

The Changing Reconstruction Views of Governor  
Oliver P. Morton

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## I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is the examination of primarily one man, Governor Oliver P. Morton of Indiana, and a narrative description of the change of attitude he had in the reconstruction controversy in the aftermath of the Civil War. The scope of the paper is generally restricted from the time of Lincoln's death to Morton's arrival in the Senate in early 1867. But by that latter time, Morton was "radicalized." The factors working on him particularly, on his party, and on the rest of the citizenry are examined in their importance on Morton's attitude.

The motives which a person has in mind when taking a stand, the personal feelings and judgements which are not completely preserved in autobiographies, reminiscences, diaries, or letters, are finally his own. It would take a leap from fact to speculation to analyze and then attribute motives to people and actions over one hundred years ago. So much of what can be done is done with circumstantial evidence and, hopefully, an understanding of both historical perspective and human nature. The psychological/psychiatric study of Woodrow Wilson by Sigmund Freud and William Bullett<sup>1</sup> is an excellent example of the almost complete analyses in which the patient (or victim) did not participate. The mixed reviews of the values of this work probably correlate with the adverse

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<sup>1</sup>Sigmund, Freud, William C. Bullett, Thomas Woodrow Wilson. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967.)

reaction of the public in being fed large doses of such analyses rather than the more comfortable small doses they have been used to.

Psychologically, intellectually, and politically, 1865-66 is a long way off. The understanding of that period is clouded by every philosopher, invention and political event occurring since that time. Yet works about the period have come at a rapid rate (though not as fast as those of the ever-popular Civil War). There is little that I have been uncomfortable with in writing this paper since basically I have used facts and narrative rather than a detailed analysis of Morton. Any sense of originality present in this paper is the special meaning of party and especially the particular position of the Republican party after the Civil War. The surprisingly close conjunction between party and patriotism has not since been seen or experienced. This, of course, will be elaborated upon in the body of the paper and in the conclusion, but it is speculation warranted by the evidence. The realization and acceptance of the problems involved in writing such a paper are, I feel, the primary steps in writing an "honest" survey and description of the change in Morton's ideas.

## II. Morton, Johnson, and Julian

When Governor Oliver P. Morton of Indiana led a delegation to visit President Andrew Johnson on April 21, 1865 (only seven days after Lincoln's assassination), the primary question on his mind, on the minds of everyone in the delegation and in the country, was what would happen to the defeated Southern states; what attitude would the government take toward the people of those states, especially those who encouraged and excited the rebellion? To the Indiana delegation, Johnson made his attitude evident: "Treason must be odious...traitors must be punished and impoverished...their social power must be destroyed."<sup>2</sup> This statement was not uncharacteristic of Johnson at that time. In another talk, referring to Lincoln's assassin, he said:

Is he alone guilty? The American people must be taught - if they do not already feel - that treason is a crime and must be punished; that the government will not always bear with its enemies; that it is strong not only to protect but to punish.<sup>2</sup>

Such utterances buoyed up the hopes of those who wished for a more militant policy toward the South. That such a result would not be under the leadership of Andrew Johnson was not known at the time. But what he did say most certainly satisfied Morton, Indiana's Civil War Governor. When these two men faced each other in what was most likely mutual admiration (and thus contrasting a similar scene about a year from then, but in different circumstances), a comparison between these two leaders was inevitable.

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<sup>2</sup>Avery Craven, Reconstruction: The Ending of the Civil War (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), 84.

<sup>3</sup>Lloyd Paul Stryker, Andrew Johnson: A Study in Courage (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1936), 206.

Andrew Johnson (1808-1875) was a Democrat for most of his life as a Representative (1843-53), Governor of Tennessee (1853-57), and Senator (1857-62). His decision to stay in the Senate when his fellow Southern Senators left during the winter of 1860-1861 gained him notoriety and respect in the North. After serving two years as military governor of Tennessee, he was Abraham Lincoln's running mate on the Union ticket in 1864, and became President on April 15, 1865, after Lincoln's death. Johnson was not a Republican and, as far as it is known, did not embrace the title. At most, he was a War Democrat, the type of running mate that Lincoln felt was necessary to win the 1864 elections.

