes they found work; more often they were described as a group of chronically unemployed men in winter. According to one agent, they had difficulty finding agricultural labor since "they knew nothing about farming," suggesting that they had long been about their business.⁸⁵

One important development in the economic, agricultural, and labor history of the postwar tobacco belt, and one that not only helped establish sharecropping but kept Southside tobacco factories in operation as well, was the appearance

⁸⁴Lt. Louis W. Stevenson to Brown, 31 May 1867, Nelson co., Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁸⁵Lt. Andrew Mahoney to Brown, 1 April 1868, Pittsylvania co., Monthly Report, BRFAL. For other comments on factory work, see R. S. Lacey to Brown, 30 September 1867, Quarterly report, 7th district, C344 Letters Received; Maj. John W. Jordan to Brown, 1 July 1866, Prince Edward and Cumberland counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

of a new type of tobacco agriculture. The wide-scale adoption of Bright tobacco, along with continued dark-leaf cultivation in other counties, provided some hope for Virginia's depressed postwar tobacco industry.⁸⁶ "Bright" described a type of yellow tobacco, often called "fancy yellow," much lighter in color than the older dark leaf variety, Orinoco, that had been grown since colonial times. "Bright" was a milder, more aromatic strain, with a greater resistance to the bruising and staining of the manufacturing process and productive of a more aesthetic golden product. The controlling feature of bright culture was that it actually grew best in poorer soils of light, somewhat sandy composition, since its coveted hue resulted from a semi-starvation process. Neither the heavier red clays nor the rich dark loams of eastern Virginia could produce high-grade Bright tobacco, and its growth was restricted to a poverty-stricken band along the Virginia-North Carolina piedmont border that came to be known as the new or Bright belt.⁸⁷

⁸⁶Kentucky would outpace Virginia as the nation's major producer of tobacco by the 1870s, and North Carolina, where the majority of Bright tobacco was grown, was an up-and-coming competitor. Robert, Story of Tobacco in America, pp. 134-37.

⁸⁷Robert, Story of Tobacco, p. 17; Nannie May Tilley, The Bright-Tobacco Industry, 1860-1929 (Chapel Hill, 1948), esp. pp. 1-36, 37. Tilley's book is a monumental piece of research on the subject. See also J. B. Killebrew, "Report on the Culture and Curing of Tobacco in the United States," (Washington, 1889), pp. 788-818.

While much of the processing of "Bright" was performed by hand, other aspects of its culture were innovative in approach. Rather than use the old fire-cure method, a laborious process lasting several days or weeks, Bright farmers subjected "fancy yellows" to more efficient and labor-saving flue curing. Fire-curing was an uncertain venture that had required farmers to maintain fires under curing barns which they tended through the night and extinguished by day. But by constructing stoves or kilns outside the curing barn, farmers could direct heat into the interior through pipes--"flues"--in a more uniform and measured way. Flue-curing released farmers from the tedious nightlong vigils, lessened potential fire hazards, and introduced a more general use of charcoal, rather than the less efficient wood used in fire curing. The use of flues prevented adulteration by smoke, and eliminated frustrating gambles with the weather, which had to be clear during fire-curing to lessen the damage of mold and mildew. Farmers had experimented with flue cures since the early nineteenth century, but they did not perfect the technique for general use until the late antebellum period. Once flue curing became a generally understood process, and once farmers realized that the cultivation of yellow tobacco had specific soil requirements, large-scale cultivation became

possible. This awareness had become general in the late 1850s, but the war had interrupted widespread adoption of the crop.⁸⁸

Although the methods of marketing Bright differed considerably from those which had characterized antebellum dark-leaf production, the uses to which it was put varied little, and helped maintain a market for black labor in the factories. Bright tobacco, when properly produced, resulted in thin, pliable leaves highly prized as wrappers, the attractive covers used on chewing plugs. Because the value of the leaf hinged on its individual characteristics, the old government-sponsored inspection system, whereby hogsheads of prized tobacco were split partially open to obtain a sample by which the quality of the whole was judged, yielded to loose-leaf auctions that allowed buyers to inspect each leaf. The act of prizing was also said to damage Bright leaf and could render it useless as a wrapper, a fact which also influenced the use of private auction marketing. By the late 1870s this shift in marketing, from bulk inspection to warehouse auction, transformed tobacco sales from a state-controlled to a private venture and had introduced the itinerant middleman, changes that were in greater harmony with the growing laissez-faire spirit of the

⁸⁸Tilley, Bright-Tobacco Industry, pp. 59-73.

age.⁸⁹ But before the late 1870s, when a more brittle Bright leaf known as a "cutter" was used in the developing cigarette and cigar industry, Bright tobacco was used only in the production of plug or chewing tobacco, long associated with black labor. Therefore its manufacture remained the province of black labor, and factories in Danville, the Virginia market center for Bright leaf, represented an oasis of sorts where black factory workers remained in demand and were largely unaffected by growing competition from white labor.⁹⁰

Freedpeople's acquisition of the ballot and the planters' decline in political power enabled freedpeople to win more rights on the plantation, usually as sharecroppers, but occasionally as renters or even landholders. In addition, secular developments like the spread of bright culture in the Southside helped some to retain jobs in the

⁸⁹Dissatisfaction with the inspection system, operated by the government, had been fairly widespread during the 1850s, but did not give way completely to private initiative until the General Assembly of 1876-77 and 1877-78 effectively abolished the system. Loose-leaf auctions began in Danville before the war, where some Bright leaf was manufactured. The method came to characterize the sale of all types of tobacco. Tilley, Bright-Tobacco Industry, pp. 197-218, 253-55.

⁹⁰Calculated from Federal Census Returns, Population, 1860, 1870, and 1880; Tilley, Bright-Tobacco Industry, pp. 515-21. Riots occurred in Danville in 1883 which resulted largely from the greater numbers of white workers hired into the factories after the commencement of cigarette and cigar manufacture. See Leslie Hough, "Discontent in a Southern Tobacco Town: Lynchburg, Virginia Workers in the 1880s,"

industrial economy, which in turn enhanced other workers' bargaining positions on the farm. Freedpeople thus were able to resist efforts to reinstate antebellum labor organization, and their experiences show that emancipation had made an important difference in their lives as laborers. Within the black community, there was evidence that the changes in labor status also had brought change to the other aspects of black life.

VII

An important emancipation-related development in upcountry black society between 1866 and 1868 was the differentiation of the Afro-American community along class lines. One of the best sources of information on the emerging black elite comes by way of black participation in politics and the exercise of the ballot, as the Klan's visit to Appomattox county showed previously.

Of the twenty-five black members elected to the 1867 Constitutional Convention--all of whom later served in some capacity in state and local political offices--thirteen came from tobacco-belt counties. Information on the background of eight of these men exists. Collectively they displayed

Masters' Thesis, University of Virginia, 1973, for an account of the decline of the tobacco industry and the simultaneous introduction of white labor in "the Tobacco City," and the violence that resulted.

characteristics common among emergent black leaders all across the South. Most striking of all was their status as property holders or skilled artisans; frequently they also ranked as prominent members of the church. At least eight owned significant amounts of real or personal property; seven were possessed of important skills. Six had been born free before the war, one had been a hired slave, at least four were literate, and two were preachers in addition to other skills or professions. Although their color, as distinguished between black, and "colored" or mulatto, is not known in all cases, generally Afro-American officeholders in Virginia were more often black than mulatto, contrary to black politicians in the Lower South or in South Carolina.⁹¹

⁹¹The analysis in this chapter includes only those men in political office between 1865 and 1871. Luther Porter Jackson studied black officeholders between 1865 and 1895. He found that out of a total of 102 black Virginian legislators, about 25 percent were "fair in color" while the others were "chiefly or wholly of African descent." At least ten of the mulattoes, he said, were sons of their masters. One-third of the group had been born free, and most of them had worked either as house servants, skilled mechanics, or managers of other slaves. Many were literate; only eighteen possessed no property of any kind. A wide range of occupations was represented among them, including doctor, dentist, lawyer, teacher, minister, rock mason, painter, jeweler, general mechanic, brick mason, barber, blacksmith, carpenter, shoemaker, boatman, grocer, general storekeeper, farmer and janitor. Luther Porter Jackson, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, 1865-1895 (Norfolk, 1945), pp. 47-53. That blacks as opposed to mulattoes proliferated in the leadership elite in postwar Virginia is not surprising, given the state's demography. Many free Negroes did not originate from unions between slave women and white men, as was true in the Lower South. Most traced their

The collective characteristics of these men are suggestive of the attributes necessary to gain positions of influence in the postwar period. Former free Negroes were more numerous than former slaves. They included James D. Barrett of Fluvanna county, a shoemaker who also farmed and preached. James W. D. Bland from Prince Edward was one of the most prominent members of the Convention, mistakenly dismissed by Schofield as "illiterate and ignorant."⁹² Through his mother's ex-master, Bland learned to read and

heritage to the Revolutionary era and late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when a combination of economic and ideological motives persuaded a significant number of Virginia slaveholders to emancipate their bondsmen and women, most of whom were black. See Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South (New York, 1976), pp. 4-5; Willie Lee Rose, "The Impact of the American Revolution on Afro-Americans," in Slavery and Freedom, ed. by William W. Freehling (Oxford, 1982), pp. 15-16; Richard S. Dunn, "Black Society in the Chesapeake, 1776-1810," in Ronald Hoffman and Ira Berlin, eds., Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution (Charlottesville, 1983), pp. 49-82; Allan Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples: Black Migrants in the Age of the American Revolution, 1790-1820," in *ibid.*, pp. 143-74; Luther Porter Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860 (New York, reprint ed., 1969), p. 116. On the development of the postwar elite in other parts of the South, see Thomas Holt, Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction (Urbana, 1977), and Armstead L. Robinson, "Plans Dat Comed From God: Institution Building and the Emergence of Black Leadership in Reconstruction Memphis," in Towards A New South? Studies in Post-Civil War Southern Communities, ed. by Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr. (Westport, Conn., 1982), pp. 71-102.

⁹²Schofield drew up a list of both black and white convention delegates and gave a brief description for most of the people he named. The list is reproduced in Lowe, "Virginia's Reconstruction Convention," 341-60.

write; as a boy he worked in his father's cooper shop. At his untimely death at 32 he was landless, but with the \$1000 he left behind his widow purchased a home. Frank Moss was a Buckingham county farmer and preacher who came from a free Negro family of several generations' standing. Moss steadily added on to his landholdings through the 1870s. John Robinson of Cumberland had become a landholder in 1857. He also owned a tavern, several horses and carriages, and held a job as a mail carrier. James T. S. Taylor was, like his father Fairfax Taylor, a shoemaker. Taylor was educated by a white hired by his father for the purpose. With the \$1000 he gained through service in the war, Taylor built a two-story brick house on some land his father owned. Schofield described him as "honest," but expected him to "act with the extreme Radicals." Edward Nelson, a laborer who won Schofield's approbation as a man possessed of "excellent character," represented Charlotte county.⁹³ With the exception of Nelson, the group revealed how important it was, even with their status as former free Negroes, to own property as a prerequisite to political representation.

Possession of property or an important skill seem to have been widespread among the former slaves elected to the

⁹³Information on these men is found in Jackson, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, pp. 1-2, 3-4, 7, 21-2, 28-9, 35-6, 41, 43; and Lowe, "Virginia's Reconstruction Convention," 346-80.

convention that fall. James B. Carter, a representative for Chesterfield and Powhatan, held both: he owned lots in Manchester and practiced the trade of shoemaking. Samuel F. Kelso of Campbell county owned land and taught school. David Canada of Halifax was skilled in stone masonry. John Watson from Mecklenburg was a shoemaker active in the establishment of schools and churches. Former house servant and boatman William P. Moseley came from Goochland. Apparently illiterate, he owned property in Goochland, where he "lived in regal style in the mansion once occupied by his master" on 500 acres of land; he owned a lot in Richmond as well. A former hired slave shoemaker named Joseph R. Holmes, also from Charlotte joined these others in Richmond that fall. After freedom Holmes had bought eight and a half acres; he was said to read and write easily and had received some legal instruction from his former master. Although only one of these men was specifically mentioned as a former hired slave, the skills that the group possessed suggest that they might well have been acquainted that system.⁹⁴

The Bureau also provided information on the emerging black elite through a series of reports, entitled "Reports on Prominent Whites and Freedmen," that it generated on influential members of the community. In early March 1867 Brown solicited information from his agents through a

⁹⁴Jackson, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, pp. 3-4, 34-6, 41, 43; Lowe, "Virginia's Reconstruction Convention," 346-80.

confidential circular on both white and black residents who were "men of the first respectability, and who have the confidence of both the whites and the freedmen, such men as both races would select for the Magistracy, or any office of trust and responsibility." The men on whom the assistant superintendents subsequently reported did not always enter the political arena, although some did.⁹⁵

In most cases agents went into more detail on whites, but some gave extraordinary information about the freedpeople they selected. The Albemarle agent was the most thorough. The nine men he selected included six ex-slaves and three former free Negroes. Of the former slaves, four he described as black, and two mulatto. The former included Henry Smith, who farmed and preached in the Baptist church near Scottsville. William Gibbons, a mulatto, also farmed and preached, and was literate. Still another mulatto, farmer Spotswood Jones, preached in the Baptist church. At Keswick Depot lived Emanuel Madison, a black farmer who was "a prominent member of the Baptist church. . . . It is believed he can read, but he can not write." Ossian Johnson, black, was another Baptist church officer; he could read but not write. The Albemarle agent settled on Fairfax

⁹⁵Brown, Circular Letter, 8 March 1867; copy found in unregistered Letters Received, RG 105, 4084, box 35, Brown to R. S. Lacey, BRFAL. These reports seem to have been motivated by the charge that disfranchisement would diminish the number of men capable of governing the state, a charge that Brown wished to disprove.

Taylor, whose son James later became a delegate to the Convention, as the last former slave on his list. He described Taylor as black, freed by his own purchase, and an officer in the Baptist church. Taylor had enrolled in school in Charlottesville, "and can not only read and write, but has some knowledge of grammar."⁹⁶

The agent described as light-skinned each of the three former free Negroes from Albemarle who had never been slaves. They included Robert Scott, "an octoroon" and a musician who owned "considerable property," was literate, and "mingle[d] but little with either race, but is by both highly esteemed." Nichols Richmond, "a quadroon," was a shoemaker and a Baptist preacher, literate, and "exercise[d] considerable influence among the colored people."⁹⁷

Blacksmith Peter A. Cross, a quadroon, owned property and was an officer in the Baptist church.

Four members of the group selected by the Albemarle agent--Cross, Johnson, Richmond, and Taylor--had been delegates to the Colored State Convention in December 1865. Of the nine names submitted from Albemarle, fully eight were said to be either Baptist preachers or officers; three were

⁹⁶Capt. William L. Tidball to Brown, 12 March 1867, Albemarle county, Report on Prominent Whites and Freedmen, BRFAL.

⁹⁷Nichols Richmond was probably the "N. Richmond" who authored the petition of "colored citizens" to request federal military protection earlier in 1866.

free Negroes before the war, while six were former slaves. Three were skilled; four were farmers; all were said to be literate to one degree or another. Five were mulattoes, four were described as "black men." While all of the former free Negroes were mulattoes, four of the six former slaves were black.⁹⁸

The lists for other districts revealed that many of the men chosen, as in Albemarle, also had attended the Colored State Convention in 1865. These included Lewis Scott and Henry Barksdale of Danville, William Mosely of Goochland, and Samuel T. Kelso of Lynchburg. Two, Mosely and Kelso, would be present at the constitutional convention that fall.⁹⁹

⁹⁸Capt. William L. Tidball to Brown, 12 March 1867, Albemarle county, Report on Prominent Whites and Freedmen, BRFAL; for delegates to the Colored State Convention, see Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker, eds., The Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840-1865 (Philadelphia, 1980), p. 259.

⁹⁹Reports of Prominent Whites and Freedmen, BRFAL, for the following: Lt. Louis W. Stevenson to Brown, 10 March 1867, 12 April 1867, Nelson county; Col. G. B. Carse to Brown, 15 March 1867, Pittsylvania county; J. B. Clinton to Brown, 15 March 1867, Amelia and Powhatan counties; J. T. Wilson to Brown, 16 March 1867, Goochland county; Lt. Kimball to Brown, 18 March 1867, Brunswick county; Lt. George Buffum to Brown, 19 March 1867, Halifax county; Lt. George T. Cook to Brown, 19 March 1867, Mecklenburg county; Capt. D. Jerome Connolly to Brown, 22 March 1867, Nottoway and Lunenburg counties; Lt. William F. De Knight to Brown, 26 March 1867, Franklin county; Maj. Marcus S. Hopkins to Brown, 27 March 1867, Orange and Louisa counties; B. T. Shaum to Brown, 27 March 1867, Bedford county; James Joyes to Brown, 29 March 1867, Prince Edward, Cumberland, Buckingham, and Charlotte counties; Lt. Fernald to Brown, 1 April 1867, Patrick and Henry counties; Lt. Louis W. Stevenson to Brown, 16 April

As the frequent references to religious leadership among the black elite show, the church formed a primary avenue to distinction in the postwar black community, and the most important focal point of the Afro-American institutional life in interior Virginia. Agents were uniformly impressed by black religious leaders and church activity; they often included comments about black religion in their reports. The Pittsylvania officer's remark was typical: "they attend their places of worship very strickly & in large congregations," he wrote in September 1867.¹⁰⁰ In Lynchburg freedpeople began building two churches in the spring of 1867, the Methodists constructing "a costly edifice, second in size to but one in the town."¹⁰¹ Most were not nearly so elaborate, but in every county reports came in of the organization of the freedpeople into churches of one sort or another. Several small churches in remote rural districts went by the name of "The African Church," as did one at Carter's Bridge in Albemarle.¹⁰²

1867, Amherst and Campbell counties. See also Foner and Walker, eds., Black State Conventions, pp. 259-60.

