South Carolina’s newly elected Republican government convened for the first time in July 1868. The state’s white press lost no time in launching a vigorous attack against the entire administration, not waiting to see what it would do. Merely watching the new officials and legislators assemble was enough to convince the Fairfield Herald that South Carolina had been “trampled beneath the unholy hoofs of African savages and shoulder-strapped brigands” and subjected to the rule of “gibbering louse-eaten, devil worshiping barbarians, from the jungles of Dahomey, and peripatetic buccaneers from Cape Cod, Memphremagog, Hell, and Boston.”

White observers professed to be shocked by the number of black faces they saw in the new government. In actuality, though, blacks did not hold nearly as many offices as they wanted. Though nearly two-thirds of South Carolina’s registered voters were of African descent, this distribution was reflected only in the state’s House of Representatives where blacks held a seventy-eight to forty-six majority. The new state Senate consisted of twenty-one whites and ten blacks. The new state administration was virtually all white. The state treasurer, Francis Cardozo, was the only black statewide official.

This paucity of black officials reflected, to some extent, the fact that the overwhelming majority of South Carolina’s blacks were newly freed slaves who lacked education or any experience that might have prepared them to assume leading positions in public
life. A handful of educated African Americans, most of whom had attended the Constitutional Convention, sought to provide leadership for the black community. This group included the members of the Brown Fellowship Society, as well as Francis Cardozo, Richard Cain, Robert Elliott, and a handful of others. Gradually, the pool of black leaders was enlarged as more blacks became literate and familiar with the intricacies of democratic politics. The Union League played an important role in introducing former slaves to the rules of parliamentary procedure and, by encouraging members to attend trials as spectators, to the rules of court procedure as well. Samuel Lee and Beverly Nash were former slaves who became influential black politicians and ultimately even earned the grudging respect of some of the state’s conservative whites. Within a few years, experienced black politicians would seek to supplant their white allies in South Carolina and in other states with substantial black electorates such as Florida, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

In 1868, however, the potential black leadership cadre was so small that African Americans had no choice but to look to whites for leadership.

At the same time, national and state Republican leaders continued to worry that an all-black government in South Carolina would hurt the party’s image nationally. Francis Cardozo cautioned against naming a black man even to the largely ceremonial post of lieutenant governor, saying that this would be a step “beyond the limits of true victory.” Among northern Republicans, only Sen. Charles Sumner argued that the southern states should seize the opportunity to elect blacks to the U.S. Congress. The Democratic press replied by urging the Massachusetts legislature to select a black senator to replace Sumner if more blacks were needed in the Congress.

Most numerous among the new government’s white officials were the carpetbaggers. Many of these immigrants had arrived in the region as soldiers in the Union army or officials in the Freedmen’s Bureau and had remained to try their hands at business, politics, or farming. Freedmen’s Bureau officials, in particular, were drawn into politics because they believed that their contacts with the freed slaves would give them an advantage in an electoral arena in which
blacks generally constituted the majority. Robert Scott, the newly elected governor, was an Ohioan who had come to South Carolina to head the Freedmen’s Bureau. Daniel Chamberlain, the new attorney general, was a native of Massachusetts who, as an officer in the Union army, had been stationed in South Carolina. Chamberlain purchased a plantation and became active in politics. Ultimately, he was elected governor, serving from 1874 to 1876 when the state was “redeemed” by white Democrats. Niles Parker, the new state treasurer, had been a captain in the Union army and, like Chamberlain, had purchased a plantation and remained in South Carolina. B. F. Whittemore, elected to represent South Carolina’s first district in the U.S. Congress, was a Massachusetts native who had been sent to South Carolina by the Freedmen’s Bureau to organize schools. Frederick Sawyer, also from Massachusetts, was elected to the U.S. Senate. He had come to Charleston to take charge of the Normal School. Several years later, the legislature elected “Honest John” Patterson, a Pennsylvania native noted for his shadiness, to replace Sawyer as U.S. senator.

A second and smaller group of white officials consisted of native Carolinians. Several prominent scalawags had roles in the new regime. Frank Moses had been elected to the state’s House of Representatives and would soon be chosen its first Speaker. With the support of the Brown Fellowship Society, Moses had defeated northern black Republican Robert Elliott for the post. Moses was also appointed to serve as adjutant and inspector general of the state militia and as a trustee of the state university. To mend fences with Elliott, Moses appointed him assistant adjutant of the militia. Later, Moses supported Elliott’s successful bid for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives where he served with distinction. Joseph Crews was another highly visible scalawag who held office under the new regime. Before the war, Crews had been a “Negro trader,” that is, a white businessman who catered to a black clientele. Crews served on a number of important committees, where he came to be known as one of the most radical members of the state legislature. Moses appointed Crews to serve as the ranking officer of the state militia.
Though Crews had minimal military experience, he was an effective enough leader to induce Democratic party paramilitary forces to assassinate him in preparation for the 1876 election campaign. “It was understood that they intended to put an end to his leadership,” one Democrat reported.\(^5\) Former provisional governor James Orr, the state’s most prominent Unionist during the prewar and war years, was not elected to serve in the new administration. In September 1868, however, the legislature elected Orr judge of the Eighth Judicial Circuit. Thomas Robertson, a scalawag who had played an important role at the Constitutional Convention, was elected by the legislature to represent the state in the U.S. Senate.

Another group of whites who played a role in the new government were more numerous but initially far less important than the scalawags. These were the white conservatives elected under the Democratic party’s banner. Seven white Democrats had been elected to the Senate and sixteen to the House, most from up-country counties where there were few blacks. In both houses of the state legislature, the Democrats generally sat together and took little or no part in the proceedings, except occasionally to protest Republican plans or to question the motives and integrity of a speaker. This small group of white Democrats was in the peculiar position of representing the views of the bulk of the state’s white populace, including those who continued to be barred from politics under the terms of the Reconstruction Acts.

At the beginning of the Reconstruction era, some white Democrats had toyed with the idea of competing with the Republicans for the support of blacks. In 1865 no less a figure than Gen. Wade Hampton, the state’s most powerful Democrat, was prepared to support a qualified black suffrage. Hampton declared that the white people of South Carolina must develop “amicable relations” with blacks in order to teach them to trust their white fellow citizens. Toward this end, Hampton opposed the most onerous portions of the Black Codes enacted after the state’s 1865 Constitutional Convention, and favored giving blacks the right to vote on precisely the same terms and conditions that the franchise was exercised by
whites. In both cases, Hampton favored a “slight” educational and property restriction. Hampton and others believed that with some encouragement, blacks would accept the leadership of native whites as they had long been accustomed to doing. Were this to occur, the antebellum political structure of South Carolina would soon be restored.

A number of factors had prevented the Hamptonian policy of conservative reconciliation from taking effect. First, Democrats had no real hope of outbidding the Republicans for black support. While the Democrats spoke of offering a qualified suffrage to African Americans, the Republicans asserted that blacks should govern, or at least play a major role in governing, the state. Second, the Union League clubs and the Freedmen’s Bureau were urging blacks to support the Republican cause. One Democratic observer complained that the Union League taught blacks that voting for the Republican side was virtually a religious obligation. “He was not only taught that it was his truest policy to vote against his former master on every occasion, but a solemn obligation to God who emancipated him—always remembering that God had used the Radical [Republican] party as his chosen instrument for this great end.” As the Union League clubs strengthened their hold on black political involvement during the mid-1860s, there was less and less likelihood that blacks could be lured away from the Republican camp.

Finally, the Hampton plan was rejected by a significant group of whites. In particular, up-country whites viewed the idea of black enfranchisement as a plot on the part of low-country planters who would control the black vote. Before the war, up-country whites, who were mainly small farmers working the land without the use of slaves, bitterly resented the dominance of the wealthy low-country planters. The war had done nothing to erase this class division from state politics. Up-country whites assumed that black voters would be controlled by the planters, who would use them to reassert their grip on state government. Hampton’s proposal was rejected by many of the state’s whites, and as a result, the notion of a political
alliance between native whites and native blacks that would have
restored white conservative rule to the state was stillborn.

The impossibility of an alliance between blacks and whites under
the auspices of the Democratic party left the field clear for the Re-
publicans. For white Republicans, be they carpetbaggers or scalawags, an alliance with blacks was the ticket to political power in
South Carolina. White Republicans assumed that they would pro-
vide the leadership and direction, with blacks providing the votes
that would give the Republican party control of the state’s affairs.
Certainly, if political power is measured by electoral success, this
alliance was triumphant in 1868 and in the ensuing three elections,
before going down to defeat in 1876. Electoral success, however,
was only part of the story of political power in South Carolina.

Though some were disfranchised and they lacked full representa-
tion in the government, the state’s white Democrats were hardly
powerless. They owned much of the state’s land. Thus, in a rural
economy, they were the state’s principal employers; their welfare
could not be entirely ignored. They controlled the press, whose vi-
cious attacks and critical accounts of the government eventually
began to reach and influence northern audiences. Finally, they were
heavily armed and more than willing to use their military training
to defend their interests. On many occasions, Democratic militias
composed of veteran Confederate officers and soldiers easily routed
the half-trained and inexperienced black state militia controlled by
the Republican government and could only be checked by federal
troops, which were not always reliable. Some federal command-
ers sympathized with the white populace and were scornful of the
Republican government. Federal troops, moreover, would not re-
main in the South forever. Conservative whites, therefore, were very
much a factor in the political life of South Carolina despite their
conspicuous absence in the new government. During the 1868 elec-
tion, whites had given notice that they were fully capable of using
violence to achieve their political goals. In that election, a campaign
of political violence organized by the Democrats claimed the lives of
at least eight blacks including James Martin who had been elected to the state House of Representatives and B. F. Randolph who had run successfully for the state Senate.  