The background of Governor Oliver Hazard Perry Throck Morton (1823-1877) was just as interesting and varied as Johnson's. Except for a family incident, Morton might have even been born in Indiana. His father James Throckmorton, felt that he had been cheated out of a proportionate share of an inheritance. Not only did he move from New England to Indiana, but probably in order to get at least some moral satisfaction out of the incident, he separated his last name, becoming James Throck Morton.<sup>4</sup> So when Oliver was born, the Throck became a middle name which he judiciously de-emphasised. Morton's residence was established near Centerville, in the east central part of Indiana. He, like many politicians of the day, studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1847.

Politically, Morton was a Democrat and, in 1852, was elected as judge to the sixth judicial district in Indiana. In 1854, however, he switched to the young Republican Party. In 1856, Morton was nominated by the

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<sup>4</sup>William Dudley Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton, (Indianapolis: Bowen-Merrill Company, 1899), I, 5.

Republicans for Governor, but was defeated by his Democratic opponent.<sup>5</sup>

During this time, he and the Indiana Republican party were changed with inviting support from the nativistic Know-Nothings. The abolitionist left wing of the Republican Party viewed Morton warmly as the leader of this movement.<sup>6</sup> In 1860, the Republicans nominated Henry S. Lane, a lawyer, banker and stalwart Republican, for governor. Morton ran for lieutenant governor, but with the understanding that Lane, if possible, would be elected Senator in 1861.<sup>7</sup>

In the Republican convention of 1860, the Indiana delegation, under Lane and Morton, was instrumental in shifting support from William Henry Seward of New York, the leading candidate, to Abraham Lincoln. Seward, they claimed, couldn't carry Indiana because of the Know-Nothings in the state<sup>who</sup> were "slightly covered with a thin varnish of Republicanism."<sup>8</sup> Seward's active intercession to guarantee the rights of immigrants and Catholics while Governor and then Senator from New York would not please these voters.

With Lincoln as the national Republican nominee, Lane and Morton won the state election in October. Indiana was then an "October state," i.e., the elections for state officials were held in October while national elections were held in November. Thus Indiana's election was a "political barometer" of what would happen in the Presidential elections prescribed

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<sup>5</sup>Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774-1961, (Washington D.C.: G.P.O., 1961), 1365.

<sup>6</sup>Grace G. Clarke, George W. Julian (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1923), 119.

<sup>7</sup>Foulke, Morton, I, 66-67.

<sup>8</sup>Thornton Kirkland Lathrup, William Henry Seward (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1896), 217.

by the Constitution for November. After a few days in January as Indiana's governor, Lane was chosen as Senator, and Morton succeeded as the state's chief executive.

As Indiana's Civil War Governor, Morton became nationally known. He was active in raising troops for the Union effort. Politically, he battled a hostile state legislature for control of the state militia and for sufficient funds in order to run the state. He moved actively against Southern sympathizers when they plotted to hamper Indiana's effort in the war. Finally, in 1864, he was elected governor in his own right. So when Morton visited Andrew Johnson in April, he was a nationally known and victorious leader of Indiana Republicanism.

In fact, if any difference was apparent between Johnson and Morton, it was the difference of party. Morton regarded the Democrats as disloyal. In Indiana, they harassed him in the legislature and they organized secret and militant societies against the war such as the Knights of the Golden Circle and the Sons of Liberty. In 1866, he attacked the Democratic Party:

Every unregenerate rebel lately in arms against his government calls himself a Democrat. Every bounty jumper, every deserter, every sneak who ran away from the draft...Every man who labored for the rebellion in the field, who murdered Union prisoners by cruelty and starvation, who conspired to bring about civil war in the loyal states...Every dishonest contraction...every officer in the army who was dismissed for cowardice or disloyalty...every one who shoots down negroes in the streets, burns negro school houses and meeting houses... calls himself a Democrat.

Morton, after all this cataloguing, summarized his feelings toward the Democrats:

In short, the Democratic party may be described as a common sewer and loathsome receptacle, into which is emptied every element of treason North and South, and every element of



inhumanity and barbarism which has dishonored the age.<sup>9</sup>

Governor Morton was one of the first Republican political leaders to "wave the bloody shirt" in the 1866 Congressional elections. But considering the "behind the lines" criticism and harassment which the Democrats used against him, there is little doubt that this ill-feeling toward the copperheads and Democrats was as sincere as it was intense.