¹⁰⁰Lt. Andrew Mahoney to Brown, 1 September 1867, Pittsylvania county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

¹⁰¹Lt. Louis W. Stevenson to Brown, 30 April 1867, Campbell, Appomattox, Amherst, and Nelson counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

¹⁰²Capt. William L. Tidball to Major E. C. Morse, 19 October 1866, Letters Sent, Field Office Records, V. 128, pp. 339-40, Albemarle county BRFAL; and Sarah Johnson to Maj. Marcus S. Hopkins, A.S.A.C., 4 October 1868, Letters

Churches served many functions. Perhaps none was more universal or more important to the lives of the masses of freedpeople than that of education. Although a handful of northern teachers, both male and female, persevered in lonely and often dangerous posts in interior Virginia, most large-scale philanthropic activity centered in the Tidewater area or was restricted to towns like Lynchburg and Danville.¹⁰³ In the absence of northern personnel, then, black churches regularly became the province of the teacher between Monday and Friday. It was within this context--that is, in remarking on schools that were being conducted in the various churches of the interior--that Bureau records most completely divulged information about both religion and education, and they often linked the two topics together. "Lindsay Smith is a freedman, who is now teaching a school

Received, M278, Albemarle county, BRFAL.

¹⁰³"There is a strong & bitter prejudice against Northern teachers, especially so - against female teachers," said the Charlotte county agent in May 1866; a similar report came from Pittsylvania county in June 1867, and reports of teachers as targets of violence and abuse were far from infrequent. Lt. Edwin Lyons to Brown, 1 May 1866, Charlotte county, Monthly Report, BRFAL; Col. G. B. Carse to Brown, 1 June 1867, Pittsylvania county, Monthly Report, BRFAL; see also Henry Lee Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870 (New York, 1967), pp. 125-26, 129, 131-32; William T. Alderson, "The Freedman's Bureau and Negro Education in Virginia," North Carolina Historical Review 29 (January 1952), 66, 69-70. The associations active in the eastern and urban areas of Virginia included the American Missionary Association, the New York National Freedman's Relief Association, the New England Freedman's Aid Society, the Baptist Home Mission Society, the Friends Freedman's Relief Association, and the American Freedman's Union Commission.

of thirty-three scholars in the African Church," came a typical report.¹⁰⁴

As elsewhere in the South, many people in upcountry Virginia commented on the thirst freedpeople had for knowledge, particularly for their children. Bureau reports were peppered with news about efforts to acquire the fundamentals of learning and the successes that attended that pursuit. "The Sunday School in this place numbers, over one hundred children, who are mostly taught, by men & women of their own race," said Lt. Shaum of Bedford county, "& conducted with the utmost decorum."¹⁰⁵ "I made an inspection of the school on the 30th instant, & found a large attendance of Scholars," said a Danville agent. "Its really surprising the progress that those children are making many of them can read & write well they study the History Geography & Arithmetic & numbers of these children are quite proficient in those branches."¹⁰⁶ Teachers and their "scholars" often proudly displayed the skills they had acquired. On New Year's Day 1867 in Charlottesville, for example, Anna Gardner's pupils celebrated the anniversary of

¹⁰⁴Capt. William L. Tidball to Maj. Morse, 19 October 1866, Letters Sent, v. 128, pp. 339-40, Albemarle county, BRFAL.

¹⁰⁵B. T. Shaum to Brown, 30 September 1867, Bedford and Botetourt counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

¹⁰⁶Lt. Andrew Mahoney, 31 March 1868, Danville (Pittsylvania co.), Monthly Report, BRFAL.

the Emancipation Proclamation with a formal recital.¹⁰⁷

As a promoter of freedpeople's education the Bureau achieved its greatest success. But, at least in upcountry Virginia, agents continued to experience difficulty meeting the educational needs of the freedpeople. Many agents reported that schools had been discontinued for want of material support. If it was not money needed to pay the teacher, or find them room and board, then it was a lack of fuel in winter to heat the schoolroom, or the absence of books, paper, and other essentials. Some children did not attend school because they lacked clothing, and not just adequate clothing but garments of any sort; others were kept out of school in order to help on the farm, as was true of farming families everywhere regardless of race. "The Freedmen generally are manifesting increased intent, in the organization & establishment of Churches, & Schools," said one agent, "& were it not for their poverty stricken condition, & their consequent inability to contribute money toward the erection of schools &c., there would be . . . a large building speedily erected, which would soon be filled."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷Miss Anna Gardner to Capt. Tidball, 27 December 1866, RG 105, 3979, box 11, Letters Received, Charlottesville (Albemarle co.).

¹⁰⁸Maj. John W. Jordan to Brown, 1 June 1867, Prince Edward, Buckingham, Charlotte and Cumberland counties, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

Sarah Johnson's experience illustrates the problems that could frustrate efforts to keep a small freedman's school financially afloat. Johnson was a freedwoman who tried repeatedly to obtain promised funding from the Bureau. She almost gave up in despair. "I would be very thankful for the help," she wrote, "but I will not trouble myself about it any more I will try to teach my own children at home and I can weave or wash and iron or sew or cook or milk or work in the field or any thing that a woman aut to do and I will do so now this is the third or fourth time that I have writen you but this is my last I will try to waste my paper some other way." But three days later some news brought by her husband prompted her to compose once more. "He told me that you said that it was only the rich people that carrys on the Schools a bout the towns for the poor colored children. so I thought if you would you could write to some of your rich friends and ask them if twas but the rags that they give the ragman that the seven poor Motherless and Fatherless children that I have in my School" would be the better off for having received them. "The least kind of old cloths clean or dirty I would except of them such as old sheets or any thing that do to have up to the least garment that is wore for a child from two to twelve years old if they was I would be glad to wash them some of the people say they will pay me but I dont expect any pay for the Motherless children for some of them had but one garment to

save their lives and if you were to help us that much it would be better than the money. . . . you know that you northern friends are all the friends we have in this world." ¹⁰⁹

Ever-present in these early efforts to establish the Afro-American community, and to erect schools and churches, were ongoing efforts to reconstitute their families. As Johnson's references to young orphan children suggests, the reunion of families, whether with kin in Virginia or with others located throughout the South, was an incomplete task in 1868. "There are still large numbers of Freedmen & women travelling around the country in search of husbands, wives, mothers & other relatives who have been seperated for years. . . . I don't believe they can be considered vagrants," agent Connolly had written in March 1866. ¹¹⁰

"A poor, lonely destitute freedwoman, Susan Jackson, has applied to me to know if there be any way she can know what has become of her children," wrote one agent. "They were three . . . Fielding, Anderson and Priscilla." Jackson knew that Fielding had been bought by Eberson & Smith, slave traders of Richmond, and she thought he had been sold into South Carolina to a man named Glover. "Anderson and

¹⁰⁹Sarah Johnson to Maj. Marcus S. Hopkins, 4 and 7 October 1868, Albemarle co., Letters Received, M278, BRFA.

¹¹⁰Capt. Jerome Connolly to Brown, 30 March 1866, Prince Edward and Cumberland counties, Monthly Report, BRFA.

Priscilla were bought by Lem Jones, a slave trader of Petersburg and also sold in the South." Of these two she knew nothing other than that a woman from South Carolina had met a Priscilla Jackson working in a Charleston hotel. "Susan Jackson is a woman considerably advanced in life," the agent wrote, "entirely alone, without a relation in the world except her children. . . . If her children can be found, it will . . . be a great comfort to her."¹¹¹

Separated from their three children in an estate division, Horace and Matilda Leftridge of Charleston sought Battle, Griffin, Cornelius, Caroline Matilda, and Rachel Walker, all grown by 1866, in Lynchburg.¹¹² One of the most poignant expressions came from West Point, Georgia, from where a 45-year old woman named Juda Wright wrote to her family in Farmville in 1868. Wright said that she had anticipated returning to Virginia long before then, but that after three years of freedom she despaired of ever seeing home and family again. "I have never got any pay for my work since we been free," she wrote. "Dear father," she addressed part of her letter, "pray that the lord may open the way that I may see you before I die . . . I am sorr[y]

¹¹¹Capt. William L. Tidball to Maj. William R. Morse, 3 August 1866, Letters Sent, Albemarle county, v. 128, p. 204, RG 105.

¹¹²G. Pillsbury to R. S. Lacey, Superintendent, 24 May 1866, unregistered Letters Received, RG 105, 4084, Lynchburg, Campbell county.

to Say that I have been gone 21 years and never expect to see home. . . . My heart is often filled with joy think that we ever meet again never part no more father there is no more selling."¹¹³ In short, there seemed to be few black families in the upcountry who had been unacquainted with family separation in slavery. Many ex-slaves in the narratives recalled the sale of someone in their family or of someone they knew. Many of these people never saw their relatives after they had been sold.¹¹⁴

IX

The struggles that occurred in upcountry Virginia between 1866 and 1868 revealed the extent to which freedpeople battled prejudice nearly every time they came into contact with whites. The northern victors and their representatives in the Bureau were no more immune from prejudice than were many of the native whites with whom freedpeople had long dealt. Nineteenth-century racism had certain general characteristics. Pronouncements against slavery among

¹¹³Juda Wright to "My Dear Sister," July 29, 1868, RG 105, 3972, box 16, unregistered Letters Received, Farmville, Prince Edward county. An unsigned note at the bottom of the letter stated that Wright's husband had left her.

¹¹⁴See, for example, the narrative testimony in Perdue, et. al., eds., Weevils in the Wheat, pp. 33, 71, 89, 92, 123, 152, 166, 236, and 264, for reminiscences of ex-slaves on this subject; see also Chapter 1.

northerners were commonplace long before the war, and a paternalist philanthropy toward the slaves had a long heritage and a large cadre of adherents. Many Bureau agents came from this tradition. But few nineteenth-century white Americans were free of assumptions about heirarchical ordering of civilizations, and uneven human development. Black inferiority was a given, and Bureau agents were not exempt from this belief. Most felt as Maj. Marcus S. Hopkins, agent for Albemarle and Orange counties in 1868, who encapsulated the prevailing attitude when he distilled his conversation with a local citizen in his diary. "Mr. Page called and discussed slavery and 'Niggers' with him," Hopkins noted succinctly from his post in Gordonsville. "We agreed on 'Niggers' but not on slavery."¹¹⁵

Yet many agents, hobbled as they were by their concepts of race and inequality, had not always been bereft of sympathy for the plight of the freedpeople. Though written through the lens of common prejudice, one of Lt. William Austin's last reports expressed his outrage at the misery he had seen in the Southside, and his frustration at his

¹¹⁵William F. Mugleston, ed., "The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction in Virginia: The Diary of Marcus Sterling Hopkins, A Union Officer," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 86 (January 1978), 71; George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York, 1971); Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (London, 1970), pp. 4-6, 40-72.

inability to help the freedpeople. "The general condition of the Freedmen is deplorable," he wrote as he closed up shop in Lunenburg county.

Ignorant, poor, & dependent. In the midst of a dominant race who are opposed to their improvement either in property or intelligence & without the means or ability to improve themselves, their children grow up in filth, ignorance & vice. Industrious, faithful & patient under all circumstances to find at years end the proceeds of such . . . taken from them unjustly & they left no better than at the beginning & compelled by want to repeat the same another year. The hearing of their complaints before a Magistrate nothing but a farce, & the higher courts beyond their reach for want of means to fee the Lawyers or pay the necessary costs. Frequently committed to jail for trivial offenses which if committed by a white man would go unnoticed. Persecuted for their color, oppressed degraded & treated like beasts of burden for selfish purposes till they become but little superior thereto. Taught by the pernicious example of evil men to disrupt & violate the law they become the sources from which the penitentiaries & jails are filled & with no counteracting influence for good the evil must greatly increase. Possessed in a remarkable degree considering their ignorance with a sense of what is just & equitable & failing to find protection in their rights in the State civil laws, they look for protection to the General Government & failing to find it there it will be a marvel in history if they do not attempt to protect themselves from the injustice of their oppressors.¹¹⁶

But Austin did not fully accredit freedpeople's many efforts to protect themselves. Some freedpeople like Dabney and Sinar Calloway and their four sons, and the Taylors of Albemarle county, had made the initial move away from sharecropping and toward greater self-mastery by renting or

¹¹⁶Lt. William P. Austin to Brown, 28 September 1868, Lunenburg co., Monthly Report, BRFA.

by working at a trade. A few others had even managed to buy land, and the acquisition of education, political rights, and the freedom to worship as they chose in churches that they directed and often owned all represented important victories for the freedpeople. They had fought against the apprenticeship system, sometimes with success, and relocated many of their missing family members, though many remained to be found. Political gains had been especially striking. Freedmen had played a major role in the formation of the Underwood Constitution, and their political activity revealed the existence of a black elite whose status rested on propertyholding and religious leadership. Many anticipated hopefully the continuation of their influence in government circles.

The years 1866, 1867, and 1868 encompassed staggering political and economic changes. In these three short years, major steps away from slavery were taken. Unreconstructed planters relinquished the last shreds of hope that they might regain absolute control over black labor. Many tobacco-belt ex-slaves had influenced this awareness by forcing the compromise of sharecropping. Sharecropping represented a bargain that fell short of the ideal of landholding, but at least potentially it could bring a degree of autonomy and privacy to life. Freedpeople influenced this outcome even as they tried to infuse the bargain with preindustrial notions of labor and property.

For their part, planters struggled to find a way to recover their political power. Their prerogatives had received a severe jolt during Congressional Reconstruction between 1866 and 1868; black suffrage and freedpeople's use of the ballot to bring victory in the convention left their opponents stunned. Consequently, the white elite prepared to chart a new course as 1868 drew to a close. During the next two years, the white elite completed its incorporation of the terms of the victors.

CHAPTER V

The Failure of Virginia Reconstruction, 1869-70

Reconstruction in Virginia ended under singular circumstances. The Freedmen's Bureau withdrew in late 1869 and early 1870 from the reconstruction process, and the federal government, as was true across the South, increasingly diminished its influence. But in Virginia, Conservatives assumed power, making the Old Dominion the only state readmitted to the Union without benefit of Republican government. In many ways, timing worked to their advantage. The national patience with postwar instability had grown short by late 1868; northerners were anxious to get on with business. President-elect Ulysses S. Grant shared that sentiment and planned to bring the three remaining unreadmitted former Confederate states back into the Union quickly and peacefully. In Virginia, that meant he dealt with a group of "moderates" who felt chastened by events of the immediate postwar years. Defeat, economic disruption, the successful challenges of freedpeople and

Radicals, and an irritatingly long wait for readmission combined by 1869 to force them to drop resistance to the new order. This group of "moderates" eagerly accepted home rule in return for manhood suffrage. The power they acquired as a result transformed them into new men who, while in many respects still traditional, now pursued goals slaveholders would have condemned. The northern departure left freedpeople on their own but protected, the government reasoned, by a trio of constitutional amendments and the Civil Rights Act. Thus, only four and a half years past surrender, political power in Virginia assumed the shape it would hold for the next decade.¹

But economic rehabilitation was far more difficult to attain, and remained an elusive goal even for the most enthusiastic and optimistic Conservatives. Each economic sector felt lingering effects of the war. Industry held the advantage in the new economy primarily because of its antebellum apprenticeship in the hiring system, and the more encouraging postwar atmosphere toward its development. Industrialists therefore found little reason to attempt a

¹Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment, specifically granting the franchise to black men, in late 1868; the Fourteenth Amendment conferred citizenship. Kenneth M. Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (New York, 1965), pp. 142, 145; C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1951), p. 4; Jack P. Maddex, Jr., The Virginia Conservatives: A Study in Reconstruction Politics, 1867-1879 (Chapel Hill, 1970) is the authoritative work on Conservative politics in postwar Virginia.

fundamental reorganization of the labor force. But in agriculture, the advent of market relations had necessitated rapid and extensive changes in labor-capital relations. Although the attempt to recoup profits on a capitalist basis proved unsuccessful--depression remained especially stubborn among tobacco farmers and in the upcountry--rural freedpeople forced more concessions from the planters than urban industrial workers could win from their employers.

elapses between the withdrawal of the Bureau, & the adoption
 & practical inauguration of a new state government, I can
 foresee nothing but anarchy & injustice to the

The beginning of 1869 was a depressing time for Virginia blacks as the Freedmen's Bureau prepared to leave the state. Although the Bureau would retain its function as superintendent of freedmen's education, both its powers and its personnel were curtailed greatly.² The Bureau had often hindered black freedom through its labor reorganization policies, but many blacks felt that without it their chances of attaining real freedom and of escaping from white violence and fraud were slim. As the Maysville

²Congress passed the law that terminated most of the Bureau's activities on 6 July 1868. See also Special Order 165, 30 December 1868, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, hereinafter cited as BRFAL; Circular 6, 17 July 1868, BRFAL; and Circular 10, 17 November 1868, BRFAL. In Virginia, Assistant Commissioner Orlando Brown became the Superintendent of Education; he retained four assistants in the state. Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 204-17; William S. McFeely, Yankee Stepfather: General Oliver O. Howard and the Freedmen (New Haven, 1968), p. 328.

agent remarked to Brown in one of his last reports, the freedpeople "all say that should the Bureau be withdrawn before the state is reconstructed that the justice that is now given them when an officer or agent . . . is present would certainly be withdrawn."³ "The withdrawal of the Bureau will take place at the worst time of the year possible," said another, "as it is the time of settlement between farmers & Freedmen, & in the interval which will elapse between the withdrawal of the Bureau, & the adoption & practical inauguration of a new state government, I can foresee nothing but anarchy & injustice to the Freedmen."⁴ Even conservative Major Marcus S. Hopkins agreed. "I consider it a great error," he wrote from Gordonsville, that the Bureau "was not continued in full operation until this State shall be reconstructed. I observe already in the freedmen a feeling of apprehension at its withdrawal."⁵ When the Bureau decamped from Lynchburg in early January, the building it had occupied, as the newspaper gleefully put it, "was . . . placed under the hammer." When it sold at auction on 2 January for \$140, "a

³Lt. Fincke to Brown, 30 November 1868, Maysville, Buckingham co., Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁴Lt. Stowell to Brown, 30 November 1868, Halifax county, Monthly Report, BRFAL.