Many blacks regarded their alliance with white Republicans as a necessary but temporary expedient, and most white Republicans also saw their relationship with blacks as a marriage of convenience. White Republicans believed that to place their control of the state on a firm footing, they must ultimately come to terms with South Carolina’s whites. One possibility was to try to build an alliance with the poorer up-country whites. This group shared many of the political goals of blacks, such as the expansion of public education, a progressive system of taxation, and a suffrage unburdened by property or education requirements. If Republicans endorsed such programs, they might attract the support of at least some up-country whites. Such support, however, was not forthcoming. The closely related issues of race and regionalism presented enormous obstacles. Very few up-country whites were willing to link themselves to a northern party that catered to blacks.

As a result, instead of seeking the support of poorer, up-country whites, most white Republicans sought to build ties to members of the wealthy low-country class made up of planters and businessmen. Many of the carpetbaggers, in particular, were more comfortable with this stratum than with poor whites or blacks. Gov. Robert Scott preferred to socialize with South Carolina’s aristocrats, including Wade Hampton. Indeed, he did not invite any blacks to his first annual governor’s ball. Attorney general and future governor Daniel Chamberlain had been educated at Yale and Harvard and constantly sought to be accepted at the highest levels of South Carolina society. Years later, Chamberlain confessed that during his entire period of involvement in South Carolina politics, he had barely been able to overcome his aversion to working with blacks. Scott, Chamberlain, and other carpetbaggers encouraged the state’s elite to participate in and profit from the program of railroad construction and economic development championed by the Republican party, and allowed them to benefit from the corruption attendant on these
ventures. Businessmen and planters were happy to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Few, however, joined the Republican camp. Most waited, instead, for an opportunity to rid themselves entirely of Republican rule and reestablish their antebellum power and position.

A Black Republican

As recently as 1867 Frank Moses, like General Hampton and other conservatives, had believed the freedmen could be convinced to follow the leadership of prominent native whites and reject the blandishments of the Republicans. When this notion turned out not to be true, Hampton and most of the others temporarily abandoned electoral politics to consider new strategies. Moses took a different course. When the freedmen would not follow him into the Democratic party, he followed them into the Radical Republican camp. This led to Moses’s almost immediate ostracism from white society. Former friends and associates shunned him. The new editors of his former newspaper, the Sumter News, wrote that they could not understand “how any intelligent white man, born and raised in South Carolina, can consent to become a part of the negro government which it is now proposed to be set up in this state.” Moses, along with another scalawag, Thomas J. Robertson, were expelled from the state university’s Euphradian Society. Only a few years before, Moses had been proud of his election to this literary honor society but now, at a special meeting, the society declared that Moses, along with Robertson, had “proved false to their own race, unloosed every tie of honor, every golden chord of virtue, and left the remaining fragments to trail in the dust underfoot.” Moses was said to have “lowered his dignity and station” and to have become a “black stain” on the society’s roll. This was strong language even for a literary society.

Shunned by white society, Moses took a truly extraordinary step for a white Carolinian—he joined black society. Most of the well-known South Carolina scalawags, including Robertson, Thomas J.
Mackey, Elliott Hayes, and James M. Smith, were involved in political and business dealings with blacks mainly as a temporary matter of expedience. For the time being, at least, the bottom rail was on the top and shrewd operators sought to make the most of the situation. After 1876, when the state had been “redeemed” by white Democrats, Robertson, Mackey, and others made haste to rejoin the Democratic fold.\textsuperscript{13} Their relationship with blacks was purely a marriage of convenience, generally unconsummated by social intercourse. Almost all of the white carpetbaggers preferred white society and avoided the company of blacks. As historian Joel Williamson has observed, racial separation “marked the formal social life of the official community in Columbia.”\textsuperscript{14}

Moses, however, felt comfortable with blacks generally and with his new black colleagues—Cain, Cardozo, Elliott, William Whipper, and the others—in particular. During sessions of the legislature, Moses entertained black representatives with “cigars, champagne and sundries at the fine saloon in the State House.”\textsuperscript{15} Moses was fond of gambling with his black colleagues. One instance involving a thousand dollar bet between Moses and Whipper on a horse race became nationally famous when journalist James Pike cited it in his newspaper articles as evidence of the state’s corruption.\textsuperscript{16}

Moses insisted that blacks be treated with appropriate respect. He complained loudly and bitterly when Governor Scott did not invite blacks to his official Christmas ball. Moses infuriated his white neighbors by actually inviting blacks to his home—at a time when only black domestics were permitted in white homes.\textsuperscript{17} “Gossiping tongues began wagging, especially when the gleeful howl over a good billiard shot came in the Gullah dialect,” Buxton reports. “When African accents rose in feminine tones, when [his wife] Emma was out of town, the flow of words across neighbors’ fences reached flood proportions.”\textsuperscript{18} Moses was often seen in the company of the Rollin sisters, four beautiful daughters of a French father and mulatto mother. The Rollin sisters were prominent in Charleston mulatto society, and the sisters were especially well known for their advocacy of women’s suffrage. Moses allowed Louisa Rollin
to deliver a speech on the topic from the floor of the House and later spoke at a prosuffrage rally organized by Lottie Rollin. So-
cial relationships between white men and women of color were, of
course, hardly unknown in South Carolina, but to be seen together
in public was a major affront to southern white mores.

Moses also visited the homes and churches of his black constitu-
ents. Except for an occasional campaign rally, most of the state’s
white elected officials—from the governor on down—had little or
no personal contact with the black families they nominally rep-
resented. South Carolina’s white politicians relied on the Union
League to round up votes, and if they thought about their mainly
black constituents at all, it was in purely abstract terms. Most had
no idea where or how the impoverished freedmen who kept them
in office actually lived. But Moses was quite familiar with the freed-
men and their living conditions. Some northern newspapers, unable
to think of any other explanation for his conduct, actually reported
that Moses was black. In his classic 1929 attack on Reconstruc-
tion, historian Claude Bowers angrily accused Moses of “frequent-
ing Negro cabins, kissing Negro babies, swirling through the dance
with dusky maidens in his arms in Negro dance halls.” Like other
men of his era, black and white, Moses was not above using racist
terms in his everyday speech. Presumably a Thad Stevens or Charles
Sumner would have condemned such behavior. Yet Moses, said
Bowers citing Reconstruction-era journalist James Pike, had “none
of [Sen. Charles] Sumner’s academic notions of social equality.” In-
stead, “[Moses] lives what Sumner preaches.”

Speaker Moses

Living what Sumner preached required Moses not only to socialize
freely with blacks but also to develop a set of programs and policies
to improve the condition of black Carolinians. Under Moses’s lead-
ership, the state legislature sought to develop such programs in the
realms of civil rights, education, land redistribution, and economic
development. To protect these programs, and their own positions,
the Republican leadership sought to build institutions that would maintain the party’s power. Here, Moses played a vitally important role. As he assumed the Speaker’s chair for the first time, Moses chided his fellow white Carolinians for boycotting the polls and refusing to cooperate with the new government. He called on his black colleagues, unprepared as they might be for public office, to rise to the occasion. “Since those whose especial duty it was,” he averred, “to resurrect from her recumbent posture our fallen and unfortunate State have failed in the performance of [their] task . . . let us address ourselves to the work before us as men who are alive to the necessities of the hour.” The “hour” seemed to require programs in the realms of civil rights, education, land redistribution, and economic development.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The legislature’s first goal was to guarantee the newly won civil rights of the state’s black citizens. To this end, the legislature enacted a civil rights act designed to provide for state enforcement of the 1866 federal Civil Rights Act. The state act proclaimed all persons to be equal before the law and prohibited all public and private agencies from discriminating on the basis of “race, color or previous condition of servitude.” Discrimination was prohibited in public accommodations, places of amusement and recreation, on common carriers, and in hotels and restaurants. The act provided harsh penalties for anyone convicted of violating its provisions. Ostensibly, violators could be sentenced to as much as five years at hard labor plus a one thousand dollar fine. To ensure that the state’s courts would enforce the civil rights act, Moses persuaded the legislature to appoint his father as the state’s chief justice. The elder Moses was required to claim Radical Republican sympathies; in turn, the governor petitioned the Congress to remove the political disabilities that disqualified Moses, an antebellum state official who had been part of the Confederate government, from participating in politics. Moses’s disabilities were removed in December 1868,
and he took his seat on the bench. Though the elder Moses was loyal to his son, Chief Justice Moses turned out not to be a reliable friend to the new regime and was often lauded by whites for his decisions. A more reliable Republican justice was Jonathan Jasper Wright, a black lawyer originally from Pennsylvania. With Richard Cain’s backing, Moses pushed Wright’s appointment through the legislature in 1870 over the opposition of most white Republicans who were not friendly to the idea of a black state supreme court justice. The third justice was a carpetbagger from New York, A. J. Willard. Democrats disparaged the new court as consisting of “a scalawagger, a carpetbagger and a nigger,” but most of the court’s critics eventually came to see its decisions as reasonable, especially in 1876 when the court played a role in the electoral crisis that followed the disputed voting of that year.