But the bond between these two men was stronger than Morton's hatred of the copperheads. This was the bond of Lincoln and the Union. Johnson, after all, did choose the Union when he remained at his Senate desk while the other Southern senators returned home. The calumny he suffered at home certainly helped him in the North. Morton was also for the Union, even if war had to be waged in order to preserve it. On January 22, 1861, he declared that all loyal people should issue a "solemn rebuke of that treason which is aiming a fatal blow at the liberties of the world.... There should be but one party," Morton added, "and that the party of the constitution and the Union."<sup>10</sup>

The other factor of unity, along with preservation of the Union, was the attitude toward Abraham Lincoln. He was connected with the idea of Union as no one else in the era. Though his apotheosis did not really take effect until after his death, Lincoln was still a symbol of Republicanism and Union. To Morton, these two terms were synonymous. After Lincoln's assassination, the memory of him was still strong enough to give his successor in the White House a good deal of good will from the moderate Republicans.

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<sup>9</sup>Foulke, Morton, I, 474-475.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 103.

Standing along with Governor Morton on that April day was a Republican who was not so moderate, Representative George Washington Julian (1817-1899). Julian was born near Centerville, Indiana, and was admitted as a practicing attorney in 1840. He was elected to the House of Representatives as a Free Soil Party candidate (1849-51). In 1852, he was the Free Soil Vice Presidential candidate. He then joined the Republican Party and was elected to the House of Representatives for five terms(1861-71).<sup>11</sup>

The political relations between Morton and Julian were strained. They were political rivals from the same state, from even the same section of the state. While Morton was cautious, and surveyed his political footing before leaping into political controversies, Julian was not that hesitant. When Senator Stephan Douglas of Illinois introduced the Kansas-Nebraska Bill before the Senate, Julian passed around to the Indiana party leaders a statement condemning the proposal. All but Morton signed it.<sup>12</sup> This bill fanned a controversy that was Julian's overriding cause - the slavery question. The Indianapolis Daily Journal, the main Republican paper in Indiana (and partially owned until 1866 by Governor Morton's close friend, William R. Holloway) attacked Julian in late 1865, stating that "having given his whole life to the slavery question, he knows comparatively nothing else."<sup>13</sup>

During the early part of the Civil War, both houses of Congress passed a resolution setting up a Committee on the Conduct of the War

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<sup>11</sup>Biographical Directory, 1142.

<sup>12</sup>Clarke, Julian, 150.

<sup>13</sup>Indianapolis Daily Journal, November 18, 1865, 1.

with Julian as one of the four Representatives, and Andrew Johnson as one of three Senators on the committee. It was around this time that Julian hearing Johnson's views on the Negro concluded that "he (Johnson) was at heart, as a decided a hater of the negro and of everything savoring of abolitionism, as the rebels from whom he had separated."<sup>14</sup> But in April, after Lincoln's death, what Julian wrote shows his attitude toward both Lincoln and Johnson:

I spent most of the afternoon in a political caucus, held for the purpose of considering the necessity for a new Cabinet and a line of policy less conciliatory than that of Mr. Lincoln; and while everybody was shocked at his murder, the feeling was nearly universal that the accession of Johnson to the Presidency would prove godsent to the country. Aside from Mr. Lincoln's known policy of tenderness to the Rebels...his...views of the subject of reconstruction were as distasteful as possible to radical Republicans.<sup>15</sup>

So though leary of Johnson's attitude toward the Negroes, Julian seemed assuaged by his strong stand against letting off the defeated rebels too easily.

Applying the two criteria listed above as factors of unity between Morton and Johnson, this difference <sup>between</sup> Morton and Julian can be highlighted. Along with preservation was to come abolition of slavery: these were the Castor and Pollux of the war and would have to be obtained jointly. Also, Julian's attitude toward Lincoln differed from Morton's. Being on a committee which could be and often was critical of Lincoln's handling

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<sup>14</sup>George W. Julian, Political Recollections, (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg and Company, 1884), 243.