⁵Major Marcus S. Hopkins to Brown, 31 December 1868, Gordonsville, Orange county, Monthly Report, BRFAL. Hopkins also administered Albemarle county.

number of negroes were present on the occasion . . . to witness the last of their beloved Bureau."⁶

By the time Grant took up residence in the White House in March 1869, then, the beginning of the end of reconstruction had begun in Virginia. The primary task left to the president was the readmission of the three states still out of the Union--Virginia, Texas, and Mississippi. He made Virginia his test case. The activities of organized groups of Virginia Conservatives, who had spent time in the national capital lobbying for the lowest possible price of admission, made Grant's decision an easy one. He felt that the road to Virginia restoration was especially well-paved, and the deal these men proposed seemed eminently reasonable.⁷

Conservative negotiations had begun shortly after the November election. After the appearance of his "Senex" letter in the Richmond press on Christmas day of 1868 urging universal amnesty in return for universal suffrage, Alexander H. H. Stuart had arranged for a meeting of the

⁶Lynchburg Virginian, 4 January 1869.

⁷William Gillette, Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879 (Baton Rouge, 1979), pp. 81-2; see Vincent P. De Santis, "Rutherford B. Hayes and the Removal of the Troops and the End of Reconstruction," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward (New York, 1982), pp. 417-50, and esp. pp. 442-44 on the extent to which Grant had already ended Reconstruction before Hayes ever entered the White House.

like-minded a week later in Richmond's Exchange Hotel. Acting in league with him were tobacconist William T. Sutherlin of Danville, Stuart's brother-in-law John B. Baldwin, speaker of the provisional legislature, and General William Mahone, the ambitious railroad tycoon and political chameleon of the postwar era.⁸ On New Year's Eve, twenty-eight men responded to the call from these leading "cooperationists." Composed mostly of westerners, urban dwellers, and former Whigs, the group selected nine from their number to press suit in Washington for home rule in return for manhood suffrage. This "Committee of Nine" and the "new movement" that they represented received particularly strong support in cities and in southwestern, Valley, and western tobacco belt counties.⁹

On 9 January the committee arrived in Washington. They aimed to persuade members of Congress and--indirectly,

⁸William Morehouse Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond, 1935), pp. 101-13; James Douglas Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction, 1865-1870: A Political, Economic, and Social Study," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1960), pp. 123-27, 243-49.

⁹Although it had often appeared ill-organized and defined, the "cooperation movement" dated back to the summer of 1866, when some former Whigs from Albemarle and nearby counties sent delegates to the National Union Convention in Philadelphia. A similar meeting took place in the summer of 1867 in Charlottesville, and this gathering sparked others in several tobacco belt counties, including Buckingham, Charlotte, Amelia, Louisa, Pittsylvania, Halifax, and Prince

through their old friend General John Schofield, then Secretary of War--a receptive Grant to reschedule the election for the ratification of the Underwood Constitution, but with special conditions. What the cooperationists wanted was separate votes on the test oath, disfranchising clause, and the township proposal. The two most influential newspapers of the tobacco belt, the Lynchburg Virginian and the Charlottesville Chronicle, each enthusiastically endorsed the cause of the committee and ran frequent editorials aimed at persuading local whites to accept the "new departure." According to the Lynchburg Virginian, "events of momentous importance to the people of this State are on the wing, and it is fitting that they should take a calm, dispassionate survey of the whole field before them." The editorial reminded readers that "a choice of weapons is not always left to combatants, and necessity is frequently laid upon them to use just what they can get. . . . The proposition is to accept negro suffrage whether we will or no. If we resist longer, we shall have it, with the additional abomination of a carpet-bag regency in the sole interest of negroes and foreigners." By acquiescing, "we may, possibly get rid of [blacks and Radicals], secure a

Edward. Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 40-41; A. A. Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia (New York, 1926), pp. 216-18.

modification of the Underwood Constitution, still keep Virginia partially in the hands of her own people, and preserve it as a fit habitation for white men. . . . Let every man in Virginia take his position and use all the influence which property and superior intelligence can exert, to defeat the infamous Constitution which alien adventurers seek to impose upon us!" Similar encouragements appeared regularly on the editorial pages during the first half of 1869.¹⁰

Grant eventually accepted the Committee's proposal on the disfranchisement and test oath clauses. Personally he opposed the township clause for the same reason that Schofield had--the fear of black ruling majorities in many eastern areas. But he did not submit it separately because his Cabinet persuaded him that its defeat would kill the public school system. Congress granted the president, rather than the military commanders as they had previously,

¹⁰Lynchburg Republican, 5 January 1869. Also in Washington were two other delegations of white Virginians, one of which differed little in outlook from the Committee of Nine, and another composed of Governor Henry H. Wells's backers who favored a referendum on the unexpurgated Constitution. Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 70-1; Maddex, "Virginia: The Persistence of Centrist Hegemony," in Otto H. Olsen, ed., Reconstruction and Redemption in the South (Baton Rouge, 1980), pp. 126-27; Richard L. Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1902 (Charlottesville, Va., 1918), pp. 67-9; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 249-50; Hamilton J. Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia during the Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1904), pp. 121-22.

the power to make these changes and plan for the election. On 11 April Congress, acting on Grant's suggestion, agreed that an election could be held. On 14 May Grant announced that Virginia voters would finally go to the polls on 6 July under two of the three conditions urged by the Committee of Nine. His generous response to Conservatives seriously jeopardized the future of the more moderate Republicans not involved in the cooperation movement, and it completely subverted the Radicals.¹¹

In the five-month interim between the Committee of Nine's journey to Washington and the announcement of Grant's final decision on the election in May, Virginia fusion--the union of moderate Republicans and moderate Conservatives, many of them former Whigs--proceeded with a vengeance. By March 1869, the growing split in the Virginia Republican party between moderates, or "True Republicans" as they would soon call themselves, and Radicals reached a peak. In their May 1868 convention, Republicans had nominated then-seated governor Henry H. Wells, the northern general appointed by

¹¹"Presidential Message on restoration of Virginia and other States lately in Rebellion to the Government of the United States," Senate Executive Document 10, 41 Cong., 1 Sess., Ser. no. 1393 (1870), 1-2; "Presidential Message on Action in Virginia, under act authorizing submission of the Constitutions of Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas to a vote of the people, and authorizing election of State officers and members of Congress," Senate Executive Document 13, 41 Cong., 2 Sess., Ser. no. 1405 (1870), 1-22, 94-139; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 78-9; Gillette, Retreat from Reconstruction, pp. 81-2.

Schofield to replace provisional governor Pierpont. But over the course of the next year, Wells accumulated some weighty political baggage unattractive to the moderates. By 1869 he was the runaway favorite of blacks and Radicals. Worse, perhaps, in the heated contest for railroad supremacy he had lent his support to Maryland operators of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, who aimed to buy out the Virginia system. This indiscretion placed him afoul of Mahone, who planned his own "native" consolidation under the name of the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio.¹²

With so much dissatisfaction among Republican moderates, the party reconvened in March in Petersburg, and amid near-riotous conditions renominated Wells. Unable to block the renomination, Mahone and his conservative friends settled on another tactic. To discredit the ticket with whites, a northern-born friend of Mahone's from Prince Edward county, Edgar "Yankee" Allen, seconded the nomination of a West Indian physician, Dr. J. B. Harris, for Lieutenant Governor. Blacks and a few white Radicals enthusiastically supported this biracial ticket, but the combination, as

¹²Allen W. Moger, "Railroad Practices and Policies in Virginia After the Civil War," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 59 (October 1951), 432-35; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 61-2, 70-1, 74-9; Maddex, "Virginia: Persistence of Centrist Hegemony," pp. 127-28; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 251; Eckenrode, Political History of Virginia, pp. 17-19; Blake, Mahone, pp. 104-07.

Mahone and Allen intended, alienated most white voters. Mahone's and Allen's maneuvers succeeded.¹³

A rump of conservative Republicans led by Mahone--the "bolters," as many called them--then held another convention in Petersburg in which they nominated a "True Republican" ticket. They chose Gilbert C. Walker, originally from New York but a resident of Norfolk since 1864. In the 1850s, Walker had been a Douglas Democrat, and in Virginia he had at first joined Conservatives before opportunistically joining the Republicans. Most important of all, Walker was not only a friend of Mahone's, but also had been a director on his Norfolk and Petersburg railroad. Though he went by the name of Republican, he was no friend of Radicals; his sympathies went to moderates and the right wing.¹⁴

For their part, Conservatives stood by the candidates they had selected in May 1868. They had chosen a traditionalist, Colonel Robert E. Withers of Lynchburg, for Governor, and John L. Mayre, Jr., of Fredericksburg for his running mate.¹⁵ But Withers carried the same political

¹³Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 74; Maddex, "Virginia: Persistence of Centrist Hegemony," pp. 128-29.

¹⁴Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 75-6.

¹⁵For attorney general the party nominated General James A. Walker of Pulaski county, and for congressman-at-large, Richmond's Marmaduke Johnson. All but Walker were antebellum Whigs, and his family ties to the Whig party were strong. Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 61-2.

liability that hobbled the Radical candidate Wells: he was an enemy of Mahone and opposed to his consolidation scheme. Approached by the Walker faction that spring, "new movement" Conservatives persuaded the party to withdraw their ticket, rationalizing that not only would Congress not accept it, but that its presence might throw the election into the hands of the Radicals. Here was a fear too well-grounded in experience, and Mahone's reasoning worked again. In late April the Conservatives withdrew their ticket and left the voters to decide between the two Republican faction nominees, Wells and Walker, the latter of whom they endorsed.¹⁶

The election on 6 July took place peacefully and brought out one of the largest electorates in Virginia history. Registered whites numbered 149,781; blacks, 120,103. Whites cast 125,114 votes against a black vote of 97,205; 24,637 whites and 22,898 blacks did not participate. A resounding 210,585 people approved the amended Underwood Constitution, against a mere 9,136 dissenters. Large, though not as mammoth, margins also defeated the test oath and disfranchisement clauses. A total of 124,360 voters opposed the former, while 84,410 favored it; and 124,715 voted against Confederate proscription, opposing 83,458 people who

¹⁶Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, pp. 74-6; Charles E. Wynes, *Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902* (Charlottesville, 1961), pp. 2-5.

supported the clause. Walker defeated Wells 119,535 votes to 101,204. Of the 43 senators chosen for the General Assembly, Conservative candidates outnumbered Radicals thirty to thirteen. In the House, 96 of the 138 delegates were Conservatives; only 42 Radicals won seats; 27 were black. Conservatives also claimed victory at the national level. Their representatives filled five of nine Congressional seats available that year.¹⁷

Blacks from the tobacco belt were not left completely unrepresented in the political debacle that occurred in Virginia in 1869. But they were few and, of those who persisted, all were members of the emerging black upper class. Fourteen of the twenty-seven blacks sent to the General Assembly in 1869 came from the interior. Five of them had represented their counties in the 1867-68 Constitutional Convention. Three were elected to the Senate: James W. D. Bland of Prince Edward county, who served from 1869-71; John Robinson of Cumberland, seated between 1869 and 1873; and William P. Moseley from Fluvanna, who served until 1871. The other two former convention members, Frank Moss of Buckingham and John Watson of

¹⁷Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 82; Eckenrode, Political History of Virginia, p. 125; Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics, pp. 74-80.

Mecklenburg, sat in the House of Delegates.¹⁸

The other nine black men from the tobacco belt new to halls of power in Virginia were, if anything, possessed of more property than their predecessors had been. Each was a man of some means, in spite of the fact that the majority--six--were born slaves. Four were highly skilled, five were literate, and three were ministers.

As had been true of the former slaves in the convention, the number of skilled former slaves in this group suggests that some or all of them may have been involved in the hiring system of the 1850s. Ross Hamilton, who succeeded John Watson as representative from Mecklenburg when Watson died, was a carpenter and storekeeper who owned considerable property around Boydton. Alexander Owen of Halifax was a former slave trained in rock masonry. With the help of money earned as a legislator, he later bought property. Cesar Perkins from Buckingham was a brick mason, brick maker, farmer, storekeeper, and minister. His colleague Fontaine M. Perkins came from Louisa, where he farmed and preached. Perkins had been taught to read and write as a slave, perhaps as a result of being appointed overseer on the plantation of his master. After surrender he attended a freedman's school taught by a northerner and bought several

¹⁸Luther Porter Jackson, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, 1865-1895 (Norfolk, 1945), pp. 3-4, 28-9, 35-6, 43.

pieces of land. William H. Ragsdale of Charlotte was a teacher who had amassed 122 acres by 1871. Ellis Wilson of Dinwiddie, like Perkins, farmed, preached, and owned four tracts of land by 1871 totalling 624 acres.

The former free Negroes among the legislators of 1869-70 were similarly well-situated. Henry Cox represented Powhatan and Chesterfield counties. A shoemaker, Cox owned land at surrender and purchased more in 1871. Isaac Edmundson came from Halifax, where he owned a considerable amount of land. Lastly, James F. Lipscomb of Cumberland farmed and operated a store. He had begun his laboring life as a hack driver in antebellum Richmond, and during the war he piloted a James River boat, which he owned. Eventually he acquired title to three farms totalling 510 acres, built a 12-room house and hired several tenants. His grandchildren continued to own his property in the 1940s.¹⁹

Yet, overall, black political influence was minimal and continued to decline in Virginia throughout the rest of the nineteenth century; 1869 had marked a thoroughgoing Conservative victory at the polls that dealt a decisive blow to the Radical party and the freedpeople. When "True

¹⁹Lipscomb was probably related to the wagoner, John Lipscomb of Cumberland county, mentioned in Luther Porter Jackson, Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860 (New York, 1942, reprint ed., 1969), pp. 79, 126-27; Jackson, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, pp. 9, 14, 19-20, 25-6, 32-5, 43.

Republican" Walker celebrated his victory two days after the election, he played to large, enthusiastic, and mostly white crowds in Richmond. He emphasized his support of equal rights, presidential reconstruction plans, and particularly his enthusiasm for economic growth and development. White Virginians generally believed that an era of prosperity was at hand; the Whig felt that the state was "now fairly open to capitalists and immigrants."²⁰

Many representatives of the northern press joined in the Conservative celebration and hailed the election as a progressive event. The New York Tribune and New York Herald were conspicuous with their praise and advised other former Confederate states to look to Virginia as a model. Local papers eagerly reprinted these northern encomiums. Shortly after the election, the Charlottesville Chronicle ran a number of these excerpts; among them was one from the New York Journal of Commerce. "The decisive triumph of the conservative republican or Walker party," it congratulated the winners, "is in itself a great event. It is greater still in its bearings on the future." Calling the election a "victory of moderation and justice over fanaticism, blind prejudice and the unchivalrous treatment of a conquered people," the Journal felt that Virginians had substituted

²¹Charlottesville Chronicle, 13 July 1869.

²²Washington Herald, 3 July 1869; see, for example, reprints of the article from the New York Tribune and

²⁰Quoted in Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 82; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, p. 263.

"order for chaos, . . . energy for lethargy, . . . life for death. No political occurrence since the war has been more significant than this. . . . From this day forward we look forward to a new day in Virginia."²¹

The tobacco-belt press was similarly elated. The Lynchburg Virginian ran a pious victory editorial that spoke gratefully of the end of an era in which Radicals had misled "credulous Africans." It also addressed an article to "Colored Laborers." In it, the editor discouraged black migration to the cities, and reminded blacks that they were "done with politics for the present, - as there will be no more elections for a long time to come." Radical leaders, the editor told blacks, "will have no more use for [you]. . . . Let every idle man go to work, and we shall soon witness a much better condition of things." Elite white Virginia thus believed that the election had solved the worst of their problems.²²

Even with the Conservatives in control with an amended Underwood Constitution to direct them, Grant still had favors to dispense to the cause of Virginia fusion and Conservative government. In September he overruled the

²¹Charlottesville Chronicle, 13 July 1869.

²²Lynchburg Virginian, 9 July 1869; see, for example, reprints of editorials from the New York Tribune passed along by this paper beginning as early as 7 January 1869; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 257-58.

military commander, General E. R. S. Canby who, following Senate resolutions, wanted to require the legislature to take the test oath before convening. But Grant ordered the attorney general, General E. Rockwood Hoar, to bring the legislature into session without a test, provoking one white Virginian to comment, "our anticipated embarrassments have been removed by the virtuous opinion of a Hoar." Shortly afterwards Grant persuaded Wells to resign the governorship; Walker was inaugurated on 21 September. The General Assembly gathered on 5 October and promptly ratified the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, fulfilling the last requirements for readmission.²³

Disgruntled Radical members of Congress and other members of Grant's cabinet agitated against Virginia readmission. They protested the election and urged the president to annul its results; they passed more stringent requirements regarding equal education in the state; and they tried to impose stricter voting requirements on former Confederates. These moves delayed Virginia's readmission until 26 January 1870, when a fitful Congress finally admitted Virginia's elected representatives to the Capitol.

²³Quoted in Gillette, Retreat from Reconstruction, pp. 83-4; Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction," pp. 158-60; Max Heyman, Prudent Soldier: A Biography of Major General E. R. S. Canby, 1817-1873 (Glendale, 1959), is dated and sentimental but provides the essential outline of Canby's career; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 254-57.

²⁴Haddox, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 82-3, 185-86.

Although an atmosphere of good feeling between Virginia Conservatives and the president would pay off in a Grant reelection in the state in 1872, friendship with the party did not last much longer. In 1873, when the next Virginia gubernatorial election took place, the honeymoon with Republicanism was over. Voters chose former Confederate General James Lawson Kemper for governor, and the Republican party was all but impotent by that time.²⁴

II

With the reconciliation formally concluded, Virginia's white elite turned its attention to resurrecting the economy, a task that involved Afro-America only so far as to insure that blacks would continue to labor in behalf of elite interests.²⁵ But now, new rules governed labor expropriation, and in the previous four years, capitalist labor relations had already taken root. These developments began long before Conservatives had a chance to influence their course. Much of what came under their newly-won political control, then, not only contrasted sharply with what they had known a decade earlier, but displayed settled

²⁴Gillette, Retreat from Reconstruction, pp. 84-5; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 259-61.