The Civil Rights Act was more important for what it symbolized than for what it actually accomplished. Only one individual was ever convicted for violating the act. The director of Charleston’s academy of music, John Ford, was fined for refusing to admit a group of blacks to the main floor of the academy’s auditorium for a performance. For the most part, however, South Carolina’s blacks and whites lived in such different social worlds that laws mandating equality of social treatment were irrelevant. Blacks generally did not endeavor to attend the opera or symphony. Whites and blacks did not frequent the same restaurants. And when blacks did win access to a public institution, whites withdrew from it. For example, when blacks were finally granted use of Charleston’s streetcars, whites stopped riding them. Of course, blacks enjoyed equality before the law in South Carolina for only a brief time. Blacks were assured legal equality so long as Republicans controlled the legislature and many of the courts. When that ceased to be true after 1876, equality before the law diminished and then disappeared altogether. The act was repealed in 1889.
EDUCATION

The second of the legislature’s goals, the creation of a system of public education, was extremely important to South Carolina’s African Americans. Education had been denied to slaves, and black leaders strongly believed that education was a necessary condition for black equality and progress. Billing itself as the first formal conclave of African Americans in the state, the Colored People’s Convention, held in Charleston in 1865, proclaimed that the highest priority of the freedmen should be “good schools for the education of our children.” This was essential because “an educated and intelligent people can neither be held in nor reduced to slavery.” Throughout the state, blacks had seized every possible opportunity to learn to read and write, and they looked to the Republican government to establish a statewide set of institutions to ensure the education of their children. Prior to the Civil War, the state’s educational system had been quite backward, even by the standards of the time. South Carolina was dominated by the low-country planter elite, which had little interest in spending money on schools for the common folk. Few rural whites and no blacks had access to public education. Public schools existed in some towns, but in most rural areas education was a private matter. This meant that, for the most part, only the children of well-to-do whites received even rudimentary schooling. In Charleston and other towns, free blacks maintained their own schools, and a small number of blacks were taught by friendly whites or educated abroad so that perhaps 5 percent of the black population was literate before the war.26

In the war’s aftermath, the state government made some effort to expand the educational system. By 1869, however, only 8,255 out of some 68,000 white school age children were enrolled in public elementary schools.27 Some 650 white boys attended private academies that were the equivalent of modern high schools; 950 attended one or another of the state’s colleges. The publicly supported University of South Carolina (formerly South Carolina College) enrolled only 65 students in 1869. White girls whose parents could af-
ford the tuition attended seminaries whose educational efforts were focused on etiquette and decorum.

By 1868 an annual average of 5,800 black children were enrolled in the fifty-six schools the Freedmen’s Bureau had established across the state. Several hundred more attended one of the handful of publicly supported schools for blacks created during the 1860s. The best known was the Morris Street School in Charleston. Only one public high school was available to black children. This was the Howard School in Columbia, which had been built by the Freedmen’s Bureau in cooperation with a private philanthropic association, the New York Freedmen’s Relief Society. In a number of instances, African Americans erected school buildings and raised money for supplies in the hope that teachers would be sent by the Freedmen’s Bureau. Typically, the Freedmen’s Bureau schools were staffed by northerners since few native whites were willing to teach blacks.

Whites alleged that the Freedmen’s Bureau schools focused more on political indoctrination than on reading, writing, and arithmetic. Often, indeed, the schools sought to teach their young charges to love their country and to revere the Republican party that had brought them out of slavery. This effort to build patriotism and partisan attachments, however, hardly distinguished the bureau’s schools from public schools in many parts of the nation. What is more significant is that before they were closed by the federal government in 1869, the Freedmen’s Bureau schools had taught thousands of black children at least the rudiments of reading and writing and strengthened the conviction of black leaders throughout the state that education was critically important.

The 1868 South Carolina constitution provided a blueprint for a public education system modeled after those found in the New England states. The state constitution called for the creation of a system of universal education with two-year compulsory attendance for all children between the ages of six and sixteen. Schools supported by public funds were prohibited from excluding black students. The constitution called for the division of each county
into school districts and provided for the establishment of a state superintendent of education and a school commissioner in each county. The education system was to be supported by a property tax and a poll tax. In addition to elementary schools, the constitution mandated state support for a university, a teacher’s college, an agricultural school, and schools for the physically disabled. When it convened in 1869 under Moses’s leadership, the new legislature sought to implement these constitutional mandates. Salaries were appropriated for the position of state superintendent of education and for the county education commissioners. Curricular guidelines were developed, school district boundaries drawn, provision made for free textbooks for those unable to afford books, and a school tax put into place. On paper, at least, South Carolina now had one of the nation’s finest school systems. Translating paper into reality, however, proved to be quite difficult.

The state’s first superintendent of education was appointed in 1868. He was Justus K. Jillson, a Massachusetts native who had come to South Carolina to help supervise the Freedmen’s Bureau’s school system. Jillson was an energetic and competent administrator who, during his seven years in office, achieved some notable successes. Between 1869 and 1876 the number of public schools in the state increased from 400 to nearly 2,800. The size of the teaching staff increased from 500 to more than 3,000. In a similar vein, the number of students enrolled in some form of schooling rose to nearly 125,000—an increase of more than 100,000—during the first five years of the system’s operation.²⁹

The new public schools were not integrated in the contemporary sense. Black and white children generally attended separate schools, though in some instances they might attend separate classes within the same building. Nevertheless, from the beginning, many white Carolinians viewed the new school system as an institution aimed mainly at promoting black education. This view was strengthened in 1873 when, as governor, Franklin Moses opened the state university to blacks. Since most whites were bitterly opposed to the
education of blacks, the education system had little or no support in the white community.

White suspicion of the school system was fanned by the state’s Democratic leadership, which characterized the public schools as little more than an institutional base for the Republican party. Republicans, it was feared, would use this base as a source of patronage positions for their activists and as a channel for pumping state money into the party’s coffers. Through the school system, Republicans might not only indoctrinate and mobilize blacks but also begin to bring some poor whites into their orbit. This was not to be tolerated. The state’s Democratic leadership attacked the school system and encouraged whites to evade the poll tax, which was an important school funding source. Within a short period of time, poll tax evasion became the norm among whites.

The state’s entire revenue base eventually collapsed under white attack, leaving the schools, along with most other state institutions, chronically short of funds. Most schools, particularly in rural areas, could afford to stay open only one or two months per year. There were no funds for combating truancy and absenteeism. Textbooks could not be furnished to poor students. The dream of a public education was never fully realized by South Carolina’s black citizens or, for that matter, most of its white citizens.

LAND REDISTRIBUTION

The third major undertaking of the new Republican administration had to do with the issue of land. The land issue had two interrelated components. The first of these was how to respond to the desire of thousands of freedmen to own their own land. While land ownership was a dream of freedmen throughout the South, in South Carolina it had been stimulated by the events of the war. The Sea Island experiment, coupled with Sherman’s Field Order 15, gave South Carolina’s black population a taste of land ownership that it would not soon forget. From the perspective of the new Republican
government, finding a formula through which its black supporters might acquire land was a political imperative.

The second component of the issue was the fact that land ownership was the basis of the white elite’s power in South Carolina. A relatively small number of families owned most of the state’s productive land in the form of large plantations. These families controlled the state’s economy and would exercise political power regardless of whether they had the right to vote or hold public office. During much of Reconstruction, wealthy land owners dominated a set of white institutions parallel and separate from the state’s official institutions. Indeed, toward the end of the era, the white community, led by Wade Hampton, essentially governed itself outside the official system of government. The wealth of the white land owners also financed a well-organized and well-supplied insurgency that eventually brought down the Republican regime.

In principle, the two components of the land question could have been resolved with one simple policy—confiscation. In the immediate aftermath of the war when, as Senator Stevens averred, the South’s landed aristocracy was at its weakest, large plantations might have been seized, subdivided, and turned over to land-hungry freedmen. In one fell swoop, the freedmen would have the land for which they hoped and the power of the southern aristocracy would be broken. But if there had ever been a moment when confiscation had been a realistic possibility, by 1868 that moment had passed. The federal government would not support a policy of confiscation, and state-level Republican politicians were compelled to disassociate themselves from the idea.

Unable to pursue a program of confiscation, Republicans instead adopted a two-pronged policy that promised to achieve at least some of the same results. To provide land for the freedmen, the new Republican legislature turned to the land commission established under the 1868 constitution. To reduce the land holdings and power of the white planters, the legislature developed a new system of taxation designed to “drive them to the wall.”

In the first session of the Republican legislature, Moses and his
fellow Republicans enacted a bill to fund and implement the constitution’s provision for the creation of a state land commission. The commission was charged with purchasing farmland and reselling it to black families at a price and under terms that would make it possible for large numbers of blacks to acquire their own land. Pursuant to the act, land purchased by the state was to be divided into sections ranging in size from twenty-five to one hundred acres. Lots were to be sold to settlers—who might be black or white—at the state’s purchase price. Purchases could be made entirely on credit at a 6 percent annual rate of interest. To discourage land speculators, purchasers were required to live on the land for three years before they could pay or begin paying the purchase price. At that point, settlers would have eight years to complete their payments and receive title to the land. The legislature authorized two hundred thousand dollars in bonds to be issued to pay for land purchases. In 1870 the legislature authorized the sale of another five hundred thousand in bonds to fund land acquisitions.

Governor Scott appointed Charles P. Leslie, a carpetbagger from New York, to be the state’s first land commissioner. His work was to be overseen by a board consisting of the governor and other prominent Republican politicians, including Attorney General Chamberlain and State Treasurer Parker. Over the next several years, Leslie was replaced by black Republicans, first by Robert DeLarge, then by Francis Cardozo, and finally by Henry Hayne.

The commission began purchasing land in 1869. From the outset, the state’s purchasing procedures were beset by problems. Many land owners saw the state’s purchasing efforts as an opportunity to rid themselves of undesirable land at an inflated price. Land owners often bribed state surveyors and assessors to approve the purchase of land that was utterly unsuitable for farming. The state was then unable to resell the land to settlers. One example of this practice was the notorious case of a tract of land that went by the unappealing but apt name of Hellhole Swamp. This was a thirteen-thousand-acre tract that had belonged to one of Charleston’s wealthiest families, the Manigaults. The land commission paid the family eight
thousand dollars, but the purchase price was recorded as thirty-eight thousand. The thirty thousand dollar difference went directly into the pockets of the land commission members. The tract was generally uninhabitable, much less suitable for farming. Local wags were fond of saying that even the swamp’s snakes and alligators struggled to eke out a living from the inhospitable environment.

