

## SYMPOSIUM INTRODUCTION

The War Between the States has been a source of controversy for some time among libertarians. Since the libertarian position acknowledges a right of secession, many libertarians have opposed Lincoln and sided with the South, at least on its right to withdraw peacefully from the Union. Others, however, appalled at the Southern slave system, have identified the Northern cause as the libertarian one.

This latter position, though, raises serious questions. How can a libertarian support the principle for which Lincoln fought, namely, that no state may secede? Is the triumph of that principle more or less likely to accelerate government's future growth? Libertarians might also reconsider the barbarism and terror of the War Between the States, a war whose conduct undermined centuries of laborious work establishing a code of civilized warfare. There are also more immediate consequences: libertarians must certainly feel apprehension at the massive and unconstitutional suppression of civil liberties, including the presidential suspension of *habeas corpus*, the imprisonment of tens of thousands, and the closing of hundreds of newspapers, to name only a few examples from the war.

All of this, in turn, raises another question: was the war's violence and destruction, to say nothing of its long-term consequences, ultimately necessary to bring about an end to slavery? Jeffrey Rogers Hummel answers no in his book *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men*. Among other arguments, he sides with William Lloyd Garrison in suggesting that Northern secession would have hastened the end of slavery. The North, no longer obligated to the Constitution's fugitive slave clause, could have become a haven for runaway slaves.

Then there is the fact that the war left the central government more powerful than it had ever been, and the states, which had traditionally curbed federal power, in grave danger of ultimate eclipse. And it can scarcely be a coincidence that within a generation of the end of Reconstruction, with a strong federal government and an "indivisible" Union, the United States had embarked on its career of empire.

This issue of *The Journal of Libertarian Studies* explores this topic and much more. Professor Constantine Gutzman looks at an important

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precursor to these events: John C. Calhoun's conversion from nationalism to localism. Professor Gutzman maintains that this critical shift was essential to South Carolina's eventual secession and, indeed, perhaps to all of Southern nationalism. Likewise, Professor Lee Cheek, author of *Calhoun and Popular Rule*, explores Calhoun's significance to American political philosophy.

Emory University's Donald Livingston strikes the heart of the matter in "A Moral Accounting of the Union and the Confederacy." Professor Livingston dismisses the standard tale of the war as an unproductive combination of myth and propaganda that fails to reckon not only with the nuances of the Southern position, but also with the long-term effects of the political centralization that the war left in its wake. Given the catastrophic destruction for which large-scale centralized states have been responsible, the actions that bring about such centralization must, in Livingston's judgment, be called to moral account.

This issue also explores Reconstruction, the postwar period which transformed Southern society, and undermined and compromised the American constitutional order. Since Eric Foner's 1988 *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* swept the boards, it has become all but impossible to discuss Reconstruction in academic quarters. Joseph Stromberg, the Ludwig von Mises Institute's JoAnn B. Rothbard Historian-in-Residence, provides an overview of the voluminous literature about the period, supplying both the lay reader with a sense of where matters stand and the scholar with a useful aid in navigating the deep scholarly waters. Professor Thomas DiLorenzo offers a libertarian critique of Reconstruction, precisely the kind of study that has been unavailable in mainstream literature for many years.

The War Between the States, as one of the defining moments in American history, demands serious investigation and careful thought. Unthinking dismissals of the Southern position and uncritical acceptance of Lincoln's legacy are disappointing when they come from libertarians, who, in so many other areas, have shown themselves capable of independent thought and philosophical sophistication. This issue of *The Journal of Libertarian Studies* will help to infuse the libertarian position with the level of nuance and precision demanded by an issue of such profound significance.

THOMAS E. WOODS, JR.  
*Suffolk Community College, SUNY*  
*Brentwood, New York*