²⁵Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, pp. 82-3, 185-86.

patterns over which Conservatives could exert little effective influence. By 1870, Virginia's industrial and agricultural sectors displayed distinctly different but established patterns of adaptation to the new order. Because industry developed little by 1870, and because previous experience with slave hiring schooled both employers and employees for the new order, this sector experienced a relatively smooth transition to free labor relations. Extensive changes in the character and organization of the skilled and industrial work force would not occur until the 1870s and 1880s, when industrialism began to gather momentum. By contrast, on plantations and farms, sweeping changes in the relationship of capital and labor took place relatively early, and the shift to free labor in rural areas proved to be a far more uneven and confrontational variety than was true of the short-range transformation of industry.²⁶

The labor system was but the most obvious and fundamental alteration in the economy of 1870. Other important changes had also taken place. With the tax base drastically changed--slaves no longer formed its foundation--Conservatives had to find a means to finance the government. The public school system mandated by the

²⁶Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 267-68.

Underwood Constitution required funding, and the issue of the antebellum debt, destined to be a controversy throughout the 1870s and 80s, also demanded attention. Most of all Conservatives needed to create an atmosphere conducive to northern investment. In part because northern capitalists had wanted political stability in Virginia before they invested heavily there, the previous four years had drawn outside capital sporadically, which in turn retarded recovery.

Census figures for 1870 give a ten-year measurement of the extent of change in both industry and agriculture.²⁷ They reveal that the effects of the war on industry and manufacturing ironically had left Virginia, alone of the former Confederate states, with a net loss in manufacturing value over the course of the decade. Much of this loss could be laid at the feet of Virginia's antebellum status as the industrial leader of the South; the state had had more to lose, and she lost a great deal. The value of all

²⁷The 1870 census was a defective one containing serious undercounts throughout the South, as many have pointed out. For example, it is estimated that the entire southern black population was undercounted by 6.6 percent. Similar collection errors characterized other categories of inquiry. Still, although the extent of change unquestionably is misrepresented, the general trend indicating economic disruption in many areas of the economy seems evident. Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation (New York, 1977), pp. 53-4; U. S. Bureau of the Census, Negro Population, 1790-1915 (Washington, D.C., 1918; reprint ed., 1968), pp. 26-7.

manufacturing products fell \$3.25 million below that recorded in 1860. But even with this decline, Virginia remained the South's leading manufacturing state and by 1880 the volume of manufacturing was twice what it had been in 1860.²⁸

Industry was stunted in 1870, then, but its character remained much the same as it had been in the antebellum period. Flour milling brought in the single largest amount of manufacturing wealth; tobacco ranked next, with Richmond and Lynchburg still the main centers for its manufacture but with Petersburg, Danville, and Farmville up-and-coming competitors. Iron, lumber, cotton textiles, and leather products remained important products. Collectively, these industries accounted for 73 percent of all Virginia manufacturing in 1870; in 1860, they had comprised 75 percent of that total.²⁹ What had changed in the industrial profile of the state was a regional redistribution of manufacturing activities. One section, the Tidewater, had increased markedly its share of the state's manufacturing wealth by 1870, industrial employers there becoming the leading beneficiary of emancipation. In

²⁸Virginia's manufacturing value fell from \$41,637,979 to \$38,364,322 between 1860 and 1870. This figure does not include figures for West Virginia in 1860. Maddex, *Virginia Conservatives*, p. 281; Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction," pp. 195, 215, 220, 223-26.

²⁹Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction," pp. 221-23.

1860, just over 25 percent of all capital invested in manufacturing went to Tidewater interests; in 1870, over 40 percent did. Before the war, the region produced about 35 percent of all the industrial wealth of the state; after the war, that figure rose to 46 percent.³⁰

This regional concentration in industry occurred partly at the expense of the tobacco belt. Wartime demand, some modest recovery, the number of small tobacco factories lingering on individual plantations, and the larger ones in Lynchburg, Danville, and Farmville, increased the number of manufacturing establishments by 26 percent. But, measured as a percentage of the state's output, the tobacco belt's share of industrial activity in 1870 showed no significant increase over the last antebellum reading. Clearly, industrial capitalism had settled, not surprisingly, in the region where antebellum manufacturing and a rudimentary form of wage labor had been most developed.

Where industry continued to exist, whether in upcountry urban centers like Lynchburg and Danville, or in Richmond, where it already had an important base on which to build, it typically retained the work force already in place. More

³⁰See Appendix Table 10, "Regional Manufacturing in Virginia, 1860 and 1870," and 11, "Regional Manufacturing in Virginia, 1870 and 1880." The standard census categories in manufacturing were number of manufacturing establishments, capital invested in manufacturing, cost of raw materials, annual cost of labor, and annual value of the manufacturing product.

sweeping changes in racial composition of the industrial labor force would not occur until the 1870s, when industry revived and developed in new directions. Only the beginnings of this process were evident in 1870; by 1880 they were unmistakable. Changes in tobacco factory labor provide the best example of the trend. The new cigarette and cigar manufacturers of the late 1870s began to use white labor, excluding blacks from production. But the pattern also was evident in most artisanal and craft work, where blacks faced consistent and growing exclusion.

Studies of Richmond's work force in 1880 and 1890 illustrate the extent to which black workers either remained locked in familiar occupations, or labored in unskilled positions. In 1880, only 15 percent of all black male workers in the city labored as artisans, whereas 80 percent listed occupations as tobacco factory hands, servants, cooks, waiters, draymen, teamsters, coachmen, porters, iron and flour mill workers, dock workers, whitewashers, railroad and brickyard workers, and boatmen. A small group of 295 held more prestigious and skilled positions as professionals--doctors, teachers, and ministers, for example--or as store and restaurant owners.³¹ A decade

³¹Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York, 1976), pp. 479-83, Appendix A; Writer's Program, Virginia, The Negro in Virginia (New York, 1940, reprint ed., 1969), pp. 318-20.

later, occupational divisions along racial lines were even more pronounced. Stonecutters, printers, machinists, cabinetmakers, and tailors became systematically proscribed occupations. Some blacks could still be found in blacksmithing, harness and saddle-making, carpentry, shoemaking, bricklaying, and coopering, all of which had been traditional slave skills, and had been associated with the hiring system. Barbers and wood sawyers were sometimes black, and blacks continued to dominate the plaster trade, as had free Negroes in antebellum days.³² But such craftsmen, nearly all of them located in urban areas, represented a distinct minority. Interior towns like Farmville displayed a pattern similar to that of Richmond. There, the great majority of black men employed outside of agriculture in 1890 worked in the town's tobacco factories.³³

Figures on the numbers of white workers and their occupations in 1890 in Richmond give an idea of the

³²Black plasterers comprised 90 percent of all such workers in Richmond in 1890. Leon Fink, Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics (Urbana, 1983), pp. 149-77.

³³W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia: A Social Study," Bulletin of the Department of Labor 14 (January 1898), 15-23. Ransom and Sutch review the factors that hindered the development of black business in the postwar period, including illiteracy and competition from already established white tradesmen. Only 3.5 percent of

long-term changes that had had their beginnings after emancipation. Among male workers in the capital city that year, whites composed 50 percent of the working class, outnumbering blacks in skilled trades three to one, and filling 61 percent of all industrial positions. Only in unskilled work did black labor dominate; there, they represented 77 percent of the work force. For women the situation was much the same. Although more black women than black men carved out a place among non-wage earners, they too represented 77 percent of the female working class that year. As with the men, only in skilled trades did black women number a minority; 82 percent of these jobs were held by white women.³⁴ One prominent New South Virginian in 1886 reflected on the trends that had resulted in this racial division in the work force. "I think it can be demonstrated," said John Imboden in 1886, "that the abolition of slavery has revolutionized the whole industrial system of the South, by emancipating the white race from the incubus of slavery, and making manual labor honorable for them to engage in, especially in all skilled employments that lead to wealth, comfort, and social distinction by

all black male laborers worked as independent artisans in the cotton South before 1880. Ransom and Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, pp. 31-8.

³⁴Fink, Workingman's Democracy, pp. 150-51.

success; and leaving open to the Negro race, almost exclusively, as wage-workers, their ancient field of industry in the planting districts. . . . Both races see now that they can work shoulder to shoulder, each in their sphere, and in perfect harmony, and they are doing it."

Imboden's optimistic reference to racial harmony in the polarized work force lacked much basis in fact, but his analysis of the fundamental character of its divisions was largely accurate.³⁵

Thus, with increasingly limited exceptions, opportunities for black employment in non-agricultural jobs, positions for which the demand for black labor had been high in the antebellum period, dwindled over the course of the late nineteenth-century. Developing sectors of the economy raised the color bar, and those employers who probably would have used black labor--like railroad men--sometimes could not do so given the depressed or altered nature of the postwar economy. The limited track mileage laid in the 1870s curtailed demand for black labor, for example; once the roads were repaired, the need for labor dropped sharply. Consolidation, not extension, of rail lines was a more absorbing postwar occupation for businessmen. The only road which employed large numbers of black workers in the

³⁵John D. Imboden, "Virginia," in Report on the Internal Commerce of the United States, House Doc. 7, Part II, 49 Cong., 2 Sess., Ser. 2476, (1886), 172.

late 1860s and early 1870s was the Chesapeake & Ohio, in construction along part of the James, which hired some 5,000 blacks in 1871. Many blacks in search of railroad employment looked to other states like Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama.³⁶ Similar changes engendered by the industrializing economy appeared in the ironworks and blast furnaces. Richmond's iron industry would be eclipsed first by the Panic of 1873, then by the rise of Birmingham before century's end, hampering black employment in an industry that traditionally had employed many hired slaves in the 1850s.³⁷

For their part, industrial employers welcomed the end of slavery. They anticipated a new source of profit in the disappearance of legal compulsions to supervise and provision the labor force. Afro-Americans who retained

³⁶Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 114-15, 128; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 143; Moger, "Virginia Railroads," 448n. Mileage rose from 1449 to 1893 miles over this decade, a total of 444 miles, including track in West Virginia. The Freedmen's Bureau agents often remarked on black men heading into these states to work for the railroads. In November 1869, an Alabama line hired 125 black men from Pittsylvania, Halifax, and Caswell (North Carolina) counties. Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, p. 115; Lt. Louis S. Stevenson to Brown, 31 May 1867, Letters Sent, 4082, vol. 299, pp. 96-7, RG 105, BRFAL; Tilley, Bright-Tobacco Industry, p. 97.

³⁷Charles B. Dew, "Disciplining Slave Ironworkers in the Antebellum South: Coercion, Conciliation, and Accommodation," American Historical Review 79 (April 1974), 414-16; Dew, Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works (New Haven, 1966), p. 319.

positions in the skilled and industrial work forces consequently discovered that free labor carried in its train a host of problems unknown in slavery, and that in certain respects their status had actually worsened since the prewar period. Factory and industrial employers had no intention of paying free black labor for those needs--medical care, for example--that owners had formerly provided. With no laws governing the responsibilities of employers to employees, industrialists simply paid a wage, as they had in the antebellum period, but to the worker himself rather than the owner. They could even cut that wage by a third or a half its antebellum value if they chose, as they frequently did.

Not surprisingly, it was Richmond's tobacco workers who first protested these practices. In a document brought to Whitelaw Reid's attention in 1865, these men contrasted their former working conditions as hired slaves with those they experienced as freedmen, and stressed how the latter version had undercut their prewar status. Signing themselves the "Tobacco Factory Mechanics of Richmond and Manchester," they produced the following complaint that September:

Dear Sirs We the Tobacco mechanicks of this city and Manchester is worked to great disadvantages. In 1858 and 1859 our masters hiered us to the Tobacconist at a prices ranging from \$150 to 180. The Tobacconist furnished us lodging food and clothing. They gave us tasks to performe. all we made over this task they payed us for. We

worked faithful and they paid us faithful. They Then gave us \$2 to 2.50 cts, and we made double the amount we now make. The Tobacconist held a meeting, and resolved not give more than \$1.50 cts per hundred, which is about one days work in a week we may make 600 pounds apece with a stemer. The weeks work then at \$1.50 amounts to \$9--the stemers wages is from \$4 to \$4.50 cents which leaves from \$5 to 4.50 cents per week about one half what we made when slaves. Now to Rent two small rooms we have to pay from \$18 to 20. We see \$4.50 cents or \$5 will not more than pay Rent say nothing about food clothing medicin Doctor Bills. Tax and Co. They say we will starve through laziness that is not so. But it is true we will starve at our present wages. They say we will steal we can say for ourselves we had rather work for our living. give us a chance. We are Compeled to work for them at low wages and pay high Rents and make \$5 per week and sometimes les. And paying \$18 or \$20 per month Rent. It is impossible to feed ourselves and family--starvation is Cirten unles a change is brought about.³⁸

Early in freedom, then, black tobacco factory hands in Richmond, many of them former hired slaves from the upcountry, objected to the disadvantages that a purer form of wage labor entailed. Many also responded with strikes, which were especially common in Petersburg's tobacco factories. Still other skilled, urban black workers utilized that tool to protest their conditions in the late

³⁸The stemmers to whom the workers refer were men who stripped the main stalk or stem from the tobacco leaves prior to its processing. In the postwar period workers, not the factory owners, employed these stemmers and paid them out of their own wages. J. T. Trowbridge, A Picture of the Desolated States; and The Work of Restoration, 1865-1868 (Hartford, 1888), pp. 230-31n.; reprinted in Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, eds., The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present, 4 vols. (Philadelphia, 1978), IV, 344.

1860s and early 1870s. Black workers for the Burial Corps of the National Cemetery in Richmond had stopped work in July 1867 for higher wages, objecting that \$15 per month and rations was insufficient; they wanted \$25.³⁹ Richmond's stevedores struck for higher wages in May 1867, as did workers in the freight yards of the Richmond and Danville railroad in May 1872.⁴⁰ Other collective movements protesting labor conditions appeared among black workers prior to 1870, most of them in occupations formerly used to hired slave labor and always in the cities.⁴¹ But even with their antebellum acquaintance with a crude form of wage labor, black industrial workers in the immediate postwar period often were unable to utilize their bargaining skills to advantage. In a free labor society that increasingly relied on white labor to man the factories, the complaints of black workers represented no particular threat; ironically, in antebellum days, black demands as industrial workers often had been generously heeded.

³⁹Charlottesville Chronicle, 30 July 1867.

⁴⁰Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, p. 120.

⁴¹See Fink, Workingmen's Democracy, pp. 154-56, for labor activity in the capital in the 1880s and 1890s, and political organization under the banner of the Knights of Labor.

III

Like Virginia industry, the products of Virginia agriculture changed but little by 1870. Farmers continued to grow tobacco, wheat, corn, and oats, and tobacco's regional concentration persisted. But there the similarities between the two largely ended. Unlike industry, the relations of production in agriculture had undergone extensive adaptations, and by 1870 they were more responsive to labor pressure. However, these changes, once established, persisted until the 1930s, and sharecroppers would experience few improvements in status after the victories they won in the early postwar period.⁴²

Depression was much more widespread--and ultimately more enduring--among farmers and planters in the tobacco belt than was true of industrial employers and workers. The war had seriously reduced total crop production in the region. Federal enumerators in 1870 recorded declines of between one-fourth and two-thirds in the yields of such crops as tobacco, wheat, oats, corn, hay, Irish potatoes, and sweet potatoes, as compared to 1860. The numbers of livestock, including horses, mules, oxen, sheep, swine, milk cows, and

⁴²On the persistence of sharecropping in tobacco regions of the South, see Pete Daniel, Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures Since 1880 (Urbana, 1985), pp. 110-33.

cattle thinned to between one-half and four-fifths of their prewar size.⁴³ Reflecting the beginnings of the long-term trend away from local and individual subsistence on the farm, the value of homemade manufactures declined more than a third.⁴⁴ Despite the faith that farmers held in the resurrection of tobacco, a steadily declining percentage of farm land was improved, and of those improved acres, fewer and fewer were devoted to the cultivation of tobacco.⁴⁵ Capricious nature had brought a series of droughts in 1867, 1868, and 1869, restricting yields in a market beset by declining postwar prices. The tobacco farmers of upcountry Virginia would never fully recover from the effects of war and nature. Total tobacco production fell from just under 100,000,000 pounds in the belt in 1860, to 34,000,000 pounds

⁴³Percentage declines were: tobacco, 66 percent; hay, 57 percent; wheat, 43 percent; Irish potatoes, 34 percent; sweet potatoes, 66 percent; oats, 25 percent; corn, 49 percent. The overall value of livestock dropped 39 percent; there were 28 percent fewer horses, 19 percent fewer mules, 54 percent fewer sheep, 44 percent fewer swine, 29 percent fewer milk cows, 44 percent fewer cattle, and 47 percent fewer oxen. Federal Census, Agriculture, 1860 and 1870. Ransom and Sutch found that livestock herds were decimated by about a third in the cotton South, but Virginia's losses exceeded that rate, probably as a result of the extent of armed conflict in the state. Ransom and Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, pp. 48-51.

⁴⁴Another two-thirds attrition occurred over the next decade.

⁴⁵See Appendix Table 12, "Percentage of Improved to Total Acreage, Tobacco Belt, 1850-80." The tobacco belt's improved acreage declined 13.4 percent between 1860 and 1879; the state's declined by 28.6 percent.

in 1870, and rebounded only up to 72,000,000 a decade later.⁴⁶

Postwar tobacco farmers also cultivated lands that were not worth what they had been in slavery. Land values across the South had fallen since the war, in many cases dramatically. The most precipitous deficits were in the cotton South, as the Commissioner of Agriculture had reported in 1867. Yet it was not military devastation, as many white southerners argued, but the withdrawal of slave labor initially responsible for bringing those lands into productivity, that undercut postwar southern land values most effectively. Labor withdrawal was a factor specifically mentioned by the Commissioner in his 1867 report on Virginia. Still, the state fared well in this postwar ranking relative to the cotton states. Virginia's lands declined in value 27 percent on the average, less than any of the other former Confederate states save Tennessee. Tobacco-belt farms, however, showed a more serious decline in value. Their worth dropped by an average of 44 percent, and the value of the implements and machinery they used on those farms declined 46 percent.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Their portion of state production jumped back to 90 percent, however, after a slight drop in 1860 due to increased production in the southwest corner of the state (see figures for the mountain region in Table 4, "Regional Agricultural Production, 1850 and 1860"); Smith, "Virginia During Reconstruction," pp. 189-92.