Despite the various frauds connected with the land commission, South Carolina’s efforts to acquire land for African Americans were at least a partial success. Some fourteen thousand black families were, at one time or another, settled on tracts of land acquired by the state. This meant that during Reconstruction some seventy thousand people, or nearly 15 percent of the state’s black population, lived, at least briefly, on their own land. A number of poor whites also acquired land during this period, and on many tracts black and white families farmed side by side.33

Over the years, many blacks and poor whites lost possession of the land on which they had settled because of their inability to make the payments mandated by state law or to scrape together enough money to meet their tax obligations. Particularly after the end of Reconstruction, the state government demanded strict adherence to the specified payment schedule and was quick to evict black settlers who fell behind on their taxes or their land payments. After 1890 the state halted the sale of small parcels of land altogether and sold off its remaining lands to wealthy land owners and investors in large tracts that were beyond the financial reach of settlers. Despite this manifest change in the state’s attitude toward land settlement, thousands of blacks managed to hold on and acquire full title to their state lands. Some were even able to expand their holdings. This is why black land ownership in South Carolina in the twentieth century was higher than in any other southern state. In 1900 South Carolina blacks owned more than fifteen thousand farms. To a substantial extent, Republican policy in the 1870s did fulfill the freedmen’s dream of land ownership.

Frank Moses supported the work of the land commission, but the land policy to which he gave his attention as a legislator, and later
as governor, was taxation. Moses was a strong proponent of high taxes on land. Indeed, these taxes reached their peak during his term as governor. Republicans fully understood that heavy taxes could gradually sap the wealth and power of the state’s traditional rulers. A tax program could be as effective as confiscation “and yet avoid the strenuous opposition that any scheme of land pillaging would infallibly meet with in the North.” Over time, taxes would erode the planters’ wealth, force them to sell more and more land, and reduce their power to direct the state’s affairs. “Taxes are always a burden, will be assessed yearly upon all lands, and they must be paid. The expenses of the state will be a continual drag upon those who attempt to carry on large landed estates.” Over the next several years, tax rates and tax assessments were steadily increased to the point that many land owners were unable to pay, and hundreds of thousands of acres were sold at a discounted price or disposed of by state and county governments at tax sales. “I don’t see how we can stay in the country,” said one Laurens County land owner, “for our taxes will be increased and we will be under the very heels of the Radicals.”

Perhaps through taxation the Republican legislature might eventually have redistributed political power as well as land in South Carolina. However, resistance to taxation soon developed, and it was not limited to the white planter class. White land owners organized a series of taxpayer conventions to publicize their plight. Among the attendees were carpetbaggers and black landowners who, having acquired property, found themselves the victims of the same Republican tax programs that had been justified by the need to provide blacks with an opportunity to purchase land. “Negro voters,” said the New York Times, “are not exempt from the visits of the tax gatherer.”

White land owners petitioned the press and the U.S. Congress; black land owners and carpetbaggers complained to their state legislators. One group of land owners formally presented a petition to the Grant administration pointing out the obvious. “It has been openly avowed by prominent members of the [state] legislature,”
declared the petition, “that taxes should be increased to a point which will compel the sale of the great body of the land, and take it away from the former owners.” Republicans were compelled to briefly reduce taxes in anticipation of the 1872 election. After the election, however, the Moses administration resumed a high tax policy that, had it continued, might have taken away the great body of the land from its former owners. But political developments overthrew the Republicans and saved the white land owners.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The fourth major goal of the Republican administration that assumed office in 1868 was industrial and commercial development. Such development would serve a number of purposes. Through industrial development, jobs would be created for the freedmen, converting them from backward agricultural laborers into a more progressive industrial working class. Moreover, the transformation of the state’s agriculture-based economy to one based on industry would further undermine the power of the antebellum planter aristocracy and make way for a new commercial and industrial elite. Finally, industrial development would increase the entire state’s prosperity, which would, it was hoped, give all Carolinians and especially the state’s business community, a reason to tolerate—if not enthusiastically support—Republican rule. James Harrison, a scalawag and president of the Blue Ridge Railroad, wrote to Governor Scott that by creating a climate favorable to business and enterprise, the Republican party might win the support of more of “the old citizens of the state.” Reliance on black support, wrote Harrison, was ultimately a losing proposition. “The colored people from a vain lust for office and brief power, are going to bring swift destruction on their race. . . . The Negro is played out.”

While the state government did take some interest in phosphate mining and iron production, its major emphasis was on the construction of railroad lines that would connect South Carolina with the major manufacturing centers of the North, promoting the ship-
ment of cotton and other crops to northern factories. Railroads would also connect the port of Charleston to the agricultural regions of the West, thus expanding Charleston’s role as a shipping center. An expanded rail network would also provide the necessary infrastructure for further industrial development, particularly in the realm of cotton manufacture.

Before the war, the city of Charleston had actively encouraged railroads, purchasing nearly $2 million in bonds to promote construction of rail lines to Nashville, Chattanooga, and Memphis. Despite these efforts, railroad construction in South Carolina, as in the South as a whole, had lagged far behind that in the North. At the outbreak of the war, there were only 973 miles of track in the entire state of South Carolina. Much of this was destroyed during the war, along with bridges, stations, locomotives, and railcars.

After the cessation of hostilities, the owners of four lines, the South Carolina, the Charleston and Savannah, the Greenville and Columbia, and the Blue Ridge railways, moved to repair their track and resume service. It was, however, extremely difficult for these lines to raise the huge amounts of capital needed, given the general paucity of capital in the region and the reluctance of northern investors to commit funds to what were viewed as extremely risky ventures. As a result, all four lines asked the state legislature to make their bonds more salable in national credit markets by guaranteeing payment in the event of default. Between 1865 and 1868 the state legislature gave limited assistance to all the rail lines, most notably guaranteeing an issue of South Carolina Railroad bonds in 1867. Not until 1868, at the beginning of the Scott administration, did the state government throw its full weight behind railroad repair and construction projects.42

Between 1869 and 1871 the state guaranteed nearly $1 million in Charleston and Savannah bonds and allowed the railroad to postpone payment of principal and interest on another $1 million in bonds that the state had guaranteed before the war. In addition, the state purchased outright more than a $250,000 in the line’s common stock. During the same period, the state legislature also guar-
anteed nearly $2 million in Greenville and Columbia bonds, while purchasing almost $500,000 in the company’s common stock. The state guaranteed more than $4 million in Blue Ridge securities for the construction of a rail line linking Charleston to Knoxville, Tennessee, and gave the Blue Ridge a loan of $200,000 for repairs and construction. Only the South Carolina Railroad was able to operate without help from the Scott administration.

Despite millions of dollars in state bond guarantees and loans, South Carolina’s railroad system did not develop rapidly during the Scott era or, indeed, during the entire period of Republican rule. In 1868 South Carolina had roughly eleven hundred miles of usable track. By 1875 this had increased to little more than thirteen hundred miles, despite millions of dollars in state investment. The Blue Ridge Railroad had been forced into bankruptcy in 1873 without ever completing its line to Knoxville. The Greenville and Columbia was sold in bankruptcy in 1872 to the South Carolina. The Charleston and Savannah went bankrupt in 1874. Only the South Carolina railway, the one railroad that did not receive much in the way of state support, prospered during this period, tripling its freight and passenger business as the other railroads faltered. The administration’s dream of creating the infrastructure for industrial development had failed.

Several factors account for this failure. The first was corruption. As was the case throughout the country, state aid for railroad construction created opportunities for massive public fraud. A group of prominent Republican politicians who came to be called the Greenville and Columbia ring looted hundreds of thousands of dollars from the railroad. The members of the ring, including Attorney General Chamberlain, State Treasurer Parker, Secretary of State Cardozo, U.S. senator John J. Patterson, used their powerful positions to acquire control of the railroad. “There is a mint of money in this or I am a fool,” Chamberlain wrote to one of his fellow conspirators. Speaker Moses was certainly aware of the ring’s activities and may have facilitated its efforts, but despite his reputation as the Robber Governor, Moses was not a direct participant in
this or the other major frauds promulgated during Scott’s term as governor. Moses was sometimes a “tool” but seldom an associate of the various fraudulent operations during this period. The Greenville and Columbia ring’s method was simple. To assist the railroad, the state had purchased nearly a half million dollars in its stock, paying approximately $20.00 per share. The ring secured the enactment of a state law authorizing the sale of surplus state property, ostensibly to permit the disposal of damaged construction material lying around the grounds of the statehouse. The sale of these and other surplus materials was to be managed by a commission headed by Chamberlain. The remainder of the commission was conveniently made up of the other members of the ring. At its first meeting, the commission declared the state’s Greenville and Columbia shares to be surplus property and offered them for sale at $2.75 per share. All the shares were immediately purchased by the commission members who now, in their capacity as private citizens, were able to exercise control of the railroad. They quickly created a new board of directors composed exclusively of members of the commission.

At that point, however, the ring became too ambitious. Chamberlain and the others sought to use their influence to persuade the legislature to guarantee more than $1 million in new Greenville and Columbia bonds. They hoped to pocket the proceeds from the sale. Learning of the plan, however, New York bond traders refused to purchase any Greenville and Columbia securities. The collapse of its bonds forced the line into bankruptcy. The ring had lost its investment and the railroad was ruined. A similar effort to plunder the Blue Ridge Railroad resulted in that corporation’s bankruptcy also. The same commission that sold the state’s shares in the Greenville and Columbia, also sold the state’s holdings in the Blue Ridge at a price of $1.00 per share. This allowed a group headed by Senator Patterson to gain control of the railroad for a little more than $13,000. Since the state had already agreed to back some $4 million in Blue Ridge bonds, Patterson and his associates hoped to reap an enormous profit from their investment. They discovered, unfortu-

Speaker Moses  123
nately, that even with the state’s endorsement, the bonds could not
be sold on the market. The group then turned to the state legislature
and secured the enactment of the Revenue Bond Scrip Act.