<sup>15</sup>James G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1961), 568. Julian disputes this assumption of his satisfaction with Johnson in his later-written Recollections, p. 262, when he writes of the April 21 meeting: "I was disgusted, and sorry that the confidence of so many of my radical friends had been entirely misplaced."

of the war effort, Julian did not so totally trust Lincoln's judgment. As the above quote (footnote 15) illustrates, by the time of Lincoln's death, Julian was pretty well estranged from Lincoln primarily because of the President's reconstruction policy.

By the comparisons of these three men, the lines of interrelationships and differences are important in noting Morton's shift from a moderate to a radical position in the reconstruction controversy. In attitudes and beliefs and especially in their attitude toward Lincoln, Morton was closer to Johnson than he was to Julian. When Morton made a speech in his delegation's meeting with Johnson, the President stated that he himself could have made the very same speech.<sup>16</sup> But in the question of party, it was Julian and Morton joined as Republicans. This is not to say that Julian was representative of the Congressional Republicans. In fact, even after the success of the radical program, he still left the party in the early 1870's after being rejected for re-nomination by the Republicans in his district. But in 1865, both men were members of a party that was organized only thirteen years previously and which had victoriously survived the Civil War against Confederate and some Democratic opposition. This young party had to be protected and propagated by its members against any challengers or dangers, present and future. At least to the Republican party faithfuls, party partisanship was patriotism, and patriotism was party partisanship. However, in April of 1865, with a supposedly "hard-line" President in the White House,

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<sup>16</sup>Foulke, Morton, I, 441-442.

there was no obvious dangers to the safety of the party. The Republican Party, or at least most of it, stood behind the former Democrat. It was up to Andrew Johnson to change this situation.

### III. To Form a More Perfect Union

When Andrew Johnson announced his plan of reconstruction on May 29, 1865, while Congress was not in session, the radical<sup>17</sup> former confidence in Johnson was destroyed. Johnson's provisions were similar to the moderate terms which Lincoln had proposed and the radicals had rejected. In addition to Johnson's plan was a section excluding from the amnesty Southerners with property valued at \$20,000 or more, for the President believed "it was the wealthy men of the South who dragooned the people into secession."<sup>17</sup> These people, the Radicals discovered, were the ones whom Johnson considered the traitors. But even they could obtain pardons easily if they applied for them.

The Presidential-constructed reconstruction continued with the appointment of provisional governors for the states still under reconstruction and the calling of state constitutional conventions. Johnson, evidently worried about the Republican reaction to his plan, suggested in a letter to his provisional governor in Mississippi, William L. Sharkey, that Negroes who could read the Constitution in English and could write their names, or who owned real estate valued at \$250 or more and paid taxes on it, be allowed to vote. In this way the Radicals could be "completely foiled on their attempts to keep the Southern states from renewing their relations to the Union by not accepting their Senators and Representatives."<sup>18</sup> But instead of this moderate stance, the conventions enacted a series of black codes, though not slavery, then a

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<sup>17</sup>Kenneth M. Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction, (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 63.

<sup>18</sup>Andrew Johnson, The Andrew Johnson Papers, Series 3A, (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, n.d.), 229-230.

legal type of serfdom. This obvious re-establishment of the status quo before the war certainly worried the Republicans who didn't want similar conditions which began the Civil War in the first place to take root again in the South.

Johnson's worries about the North's reaction to his program were eased after Governor Oliver P. Morton strode out on a platform in Richmond, Indiana, to discuss his theory of reconstruction on September 29, 1865. Morton opened his speech with the assertion that the idea of secession in the Southern states was dead. Indeed, he claimed, "there is no more danger of secession in South Carolina or Georgia than there is in the state of Indiana."<sup>19</sup> Then Morton examined the reconstruction policy that Johnson instituted and came to the conclusion that it was basically similar to Lincoln's policy which Morton had supported.<sup>20</sup>

Coming then to what easily was becoming the main issue, what to do with the emancipated slaves, he proposed a wide-range plan:

If I had the power, I would arrange it in this way: I would give these people, just emerged from slavery, a period of probation and preparation. I would give them time to acquire a little property, and get a little education, time to learn something about the simplest form of business, and prepare themselves for the exercise of political power. At the end of ten, fifteen, or twenty years, let them come into the enjoyment of their political rights. By that time, these Southern states will have been so completely filled up by emigration from the North and from Europe that the Negroes will be in a permanent minority.<sup>21</sup>

Thus Morton advocated a gradual assimilation of the Negro population into

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<sup>19</sup>Oliver P. Morton, "Speeches", (A collection of newspaper clippings compiled by the Indiana State Historical Library), 2.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 19.

the rights and liberties of citizenship, while at the same time, the Southern conventions were just as active in trying to circumvent any such rights.