⁴⁷The commissioner recorded the following average declines

The efforts of ex-slaves to acquire some independence as agricultural laborers in this depressed atmosphere are also evident in the 1870 census figures. Despite political setbacks and the meager economic resources with which they began their struggle, freedpeople resisted reestablishment of antebellum-style plantation production. As figures on improved acreage for 1860 and 1870 show, the advent of the sharecropping system--a process in which freedpeople played a pivotal role--effectively undermined the ability of former planters to continue the cultivation of large amounts of acreage. Accordingly, the advent of sharecropping played an important role in land devaluation. Agriculture underwent a rapid decentralization as many farms were subdivided into small parcels worked by sharecroppers.⁴⁸ The total number

for each southern state: Louisiana, 70 percent; Mississippi, 65 percent; South Carolina and Alabama, 60 percent; Arkansas and Florida, 55 percent; Georgia, between 50 and 60 percent; North Carolina, 50 percent; Texas, 28 percent; and Tennessee, 18 percent. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Report of the Commissioner for 1867 (Washington, D.C., 1868), pp. 104-07, 119. Ransom and Sutch found that the Commissioner of Agriculture was correct in his assessment of land values. They calculate the drop in land values was felt most heavily in the cotton South, where between 55 and 70 percent of prewar value was lost. Ransom and Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, p. 51. They also emphasize that the decline resulted most directly from the withdrawal of black labor. See also Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 102-03.

⁴⁸In the 1860 and 1870 censuses, the word "farm" applies to all holdings, whether operated by an owner, a renter, or a sharecropper. Therefore, it cannot be told with absolute certainty whether small farms were being operated by owners or sharecroppers, although the likelihood that they were farmed by sharecroppers is high. The 1860 and 1870 censuses

of farms in the tobacco belt increased by 29 percent over the 1860s; by 1880, there would be another 69 percent more farms as agricultural decentralization, sharecropping, and tenantry proceeded apace. The ability to cultivate tobacco on a small scale--one man could plant and harvest one to two acres without assistance--enhanced freedmen's abilities to resist a return of the old ways of agricultural production.⁴⁹

By far the largest increases occurred among small farms of fewer than 100 acres; a steady decline in improved acreage characterized farms above that size.⁵⁰ By 1870 there had been a phenomenal 370 percent increase in the number of farms of between 3 and 9 improved acres, and another 174 percent increase in those between 10 and 19 acres. But at the other end of the scale, planters owning large plantations of between 500 and 999 acres saw their improved acreage drop by 31 percent, and those with 1000 acres or more had theirs decline by half. These figures on

also failed to provide information on the racial composition of farm operators. In 1880, the census began to take note of farm tenure--owned, rented, or sharecropped--but again, not by race. It is not until 1910 that the census tabulated all of this information. James S. Fisher, "Negro Farm Ownership in the South," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 63 (December 1973), 478-80.

⁴⁹Calculated from Federal Census Returns, Agriculture, 1860, 1870, 1880.

⁵⁰See Appendix Table 13, "Improved Acreage in Farms, by Size and Region, and Their Percentage Changes, 1860-1870"; Table 14, "Farm Size by Region, 1860-70."

land use by farm size are one of the most telling indicators that emancipation made an important difference in the tobacco belt, and they show that freedpeople scored important postwar victories.⁵¹

As industry experienced some regional redefinition in postwar economic change, so too did emancipation bring a regional reapportionment of small farms and large plantations. Before the war, small farms had predominated in regions where slavery was least established. After Appomattox, those regions where slavery had been most important--the tobacco belt and the Tidewater--were the places where the greatest proliferation of small farms occurred. The single largest percentage of farms under twenty acres was in the Tidewater, where freedpeople generally had a better chance of buying small parcels of worn land. But the tobacco belt did not lag far behind that figure, and together these two eastern regions accounted for over two-thirds of farms in this category. The greatest number of mid-sized farms numbering between 20 and 99 acres in 1870 were located in the tobacco belt. As during the antebellum period, large farmers who owned 100 acres or

⁵¹Without manipulation, the 1880 figures on farm size cannot be used in this comparison, since they included both unimproved and improved acreage in one figure, whereas the 1860 and 1870 census took notice of improved acres separately from unimproved acres. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Report on the Productions of Agriculture as Returned at the Tenth Census, 1880 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1883), p. xiv. The

more--and especially those with 500 acres or more--were most likely to be found living in the tobacco belt, though their increase was but slight compared to the remarkable growth of small farms. Farther east in the Tidewater, where commercial wheat production and market gardening centered, the number of large plantations declined relative to the rest of the state. The most significant regional increases in the number of large farms characterized only the northern piedmont and Valley. In those regions, slavery had been less fixed, postwar declines in black population were especially pronounced, and the numbers of small farms changed but little. They even declined somewhat in the Valley.⁵²

Despite agricultural decentralization and the spread of sharecropping throughout eastern Virginia, whites, many of them former antebellum slaveholders, continued to hold title

comparison between 1860 and 1870 figures is also problematic given the 1870 census undercount. It is interesting to note that in the mountain counties that constituted the state of West Virginia, the decline in improved acreage is evident to a remarkable degree among all groups of landowners; see Appendix Table 13.

⁵²See Appendix Table 13, and Table 14, "Farm Size by Region, 1860-1870." Census figures show that large plantations increased greatly in number over the 1870s, but it must be borne in mind that 1880 farm figures included unimproved acreage in the total, whereas 1860 and 1870 figures only included improved acreage. See Appendix Table 15, "Farm Size by Region, 1870-1880"; Table 16 recapitulates the information in Tables 13-15. A discussion of regional black migration and population changes follows, based on the information contained in Table 17, "Regional Virginia Population, 1860-80."

to most of the land. One study of two tobacco belt counties, Nelson and Goochland, estimates conservatively that between 47 and 59 percent of all landowners of 500 acres or more in 1860 continued to own those lands in 1870, and that a rate of between 67 and 75 percent is probably even closer to reality.⁵³ This kind of measure is known as a "planter persistence rate" and has been calculated for several regions in the postwar South. All have found high rates of persistence. This focus on the retention of landed wealth among whites stresses that landholders traced familial roots to the old antebellum planter class, and that generally these men and women fiercely resisted the changes wrought by the war. From this evidence come conclusions that the war and emancipation had little effect on the content of postwar southern society.

But the use of "planter persistence" sorely neglects the political economy within which "persistent" landownership occurred. The simple possession of land alone never had brought wealth to a plantation owner; labor called forth its true value. Previously, landowners had owned much of society's available labor; after the war, they no longer did so. This change had a steadily corrosive effect on the postwar status and power of landholders. Debts and

⁵³A. Jane Townes, "The Effect of Emancipation on Large Landholdings, Nelson and Goochland Counties, Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 45 (August 1979), 403-12.

competition from businessmen compounded the planters' dilemma. These factors often led planters to employ coercion, violence, and fraud, since a sufficient labor force required a bargaining procedure with ex-slaves who might decide they disliked their working conditions and leave, if they could afford to do so.

This is why the sole use of white landownership as a measure of change between 1860 and 1870 obscures as much as it reveals. Complex changes in human relations and the structure of the economy had evolved since the end of the war, changes that injected the medium of the marketplace between ex-masters and freedpeople and spelled the fundamental difference between slavery and freedom. Unequal access to such other factors of production as land and tools often left the superficial impression that early capitalist agriculture differed little from slavery. Maldistribution of land, tools, and livestock had profound impacts on the ways in which freedpeople and whites interacted. But they did not determine them, and as freedom progressed, ownership of these factors sometimes altered in ways that did not favor planters, and in ways they never would have under slavery. Consequently, emphasis deservedly belongs on the long-range process begun by emancipation that revolutionized society by redefining the position of labor within it. Sometimes the characteristic features of this change were only barely discernable in the immediate postwar years,

camouflaged and disfigured as they frequently were by slavery's lingering impulses. But that the title to comparatively small percentages of land changed hands immediately after the Civil War fails to demonstrate that postwar society was static, that life on the plantations remained unchanged, or that duplicitous whites so manipulated black freedom that it became little more than a chimera. Landholding figures can be instructive when consulted in conjunction with land use figures, as well as a range of other social, political, economic, and cultural information; but they show little when used in isolation.⁵⁴

Inordinate emphasis on planter persistence also shrouds an important trend set in motion by emancipation and of

⁵⁴Barbara Jeanne Fields, "The Nineteenth-Century American South: History and Theory," Plantation Society 2 (April 1983), 21-5; an early work on planter persistence is Jonathan Wiener, "Planter Persistence and Social Change: Alabama, 1850-1870," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 7 (Autumn 1976), 235-60; and Wiener, Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1880 (Baton Rouge, 1978), pp. 8-16. See also Michael Wayne, The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District, 1860-1880 (Baton Rouge, 1983), pp. 86-109, Kenneth S. Greenberg, "The Civil War and the Redistribution of Land: Adams County, Mississippi, 1860-1870," Agricultural History 52 (April 1978), 292-307; Gail W. O'Brien, "Power and Influence in Mecklenburg County [N.C.], 1850-1880," North Carolina Historical Review 54 (Spring 1977), 43-4; James Tice Moore, "Redeemers Reconsidered: Change and Continuity in the Democratic South, 1870-1900," Journal of Southern History 44 (August 1978), 377-78. An extreme example of the persistence approach for Virginia is Townes, "The Effect of Emancipation on Large Landholdings." Townes explicitly divorces her findings from the political, economic, and social realm in which they occurred, thus providing one of the more notably sterile interpretations of continuity through the use of landholding figures. Although Townes emphasizes continuity

particular relevance to the case of eastern Virginia, namely, the steady acquisition of land among blacks. The long-range trend in black land tenure in Virginia was toward a striking level of ownership. By 1910 more Virginia Afro-Americans had acquired land, despite political and economic proscriptions, than had any other group of freedmen in the South. In that year, when the first figures on landowning by race became available, owners numbered 32,228, or 67 percent of all black Virginia farmers. Most--54 percent--lived in the Tidewater, but a substantial proportion--40 percent--had acquired land in the tobacco belt. Although such lands were often of marginal quality and held in small parcels, freedpeople of sufficient means had purchased them whenever possible. Impressive too was the proportion of black farm owners in 1910 who held title free of debt; only 10 percent had mortgages. Because many were unable to bring these indifferent lands into self-sufficient production, they also worked as day laborers or sharecropped another plantation. But possession of their homes and the land on which they stood was an important gain

in landholding as her major finding, she does note that large owners were fewer in absolute number in 1870 than they had been a decade earlier, while the numbers of small farmers had increased considerably. See especially pp. 411-12. Another work on postwar Virginia which concludes that the war brought little change to one county in the Virginia tobacco belt, Louisa, but which does not calculate persistence rates, is Crandall Shifflett, Patronage and Poverty in the Tobacco South: Louisa County, Virginia, 1860-1900 (Knoxville, 1982).

that provided some security in personal life.⁵⁵

Only a few of these land acquisitions among blacks dated from the late 1860s and early 1870s; landholdings that originated in postwar purchase appear to have dated primarily from the 1880s.⁵⁶ By that decade--and particularly after 1885 when the Virginia economy had revived somewhat--increased business and industrial activity coupled with worsening prospects of obtaining a living from the soil, meant that more land became available for purchase.⁵⁷ But well before 1880 many blacks had come into possession of land. Reports of thrifty black landholders who added to their early holdings bit by bit were common in the east in the late 1860s and early 1870s; Mecklenburg, a Southside tobacco county, was a premier black landholding county in the state during that decade. Some freedmen, like Tom Sukins of Charlotte, had managed to buy

⁵⁵Fisher, "Negro Farm Ownership in the South," 483; Negro Population, Table 57, p. 610; see Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 130-36, for numerous other instances of black landholding through the early 1870s; Samuel Tilden Bitting, Rural Land Ownership Among the Negroes of Virginia, with Special Reference to Albemarle County (Charlottesville, 1915), pp. 16-18, 30-5.

⁵⁶In interviews conducted just before 1915, most black landowners reported that they had acquired their lands after 1880. Bitting, Rural Landownership Among the Negroes of Virginia, pp. 30-1.

⁵⁷See William A. Link, "Cavaliers and Mudsills: The Farmers' Alliance and the Emergence of Virginia Populism," (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1973), on the declining fortunes of Virginia farmers in the 1880s and 1890s.

tracts totalling 1500 acres by 1871. Also among the black landed in 1870 were Brunswick farmers Ephraim Gaines, who owned over 1000 acres, and J. Anderson Greene and Ruffin Callis, who owned 500 and 600 acres respectively. Watt Love lived on his 500 acre farm near Boydton by the early 1870s. Urban blacks had also made strides toward home ownership. In 1891 tobacco-belt blacks paid taxes on considerable amounts of real estate in Charlottesville, Danville, and particularly in Lynchburg.⁵⁸ When Robert Somers visited Richmond in the fall of 1870, one of the things that particularly struck him was the amount of land and other real property on the market. "The land question," he said,

⁵⁸Taylor, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 131-36; Table V: "Real Estate Owned by Virginia Urban Negroes in 1891," p. 135, lists the assessed values of real estate by blacks in Charlottesville at \$103,035; in Danville, \$194,171; and in Lynchburg, \$425,908. Richmond blacks controlled the largest amount of real estate in urban Virginia, valued at \$968,736. Taylor reports that Archdeacon James S. Russell of the St. Paul Industrial School in Lawrenceville conducted a study which estimated that between 80,000 and 100,000 acres of land came under black ownership in the late 1860s and early 70s. According to the census of 1890, between 1870 and 1900 Virginia blacks owned a collective total of 1,031,331 acres in 25,566 farms, whose improvements were valued at \$12,915,931. Ibid., pp. 132-33. As has already been shown, landownership was an important prerequisite to political power; of the 54 black officeholders from the tobacco belt on whom Luther P. Jackson collected information between 1865 and 1895, 37 of them, or 69 percent, were landholders. Calculated from Jackson, Negro Officeholders in Virginia, 1865-1895 (Norfolk, 1945). Crandall Shifflett, in his study of postwar Louisa county, Virginia, has also found a high rate of black landowners in 1900, when 35 percent of all black farmers owned their lands. Shifflett, From Patronage to Poverty, p. 18.

"is the absorbing question in Virginia." If he had had the time, he might have filled "pages with a description of farms and plantations, and lots, large and small, of land" that whites had for sale. The phenomenon he explained by reference to emancipation. "At the close of the war," he said, "when slaves became free," landholders had "no means left to cultivate such large tracts of land under the new conditions," and "it became a necessity, as well as the best thing the owners could do, to sell large portions of their estates." It would be easy to read too much into Somers's account, but his comments illustrate the fact that the war had straitened some planters to the point of forcing them to retrench; they did so by reducing the size of their estates and by selling portions of their land--even to freedpeople, if need be.⁵⁹ Ironically, then, the circumstances in which Conservatives took early control left open a path toward petit landholding for Virginia blacks, an unthinkable proposition when proposed during the early days of the Bureau.

Another important factor in agricultural reorganization was the emigration of a substantial part of the state's black population, accompanied by a regional redistribution of those who remained behind. According to the census,

⁵⁹Robert Somers, The Southern States Since the War, 1870-1871, ed. by Malcolm C. McMillan (University, Ala., reprint ed., 1965), pp. 20-3.

Virginia's total black population declined by 6.6 percent between 1860 and 1870.⁶⁰ Many contemporary whites felt that the heaviest emigration occurred in 1869 and 1870.⁶¹ The vast majority of relocated black Virginians lived in Deep South states, where a total of 114,802 blacks reported Virginia as their birthplace. Many if not most of this group first went south as slaves sold into the interstate trade, but others had migrated in the immediate postwar period. Some had gone in search of their families; others had left with former masters bound for a fresh start in King Cotton's domain; many were persuaded by the smooth talk of a labor agent. A group of 150 freedpeople, for example, mostly women and children, had left from Danville for Mississippi in March 1866 with a man named Cunningham, who requested and received transportation from the Bureau to take this group as well as himself and his family.⁶² C.

⁶⁰It would increase by about 23 percent over the 1880s. The estimated error in black population counts for the 1870 census is 6.6 percent, so that if this figure is taken into account, Virginia's total black population did not change over the decade. Even so, unchanging population figures over a ten-year period is evidence of migration, even given deaths and escapes during the war, since natural increase in a stable population is usually calculated anywhere between 20 and 23 percent over the course of a decade. That would mean that the black population of the 1870s, which increased by 23 percent, was a relatively stable one unaffected by a great deal of emigration out of the state.

⁶¹Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 186.

⁶²Capt. Wilcox to R. S. Lacey, 14 March 1866, Letters Received, Danville, Pittsylvania co., RG 105, 4084, BRFAL.

R. Boulware of Louisa moved a family of his former slaves--husband, wife and seven children--with him to Missouri in November of the same year.⁶³ And on 15 February 1867, J. W. Bondurant left Lynchburg for Louisiana with 58 Virginia freedpeople he had hired to work on his plantation there.⁶⁴ Another sizeable group of 39,142 Virginia blacks lived in northern states by 1870, and 19,910 had responded to the lure of the west.⁶⁵

Black migrations affected the tobacco belt less severely than any other region in the state. The 1870 population was only 1.3 percent less than it had been in 1860. Blacks had departed the Tidewater at a slightly higher rate--there were 3.9 percent fewer blacks in that region in 1870. But the greatest drops in black population over the 1860s occurred in the northern piedmont and Valley, both regions that already had had relatively small black populations, and where plantation agriculture had been of limited

⁶³C. R. Boulware to Major E. C. Morse, 26 November 1866, Letters Received, B522, Gordonsville, Orange co., BRFal.

⁶⁴Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 90-1, for this and other accounts of Virginia blacks moving south between 1865 and 1870.