This ingenious piece of legislation authorized the state treasurer
to issue nearly $2 million in “certificates of indebtedness” to be is-
issued in exchange for $4 million in outstanding Blue Ridge bonds.
These new securities were to be treated by the state almost like cash,
insofar as they were to be receivable in payment of taxes and other
obligations. In essence, members of the Patterson group had secured
legislation bestowing on themselves a grant of nearly $2 million
dollars in state funds in exchange for a set of worthless bonds. Even-
tually, the Scrip Act was overturned by the state courts. Before that
time, however, several hundred thousand dollars in revenue bonds
were issued by the state and sold on the financial market. The mem-
bers of the Patterson group earned a very substantial return on their
investment. The Blue Ridge Railroad, unable to borrow money, was
forced into bankruptcy without completing its repairs or new con-
struction.

The Politics of Corruption

Accounts of official corruption such as the Greenville and Columbia
ring and the debt certificates dominate historical writing on South
Carolina during Reconstruction. In both older and more contem-
porary works, Frank Moses is singled out as the leader of a gang of
thieves who devoted themselves to stealing as much as they could
from the good people of South Carolina. In his influential 1905
work, the historian Frank S. Reynolds called Moses “notorious, not
only in this state, but in the other states of the Union.” In their
monumental 1932 volume, the historians Francis Butler Simkins
and Robert Hilliard Woody aver that Moses was “thoroughly un-
scrupulous.” Simkins and Woody approvingly reprint an editorial
cartoon depicting Moses surveying his “promised land” from the
pinnacle of a mountain of fraudulent notes labeled “Mt. Ruin.”
Many of the editorial cartoons of the period link Moses’s Jewish-
ness to his alleged cupidity. One Thomas Nast cartoon shows Moses issuing an official pardon to a black man, drawn with Simian features, who has just broken both stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. Even in recent years, volumes such as Robert N. Rosen’s *Jewish Confederates* emphasize the notion that Moses presided over “one of the most corrupt state governments in U.S. history.”

There is no doubt that Moses and his allies were corrupt, though Boss Tweed and other legendary northern politicos of roughly the same era would have been shocked at the idea that Frank Moses even approached their accomplishments in the realm of thievery. Two points, however, should be made with regard to corruption on the part of South Carolina’s Reconstruction government. The first is that charges of corruption were an aspect of political warfare. By charging Republicans with corruption, Democrats were able to appeal to northerners and to white and black Republicans in the South on a basis other than overt racial prejudice. They could, as Mark Wahlgren Summers has observed, “insist that their enemy was not the Negro but the thief.”

Throughout the South, the white Democratic press continually charged Republican governments with the most outrageous forms of corruption in an effort to smear and discredit them. Republicans did finance their own newspapers in the South usually through state government patronage. The Republican papers, however, were never as vigorous or numerous as their Democratic counterparts, and rather than presenting a united front against the Democrats, their editorial policies often reflected the factional divisions within the Republican camp. Moreover, when northern journalists like James S. Pike visited the South, they interacted mainly with white people, particularly the “respectable ones,” that is, white professionals and propertied persons. From these individuals, journalists learned that the Republican state governments were gangs of thieves and looters and learned very little, if anything, of the social and economic programs these governments had undertaken. Even the then staunchly Republican *New York Times* accepted this version of events, reporting retrospectively that “a recital of [Frank
Moses’s] crimes against taxpayers and the state would fatigue the indignation. He had absolutely no shame, there seemed to be no limit to his capacity for squandering, throwing away money.” In the same story, the *Times* reporter acknowledged that Moses had been “every day making new friends” in the state, but could think of no reason why this might have been the case.\(^5^4\)

Northern journalists also allowed their stories to be shaped by their own racist preconceptions. In the northern press, black politicians were generally described in terms designed to suggest that they were ignorant subhumans. A prominent black politician was said to possess “as much intelligence as one would observe in a dead mackerel.” A black senator was said to have a physique and brains “that could make more impression in the corn field.” Blacks, generally, were said to know as much about political issues “as a pig does of the bible.”\(^5^5\) The *Atlantic Monthly* declared, “It has for years been notorious that the ignorant negro rulers of [South Carolina] had carried into their legislation and administration the spirit of the servile raid upon the plantation hen-roost and smoke house.”\(^5^6\) In its review of Pike’s book, the *Nation* said that Pike showed that the intelligence of black South Carolinians was “so low that they are but slightly above the level of animals.”\(^5^7\)

Southern whites, on the other hand, were treated with some deference in the northern press. They were depicted as struggling to maintain their honor and dignity though beset by thieves and black savages. The press typically blamed murderous blacks for the violence that afflicted the South. Many reporters sympathized with what they saw as the desperate efforts of southern whites to defend themselves and persuaded their readers of this point.\(^5^8\) In short, as historian Walter Edgar observes, by successfully manipulating the northern press, “the white community won the propaganda war.”\(^5^9\)

A second point about Reconstruction-era corruption is that Moses and other southern Republican politicians of the period did not skim from the public treasury simply to line their own pockets. Diversion of public funds, patronage appointments, selling of fa-
vors, and official pardons are, as political scientist Martin Shefter notes, typical of political parties seeking to overturn the previously dominant class of notables by building a party organization and mobilizing a mass following. In Europe and the United States—the Jacksonians are a prime example—new political movements seeking to mobilize mass constituencies have usually found it necessary to distribute jobs, money, and favors to secure their hold on power. A good deal of what white southerners and, eventually, the northern press, labeled “corruption” was related to the Republicans’ effort to build a party organization based on an impoverished base that would be capable not only of winning elections but also of withstanding the intimidation and violence directed against it by its foes.

For example, Frank Moses was accused by the white press of selling pardons and freely pardoning fellow Jews convicted of criminal activities. Perhaps he did. For the most part, however, Moses issued pardons to local Republican officials who had been caught using their official positions for personal gain—a crime to be sure, but a crime that had to be tolerated in the interest of maintaining a party organization. Moses issued many pardons during his two years as governor, most on the application of interested politicians. Moses pardoned James Gulagher, who had been convicted of kidnapping, when Thomas Mackey, an important Republican, told the governor that Gulagher was “an active politician.” Moses pardoned Benjamin Hernandez, a state constable who did political work, who had been convicted of assault with intent to kill. Moses pardoned Samuel Fraser, a black militia officer, convicted of forgery, because he was a “good political nigger.” Moses used his pardons, as the white press sometimes pointed out, to help maintain his control over the black vote.

Maintaining Republican Power

From the first days of their rule, Republicans recognized that the task of organizing and mobilizing black voters on an ongoing basis
would be a difficult one. The freedmen had no education or political experience, and many whites assumed that once the early political hubbub abated, blacks would lose interest in politics and be easily discouraged or intimidated. Moses acknowledged that “many expected nothing but absolute failure” from the “startling experiment” of enfranchising “a race hitherto enslaved, reared to manhood without the advantage of an education, and trained to a quiet and unquestioning obedience to the will of a dominant people.” Republicans struggled to avoid this “absolute failure,” while Democrats worked to bring it about. During the entire period of Moses’s tenure as Speaker of the House, South Carolina was the site of an intense and frequently violent political battle that required Republicans to fully mobilize their constituency, build a potent armed force, and establish a reliable revenue base. Democrats, for their part, employed a variety of techniques, including violence, to defeat Republican efforts to maintain control of the state.

A combination of federal and state efforts helped bolster the mobilization of black Republicans while undermining the political—or at least electoral—mobilization of white Democrats in South Carolina. Federal policy at least temporarily disfranchised those whites who had held any state or federal office and then engaged in acts of rebellion against the United States. This affected all whites who had been politically active before the war and subsequently served in the Confederate, state, or local government during the war or, of course, in the Confederate army. Only a small percentage of the potential white electorate was disfranchised by this provision. However, those excluded were the leaders of the white community. In essence, the bulk of the prewar political class was excluded from participation in postwar electoral politics. By 1870, most had regained their political rights, but for a time the white electorate was demoralized and disorganized.

Blacks, for their part, were registered under the supervision of federal military authorities in 1867. After this initial registration was complete, the state’s electorate consisted of 80,832 blacks versus 46,929 whites. Though registration figures varied over the
years, South Carolina’s black voters outnumbered their white counterparts by a similar margin throughout the Reconstruction era. Merely registering African Americans, of course, was not the same as actually getting them to the polls and making certain that they continued to support the Republican ticket. In many areas, whites used violence and intimidation to try to prevent blacks from voting. In other areas, white land owners threatened to evict black farm workers who supported the Republicans. Such threats were quite credible. And since the secret ballot had not yet been adopted in the United States, how an individual voted quickly became a matter of public knowledge.