During most of 1865, Morton had been ill, but still continued his official functions. But on October 10, "as I attempted to get out of bed, I discovered I was unable to lift my limbs.... I felt no pain, but from my hips downward I was unable to move."<sup>22</sup> Thus began a paralysis which continued to plague him throughout the rest of his life.

George W. Julian, on November 17, 1865, in Indianapolis, replied to Morton's Richmond speech. Julian stated his own views on the punishment of the Confederate leaders. For Jefferson Davis, he would "build a gallows and hang him, in the name of God. ...I would dispose of a score or two of the most conspicuous of the rebel leaders."<sup>23</sup> Then Julian would seize the large Southern estates "and parcel them out among our soldiers and seamen, and the poor people of the South, black and white, as a basis of real democracy and genuine civilization."<sup>24</sup> Finally, Julian addressed himself to Morton's gradualistic approach in allowing the Negro voting rights: "If you want to prepare the negro for suffrage, take off his chains and give him equal advantages with white men in fighting the battle of life."<sup>25</sup> To give the Negroes the vote would be to have a loyal element in the South; suffrage was based "on the more immediately imperative

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<sup>22</sup>Foulke, Morton, I, 454.

<sup>23</sup>George W. Julian, Speeches on Political Questions, (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1872), 267, 268.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 268.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 276-277.



ground of national salvation."<sup>26</sup> So the gap between Morton and Julian was still wide in both method and philosophy. But even while these speeches were being made, events proceeded in the South.

After the state constitutional conventions, elections, for state and national offices were held. The voting certainly did not ease the fears of the Republicans who were suspicious of Southern upsurge. If the great body of Southern people desired peace, they desired to have it under their former leaders. In elections throughout the reconstructed South, the voters turned to the very people who revolted against the Union, either as military leaders or as administrators. Among officials elected were Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens, four Confederate generals, five colonels, six cabinet officers, and fifty-eight Congressmen.<sup>27</sup> If ever a case for an unrepentant<sup>South</sup> could be made, this reaction of the Southern voters would be primary evidence. Even Andrew Johnson was becoming uneasy about the election results. He wired William H. Holden, Provisional Governor of North Carolina, that the election of so many Confederates would damage the acceptance of his program.<sup>28</sup> But whatever his fears, he gave out pardons to those elected who had not yet been pardoned.

Despite the growing uneasiness of the Republicans about the presence of former Confederate leaders as elected representatives of the South and about the state constitutions and their black codes, Governor Morton still strongly supported the President. On December 7, in New York while

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>27</sup> James P. Shenton, (ed.), The Reconstruction (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1963), 3.

<sup>28</sup> John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction After the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 44.

waiting to sail to Europe, Morton wrote Johnson that "the great body of the people of the North will endorse your doctrine and policy, and this the members of Congress will find out before they are ninety days older. I can't be mistaken."<sup>29</sup>

In mid-December, with trouble brewing with the convening of Congress, Morton left for France for treatment of his paralysis. At this time, he wrote, he was "so weak and feeble that I can hardly stand on my feet."<sup>30</sup> He traveled first to England, then to France where the treatment for his partial paralysis was for the most part unsuccessful. He then canceled the rest of his vacation to return to the United States.

In Washington D.C., the controversy on reconstruction raged. As Johnson feared, when the Southern congressmen tried to present their credentials, they were not admitted. Congress then appointed a Joint Committee of Fifteen (six Senators and nine Representatives) to investigate the actions of the Southern states. This committee, Morton advised Johnson in the December 7 letter, "is cunningly devised and is intended to trap your friends in such a manner they cannot escape."<sup>31</sup> The conflict became acerbic when the President vetoed an extension of the Freedman's Bureau on February 10, 1866.