⁶⁵See Table, "Virginia Negroes in Other States," calculated from the U. S. Census of 1870, in Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 90-3; Maddex, Virginia Conservatives, p. 186; Nell Irvin Painter, Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction (New York, 1976), tells the story of the first major postwar migration of Afro-Americans from four states--Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Tennessee--to Kansas in the late 1870s and 1880s. See esp. pp. 6-10 for motives behind the exodus.

significance.⁶⁶

Newspapers eyed black emigration closely and kept up a steady stream of commentary about the phenomenon. In December 1869, for example, the Charlottesville Chronicle reported that four hundred black men recently left the Richmond area for the cotton states, and charged that in the last month alone two thousand had gone.⁶⁷ The Richmond Whig estimated that 10,000 blacks had left for the south during 1869, and in the same year a New Orleans newspaper reported that 31,000 Virginia and Carolina blacks had gone

⁶⁶See Appendix Table 17, and Table 18, "Regional Percentage Changes in Black and White Populations, 1850-80." These findings contradict those of A. A. Taylor, who felt that the largest black exodus occurred in areas where the slave population had been most heavily concentrated, that is, in the Tidewater and southern piedmont. Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, p. 91. These new figures support Lawrence W. Levine's observation that emancipation, while marking the beginning of the differentiation of black culture and consciousness along class lines, at the same time resulted in a voluntary black withdrawal from many aspects of white life and culture. Hence the greater rates of migration out of areas where the black population was most outnumbered--the northern piedmont and Valley--to areas of high black concentration--the tobacco belt and Tidewater, is consonant with Levine's findings. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom (Oxford, 1979), p. 140. The black population stabilized in the 1870s, but migrations resumed after 1880. In 1900, 28.8 percent of Virginia-born blacks lived outside the state; ten years later, 28.9 percent; and in 1920, 31 percent. These rates were higher than those of any other state except Kentucky. Writer's Program, Negro in Virginia, p. 349.

⁶⁷Charlottesville Chronicle, 25 December 1869; Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 85-88, 99-101.

through the city headed for the southwest. The Whig later ran an article based on information supplied by a Virginia railroad official that claimed that 15,000 black Virginians had left the state via the Danville, the Southside, and the Virginia and Tennessee railroads.⁶⁸

The reason for so much commentary on black emigration was that this exodus prefigured the menace of a labor shortage. Satisfied by 1870 that white immigrant labor would not replace the black labor force in Virginia, many whites who had formerly encouraged the forced expulsion of freedpeople from the state now sought to contain these voluntary black movements. "We expected large emigrations from Virginia," said the Chronicle, "but did not expect it to commence so soon. . . . It presents a very serious question." Insufficient labor, "unless the most strenuous exertions are made to replace the negro with the white man," would upset the economy even further.⁶⁹ In Burkeville, the newspaper editor asserted, blacks "may not constitute the best labor in the world; but they constitute the best most of our people can get--and in fact, all that many of them can obtain. . . . The welfare of the present generation of whites in Virginia is intimately blended with that of the black population" and "they cannot part from each other

⁶⁸Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, p. 92.

⁶⁹Charlottesville Chronicle, 25 December 1869.

without serious, if not fatal injury to the whites."⁷⁰ In February 1870 one member of the House of Delegates thought the situation serious enough to warrant the introduction of a bill to prevent labor agents from entering Virginia, and he sought legislation that would restrict black emigration as well.⁷¹

Yet a cursory glance into the future of "redeemed" Virginia reveals that this high-pitched white anxiety failed to protect them from the weapons that free black labor could employ. Lulled into a sense of security by their political victory in 1869, Conservatives remained devotedly ignorant of the extent to which freedpeople's labor militancy on the plantation undermined their rule.

The first phase of Conservative government lasted ten years. Although the industrial economy in particular showed some improvement over the decade, agriculture remained sluggish, in part owing to Conservative political policies. The legacy that Conservatives left Virginia in 1880 was one of financial mismanagement, debt, and corruption, all of it achieved without a significant presence of black politicians and officeholders. It was the ill-conceived Funding Act of 1871, passed under the Walker administration, that made

⁷⁰Quoted in Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 101-02.

⁷¹Such legislation did not pass. Taylor, Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia, pp. 103-04.

Conservatives architects in their own defeat. With an ignorance of the devaluation of land brought about by the altered status of labor, the government blundered seriously by miscalculating the value of Virginia's tax base, now primarily land instead of slaves. From an optimistic forecast, Conservatives expected to finance the government, the Underwood-mandated free school system, the enormous \$45 million antebellum debt plus the full value of its interest, and produce a surplus as well. When Conservatives fully realized how fantastic Walker's estimations had been, they adopted a plan of retrenchment that undercut government services in the determined interest of serving the debt. Schools, prisons, and asylums--the state's primary social service institutions--felt the effects of retrenchment most keenly, and Conservatives refused to guard the interests of small landholders through responsible stay-law legislation. Their program produced a fiery conflict between "debt-payers" or "funders," men who felt that honor and plain good business demanded recognition of the debt in full, and "readjusters," who wanted to scale the debt or at least undercut its priority. This animosity festered for eight years before bringing the government to its knees with a Readjuster party victory, composed chiefly of western white Republicans and blacks. Thus did Virginia stand out once again from the other southern states; as the Conservative party's historian has noted, Virginia

"Republicanism failed in its time of southern success and succeeded in its time of southern failure."⁷²

IV

"It was not . . . race and culture calling out of the South" at Reconstruction's tragic end in 1876, wrote W.E.B. Du Bois, "it was property and privilege, shrieking to its kind, and privilege and property heard and recognized the

⁷²Maddex, "Virginia: The Persistence of Centrist Hegemony," p. 150. J. Mills Thornton, III has suggested that the issue of land taxes in Republican-controlled southern states has been an ignored but crucial aspect of Reconstruction history. Postwar taxes fell more heavily on the small white farmer than they had in the antebellum period, when planters paid the heaviest portion of taxes through the levy on slaves. Higher taxes to finance a government that provided no particular social services was a major source of small white farmer disaffection from the party and led to their cooperation with Conservatives against the freedpeople. Moreover, ex-slaves paid little tax because few of them owned land, but they reaped tangible benefits from the public school system. In Virginia this process worked in reverse. Conservatives implemented and enforced an unfair tax code, and linked it to the issue of the antebellum debt. When small farmers pinpointed their oppressors in the Old Dominion, the culprits they found in office were not Republicans but Conservatives. As a result, poor whites joined fortunes with Republicans and blacks, for a time, to arrest Conservative rather than Republican misrule. Thornton, "Fiscal Policy and the Failure of Radical Reconstruction in the Lower South," in Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward, ed. by J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York, 1982), pp. 349-51, 386-89.

voice of its own."⁷³ Reconstruction occupied a very short period in American history; with the exception of Tennessee, nowhere was it more abbreviated than in the Old Dominion. There, it required only a four short years of supplication before the prayers of privileged Virginians were heard, and then they were answered with exemplary dispatch. As Conservatives concluded their next-best bargain with northern business interests in 1869-70, they finally felt possessed of all the necessary ingredients for an economic recovery with a home-style version of free labor.

But in many senses their victory was a pyrrhic one. Conservatives failed to neutralize the advances already made by freedmen on the plantations in their early push toward independence. Government was directed by a document drawn up by freedmen and Radicals which Conservatives disliked. They faced intimidating economic issues that they did not fully comprehend. As capitalism had advanced under military rule, there had been little reason to change greatly the character of Virginia industry, a sector already primed for market relations through the antebellum hiring system. What had been necessary was a dramatic reconcentration of industry in regions where slavery had been of a notably less sturdy variety relative to that which characterized the

⁷³W.E.B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America (New York, 1939, reprint ed., 1967), p. 630.

tobacco belt. Under these conditions, whites would eventually enter the market economy, and blacks, except where they were already established, were excluded from developing industry.

Because the new order established no guidelines for the relationship of employer and employee, ironically, the experience of former hired slave laborers in industry often availed them little in the early postwar period. But in the agricultural upcountry, a more radical adjustment was prescribed. On the plantations, market relations wrought changes that compelled planters to relinquish some aspects of their former control over the black population, even to the point of breaking up their plantations to be worked by sharecroppers or, worse, by renting or even selling lands to freedpeople with the means to purchase them. It was here that a knowledge of bargaining skills, though less developed than among former industrial hired slaves, ironically worked to greater advantage for the freedpeople.

When Conservatives turned their attention to the world of industry and business, believing that there would they regain their power, they relegated the agricultural economy to secondary importance. Tobacco-belt freedpeople established their postbellum world in the wake of that neglect. Demands for more independent working conditions coupled with labor withdrawal, migration, and emigration bruised the old planter aristocracy. Indirectly, black efforts at independence in agriculture also undercut

politicians and entrepreneurs. The land value that freedpeople had undermined by the manipulation of their labor eventually became a crucial factor in the downfall of Conservative government and the rise of the Readjuster party. Not even the disasters they had experienced during the war as a direct result of labor issues prepared Conservatives to relinquish their self-deceits and heed the powerful influence that black labor exerted over many aspects of white life.

CONCLUSION

The political, economic, and demographic features of the antebellum Virginia tobacco belt gave rise to a distinctive emancipation experience. The people who lived there felt the force of both the old and the new as they made the passage from slavery to freedom. Even though a still-vigorous plantation system remained the region's dominant characteristic, the tobacco belt, through the slave hiring system, was integrated fully into Virginia's nascent market economy. This, in turn, bestowed an important postwar legacy. For while freedpeople and ex-masters generally possessed unusually extensive experience with market relations, at the same time they harbored strong--and conflicting--preindustrial visions of how society should be ordered. During wartime, exposure to market relations became even more widespread as the breakdown of slavery and the intrusion of Confederate labor demands achieved revolutionary proportions. After emancipation, a dual sensibility bred of the conflicting ideologies of the landed and the landless influenced the nature of reconstruction while facilitating the swift economic transition that also

occurred.

The transformation in industry was especially rapid, and black industrial workers, the group most familiar with market relations, experienced little change in the organization of their labor. Despite this relative stability, they were unable either to increase their numbers or to achieve any significant occupational mobility. These workers retained positions where they had formerly concentrated as hired slaves--in railroads, tobacco factories, ironworks, and blast furnaces, for example. The development of Bright tobacco ensured continued demand for black labor in the factories of Danville, Lynchburg, and Farmville, where it was used in the production of chewing tobacco, long a black-dominated endeavor. But postwar industrialists no longer utilized the tobacco belt as an informal labor reserve, and a reconcentration of industry in the Tidewater eliminated some jobs in the upcountry. The postwar political economy strongly supported industrial development, the power of businessmen, and the introduction of white former nonslaveholders into the work force. But it did not further the rights of black workers. Consequently, many black industrial laborers experienced a sharp decline in economic status and a loss of bargaining power. In general, business drew the color line in developing industrial sectors, and white laborers controlled many of the skilled artisanal and craft positions still available as

well.

It was thus primarily in the context of the postwar plantation that freedpeople in interior Virginia were able to effect the definition of their liberty and to recast their relationships to their former masters. Freedom as envisioned by these ex-slaves meant a release from compulsive labor, and the liberty to define their own personal lives. It meant independence, and independence in turn connoted landownership, the just compensation for decades of unremunerated labor. Even when President Andrew Johnson, under the influence of conservative business interests, proscribed land distributions in the fall of 1865, tobacco-belt freedpeople were not left powerless to force concessions from the planters who did retain the land. Their preindustrial ideology helped them strike the next-best bargain with those who possessed other factors of production but who needed their labor.

In tobacco agriculture, the struggle to reorganize freed black labor produced the economic and social compromise of sharecropping, a compromise which became established by 1867. To a much greater extent than was true among their counterparts in industry, agricultural laborers were able to utilize the bargaining power of their labor on the market to infuse their visions of freedom into their working conditions. Thus did the advent of Virginia capitalism display a feature characteristic of its appearance in all

transition societies: it exacted little change where none was needed, but compelled great change where labor organization was antithetical to capitalist development. This meant that agriculture, where the labor force was immobile and unorganized along a wage basis mediated by the market, required greater interference than did industry, where market relations already existed to a significant extent. But ironically, the need to change agricultural production in turn created the opportunity for labor to force concessions from planters, and the agricultural sector proved more susceptible to labor pressure than industry in the immediate postwar period.

These developments revealed certain ideological, economic, and cultural elements of continuity with the slaveholding past. But, in the tobacco belt as throughout the South, a more powerful, overarching element of discontinuity could be discerned in postwar society. Because emancipation could not do other than redefine the nature of the relations of production, it also represented a decisive rift with the past. Although its full implications would not be realized for decades, the early phases of those changes in tobacco agriculture were distinct and relatively settled by 1870.

Because many northerners understood the direction, if not the scope, of these changes, they organized the Freedman's Bureau to oversee the establishment of free labor

relations in the postwar South. From the freedpeople's perspective, the agency's work had both positive and negative effects. Usually the most ameliorative results came from efforts of more sensitive individuals who, in spite of their lack of military support, often tried to work for the good of the freedpeople. They made their greatest contributions in the realm of education. But as an institution, the Bureau quickly evolved from a social welfare agency into an agent of the planters, helping them to acquire a new type of control over labor. The Freedman's Bureau moved to rejoin land and labor by impressing ex-slaves with the "fact" that freedom did not confer discretion over their own labor. Ultimately, the Bureau was distinguished chiefly by its efforts to retard black liberty as the freedpeople themselves defined it, and to instill in the freedpeople the bourgeois notion of labor's dependence upon property owners--property that had been produced from slave labor.

The planters and industrialists to whom the Bureau gave its support represented another group of bargainers in postwar Virginia who could lay claim to a familiarity with the workings of market society. These early New South advocates sought to master the prerogatives of the new system in the interest of asserting their economic and social dominance. The needs of such men were chiefly for ample external capital and tractable internal labor. The

prerequisite to the acquisition of both was reconciliation with the North, and this they tirelessly promoted.

But between 1866 and 1868, these men encountered political setbacks. Congressional intervention during Radical Reconstruction created an atmosphere in which newly-enfranchised freedmen made important political gains that enhanced their economic power on the plantation. Taken together, the Joint Committee, the Civil Rights Act, the renewal of the Bureau, the institution of military rule, and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, interrupted the momentum of the New South prophets. Land allotments were not a part of this temporary resurrection of conscience, but under Congressional reconstruction, freedmen in alliance with white Radicals wrote the constitution that governed Virginia for the remainder of the century.

Afterwards, some "moderate" members of the white elite were ready to submit to black male suffrage in order to regain political and economic hegemony, which they predicted would enable them to overpower an enfranchised black male population possessed of but limited economic resources. In 1869, therefore, these men struck their own next-best bargain, with a weary Congress and a receptive president. Under its terms, the Bureau and the military withdrew, and the Underwood Constitution was approved with key amendments: universal suffrage for universal amnesty. Northern businessmen were pleased at the result.

Freedpeople and white Radicals lost their political momentum to these "moderates" or "cooperationists," men anxious to become part of the rising postwar business and propertied elite. But even though "moderates" had emerged as postwar Virginia's political elite, they were unable to turn back the changes in labor relations that had occurred before they assumed power. Ironically, some of those changes would soon represent a challenge to Conservative rule.

By 1870, several clearly discernible trends that had developed during Congressional reconstruction illustrate the difference emancipation had made in the lives of ex-slaves, planters, and other whites. Sharecropping was but the most widespread and obvious of these patterns. With its emergence came a marked decentralization of large plantations and a proliferation of small farms. Along with a decline in the number of large plantations came a reduction in their improved acreage, compared to an increase of cultivated land on the growing number of small farms. Regional redistributions in the location of large plantations and small farms, and in the concentration of the black population, also reflected the changes fostered by emancipation. In areas where slavery had been most firmly established and where the black population was largest, the number of small farms increased tremendously. Large plantations, however, increased only in those regions where slavery had been of minor importance, and where the black

population had been relatively small. Changes in regional black population distribution followed a similar pattern. Postwar black out-migrations were heaviest where slavery had been least important and the black population smallest.

There were other changes. Women and children, and some men, withdrew their labor from agriculture. This behavior served to devalue plantation holdings, because as a result the large planters could not always bring their lands back into production. Remonstrances against the nature and extent of work performed on the plantation were levied and sometimes won. Family reconstitution was an important goal, and schools and churches were established and became the institutional focal points of the black community. The appearance, by 1870, of a small group of black renters, landowners, and personal property owners illustrated that some freedpeople had forced even greater concessions from the planters and successfully had checked designs on their independence. In time, a significant number of freedpeople were able to move from cropping to renting and, if they were more fortunate still, went on to join a growing number of small independent landholders. By 1910, when the long-range results of this trend can first be measured, black farm owners constituted a larger group in Virginia than in any other southern state. Although white planters, particularly in the immediate postwar years, continued to own the bulk of the land, much of it the most productive land available,

mere landownership could not, in and of itself, restore their prewar status. Because they had lost ownership of labor, and could not always coerce labor back onto the plantation, those lands were not as valuable to them as they had been in slavery.

These first efforts on behalf of the freedpeople toward a self-definition of their liberty came neither easily nor peacefully. On the contrary, they were accompanied by violence, fraud, evictions, deceptions, terror, and even murder. The infliction of such violence on the freedpeople illustrates the kinds of everyday dangers they often faced, especially in the spring of 1868, when political tensions ran high. Many freedpeople lived with poverty, injustice, and despair the likes of which sometimes seemed to exceed that they had known in slavery.

Despite these enormous political, economic, and social constraints on their lives, a black elite emerged early in the postwar period. In the Constitutional Convention of 1867-68, those blacks elected were uniformly propertied. Many of the black convention representatives were skilled and literate; several were religious leaders; a significant proportion were former free Negroes, former slave artisans, craftsmen, and hired slaves. By the time of the 1869 election, this differentiation of black society along class lines was in greater evidence, and an even more select group of landed and skilled men entered state office.