To mobilize black voters, Republicans relied initially on the Union League, which organized throughout the state in the aftermath of the war. For electoral purposes, the league was organized along the lines of an urban political machine with its ward bosses, precinct captains, and state committees. A local league board, or council, was organized in every precinct in the state. The activities of the precinct councils were governed by a state council that, in turn, was directed by its executive committee, a body consisting of two representatives from every county. Members of the precinct councils served in the same capacity as assembly district leaders or precinct captains. Prior to an election, they mobilized campaign workers, organized rallies and meetings, made arrangements to bring voters to the polls, and instructed voters on their responsibilities. Just as the activities of northern machine politicians were a necessary condition for electoral participation by illiterate and politically inexperienced immigrant voters, so were the efforts of the league councils essential for illiterate and politically inexperienced freedmen to take part in politics. In the 1870 election, conservative whites organized a Reform Party whose Union Reform clubs were designed to lure blacks away from the Union League clubs. State Union League president Francis Cardozo spent much of his time warning black voters to avoid being fooled by the similarity of names.65

The league was so effective in mobilizing black voters between 1867 and 1870 that its local councils came under violent attack
by the Ku Klux Klan and other paramilitary forces associated with the Democratic party during the winter of 1870–71. League officials and activists were beaten, whipped, and even murdered. In York County, a sixty-one-year-old black man and Union League member named Sam Sturgis was beaten by a group of Klansmen who told him that “they come for to break down these damned Union Leagues, and these Radical parties.” In another part of the same county, Klansmen whipped and killed Charlie Good, a county league official, in order to “discountenance people from joining the League.” According to the courtroom testimony of one Klansman who participated in the killing of Charlie Good, “Those who belonged to the League were to be visited and warned. . . . On the second visit they were to be whipped . . . [and] after this, if they did not leave, they were to be killed.” This violent action was regrettable but justified, according to the Democratic press, because of the league’s responsibility for “the shameful state of things which now exists.” After 1871, the league ceased to be politically important and the state council met only for ceremonial purposes. At this point, the political work of the league was largely taken over by the state constabulary and black militias.

The Constabulary and Militias

Republican rule in South Carolina was, in the first instance, a result of the fact that federal military forces had conquered and occupied the state. Because of the hostility of heavily armed white citizens to the continuation of Republican rule, the continued presence of federal forces was an essential prop. Federal troops alone, however, were not an adequate tool for the state government. First, South Carolina officials did not actually control the movements and conduct of federal troops in the state. The governor might ask for their assistance, but there was no guarantee that federal forces would be deployed at the precise time and in the precise place and manner that state Republican officials wanted.

For example, during the 1870 statewide elections, Governor
Scott asked federal authorities to send troops to Laurens, where whites were rumored to be arming and organizing to disrupt the voting process. The local military commander declined to take the matter seriously. He dispatched only a small force that camped too far away from the town to be of any use in the event of trouble. The result was that federal troops were not available to prevent the violence that disrupted the voting process. Many federal officers and soldiers had little sympathy for blacks and were often disinclined to do much to help them. Some officers, indeed, were Democrats and not especially eager to lend their support to Republican politicians. The attitude of the federal troops was a problem throughout the South. In Mississippi, federal troops sent to protect Albert Morgan, a prominent Republican politician who had been threatened by local whites, savagely beat him while in the middle of the street. Morgan was later involved in gun battles with Democratic paramilitary forces and eventually fled the state. In South Carolina, according to a northern newspaper correspondent, “acts of cruelty and oppression are constantly perpetrated” by federal troops against blacks. In both Edgefield and Charleston, major riots erupted from confrontations between blacks and soldiers. An armed force controlled directly by the state government was an absolute necessity if the regime was to survive.

For this reason, one of the first acts of the new administration was the creation of a state police force, popularly known as the state constabulary. John B. Hubbard, a carpetbagger from New York who had some experience in police work, was appointed chief constable. Hubbard assembled a force of five hundred men armed with Winchester repeating rifles and pistols. A deputy chief constable was appointed in every county. Each deputy chief was authorized to hire as many deputy constables as he deemed necessary to keep the peace. Eventually, the force had some four hundred deputies. In general, the deputy chiefs were white carpetbaggers or scalawags; the deputies were usually black.

The state constabulary functioned primarily to bolster Republican rule by protecting the political and civil rights of blacks, making
sure that blacks went to the polls and voted the Republican ticket, intimidating opponents of Republican rule, and maintaining Republican control over the state’s electoral machinery. In general, the deputy chiefs were drawn from among the leaders of the Republican party within each county. In addition to their regular salaries, deputy chiefs were in a position to skim from the state’s coffers and, from time to time, engage in a bit of extortion. Corruption was part of the price of maintaining a political machine. In this way, the Republican party’s electoral machinery and the machinery of law enforcement were integrated. The state constabulary was under the direction of those best able to use it for political purposes, and the deputy chiefs recognized that their government positions depended on their ability to achieve results at the polls. In some measure, the constabulary and the black militias were armed versions of the Union League.

The constabulary also exercised power on a statewide basis. The constables were state—not county—officers, and they executed warrants issued by a magistrate in Columbia, the state’s capital. Those arrested by the constabulary were brought to Columbia for trial. In this way, the Republican administration sought to circumvent county and local law enforcement agencies that, in several cases, remained in the hands of white Democrats. Through the constabulary system, the state government’s political opponents could be charged, arrested, and tried by a process that was firmly in Republican hands.

The constabulary was a small force and not able to police the entire state of South Carolina. Backing up the constabulary was a much larger force, the state militia, or national guard. Freedmen were organized into militia units throughout the South during this period and, in several instances, were deployed in pitched battles against armed groups of whites calling themselves white citizens leagues or white liners. Louisiana, Arkansas, and South Carolina were the three states whose black Republican militia companies saw the most action.68

Beginning in 1869 the Scott administration began to organize
and arm black militia companies throughout the state. A militia was needed, said Governor Scott, because the only law white South Carolinians really understood was the Winchester rifle. Prior to this period, militia companies were formed by volunteers who then applied to the state for arms, supplies, and official recognition. Under the 1869 militia law, the state assumed responsibility for initiating the formation of militia companies and reserved the right to reject applications for recognition from units formed on a voluntary basis. The law also prohibited “organizing, drilling or parading by any bodies other than the National Guard of South Carolina.” This prohibition was designed to discourage whites from organizing their own paramilitary forces.

Under the leadership of Adjutant General Moses, the state government organized several dozen black militia companies and rejected the applications of all but one white company of volunteers. This one white militia company disbanded after Moses placed it under the command of a black officer. At its height, the black militia consisted of about fourteen regiments, each with about one thousand enlisted men and officers. All of the common soldiers and most of the militia officers were black, though the militia’s highest ranking officer, Joseph Crews, was a white scalawag. To support the militia, Moses arranged for the legislature to establish a special “armed services fund.” This fund was designed to pay for rations, uniforms, weapons, ammunition, and the like. As was typical, the fund came to be associated with fraud and corruption. Militia officers expected to be able to pocket some portion of the money that came into their possession and this was overlooked so long as they carried out their political and military duties.

Arming the militia proved to be a problem. The state owned a small number of obsolete, single-shot muskets which had been provided by the federal government. In the event of a violent confrontation with whites, black militiamen equipped with muskets would be no match for white veterans armed with rifles. The rifles were easier to load, more accurate, and had a considerably longer range. Some whites owned sixteen-shot Winchester repeating rifles. These
had begun to make their appearance toward the end of the war and became the favorite weapon of the cavalry. Some Confederates had managed to retain possession of their weapons after the surrender. Others were able to purchase Winchesters after the war. For the black militia to be effective, something would have to be done to improve the quantity and quality of the arms they carried.

To this end, Moses went to Washington, D.C., where he persuaded the War Department’s Militia Bureau to issue South Carolina its full quota of arms for the next ten years. This would provide the state militia with nearly ninety thousand firearms of various sorts. Some of these weapons were new Winchesters; others were older Springfield muskets. Moses contracted with the Roberts Breechloading Company to have the Springfields rebuilt and converted into far more effective breech-loading rifles. The muskets’ cartridges were then retrofitted as rifle shells. Republicans hoped that with these new weapons black militia companies might be able to hold their own in the event of trouble. Moses, as was trumpeted by the white press, apparently pocketed a one dollar “commission” per converted rifle, which he spread around to his black followers. What seems to be most important in this story, though, is not the petty graft denounced by the conservative press, but the fact that the militia received more effective weapons than would otherwise have been available. Even the graft was related as much to party building as to personal venality.

Like the constabulary, the militia was integrated into the Republican party’s political machinery and its main purpose was to help maintain Republican control over the political process. Black militia officers were often drawn from among the leaders of the Union League, and the militia served, in many respects, as the military complement to the league’s political efforts. While the Union League organized blacks and sought to teach them how to exercise their political rights, the militia was designed to make certain that it remained possible for them to do so. The presence of an armed black militia gave African Americans the confidence to go to the polls, while service in the militia gave blacks a sense of empow-
erment and a feeling that they could control their own political destinies. Militiamen were also subject to intense indoctrination, attending political rallies and lectures as often as they practiced their military drills.  

In rural up-country areas or other areas in which white opponents of the Republican regime were particularly active, the militia, working closely with the constabulary, played a critical political role. In rural Laurens County, for example, whites were very well organized. Through a campaign of intimidation designed to discourage blacks from voting in the 1868 election, white Democrats had won control of most county offices, including the county’s judicial and police machinery. Both the sheriff and the county judge were Democrats and known to be contemptuous of blacks. With the local government firmly in white Democratic hands, the Republican state administration was intent on organizing constabulary and militia forces in the area.

State militia commander Crews was, as it happened, a native of Laurens. Governor Scott named Crews the leader of the county’s Republican party as well as its commissioner of elections. Crews organized and armed more than six hundred black militiamen with Remington and Winchester rifles. He used the constabulary to create a network of informants in the county. Typically, these were black household workers who might be in a position to provide information on the political activities of their white employers. Crews also devoted a great deal of energy and attention to the indoctrination of his troops, who were required to attend “military barbecues,” where they listened to political speeches.

