

## Louisiana Law Review

---

Volume 9 | Number 3

March 1949

---

THE DEVELOPMENTS OF SOUTHERN SECTIONALISM, 1819-1848, by Charles S. Sydnor (A History of the South, ed. by Wendell H. Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, Vol. V.). Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948. Pp. xii, 400. Illustrations and appendix. \$6.00.

R. S. Cotterill

---

### Repository Citation

R. S. Cotterill, *THE DEVELOPMENTS OF SOUTHERN SECTIONALISM, 1819-1848*, by Charles S. Sydnor (A History of the South, ed. by Wendell H. Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, Vol. V.). Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948. Pp. xii, 400. Illustrations and appendix. \$6.00, 9 La. L. Rev. (1949)

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.lsu.edu/lalrev/vol9/iss3/12>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Reviews and Journals at LSU Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Louisiana Law Review by an authorized editor of LSU Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [kayla.reed@law.lsu.edu](mailto:kayla.reed@law.lsu.edu).

## Book Reviews

THE DEVELOPMENTS OF SOUTHERN SECTIONALISM, 1819-1848, by Charles S. Sydnor (A History of the South, ed. by Wendell H. Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, Vol. V.). Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948. Pp. xii, 400. Illustrations and appendix. \$6.00.

Beginning his thirty years view of southern history with a close and searching 100-page analysis of southern society in 1819, Professor Sydnor first defines the South as ten states possessing in common the economic characteristics of staple-crop agriculture, dependence on export trade, and devotion to slavery. Economically the South was not a colonial region but an equal partner with England and the North: it considered slavery not merely as a labor system but also as a method of social control. Because of property qualifications for voting and office-holding the governing power in most of the South "reposed far up in the economic pyramid," exercised locally by an oligarchic, conservative, appointive, self-perpetuating county court and state-wide by a legislature closely allied to the county court. The inherited philosophy of these conservative, but not unrepresentative, state and local governments permitted them to expand public funds only for such social improvements as promised to pay dividends, such as roads and banks, leaving to church and plantation such things as education, paupers, criminals (negro), and public health. The older deism and Unitarianism was in retreat before the forces of Methodists and Baptists "but the trend was not so much from liberalism to conservatism as it was from intellectualism to emotionalism."

The South of 1819 was an "unawakened South" having a large share in the direction of the federal government and, in general, satisfied with the way that government was being managed. But around 1820 Southern sectionalism comes into being, born of economic "Crises in Business and Politics" in the form of the Panic of 1819, and the Missouri Controversy of the following year. The panic gave the South a unity of economic grievances (against banks) to reinforce its unity derived from economic self-interest. In order to gain control of national, state and county governments from which any redress of their griev-

ances, born of or accentuated by the panic, the southern people increased their democracy by the removal of qualifications for voting and office holding and by increasing the number of elective offices. The unhappy result was, by discarding the old conservative but skilled leadership, to deliver the South into the hands of untried leaders and electorates incompetent because they were illiterate. The zeal of the new democracy for state and local reform was deflected by the necessity of combatting the abolitionists.

The Missouri Controversy was neither a humanitarian movement or a balance-of-power contest. It was an economic conflict in which New England sought to improve its economic lot by the abolition of the three-fifths clause of the Constitution, and the South defended its economic self-interest involved in slavery. Following this controversy, the South, for economic reasons, became more thoroughly united against the northern program of national bank, protective tariff and internal improvement. When in 1824 the national government fell under control of forces inimical to southern economic interests, the South had recourse to state-rights. Nullification was preached only in South Carolina, but was successfully practiced in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi for the economic purpose of reducing the tariff and removing the Indians. As panaceas for the economic ills superinduced by the Panic of 1837 the South promoted the building of railroads and the improvement of agriculture, increasing thereby its sectionalism as it increased its economic self-sufficiency. Under the impact of abolitionist abuse, southern sectionalism became charged with a measure of emotionalism resulting in the division of the churches, the founding of southern colleges and the conscious promotion of a southern literature. By 1848 the only bond uniting North and South was the political party and even party allegiance was showing signs of succumbing to sectional patriotism.

The thesis of this book is that southern (economic) sectionalism preceded southern (emotional) nationalism and gave rise to it. From that thesis the reviewer wholly dissents, believing, the contrary, that southern nationalism was in existence in 1820 and that it was the cause, not the result, of southern sectionalism. But it is not the task of a reviewer to argue with the author. It is his duty, here gladly performed, to bear testimony to the consistent thought of the book, to the skill of its interpretations, and to the moderation and reasonableness of its presentation. It is

so closely packed with material and so well-knit in its argument that it must be read closely and carefully to be read at all. So read and measured it is likely to affect a revolution in the historical estimate of this period.

R. S. COTTERILL\*

THE LAW OF DIVORCE IN CANADA, by W. Kent Power. K. C. Calgary: Burroughs and Company, Ltd., Toronto, The Carswell Company, Ltd., 1948. Pp. xxxix, 906.

This book is an invaluable addition to the tools of the legal profession. Its organization is excellent, its expression clear. The huge task of reviewing such a mass of material has been done carefully, conscientiously and intelligently. The problems involved in dealing with the many provinces are similar to those which confront the writer in the United States who attempts to prepare a work for the profession for use in the many states of the Union. The volume obviously will assist the bar of Canada. It will likewise assist the bar of the United States where analysis, comparison, and additional documentation are sought. The book is comparable to Vernier's monumental work though confined to divorce and hence allowing a much more detailed and comprehensive treatment of the limited subject matter.

More important by far, in the writer's judgment than the obvious value of the volume for ordinary legal reference, is its social significance. The pointing up by collection and classification alone of causes, cases, evidence, judicial expressions, in divorce matters and their aftermath, will surely move thoughtful and intelligent lawyers and laymen to attempt to remedy in Canada and in the United States some of the stupidities, obscenities and ineffectualities of the present laws on divorce in both countries. The following excerpts show that Mr. Power is well aware of the importance of the underlying social problems; that Canadians, together with other North Americans are thinking deeply about them and their possible solution; and that the state of affairs legally in Canada is as unsatisfactory as it is in the United States.

**"Public Policy.**

"There are few, if any branches of the law upon which public opinion is so sharply and widely divided as it is in

---

\*History Department, Florida State University.