Thus, reconciliation with the North placed Conservatives in charge of a state that, between 1860 and 1870, had undergone enormous changes directly related to the emancipation of the slaves. And although the postwar outlines of the agricultural economy were clear, that economy had not recovered from the war by the time federal census takers toured in 1870. Although industry's recovery would be well-advanced in 1880, tobacco farmers never regained their prewar levels of production. The factors contributing to this sluggish economy were both numerous and complex, and Conservative government dealt poorly and often corruptly with them. These failures contributed heavily to a legacy of poverty and economic and social retardation which affected Virginia for decades. The failure to comprehend one issue in particular had serious repercussions. Conservatives planned to finance their government primarily from land taxes, but they made an unrealistically high estimation of Virginia land values. This error resulted in part because labor, through its general withdrawal, had devalued lands in general. Consequently, revenues from those properties did not match the early projections of the Conservatives. When their mistake became plain, it resulted in political and economic conflict that caused the downfall of the party in 1879.

In the interim, Conservative rule was affected at many turns by the actions of freedpeople on the postwar

plantations. They governed under the liberal constitution produced in 1867-68, of which they largely disapproved. Because they could not and in some cases would not protect large landholders from debt, their policies encouraged land sales, often in small parcels, and often to freedpeople. Because the early establishment of sharecropping had helped bring about a settled labor-capital relationship that produced a climate into which northern businessmen more confidently brought industrial investments, Conservatives were in a sense content with its establishment. A settled labor force also fostered the Old Dominion's readmission into the Union. But this Conservative security was misplaced; because they believed they had the labor force under control, they did not always recognize the ways in which their own policies were used as weapons against them.

Many important studies in Afro-American history have appeared in the last twenty-five years focusing on issues in both slavery and freedom. Increasingly they have shown us that black relationships to the larger sweep of American history were not only complex and multifaceted in and of themselves, but were critical as well to a full understanding of American history. These issues have been especially well-studied with respect to the black family,

black culture, and black religion. And although we know a great deal about slavery, both as a social and a labor system, and how it affected events in the antebellum period, we know relatively little about how black labor history in the late-nineteenth century affected the larger patterns of labor history during these important decades of industrial capitalism's development. The experience of the tobacco belt's black laborers between 1850 and 1870 provides an example of the extent to which black labor affected the course of postwar economic history in that state, showing not only how it affected black life, but Virginian life as well.

Many recent studies of the transition from slavery to freedom have stressed features of continuity, rather than change, between the antebellum and postwar periods. Continued land ownership among white planters, coercive labor methods, poverty and racism are cited as the main indicators of continuity. A corollary stresses that blacks did not--could not, actually--influence emancipation or postwar society to any significant extent under these circumstances. But as the experience of the transition in Virginia shows, Afro-American ideology exerted a significant influence on the contours of postwar society. Virginia tobacco belt ex-slaves had an understanding of market society at the same time that they held an ambivalence toward it. Although they were often inarticulate, their

actions frequently expressed what written words did not. They are our evidence that elements of continuity did exist, but not those elements of continuity traditionally alluded to in the literature. The continuity referred to here was more of an ideological nature, pieces of the slave past employed as tools in freedom to influence the balance of power on a developing social landscape. But the opportunity to employ those tools in the postwar period would not have occurred without a more fundamental change that redefined the status of black labor. And so the emancipation experience in the tobacco belt also shows us that emancipation constituted a revolution.

The transition from slavery to freedom in Virginia's tobacco belt illustrates the limitations of views which see the cotton South as the model of southern emancipation. Emancipation in the tobacco belt involved the largest group of Afro-Americans in the South. These blacks had lived in an environment that mixed a healthy slave regime with the early appearance of market relations. This atmosphere often afforded certain Afro-Americans the opportunity to exploit the weaknesses of both labor systems, more so than was true of the ex-slaves of the cotton South. Unlike other regions where high concentrations of slaves were found--as in lowcountry South Carolina or coastal Louisiana--tobacco slaves were long removed from their African origins. They had lived at close range with former masters for a century

and a half by the time of emancipation, and they were more acquainted with individual bargaining methods. In their experience we see, then, a blend of both continuity--a knowledge of bargaining coupled with strong preindustrial desires for landholding and independence--coexisting with a dramatic break from the past that shifted the ownership of labor and ushered in an era of laissez-faire capitalist development. Tobacco belt freedpeople showed that they knew how to utilize those circumstances to undercut class rule while they enhanced their own freedom.

APPENDIX: NAMES AND LISTS

APPENDIX TABLES AND LISTS

TABLE 1
REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, 1850 AND 1860
TOBACCO, WHEAT, CORN, AND OATS (POUNDS)
PERCENTAGE OF STATE

EASTERN REGIONS

	Tidewater				Southern Piedmont				Northern Piedmont			
	1850		1860		1850		1860		1850		1860	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Tobacco	1,294,528	2.37	9,728,035	7.65	52,000,000	95.01	99,754,359	78.48	525,455	00.06	4,546,475	3.58
Wheat	1,567,513	13.99	2,600,589	19.98	2,820,446	25.19	3,547,313	27.26	1,817,110	16.23	1,507,305	11.58
Corn	8,708,192	24.75	10,073,528	32.85	9,094,481	25.85	8,498,576	27.72	3,335,686	9.48	3,910,161	12.75
Oats	1,416,410	14.12	1,596,415	15.60	3,181,301	31.72	3,654,464	35.70	616,705	6.15	941,702	9.20

WESTERN REGIONS

	Valley				Mountains				STATE	
	1850		1860		1850		1860		1850	1860
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Tobacco	621,049	1.13	2,635,194	2.07	291,744	00.09	10,440,206	8.21	54,732,776	127,104,269
Wheat	2,478,320	22.13	1,977,859	15.98	2,513,880	22.45	3,381,072	25.98	11,197,289	13,014,138
Corn	2,966,430	8.43	3,751,397	12.24	11,078,703	31.49	12,073,730	39.38	35,183,492	30,658,646
Oats	1,122,185	11.19	1,026,053	10.02	3,691,885	36.81	3,018,050	29.48	10,028,486	10,236,684

Table 1 provides regional agricultural production and percentage figures for the four most important crops in Virginia in the mid-nineteenth century. Tobacco agriculture dominated the southern piedmont region, but the section also grew sizeable crops of wheat, corn, and oats. These three crops, however, did not often reach market, and were used primarily in local consumption. Cereal crops raised for local consumption also typified the mountain region; in the Tidewater and Valley, cereal agriculture more often was associated with production for market. The increase in tobacco production in the mountains during the 1850s reflects the construction of the Virginia and Tennessee railroad through southwest Virginia, which opened up some counties there to tobacco production. (For the same reason, Table 4 also shows an increase in the slave population in that region.) Generally, however, slavery was unimportant in this remote western area, particularly in those counties that would form West Virginia in 1863.

TABLE 2
Farm Size by Region, 1860
Percentage of State

<u>Improved Acres</u>	<u>EASTERN REGIONS</u>			<u>WESTERN REGIONS</u>	
	<u>Southern Piedmont</u>	<u>Tidewater</u>	<u>Northern Piedmont</u>	<u>Valley</u>	<u>Mountains</u>
3-9	11.40	23.73	7.78	8.17	48.92
10-19	12.31	22.26	6.11	8.79	50.53
20-49	15.81	21.07	5.48	9.68	47.96
50-99	19.25	21.40	6.13	12.23	40.96
100-499	28.55	21.00	9.47	14.94	26.13
500-999	41.95	24.29	13.22	8.36	12.18
1000+	37.13	26.68	13.73	7.33	15.13

This table shows that in 1860, the Tidewater held a larger share of small farms and plantations--those below 100 acres--than did the tobacco belt, where plantations numbering 100 acres or more tended to concentrate. Small farms were particularly numerous in the mountains, where slavery was unimportant.

TABLE 3
Regional Manufacturing in Virginia, 1850 and 1860
(Percentage of State Total)

	<u>EASTERN REGIONS</u>						<u>WESTERN REGIONS</u>			
	<u>Southern Piedmont</u>		<u>Tidewater</u>		<u>Northern Piedmont</u>		<u>Valley</u>		<u>Mountains</u>	
	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>
Capital invested in Manufacturing	23.69	25.10	31.46	29.74	8.50	5.10	12.02	11.04	24.55	29.02
Persons employed	30.10	36.10	28.83	30.46	6.62	6.27	10.71	8.24	23.73	18.93
Value annual product	36.41	33.56	28.01	35.54	6.59	5.60	9.97	9.45	17.22	17.70
Cost raw materials	NA	32.42	NA	35.67	NA	5.56	NA	10.13	NA	16.39
Cost labor annually	NA	30.87	NA	31.64	NA	6.26	NA	8.05	NA	23.39
Number mfg. ests.	NA	26.17	NA	23.42	NA	9.03	NA	18.37	NA	23.03

NA = Figures Not Available for 1850

Table 3 illustrates the concentration of Virginia industry and manufacturing in the eastern regions of the state. During the 1850s, the southern piedmont's share of industrial value declined somewhat, as did those of all other regions save the Tidewater, where the value of manufacturing products increased noticeably.

TABLE 4
VIRGINIA REGIONAL POPULATION, 1850 AND 1860

EASTERN REGIONS

	Tidewater				Southern Piedmont				Northern Piedmont			
	1850		1860		1850		1860		1850		1860	
	No.	% State	No.	% State	No.	% State	No.	% State	No.	% State	No.	% State
Whites	191,539	21.41	227,280	21.70	186,480	20.84	202,049	18.20	69,971	7.82	76,807	7.33
Free Negroes	26,677	49.10	32,407	55.90	13,282	24.45	14,309	18.24	6,047	11.13	6,101	10.51
Slaves	151,811	32.13	158,377	32.26	214,287	45.35	226,506	46.14	46,009	9.74	45,403	9.26
Total Black	178,488	33.88	187,078	34.08	227,569	43.19	240,815	43.87	52,056	9.88	51,564	9.39
Total Population	370,027	26.03	414,446	25.96	414,049	29.12	442,864	27.74	122,027	8.58	128,371	8.04

WESTERN REGIONS

	Valley				Mountains				Virginia	
	1850		1860		1850		1860		Total	Total
	No.	% State	No.	% State	No.	% State	No.	% State		
Whites	126,708	14.16	140,453	13.41	320,102	35.77	400,710	38.26	894,800	1,047,299
Free Negroes	5,590	10.29	6,034	10.40	2,737	5.04	2,892	4.98	54,333	58,042
Slaves	32,864	6.95	32,656	6.65	27,557	5.83	27,863	5.68	472,528	490,865
Total Black	38,454	7.30	38,690	7.05	30,294	5.75	30,755	5.60	526,861	548,907
Total Population	165,162	11.62	179,143	11.22	350,396	24.65	431,494	27.05	1,412,661	1,596,206

Table 4 illustrates the regional variations in Virginia's population. The black population concentrated in the east, particularly in the southern piedmont and Tidewater. Of these two regions, the slave population was greatest in the southern piedmont, where it grew significantly over the decade of the 1850s. The other region of high black population, the Tidewater, held the largest number of free Negroes. Free Negroes in the Tidewater, like slaves in the upcountry, increased their regional concentration significantly during the 1850s. In the northern piedmont and the Valley, where slavery was of marginal importance, the slave population declined slightly over the 1850s. Reflecting the extension of the railroad into the southwestern corner of the state, and the resulting increase in tobacco production there, the number of slaves in the mountains increased somewhat. The increase in their numbers disguises the fact that slavery played an insignificant role in that region, particularly in the Alleghany district that would become West Virginia in 1863.

TABLE 5
SLAVEHOLDERS IN VIRGINIA
1860

EASTERN REGIONS

No. of Slaves	Southern Piedmont			Tidewater			Northern Piedmont		
	No.	Percentage of: State	Region	No.	Percentage of: State	Region	No.	Percentage of: State	Region
1-4	9,270	36.65	44.18	7,999	31.55	49.32	2,515	9.92	48.24
5-9	4,733	38.73	22.56	4,026	32.94	24.82	1,301	10.64	24.95
10-49	6,507	47.53	31.01	4,174	30.49	25.73	1,345	9.82	25.80
50-99	416	55.76	1.98	243	32.57	1.50	49	6.57	0.94
100+	57	50.89	0.27	48	42.86	2.96	4	3.57	*
TOTAL SLAVEHOLDERS	20,983	40.25		16,220	31.12		5,214	10.00	

WESTERN REGIONS

No. of Slaves	Valley			Mountains			State	
	No.	Percentage of: State	Region	No.	Percentage of: State	Region	No.	Percentage
1-4	2,507	9.89	53.64	3,064	12.08	60.82	25,355	48.64
5-9	1,177	9.63	25.19	1,262	10.33	25.05	12,222	23.45
10-49	962	7.03	20.59	702	5.13	13.93	13,691	26.26
50-99	19	2.55	0.41	19	2.55	0.38	746	1.43
100+	4	3.57	*	1	*	*	112	*
TOTAL SLAVEHOLDERS	4,673	8.96		5,038	9.66		52,128	99.78

*Less than 1 percent

Table 5 shows that the slaveholding class concentrated in the tobacco belt by 1860. Furthermore, large holdings of 50 slaves or more tended to be located in that region. The slaveholding class in the Tidewater was somewhat smaller than that of the upcountry. In the west, slaveholders were relatively few indeed, and when present, most often owned the labor of fewer than five slaves. In the state as a whole, small slaveholders predominated; nearly half owned fewer than five slaves in 1860.

TABLE 6
SLAVES ON GIVEN SIZE PLANTATIONS
1860 SOUTHERN PIEDMONT

<u>Slaveholding Size</u>	<u>Number Slaves</u>	<u>Percent Region</u>	<u>Percent Region/State</u>	<u>Percent In Va.</u>
1-4	18,222	8.60	35.24	10.54
5-9	30,732	14.55	37.56	16.67
10-14	28,716	13.59	42.09	13.90
15-19	23,596	11.17	44.95	10.69
20-49	73,587	34.83	50.15	29.89
50-99	27,590	13.06	54.27	10.36
100-199	7,800	3.69	49.52	3.21
200-299	1,020	.51	50.00	.42
300-499	0	0	0	0
500-1000	0	0	0	0
1000+	0	0	0	0

While most tobacco belt slaveholders, like slaveholders throughout the state, owned fewer than five slaves, slightly over half of all slaves in the upcountry lived on large plantations holding 20 slaves or more. The larger the number of slaves on a plantation, the more likely it was to be located in the tobacco belt. Plantations and farms with fewer than 15 slaves were not as representative of the region as they were of the state; above that number, they exceeded the state average.

TABLE 7
Regional Percentage of Free Negroes
to the Total Black Population
1850 and 1860

	<u>EASTERN REGIONS</u>						<u>WESTERN REGIONS</u>					
	Southern Piedmont		Tidewater		Northern Piedmont		Valley		Mountains		State	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
1850	13,282	5.84	26,677	14.95	6,074	11.62	5,590	14.54	2,737	9.03	54,333	10.31
1860	14,309	5.94	32,407	17.32	6,101	11.83	6,034	15.60	2,892	9.40	58,042	10.57

Table 7 shows that the free Negro population was only a small fraction of the total black population in the tobacco belt, smaller than in any other region of the state. Free Negroes were more likely to live in the Tidewater or in the Valley; they increased their numbers in the Tidewater significantly over the 1850s.

TABLE 8
Regional Sex Ratios
Free Negroes, Slaves, and Whites
1850-1860

	<u>EASTERN REGIONS</u>								<u>WESTERN REGIONS</u>			
	<u>State</u>		<u>Southern Piedmont</u>		<u>Tidewater</u>		<u>Northern Piedmont</u>		<u>Valley</u>		<u>Mountains</u>	
	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>
Free Negroes	85.34	83.84	87.43	84.19	83.27	82.28	80.11	77.01	90.82	90.77	95.99	94.67
Slaves	105.84	104.98	108.34	107.85	101.92	104.11	99.63	92.58	119.57	111.15	111.32	100.90
Whites	100.21	99.71	97.27	98.18	98.25	101.68	94.32	95.60	100.70	100.46	104.64	100.99

Table 8 illustrates the difference in the sexual composition of the free Negro, slave, and white populations by region. In all regions, the free Negro population held more women than men, especially in the northern piedmont. Only in the mountain region did sex ratios among free Negroes approach parity. By contrast, the slave population tended to have more men than women, with the exception of the northern piedmont counties. Sex ratios among whites were more nearly equal than for any other group of the population, once again with the exception of the northern piedmont region.

Sex ratios are calculated by finding the number of men per 100 women. Because they are used primarily to show the likelihood of the adult population to find a mate, they are limited to men and women between the ages of 15 and 50, the approximate years of human reproductive capacity. Figures above 100, known as high sex ratios, indicate an excess of males over females, and are taken to mean that not all men will find mates. Figures below 100, known as low sex ratios, indicate an excess of females over males, and mean that not all women will find mates. But because it was neither uncommon nor illegal for slaves and free Negroes to establish families across these legal boundaries, sex ratios reveal relatively little about black family life. What they do show is how much more likely a slave woman was to be manumitted than a slave man.

TABLE 9
REGIONAL PERCENTAGE CHANGES IN SLAVE AND FREE NEGRO
POPULATIONS, 1850-1860

<u>EASTERN REGIONS</u>	<u>Slave</u>	<u>Free</u>
Southern Piedmont	5.7	7.7
Tidewater	4.3	7.6
Northern Piedmont	-1.2	**
 <u>WESTERN REGIONS</u>		
Valley	*	7.9
Mountains	1.1	5.4

* less than 1% decline.

** less than 1% increase.

This table shows that the free Negro population increased at a higher rate than did the slave population during the 1850s, especially in the tobacco belt, the Tidewater, and the Valley. The increase in the slave population was greatest in the tobacco counties.

TABLE 10
REGIONAL MANUFACTURING IN VIRGINIA, 1860 AND 1870
(Percentage of State Total)

	<u>EASTERN REGIONS</u>						<u>WESTERN REGIONS</u>			
	<u>Southern Piedmont</u>		<u>Tidewater</u>		<u>Northern Piedmont</u>		<u>Valley</u>		<u>Mountains</u>	
	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>
Capital invested										
in Manufacturing	29.74	28.57	25.10	40.54	5.10	9.33	11.04	16.40	29.02	5.16
Persons employed	36.10	35.37	30.46	38.31	6.27	8.29	8.24	11.77	18.93	6.26
Value annual product	33.56	33.89	35.54	45.61	5.60	8.62	9.45	12.22	17.70	5.67
Cost raw materials	32.42	34.74	35.67	36.85	5.56	8.65	10.13	13.92	16.39	5.85
Cost labor annually	30.87	28.18	31.64	49.81	6.26	9.10	8.05	9.41	23.39	3.50
Number mfg. ests.	26.17	29.88	23.42	22.75	9.03	13.16	18.37	20.02	23.03	14.17

Table 10 illustrates the postwar concentration of industry, as measured by categories provided in the census, in the Tidewater and northern piedmont in the east, and in the Valley in the west. Only in the number of manufacturing establishments did the Tidewater lose ground, perhaps a reflection of the damage inflicted during the war, especially around Richmond. By contrast, the southern piedmont's share of state industry declined relative to the rest of the state.