Local whites thought the political indoctrination sessions were calculated to make blacks behave in an “insolent” manner toward whites. And, indeed, they were not far off. Republican hopes rested on the ability of inexperienced, half-trained black militiamen—recently slaves—to stand up to their former masters. What whites saw as training in insolence was an essential effort to build the confidence of the militiamen and give them a sense of the importance of their task.
In preparation for the 1870 statewide elections, Crews used his authority as county election commissioner to order all ballot boxes brought to the county seat where they were set up in the public square. This arrangement would, of course, be an inconvenience to residents of outlying areas of the county who normally voted in local polling places. Crews, however, calculated that the Republicans would have a better chance of success if all the balloting took place in a single area where it could be closely supervised by his militia. On election day, militiamen were deployed throughout the county to mobilize black voters and bring them to the county seat to cast their ballots. Crews ringed the public square itself with black militiamen to discourage whites from interfering with the voting process and to reassure blacks that they could exercise their voting rights in relative safety.

These political tactics were quite successful. Black voter turnout increased dramatically. Realizing that their hold on the county would be broken, however, whites armed themselves and attacked the black militia force in the county square. After a short battle, the militiamen were routed and disarmed. Several were wounded and several others captured and murdered during the night. Most of the militia’s weapons were confiscated by the county sheriff and stored at the courthouse.

For the remainder of election day, large groups of mounted and heavily armed whites looking suspiciously like companies of Confederate cavalry—patrolled the streets, driving away those blacks who had come to vote and preventing others from entering the town. Armed whites now ringed the courthouse square, permitting only other whites to cast ballots. The electoral situation appeared to have been reversed.

Despite the defeat of the black militia, however, Republicans were able to salvage an electoral victory from the debacle in Laurens County. Federal troops that had been stationed some twenty miles away arrived at the courthouse square at the end of the day. These troops, accompanied by Joseph Crews, took control of the ballot boxes and removed them to the state capital. Here Crews, in
his capacity as Laurens County election commissioner, personally counted the ballots and declared that the Republican slate had carried the county. Subsequently, federal and state authorities arrested a number of the whites suspected of having taken part in the attack on the black militiamen, though none was ever convicted.

The black militia and constabulary were central to the Republican party’s hopes of maintaining its power in South Carolina. Whites did not hesitate to use violence to prevent blacks from exercising their political rights. Without effective armed forces, the Republican regime could not hope to persevere against the implacable hostility of the white populace. At the same time, through the organization of military forces, Republicans hoped to imbue blacks with the confidence they would need to look their former masters in the eye—impudently, as it were—and challenge them for political power. To some extent they succeeded. As the Laurens case suggests, however, the poorly trained black militiamen ultimately were no match for the veteran Confederate soldiers who could be mustered in support of white Democratic political interests. Only federal troops could successfully confront these forces.

Money

If a military force was one essential for the new government, a source of revenue was another. The 1868 constitution had authorized a tax rate that should have been adequate to support all of the state’s expenditures. Initially, the state was able to collect sufficient taxes to cover its expenses. At the end of 1869, Moses reported to the legislature that “the millions of dollars assessed for state taxes by the authority of this General Assembly has been collected with a promptness never before equaled in this state.” From these tax revenues, the state was able to pay “the interest upon the entire public debt,” as well as “salaries, contingent accounts and claims upon the state.”

Soon after Moses delivered this positive assessment, however, the state’s economy began to decline and tax collections quickly
lagged far behind the state’s needs. The state, which relied chiefly on property taxes, augmented to some extent by sales taxes, had estimated that the total value of taxable property in 1868 was about $300 million. The actual value of all the real estate and taxable personal property in the state amounted to only $180 million. Over the next several years, as land prices fell, this assessed value steadily dropped. By 1876 it was barely $100 million.

The government responded to the dwindling tax base by raising taxes. As rates increased, more and more property owners were unable, or in some cases unwilling, to pay. Between 1868 and 1871, the state’s property tax rate tripled, from three to nine mills. Tax receipts, however, actually declined, from approximately $1.5 million to barely $1.2 million, which amounted to less than half the state’s annual expenditures. As tax collections lagged, foreclosures increased throughout the state and property owners began actively resisting tax payment and foreclosure. Taxpayers banded together and chased tax assessors off at gunpoint. Tax bills were ignored. In the counties controlled by whites, the local authorities often turned a blind eye to tax resisters.

Tax resisters also sought to block foreclosure sales. Groups of armed men often appeared at these sales to intimidate potential bidders. Those bold enough to consider purchasing land at tax auction faced the very real threat of violence from organized tax protestors. A letter to the Charleston Daily News signed by “one hundred men who fought under Lee” promised that those purchasing land at auction certainly would not live to enjoy it. Though out-of-state land speculators were beyond the reach of tax resisters, violence was used against locals, especially blacks, who ignored such warnings.

The solution to the state’s revenue problem was either to drastically cut expenditures or to borrow against anticipated revenue. Reducing expenditures was not a politically viable option. Expenditures on education, public works, social services, and industrial development were needed to serve the constituencies mobilized by the Republicans. The state’s new land commission had promised to
spend nearly $1 million to purchase and distribute “homes to the homeless and land to the landless.” The government’s administrative expenses were considerable, especially the operating costs of the state legislature. In 1868–69, legislative expenses were nearly $700,000 (compared with less than $60,000 the year before the war). The prewar legislature, consisting mainly of wealthy planters who paid their own expenses, had met for short sessions and done little. The new legislature, which was made up mainly of poor blacks who could afford to serve only if their expenses were borne by the state, was in session for most of the year and sought to accomplish much. And high levels of military spending were essential. Without military forces, the regime might be driven from power by armed and hostile foes. The cost of organizing and training militia forces represented nearly 20 percent of the state’s budget—a higher level of defense spending than is currently borne by the U.S. government. Unable to cut spending or increase tax revenues, the state government turned to borrowing.

A commission consisting of Governor Scott, Attorney General Chamberlain, and State Treasurer Parker was appointed to supervise bond sales. This commission, in turn, appointed Hiram Kimpton of New York, who was well connected in national Republican politics, to act as the state’s agent for the purpose of marketing the securities. Between 1868 and 1871, the legislature authorized the governor and state treasurer to issue more than $10 million in state securities. Because of fraud and financial mismanagement, the total actually issued may have been as high as $25 million. Had such an enormous quantity of money actually reached the state’s coffers, the Republican administration would have been able to finance even the most grandiose schemes of industrial development and land redistribution. Unfortunately, nowhere near this amount of money was received by the state for its bonds. Often, the state did not have enough money to pay its employees or fund the programs it had undertaken. There was no money for schools and no money for social services. The superintendent of the state insane asylum mortgaged
his own home to raise $15,000 to feed and clothe the inmates. What happened to the revenue from state bond sales? Some money, of course, was skimmed off the top by corrupt state officials.

Corruption, however, was not the principal reason the state’s bond issues did not produce the revenues needed to fund state programs. Corruption accounted for hundreds of thousands of dollars in losses, while the difference between the quantity of bonds issued and revenues received was millions of dollars. The fact of the matter was that South Carolina bonds sold at a deep discount—when they could be sold at all. At most, and for only a very brief period, the state’s securities sold at 70 to 80 cents on the dollar. More typically, South Carolina securities sold for 20 to 30 cents on the dollar. By the mid 1870s, the state’s bonds could hardly be sold in the United States at any price.

The difficulties the state faced in the nation’s credit markets mainly reflected the political power of the state’s conservative white community. White Democrats did not want the state government to be able to borrow money because they correctly saw this source of revenue as a mechanism for enhancing the power and stability of a regime they were determined to depose. Revenues from bond sales would allow the Republican government to consolidate its power by expanding its military forces, embarking on ambitious social programs, and redistributing land. Conservative whites were determined to prevent this outcome even if it meant the financial ruin of the state.

Whites could not prevent bonds from being issued. They could keep them from being sold. One of their primary allies in this endeavor was the South Carolina press, which was largely, albeit not exclusively, in the hands of white Democrats. The Democratic press launched a concerted effort to undermine investor confidence in South Carolina securities by denouncing them as “bayonet bonds” that would never be paid. “Should New York or Boston touch these bonds, issued by a horde of Negroes, and in the face of the protest of the white people of the state?” asked the Charleston Daily News in 1868. “No bonds issued by this legislature will ever be paid,”
the *News* asserted. These press attacks frightened investors and effectively destroyed the state’s credit.\(^75\)

A second set of institutions used by whites to attack the state’s credit were the local chambers of commerce, which had been established by white business leaders. In 1871 the Charleston chamber of commerce declared that the state’s bonds had been fraudulently issued and would not be binding. The chamber warned potential purchasers that the state’s business community considered South Carolina securities to be “null and void.” To drive home its point, the chamber organized a “taxpayers convention” in Columbia to investigate the state’s debt. This convention was attended by a host of white businessmen and Democratic politicians. One observer called it “the best body that I have seen assembled in South Carolina, except the secession convention of 1860.” The concerned taxpayers included eleven former Confederate generals and a host of officials from the prewar government. Not surprisingly, the convention claimed that a host of abuses surrounded state bond sales and warned “all persons not to receive, by way of purchase, loan or otherwise, any bonds or obligation issued by the present state government.” The convention received considerable publicity and generally sympathetic treatment in the northern financial press as well as in the *New York World*, one of the national Democratic party’s most influential organs.

The campaign to discredit South Carolina’s bonds also received help from an unexpected quarter. In 1871 Republican attorney general Chamberlain joined the attack on the state’s credit, charging that the state had issued bonds not authorized by the legislature and that fraud and mismanagement permeated the state’s financial dealings. Chamberlain became an active participant in the “taxpayers convention” and was elected its third vice president.\(^76\) Republican newspapers allied with Chamberlain praised the convention and declared that it was a fair and nonpartisan enterprise. At the convention, Chamberlain’s role was somewhat equivocal. On the one hand, he was a champion of reform. At the same time, however, he was personally involved with Blue Ridge Railroad bonds and
worked with several other delegates who owned such securities to prevent their devaluation. Subsequently, Chamberlain supported the creation of a legislative commission to investigate the handling of the state’s debt. This commission found considerable evidence of fraud and cited mismanagement on the part of every official connected with bond sales, except Chamberlain.

