

CHAPTER 23 ADJUSTING TO NEW CIRCUMSTANCES

- A. Introduction. In the final chapter of his multi-volume history of the state, David Duncan Wallace wrote: “Masses of ignorance and masses of poverty define for South Carolina her duty of broadening her education and increasing her wealth. . . . “ Educating the state’s youth and creating for them better economic opportunities, he argued, would help the state solve its ills. The problems of a half-century ago are still with us.
- B. The Past Won’t Go Away
1. In history books and the national media, South Carolina is still paying the price for launching the Civil War.
 2. Poverty is one of the legacies of that conflict.
 - a. In 1860, every district (county) in the state, except for Horry, had a higher per capita wealth than the national average; some, such as Sumter had ten times the national average.
 - b. In 1980, not a single county in the state had a per capita income equal to the national average.
 3. Lack of educational opportunity is another legacy.
 - a. With the exception of Charleston, there were no public schools in pre-Civil War South Carolina.
 - b. Although the Constitution of 1878 provided for equality of public education, it was not enforced.
 - c. Illiteracy and disease resulted in a high percentage of South Carolinians being rejected for military duty in World War II.
 - d. Only in the period since World War II has the state seriously undertaken to educate all of the youth of the state.
 4. Lack of economic opportunity led to the outmigration of hundreds of thousands of South Carolinians and cost the state dearly in terms of human resources.

C. The Present

1. With the passage of the Education Improvement Act in 1984, the state made a major commitment for providing a sound education for the state's young people.
 - a. Significantly, the EIA was passed with the support of the business community.
 - b. Many now regard the EIA as a first step and the continued improvement of the state's schools has become a popular political issue.
2. The State Development Board continues to attract record investment in new plants and jobs.
 - a. As hard as the Board works, it still has to play catch-up.
 - b. While new jobs are being created, the textile industry and agricultural sector have lost jobs.
3. Tourism has been a financial bonanza for the coastal counties.
 - a. While tourism has attracted new development along the coast, the fragile nature of the coastal environment has been threatened in some areas.
 - b. The Coastal Management Act of 1988 was an attempt by the General Assembly to regulate coastal development and protect the environment.
4. Politically, South Carolina is very much a two party state, and race plays a significant role in state politics.
 - A. In 1975, James B. Edwards became the first Republican elected governor since Reconstruction.
 - B. At one time or another, Republican congressmen have held seats in the First, Second, Fourth, and Sixth districts.
 - *C. The close ties that state party leaders have had with the national party were instrumental in giving South Carolina Republicans important connections in Washington during the Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Bush administrations.**

- D. Republican successes led to the reorganization of the state Democratic Party under the leadership of Governor Robert E. McNair and then state party chairman Donald L. Fowler.
 - a. Black South Carolinians were welcomed into the party from whose primary they had once been excluded.
 - b. State Democratic Party officials supported the candidacy of Jimmy Carter in 1976 and he became the only Democratic presidential candidate to carry the state since John F. Kennedy in 1960.
 - E. Since 1964, with the exception of 1976, Republican presidential candidates have carried South Carolina.
 - F. The Democrats remain relatively strong in rural counties, especially in the Lowcountry, but their strength has continued to erode as evidenced by the results of the elections of the 1990s.
 - G. The Republicans are particularly strong in the state's urban areas, but have been making inroads into traditional Democratic strongholds in rural areas. In 2002, they took control of every major branch of state government for the first time since Reconstruction.
5. A series of public scandals erupted in 1990 that damaged the state's reputation.
- a. Stories about corruption and misconduct by South Carolina officials appeared in The New York Times, Newsweek, The Economist (an English publication), as well as all of the state's major newspapers.
 - b. Operation Lost Trust, an FBI-sting operation, was announced during the summer of 1990.
 - i. Legislators and lobbyists were indicted and convicted of bribery and a variety of other crimes.
 - ii. Stringent ethics legislation has been introduced into both houses of the General Assembly.
 - c. The former President of the University of South Carolina was indicted and convicted of using his office for personal financial gain.
 - d. One of the side effects of this exposure of public corruption has been a groundswell of public support for accountability and streamlining state government.

- i. All of the successful candidates for statewide office in the 1990 general election, regardless of party, ran as “reform” candidates.
 - ii. In January 1991, Governor Carroll Campbell appointed a panel of thirty-two citizens to a commission to consider the restructuring of state government.
 - iii. Though some significant restructuring took place in the wake of the Lost Trust scandal, as of 2003 fundamental restructuring was still being called for by the state’s politicians, most notably by Governor Mark Sanford in the 2002 campaign.

- 6. In terms of human relations, South Carolinians have made giant strides since 1954.
 - a. South Carolina’s relatively orderly transition from a Jim Crow World to a desegregated one is one of the social success stories of 20th century America.
 - *b. In 1990, Senator Theo Mitchell of Greenville became the third black candidate in the American South to mount a gubernatorial campaign.**
 - *c. Under the terms of the renewal of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a black majority congressional district was created by the General Assembly in 1991, and James F. Clyburn has represented the district since its creation.**
 - d. A generation of young South Carolinians has grown up in a desegregated society where the “white only” signs are as much ancient history as the slave auction block.

- D. Summary. The South Carolina of tomorrow, like the South Carolina of today, will be very much a product of the state’s more than 300 years of history. In this case however, the actions of the post-World War II years will likely prove as formative and as influential as those of the colonial period.

- E. Readings
 - 1. Edgar, South Carolina: A History, Chapter 23
 - 2. Horne, 486-531
 - 2. Lesesne, A History of the University of South Carolina, Chapter 6.

3. The State, centennial supplements: 17, 24 February; 3, 10 March 1991 and its continuing series, "Power Failure," that began 5 May 1991.