TABLE 11
REGIONAL MANUFACTURING IN VIRGINIA, 1870 AND 1880
(Percentage of State Total)

	<u>EASTERN REGIONS</u>						<u>WESTERN REGIONS</u>			
	<u>Southern Piedmont</u>		<u>Tidewater</u>		<u>Northern Piedmont</u>		<u>Valley</u>		<u>Mountains</u>	
	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>
Capital invested in Manufacturing	28.57	24.49	40.54	34.21	9.33	7.34	16.40	23.92	5.16	10.02
Persons employed	35.37	34.19	38.31	42.22	8.29	5.71	11.77	12.58	6.26	5.30
Value annual product	33.89	27.04	45.61	48.28	8.62	6.44	13.22	11.92	5.67	4.85
Cost raw materials	34.74	29.79	36.85	45.61	8.65	6.82	13.92	12.77	5.85	5.00
Cost labor annually	28.18	27.14	49.81	51.83	9.10	5.72	9.41	10.91	3.50	4.41
Number mfg. ests.	29.88	27.78	22.75	24.78	13.16	11.94	20.02	21.35	14.17	14.15

Table 10 measured the changes that resulted in regional industry after the first five years of free labor. This table looks at changes during the next decade. Between 1870 and 1880, the southern piedmont's share of state industry continued to decline. The trend toward industrial concentration in the Tidewater and Valley continued, with the exception that investment capital became less available in the Tidewater. However, the number of factories as well as the number of persons employed in manufacturing increased considerably in the Tidewater, reflecting the beginning of the boom in cigar and cigarette manufacturing in the latter part of the decade, and the accompanying increase in the employment of white labor in that branch of industry. In the Valley, the region most exploited by extractive industry, capital invested in manufacturing increased at a rate about equal to the that by which it declined in the Tidewater. The 1870s also brought a noticeable drop in the northern piedmont's share of industrial activity.

TABLE 12
TOBACCO BELT
PERCENTAGE IMPROVED ACREAGE / TOTAL ACREAGE

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>IMPROVED</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1850	3,636,614	6,824,089	53.29
1860	3,551,628	7,073,298	50.21
1870	2,985,318	6,388,276	46.73
1880	2,741,644	6,599,562	41.54

Table 12 illustrates the steady decline in the percentage of improved acreage to total acreage in farms in the tobacco belt. This pattern began in the 1850s, and worsened after the war, particularly in the 1870s.

TABLE 13
IMPROVED ACREAGE BY FARMS IN SIZE AND REGION, AND PERCENTAGE CHANGES
1860-1870

EASTERN REGIONS

Acres	Year	Southern Piedmont			No.	Tidewater		% Change	No.	Northern Piedmont		% Change
		No.	% in Region	% Change		% in Region	% Change			No.	% in Region	
3-9	1860	268	1.38		558	3.01		183	2.77			
	1870	1,259	5.05	370	1,829	9.54	278	319	4.56	74		
10-19	1860	685	3.54		1,239	6.69		340	5.14			
	1870	1,882	7.55	174	2,240	11.69	81	447	6.39	31		
20-49	1860	3,097	16.00		4,127	22.28		1,073	16.24			
	1870	5,378	21.57	74	5,027	26.23	22	1,106	15.80	3		
50-99	1860	4,071	21.03		4,528	24.44		1,297	19.62			
	1870	5,659	22.70	39	4,183	21.82	-8	1,336	19.09	3		
100-499	1860	9,792	50.58		7,202	38.88		3,247	49.13			
	1870	9,478	38.01	-3	5,389	28.11	-25	3,454	49.35	6		
500-999	1860	1,209	6.24		700	3.78		381	5.76			
	1870	830	3.33	-31	383	2.00	-45	272	3.89	-29		
1,000+	1860	238	1.23		171	0.92		88	1.33			
	1870	120	0.48	-50	80	0.42	-53	46	0.66	-48		
TOTAL	1860	19,360			18,525			6,609				
	1870	24,935		29	19,168		3	6,999		6		

(Table 13 is continued on the next page)

TABLE 13
IMPROVED ACREAGE BY FARMS IN SIZE AND REGION, AND PERCENTAGE CHANGES
1860-1870

WESTERN REGIONS

Acres	Year	Valley			Mountains (W. Va.)			State		Total State	
		No.	% in Region	% Change	No.	% in Region	% Change	Total	% Change	Without W. Va.	% Change
3-9	1860	192	1.85		1,150	3.66		2,351		1,201	
	1870	262	2.54	36	823	6.61	-28	4,492	91	3,369	181
10-19	1860	489	4.70		2,812	8.96		5,565		2,753	
	1870	394	3.83	-19	1,337	10.74	-52	6,300	13	4,963	80
20-49	1860	1,895	18.22		9,392	29.88		19,584		10,462	
	1870	1,653	16.05	-13	3,727	29.94	-60	16,891	-14	13,164	26
50-99	1860	2,585	24.85		8,664	27.59		21,145		12,481	
	1870	2,689	26.11	4	3,341	26.84	-61	17,208	-19	13,867	11
100-499	1860	5,125	49.27		8,834	28.13		34,300		25,466	
	1870	5,093	49.46	1	3,012	24.19	-60	26,698	-22	23,686	-7
500-999	1860	241	2.32		351	1.12		2,882		2,531	
	1870	176	1.71	-27	147	1.18	-58	1,808	-37	1,661	-34
1000+	1860	47	0.45		97	0.31		641		544	
	1870	24	0.23	-49	47	0.38	-52	317	-51	270	-50
TOTAL	1860	10,401			31,400			86,468		55,068	
	1870	10,297		-1	12,450		-60	73,849	-15	61,399	11

Table 13 compares improved acreage in farms from 1860-70. Note particularly the large increase in the numbers of small farms (49 acres or fewer, and especially 19 acres or fewer) in the Tidewater and the tobacco belt. Although they represent the single largest category of farms in both the tobacco belt and the Tidewater, farms of 100 acres or more exhibited a decline in numbers in 1870. Large planters in all regions experienced precipitous drops in improved acreage; Tidewater planters felt the most extreme pressures. By contrast, in the northern piedmont and in the Valley, where slavery was not as established, planters owning between 100 and 499 acres experienced little change in numbers, and small farms did not increase to the extent that they did in the tobacco belt and Tidewater. In the Valley, small farms of between 10 and 49 acres even declined somewhat. The Valley's somewhat erratic pattern, however, probably reflects the effects of the Union army more than the figures of any other region.

TABLE 14
FARM SIZE BY REGION, 1860-1870
Percentage of State

Acres	<u>EASTERN REGIONS</u>						<u>WESTERN REGIONS</u>			
	Southern Piedmont		Tidewater		Northern Piedmont		Valley		Mountains	
	1860	1870	1860	1870	1860	1870	1860	1870	1860	1870
3-9	11.40	28.03	23.73	40.72	7.78	7.10	8.17	5.83	48.92	18.32
10-19	12.31	29.87	22.26	35.56	6.11	7.10	8.79	6.25	50.53	21.22
20-49	15.81	31.84	21.07	29.76	5.48	6.55	9.68	9.79	47.96	22.07
50-99	19.25	32.89	21.40	24.31	6.13	7.76	12.23	15.63	40.96	19.42
100-499	28.55	36.51	21.00	20.19	9.47	12.94	14.94	19.08	26.13	11.28
500-999	41.95	45.91	24.29	21.28	13.22	15.04	8.36	9.73	12.18	8.13
1000+	37.13	37.85	26.68	25.24	13.73	14.51	7.33	7.57	15.13	14.83

Table 14 examines the changes in farm size, as measured by improved acreage, over the decade of the 1860s. Note the striking regional increases in small farms of below 100 acres in both the southern piedmont and the Tidewater, the two major slaveholding regions of the state. Only very small farms of between 3 and 9 acres showed a decline in number; farms of this size increased only in the Valley during this decade. The southern piedmont also continued to hold the majority of Virginia's large plantations, although their absolute numbers declined sharply between 1860 and 1870 (see Table 16). The increase in small farms was not nearly as dramatic in the Valley and northern piedmont as it was in the two other eastern regions.

TABLE 15
FARM SIZE BY REGION, 1870-1880
Percentage of State

Acres	EASTERN REGIONS						WESTERN REGIONS			
	Southern Piedmont		Tidewater		Northern Piedmont		Valley		Mountains	
	1870	1880	1870	1880	1870	1880	1870	1880	1870	1880
3-9	28.03	27.35	40.72	34.80	7.10	11.91	5.83	13.73	18.32	12.19
10-19	29.87	34.42	35.56	34.84	7.10	8.62	6.25	10.00	21.22	12.11
20-49	31.84	33.65	29.76	33.56	6.55	7.46	9.79	10.49	22.07	14.84
50-99	32.89	34.57	24.31	24.73	7.76	7.10	15.63	13.66	19.42	19.96
100-499	36.51	37.59	20.19	19.36	12.94	9.28	19.08	15.64	11.28	18.13
500-999	45.91	38.18	21.28	20.91	15.04	11.07	9.73	13.47	8.13	16.36
1000+	37.85	33.21	25.24	19.71	14.51	8.32	7.57	13.76	14.83	25.02

By 1870, as Table 15 illustrates, the most dramatic regional redistributions in farm size by improved acreage had already occurred. During the 1870s, some increases in small farms of up to 100 improved acres continued in the southern piedmont; large plantations, although they increased greatly in number (see Table 16), declined in the tobacco belt and the Tidewater relative to other regions. The big gains in the numbers of large plantations of improved acreage came in the Valley and in the mountains. The Valley also exhibited an increase in its share of small farms.

TABLE 16
IMPROVED ACREAGE IN FARMS, BY REGION
1860-1880

		EASTERN REGIONS						WESTERN REGIONS				
Farm Size in Acres	Year	S. Piedmont		Tidewater		N. Piedmont		Valley		Mountains		STATE TOTAL
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0-3	* 1860											
	1870	59	43.07	37	27.00	19	13.87	6	4.38	16	11.68	137
	1880	35	34.66	17	16.83	17	16.83	22	21.78	10	9.90	101
3-9	1860	268	11.40	558	23.73	183	7.78	192	8.17	1,150	48.92	2,351
	1870	1,259	28.03	1,829	40.72	319	7.10	262	5.83	823	18.32	4,492
	1880	1,918	27.35	2,440	34.80	835	11.91	963	13.73	856	12.19	7,021
10-19	1860	685	12.31	1,239	22.26	340	6.11	489	8.79	2,812	50.53	5,565
	1870	1,882	29.87	2,240	35.56	447	7.10	394	6.25	1,337	21.22	6,300
	1880	3,326	34.42	3,367	34.84	833	8.62	967	10.00	1,170	12.11	9,663
20-49	1860	3,097	15.81	4,127	21.07	1,073	5.48	1,895	9.68	9,392	47.96	19,584
	1870	5,378	31.84	5,027	29.76	1,106	6.55	1,653	9.79	3,727	22.07	16,891
	1880	6,501	33.65	6,484	33.56	1,442	7.46	2,027	10.49	2,868	14.84	19,322
50-99	1860	4,071	19.25	4,528	21.40	1,297	6.13	2,585	12.23	8,664	40.96	21,145
	1870	5,659	32.89	4,183	24.31	1,336	7.76	2,689	15.63	3,341	19.42	17,208
	1880	7,672	34.57	5,486	24.72	1,575	7.10	3,032	13.66	4,429	19.96	22,194
100-499	1860	9,792	28.55	7,202	21.00	3,247	9.47	5,125	14.94	8,834	26.13	34,300
	1870	9,478	36.51	5,389	20.19	3,454	12.94	5,093	19.08	3,012	11.28	26,698
	1880	19,960	37.59	10,278	19.36	4,828	9.28	8,307	15.64	9,628	18.13	53,101
500-999	1860	1,209	41.95	700	24.29	381	13.22	241	8.36	351	12.18	2,882
	1870	830	45.91	383	21.28	272	15.04	176	9.73	147	8.13	1,808
	1880	2,123	38.18	1,163	20.91	616	11.07	749	13.47	910	16.36	5,561
1,000+	1860	238	37.13	171	26.68	88	13.73	47	7.33	97	15.13	641
	1870	120	37.85	80	25.24	46	14.51	24	7.57	47	14.83	317
	1880	519	33.21	308	19.71	130	8.32	215	13.76	391	25.02	1,563
TOTAL	1860	19,360		18,525		6,609		10,401		31,400		86,468
	1870	24,935		19,168		6,999		10,297		12,450		73,849
	1880	42,054		29,543		10,376		16,282		20,262		118,517

*Figures not available for this year.

Table 16 is a recapitulation of Tables 14-15, providing a complete tabulation of changes in farm size by region for the years 1860-1880. It should be noted that the figures for 1860 and 1870 reflect improved acreage in farms, while the 1880 figures include both improved and unimproved acreage.

TABLE 17
REGIONAL VIRGINIA POPULATION, 1860-1880

TOTAL BLACK						
	1860		1870		1880	
	#	%*	#	%	#	%
S. Piedmont	240,815	43.19	237,739	46.36	288,361	45.65
Tidewater	187,078	34.08	179,721	35.04	222,439	35.22
N. Piedmont	51,564	9.39	44,559	8.69	53,107	8.41
Valley	38,690	7.05	32,589	6.35	43,556	6.90
Mountains	30,755	5.60	18,233	3.56	24,153	3.82

TOTAL WHITE						
	1860		1870		1880	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
S. Piedmont	202,049	24.65	201,858	28.35	253,603	28.79
Tidewater	227,280	21.70	170,874	24.00	203,883	23.15
N. Piedmont	76,807	7.33	74,155	10.41	84,360	9.58
Valley	140,453	13.41	131,835	18.51	160,020	18.17
Mountains	400,710	38.26	133,367	18.73	178,992	20.32

TOTAL						
	1860		1870		1880	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
S. Piedmont	442,864	27.74	439,638	35.88	541,977	35.83
Tidewater	414,446	25.96	350,767	28.63	426,371	28.19
N. Piedmont	128,371	8.04	118,716	9.69	137,467	9.09
Valley	179,143	11.22	164,430	13.42	203,595	13.46
Mountains	431,494	27.03	151,612	12.37	203,153	13.43

*Percentage (%) represents percentage of state totals. For the 1860 figures, West Virginia totals are included in the Mountain region.

Table 17 reveals regional increases in the black population particularly in the tobacco belt and Tidewater. These had been regions of greatest black population before the war (see Table 1). Declines in the black population occurred in regions where slavery had been least important, the northern piedmont, the Valley, and the mountains.

TABLE 18
REGIONAL PERCENTAGE CHANGES IN BLACK AND WHITE POPULATIONS,
1850-1880

<u>EASTERN REGIONS</u>		<u>1850-60</u>	<u>1860-70</u>	<u>1870-80</u>
Southern Piedmont	Black	5.8	-1.3	21.3
	White	8.3	*	25.6
Tidewater	Black	4.8	-3.9	23.7
	White	18.7	24.8	19.3
Northern Piedmont	Black	*	-13.6	19.2
	White	9.7	3.5	13.8
<u>WESTERN REGIONS</u>				
Valley	Black	**	-15.8	33.6
	White	10.8	-6.1	21.4
State	Black	4.2	-6.6	23.0
	White	17.0	-32.0	24.0

*-less than 1% decrease

**less than 1% increase

Note that the greatest declines in regional black population between 1860 and 1870 occurred in the northern piedmont and the Valley, where the black population was significantly outnumbered by the white. Declines were slightest in the tobacco belt and in the Tidewater.

APPENDIX DOCUMENT 19

Regions in Virginia*

EASTERN REGIONS

Tidewater

1. Accomac
2. Caroline
3. Charles City
4. Chesterfield
5. Dinwiddie
6. Essex
7. Gloucester
8. Greensville
9. Hanover
10. Henrico
11. James City
12. King & Queen
13. King George
14. King William
15. Lancaster
16. Mathews
17. Middlesex
18. Nansemond
19. New Kent
20. Norfolk
21. Northampton
22. Northumberland
23. Princess Anne
24. Prince George
25. Richmond
26. Southampton
27. Stafford
28. Surry
29. Sussex
30. Warwick
31. Westmoreland
32. York

Southern Piedmont

1. Albemarle
2. Amelia
3. Amherst
4. Appomattox
5. Bedford
6. Brunswick
7. Buckingham
8. Campbell
9. Charlotte
10. Cumberland
11. Fluvanna
12. Franklin
13. Goochland
14. Greene
15. Halifax
16. Henry
17. Louisa
18. Lunenburg
19. Mecklenburg
20. Nelson
21. Nottoway
22. Orange
23. Patrick
24. Pittsylvania
25. Powhatan
26. Prince Edward

Northern Piedmont

1. Culpeper
2. Fairfax
3. Fauquier
4. Loudoun
5. Madison
6. Prince William
7. Rappahannock
8. Spotsylvania

WESTERN REGIONS

Valley

1. Alleghany
2. Augusta
3. Bath
4. Clark
5. Craig
6. Frederick
7. Highland
8. Page
9. Roanoke
10. Rockbridge
11. Rockingham
12. Shenendoah
13. Warren

Southwest Virginia

1. Bland
2. Buchanan
3. Carroll
4. Dickenson
5. Floyd
6. Giles
7. Grayson
8. Lee
9. Montgomery
10. Pulaski
11. Russell
12. Scott
13. Smyth
14. Tazewell
15. Washington
16. Wise
17. Wythe

*Virginia counties were grouped in this way for statistical purposes.

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