Chamberlain had two reasons for lending his support to the attack on South Carolina’s credit. First, he was hoping to undermine support for some of his rivals within the Republican party. Governor Scott was closely aligned with State Treasurer Parker and Speaker Moses, one of whom was likely to be his successor as the Republican gubernatorial nominee in 1872. If Chamberlain could discredit Scott, he might be able to prevent Scott from influencing the succession. This plan nearly succeeded. The legislative commission looking into fraud connected with securities sales recommended that Chamberlain’s colleagues on the financial board, Scott and Parker, be impeached. The motion was blocked in the House by Speaker Moses, who allegedly accepted a substantial bribe for his services.

In addition to seeking to discredit his Republican rivals, Chamberlain was also courting conservative whites. Chamberlain was one of the Republican politicians who foresaw that a Republican regime based exclusively on black support would always be unstable and dependent on the presence of federal troops. Chamberlain, moreover, craved social acceptance in South Carolina’s white society and, as he acknowledged years later, had utter contempt for blacks. Accordingly, Chamberlain sought to win the support of conservative whites whenever possible. This is why he participated in the taxpayers convention and several years later, as governor, sought to build a white following in the state. Even as early as 1871 Chamberlain was seeking to distance himself from his fellow Republicans and, above all, from African Americans. In a letter published in the Charleston Republican, Chamberlain wrote that Reconstruction had had the unfortunate result of giving political control of the state to “a race [that was] devoid of political experience” and that depended on outsiders “who have drifted here from other
states.” Though he himself was one of those outsiders, Chamberlain averred that all his interests were now identified with South Carolina. Through his efforts to win the support of white Democrats, Chamberlain unwittingly helped undermine Republican rule in South Carolina and paved the way for the restoration of white Democratic government.

In the meantime, with Chamberlain’s active participation, the campaign to undermine South Carolina’s securities succeeded in virtually destroying the state’s credit. By 1872 South Carolina bonds could not be sold; as a result, the state’s revenues were insufficient to meet ordinary expenses. Republican politicians could no longer indulge in grandiose visions of “homes for the homeless and land for the landless.” Instead, by 1873, the newly elected governor Franklin Moses was forced to declare, “There is no money in the Treasury with which to meet either the current expenses of the State Government, or its large and outstanding liabilities. The necessities of the several charitable, educational, and penal institutions, which have been so extremely urgent for many months past, still remain unsatisfied.”77 In other words, on the fiscal front at least, white Democrats had succeeded.

Violence

After the Republican government had been in power for one year, Frank Moses told the state legislature that he expected white Carolinians to eventually learn that the state’s laws were “enacted for the equal benefit of all.” As soon as they did so, “an era of peace will dawn upon us and wholly displace the distemper of feeling which here and there develops itself in scenes of disturbance and violence.”78 This prediction was completely off the mark. Whether or not Reconstruction-era South Carolina was the most corrupt state in the Union, it was certainly among the most violent. South Carolina’s whites were heavily armed and thousands had fought in the Confederate army. Soon after the end of the war, members of the state’s white citizenry launched a campaign of terror designed
to intimidate white Republicans and their black supporters. Initially, acts of violence were the work of local groups calling themselves bushwhackers or patrols, but in the wake of South Carolina’s 1868 Constitutional Convention, which whites saw as an effort to institutionalize black rule in the state, local groups merged into more or less coherent statewide organizations including rifle companies and the Ku Klux Klan. Typically, the Klan and other terrorist groups targeted white Republicans and politically active or simply outspoken blacks. Several black members of the state legislature were murdered, leading Speaker Moses to observe that it would not be forgotten “that more than once have the halls in which we assembled been draped in mourning for the memory of those of our number who had fallen by the hands of violence, martyrs to their principles of political freedom.” Black federal soldiers were also frequent targets of Klan violence. During the course of the 1870 electoral campaign, more than five hundred instances of Klan violence took place in Spartanburg County, alone. Blacks known to be active Republicans were beaten or shot, and at least two people were murdered.

The Klan made a special effort to disarm and intimidate black militia forces. The organization and arming of the black militias had been seen as an affront and a threat by South Carolina’s whites. Some said that the presence of an armed black militia was “an insult too grievous to bear.” Klansmen frequently raided the militia’s arms depots and singled out militiamen for beatings, whippings, and murder. In Union County, perhaps a dozen black militiamen were lynched.

The Klan and similar groups arose throughout the occupied South in the late 1860s. Klan violence in the Palmetto state, however, was so extreme and so widespread that South Carolina became the only state in which the federal government invoked the military enforcement provision of the 1871 Enforcement Act, generally known as the Ku Klux Klan Act. This piece of legislation, aimed at suppressing Klan activities, authorized the president to designate areas in which the right of habeas corpus would be suspended for individu-
als arrested for participation in “unlawful bands” that conspired to deprive individuals of their constitutional rights. Such individuals would be subject to arrest by federal authorities and tried in federal rather than state court. This provision reflected Congress’s lack of confidence in state authorities and local criminal proceedings.

In response to hundreds of beatings, whippings, shootings, murders, and other Klan atrocities, President Grant applied the Enforcement Act to nine South Carolina counties in 1872. The president declared that the Klan aimed “by force and terror to prevent all political action not in accord with the view of the members; to deprive colored citizens of the right to bear arms and of the right to a free ballot; to suppress schools in which colored children were taught and to reduce the colored people to a condition closely akin to that of slavery.”85 More than five hundred people were arrested by federal authorities and held without charge until all the suspects in the various conspiracies had been apprehended. In a series of trials, surviving victims described heinous acts committed in the dark of night by masked and robed thugs. Klansmen who had confessed in exchange for leniency and were vilified as “pukers” by their fellow citizens also testified in court. The testimony was frequently blood curdling. A black man named Amzi Rainey testified that two dozen masked men burst into his home during the night. “My little daughter . . . run out of the room and says: ‘Don’t kill my pappy . . . ’ He shoved her back and says; ‘You go back in the room you God damned little bitch; I will blow your brains out!’ and he fired and shot her sure enough.”86 What prompted the Klan’s attack on Rainey’s family? He had staunchly and publicly supported the Republican ticket in the 1870 statewide elections.

Despite weeks of similar testimony, juries convicted relatively few Klansmen. The majority of federal jurors in South Carolina were black, but the presence of even a small number of white jurors made it extremely difficult for prosecutors to win the unanimous verdicts required for conviction. Moreover, a statewide effort led by South Carolina’s most prominent citizen, former Confederate general Wade Hampton, raised ten thousand dollars to pay for the
legal defense of the accused Klansmen.\textsuperscript{87} The money, a princely sum at the time, was used to hire two of the most famous defense attorneys of the day, Reverdy Johnson and Henry Stanbery. Johnson, a former U.S. attorney general had argued for the defense in the Dred Scott case; Stanbery, also a former U.S. attorney general, had served as Andrew Johnson’s counsel in the president’s impeachment trial.

Johnson and Stanbery secured a number of acquittals, and these skilled advocates raised enough questions during the trials to allow sympathetic newspapers, including such northern dailies as the \textit{New York Tribune}, to portray the murderous Klansmen as heroes who merely sought to defend southern women against the depredations of black savages.\textsuperscript{88} The government’s effort to suppress the Klan was also hampered by the fact that the federal charges brought against the Klansmen carried relatively light sentences. Someone who might have been charged with capital murder in state court could only be charged with conspiring to deprive victims of their civil rights in a federal proceeding. As a result, even the handful of Klansmen who were convicted received light sentences considering the brutality of their crimes—the average punishment ranged from six to eighteen months in federal prison.\textsuperscript{89}

During the course of the trials, the Klan’s campaign of violence diminished somewhat in intensity. But as federal troop strength began to decline after 1872, white South Carolinians reorganized their paramilitary forces. To deflect the attention of the federal authorities, these new groups called themselves rifle, gun, or saber clubs and held parades, picnics, and balls to mask their actual purposes.\textsuperscript{90} Between 1873 and 1876, these “clubs” were responsible for numerous acts of violence including beatings, riots, murders, and political assassinations. Joseph Crews, the powerful Republican leader of Laurens County, was killed in 1875 as pro-Democratic paramilitary forces prepared for the 1876 election.\textsuperscript{91}

The effect of continuing violence in South Carolina and the other southern states was twofold. To begin with, the constant threat of violence effectively intimidated both black and white Republicans, discouraging the former from voting and compelling many of the
latter to cut their ties to the Republican party or even to leave the state. During the 1874 and 1876 elections, violence helped Democrats carry districts in which black voters outnumbered white voters by as much as a five to one ratio. Future U.S. senator Benjamin Ryan “Pitchfork Ben” Tillman called this a process of “manipulation” and a “lesson in the possibilities of what white nerves and brains can accomplish.”

Incessant violence also provided northerners with one more reason to regard Reconstruction as a failure. Many northerners came to believe that peace could only be restored to the nation by allowing the South to manage its own affairs, particularly in the realm of race relations. Other northerners took at face value press accounts blaming murderous blacks for the violence that afflicted the South. These individuals sympathized with what they saw as the desperate efforts of southern whites to defend themselves. This view, in fact, became quite prevalent in the North and later was the basis of popular potboilers like Gone with the Wind and such mass market films as D. W. Griffith’s silent epic Birth of a Nation. All in all, incessant violence contributed to northern disenchantment with the idea of Reconstruction in the same way that continuing violence in occupied Iraq eventually persuaded many Americans that it was time to withdraw U.S. forces from that benighted country.

In 1872, as the threat of white violence increased, the state’s ability to raise needed revenue diminished, and the likelihood of continuing federal support waned, Franklin J. Moses sought election to the exalted post of governor of South Carolina.