Commenting on Johnson's difficulties, the Indianapolis Daily Journal in January stated what was then probably close to Morton's own opinion of Johnson's actions:

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<sup>29</sup>Lately Thomas, The First President Johnson (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1968), 386.

<sup>30</sup>Indianapolis Daily Journal, January 15, 1866, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup>Howard K. Beale, The Critical Year (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930), 75.

We pledge him our hearty confidence and support in all his efforts to restore harmony and mutual trust between the different sections of the Union upon the principles of universal liberty and justice to all.<sup>32</sup>

Even after his veto of the Freedman's Bureau Bill, the Journal still stated its support for Johnson, while castigating "the silly exultation of the faction, which sees in the vote the establishment of an irreparable breach between the President and the Union Party."<sup>33</sup>

With Congress and the President in a seeming deadlock over reconstruction, Morton returned to New York City on March 7. While he was still there, Lyman Trumbull, a moderate Republican Senator from Illinois, introduced the Civil Rights Bill. The bill bestowed citizenship on the Negro and granted civil rights to all persons born in this country except Indians.<sup>34</sup> Morton, now watching the moderate Republicans turning away from Johnson, left for Washington for an interview with the President. Morton asked him not to veto the recently passed Civil Rights Bill (April 9), that it would cause a split between the Republican majority and Johnson. "All roads out of the Republican Party," emphasised Morton, "led into the Democratic Party."<sup>35</sup> Johnson did veto the Civil Rights Act, which then passed over his veto. Then the Freedman's Bureau bill was also passed over his veto. On April 21, Thaddeus Stevens proposed what was to be the Fourteenth Amendment. The basic outline of the amendment was presented to Stevens and Morton by Robert Dale Owen, the son of Robert Owen, the founder

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<sup>32</sup>Indianapolis Daily Journal, January 4, 1866, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., February 28, 1866, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup>Randall and Donald, Civil War, 579.

<sup>35</sup>Lawanda and John H. Cox, Politics, Principles and Prejudice 1865-1866 (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 227.

of the Utopian community of New Harmony in Indiana.<sup>36</sup>

When Morton returned to Indiana after his interview with Johnson, his ideas about reconstruction were evidently changing. In the middle of the national Congressional elections of 1866, and certainly with the aspiration of a Senate seat for himself, Morton spoke in the Masonic Hall in Indianapolis on June 20. He declared that there should be "two leading principles...kept in view" in reconstruction First, "nothing should be done to injure or disarray the general theory or scheme of government." Second, safeguards should be applied so that the Southern states could be stopped in trying to accomplish "in the government what they had foiled by force of arms."<sup>37</sup>

In early fall, President Johnson made a campaign trip to Indianapolis, and Morton, some months ago one of his most eloquent supporters, was not in the city to meet him. Tragically when Johnson was there, a riot broke out and one person was killed.<sup>38</sup>

But going into September, Governor Morton was still not decided about Negro suffrage. In a gathering of governors during a Northern and Southern Loyalist convention, Morton declared himself opposed to Negro voting and used his personal influence with the delegates to keep the question of suffrage out of the platform.<sup>39</sup>

But with the Radicals victorious in the 1866 elections, Morton came

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<sup>36</sup>Rembert W. Patrick, The Reconstruction of the Nation (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 76.

<sup>37</sup>Indianapolis Daily Journal, June 20, 1866, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Claude G. Bowers, The Tragic Era (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), 137.

<sup>39</sup>Beale, Critical Year, 184-185.

completely to their side but for the stated purpose of preserving the Republican party. Giving the ballot to the uneducated Negroes, he declared on January 11, 1867,

was repugnant....But the necessity for loyal Republican state governments that shall protect men of all races, classes and opinions, and shall render allegiance and support to the government of the United States, must override every other consideration of prejudice or policy.<sup>40</sup>

The postscript of Morton's career in the Senate shows that at least he was faithful to the people for whom he changed his mind. He avidly supported Congressional reconstruction, voted for Johnson's impeachment, voted for and vocally supported the Klu Klux Klan laws, and became a stalwart leader of the Republicans in Indiana and in the Senate. Throughout his Senate career, he defended the Negroes and Reconstruction until his death in 1877. Even in 1876, when it was unfashionable to do so, Morton portested the Southern white terroristic tactics in the remaining unreconstructed states during the election of 1876.

The change in Morton's attitude toward the Negro can be shown through his actions. In 1851, he voted for a provision in the Indiana Constitution which excluded Negroes from the state and punished those people who encouraged the Negroes to stay.<sup>41</sup> But by 1865, in a reply to a letter seeking advice, Conrad Baker, Indiana's Lieutenant-Governor, gave these views concerning the exclusionary law "believing that they do not differ from Governor Morton's." The lady writer, having been harassed because she brought in a Negro servant, was told that the law was "a dead letter" in most of Indiana. Baker further advised the lady to either test the law

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<sup>40</sup>Foulke, Morton, I, 486.

<sup>41</sup>Clarke, Julian, 119.

or to move to some other part of the state "where there will be no changes of mob violence."<sup>42</sup> Morton also sponsored the repeal of a state law which excluded Negro testimony in court cases.<sup>43</sup> These instances exemplify the sympathetic attitude which Morton did have toward the Negro not only in the Southern states but also in his own state of Indiana.

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<sup>42</sup>Oliver P. Morton, "The Letterbooks of Oliver P. Morton," (bound collection of letters by the Indiana State Historical Library), 309.

<sup>43</sup>Cox, Principle and Prejudice, 227.

## IV. Conclusion

Oliver P. Morton was a man of party, as he was a man of patriotism. His patriotism was obvious in his active support of the Union during the Civil War. Even his Republicanism was patriotic, especially since the Democrats in his state as well as throughout the country, were hindering the course of the war.

Toward the end of the war, there supposedly was no Republican party; it was renamed as the Union party to include the War Democrats. But despite the renaming, the idea of the Republican party was still there.

The Republicans emerged as the victors in the war. Four years of bloodshed-and fraternal bloodshed at that - had accomplished the preservation of Union and the abolition of slavery. Certainly, these gains had to be kept. But any threat to them had to be precipitated by the Southern states.

In what must certainly have looked like a diabolical combination, President Johnson and his reconstructed states tried to bring back into the United States the very men who had engineered the withdrawal of these Southern states from the Union.

The idea of Negro suffrage did not appeal to Morton because of the very conditions which the Negroes were exposed to in the South, especially illiteracy. But finally, he concluded, there simply was no other feasible and immediate alternative. It was either give the ballot to the Negroes now or lose the South to the Democratic Party.

Behind the decisions of the Republican leaders was the idea of party. The party that had won the war was now had to win the peace. In this context, Lincoln had made a serious mistake in choosing Andrew Johnson as

his running mate in 1865. For Johnson was anything but a "party man." He couldn't care which party had the balance of power in the South, though perhaps his Democratic leanings were showing when he practically granted amnesties en masse to petitioners.

The Republicans probably could not have kept the balance of power in their hands by any but co-ercive means in the South. Such co-ercive means were not used in the summer and fall of 1865 and what resulted was almost complete overturning of the results of the Civil War. Since these Southerners who tried to reenter the United States were Democrats, the Republicans had yet another reason to consider themselves as the party of patriotism.

Unlike the loyal oppositions that have been prevalent during the international wars in the twentieth century, the Democrats in the early and mid--1860's were an unloyal opposition much of the time.

So reconstruction was a sort of retrenchment after the war. It was conservative in the sense that it sought to protect those advantages and changes gained as a result of the Civil War. Morton first thought that Andrew Johnson would protect these "fruits of victory," but the policy which Johnson adopted threatened to nullify any substantial advantage that the North had gained from the war. The "radicals" tried to conserve these gains by building a dam of acts, resolutions, and amendments to hold back the tide of white Southern Democracy.

Rutherford B. Hayes once wrote that Morton was "the great statesmen"<sup>44</sup> in the Republican party. Such a statement, made by one Republican about another Republican, can be taken as simply party flattery. Certainly, some

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<sup>44</sup>Harry Barnard, Rutherford B. Hayes and His America, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1954), 240.



would maintain that reconstruction as practiced by the Congressional Republicans was anything but statesmanlike.

But if the definition of "statesman" is accepted to mean one who tries to preserve and improve existing institutions and ideas, then in the field of reconstruction, Oliver P. Morton was consistently a "statesman."

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