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Suggested Citation:

Campbell, James B. "East Tennessee During the Federal Occupation, 1863-1865." *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 19 (1947): 64-80.

EAST TENNESSEE DURING THE FEDERAL OCCUPATION, 1863 - 1865

By JAMES B. CAMPBELL

When the "inevitable conflict" approached in the 1850's East Tennessee was a bulwark of Unionism. Its representatives in Congress favored compromise measures to avert secession movements. It supported Bell in the campaign of 1860. When the Harris government of the state sponsored referendums on the secession issue, East Tennessee twice voted overwhelmingly for the Union, the last time being after the fall of Fort Sumpter, in the election of June 8, 1861.

Overruled by an avalanche of secessionist votes from Middle and West Tennessee in June, 1861, the leaders of East Tennessee still did not yield. They met in convention at Greeneville on June 17, 1861, denounced the election of June 8 as fraudulent, and memorialized the state legislature to permit the withdrawal of East Tennessee from the rest of the state. This move failing, East Tennesseans adopted a program of obstructing the Confederate war effort and appealing to President Lincoln for military aid. In the congressional elections of 1861, held after Tennessee had affiliated with the Confederacy, all three successful candidates in East Tennessee were Unionists. All three tried to take their seats in Washington, and two were eventually successful. Meanwhile, Andrew Johnson retained his seat in the United States Senate. William G. Brownlow, who had consistently and uncompromisingly wielded his editorial pen for the cause of the Union in pre-war years, continued to publish "treason" to the Confederacy in his Knoxville *Whig*. Armed bands formed and drilled secretly, and thousands made their way to Kentucky to join the Federal army. Escaped Yankee prisoners were aided in traversing an "underground railroad" through Knoxville.¹ A scheme for destroying bridges on the important railways was concocted and partially carried out.

Such activities led to the occupation of East Tennessee by Confederate troops and a gradually sharpened terror against Unionists. Bridge burners were hanged, and hundreds of lesser offenders found their way into local jails or the Confederate prison at Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

¹ W. B. Hesseltine, "The Underground Railroad from Confederate Prisons to East Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 3 (1930), 61.

Supporters of the Confederacy in East Tennessee were in the minority, but they had power and influence greatly disproportionate to their numbers. In the main they were of the wealthy and aristocratic classes living in or near the towns. The Unionists, on the other hand, came from the yeomanry of the rural and mountainous regions. Since there had developed no city working class of any proportions, in many respects the war in East Tennessee assumed the character of a class struggle between the rural small holders and the plantation owners of the towns. Such economic factors added to the bitterness of the conflict. Slaveholders regarded Unionists as elements desirous of upsetting sacred property relations, as levellers, the equivalent of modern communists and socialists.² On the other hand, the Unionists, while not so clear-cut in their position, tended to regard the slaveowners as their exploiters. "We can never live in a southern confederacy and be made the hewers of wood and drawers of water for a set of aristocrats and overbearing tyrants," said Parson Brownlow, the outstanding spokesman for the Unionists.³ Thus, the term "Civil War" was probably more applicable to what took place in East Tennessee than to any other phase of the war.

In September, 1863, the long efforts of Andrew Johnson, Horace Maynard, and other East Tennessee leaders bore fruit in the occupation of Knoxville by General Ambrose E. Burnside. The reception of the latter was enthusiastic. News of his coming had spread over the countryside. People drifted into Knoxville from distances of up to twenty-five miles on foot, on horseback, and in wagon. Many carried delicacies in the form of canned goods, dried fruit, and smoked meat to distribute among their Yankee deliverers. A Baptist clergyman living nine miles from Knoxville, hearing of Burnside's approach late at night, arose, dressed, aroused his neighbors, and led a parade of welcomers that arrived in Knoxville before sunrise.⁴ As Burnside's troops entered the city unopposed, crowds lined the streets, "waving flags they had concealed under their beds and under the floors of their dwellings for that purpose."⁵ Chattanooga was soon in the hands of the Federals and reconstruction in East Tennessee had begun. After a brief attempt by Longstreet to regain Knoxville, Confederate forces retired to the extreme north-

² J. W. Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill, 1934), 44.

³ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴ *Report to the Contributors to the Pennsylvania Relief Association for East Tennessee by a Commission Sent by the Executive Committee to Visit that Region and Forward Supplies to the Loyal and Suffering Inhabitants* (Philadelphia, 1864), 16. Hereafter cited as *Pennsylvania Relief Report*.

⁵ *Brownlow's Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator*, January 30, 1864.

eastern section of East Tennessee and never seriously threatened again during the course of the war.

In the meantime preparations were in progress toward the transition to peace under Unionist auspices backed by Federal arms. William G. Brownlow came back on the heels of Burnside's army. Army ambulances were furnished by direct order of Secretary of War Stanton to convey his family and that of Horace Maynard from Cincinnati to Knoxville.⁶ Realizing the propaganda power of the zealous Parson's editorial pen, the Federal army took special steps to re-establish him in the newspaper business. The long, low brick building in which he had formerly published the *Whig* had been converted into stables and a sort of gun factory.⁷ The printing apparatus was either missing or unusable. This lack was soon remedied when a Federal brigadier removed a press, type, and ink from Alexandria in Middle Tennessee and sent them to Brownlow.⁸ In addition the government subsidized the Unionist editor with \$1500 in cash and allotted five army transport wagons to bring paper and other supplies from Cincinnati.⁹

Such confidence was not misplaced. Brownlow soon demonstrated that his persecution and imprisonment during the Confederate occupation had not impaired his power of invective against his enemies. In fact his physical deterioration seemed to have sharpened his intellectual faculties. His courage, of course, had never wavered. He changed the name of his paper from *Brownlow's Knoxville Whig and Independent Journal* to *Brownlow's Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator*. Reprinting the defiant editorial with which he had suspended publication in 1861, he launched a campaign of editorial counter-terror against the Confederates and their sympathizers. Before the war Andrew Johnson had been the foremost employer of the class angle in political propaganda. Now Brownlow assumed the Johnson toga and wore it with great consistency. Typical of his class appeal is the following:

We belong to the "low flung" party of Unionists, and don't aspire to any higher class of associates. We have always despised in our hearts of hearts, a hateful aristocracy in this country, based on the ownership of a few *ashy negroes*, and arrogating to themselves all the decency, all the talents, and all the respectability of the social circle.

⁶ *The War of the Rebellion: Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. XXX, Part III (Washington, 1893), 745. Hereafter cited as O. R.

⁷ Samuel M. Arnell, *The Southern Unionist* (unpublished manuscript in the possession of Mrs. B. F. Farrar, Knoxville, Tennessee), 243.

⁸ E. M. Coulter, *William G. Brownlow, Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Chapel Hill, 1937), 250.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 250.

The "low flung," aye, the "mudsills" of society, the hard-fisted yeomanry of this country are going to govern it, and the *respectability* of the land may prepare to meet their humiliation. Educated Labor is to take the place of your slave-ocracy, and it will not be long until it will be looked upon as no disgrace for a man to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow.¹⁰

Later the logic of his position was to lead him to bring the formerly-despised Negro into his united front against aristocratic privilege. He was helped greatly in this development by his contacts with abolitionists and other liberals in the North. One evidence of their influence was the position he took on pay for the common soldier in the Union army. Following a Cincinnati meeting on the subject, Brownlow came out editorially for raising the pay of privates to \$20 per month and proportionate raises for non-commissioned officers.¹¹

The *Whig*, occupying as it did a semi-official status, soon surpassed in influence, if not in circulation, its pre-war record. As a Morristown Conservative Unionist put it, "The rabble have it as their guide and textbook; and as they see no other journal conclude that it is the only one published on the continent and a true exponent of the old union doctrines. I am so situated that I can see the result of its influence."¹²

This power was turned full blast on the leading Confederates of East Tennessee, particularly those who had had a part in the terror against Unionist. The *Whig* repeatedly stated that such militant Confederates as Sneed, Swan, Crozier, Sperry, Haynes, and Campbell Wallace could never live in East Tennessee again. Union men who had suffered at their hands would be "justified in shooting them down on sight, and we shall regard hundreds of them as wanting in courage and in resentment if they do not dispatch them wherever they meet their rotten carcasses." The killing of East Tennessee Unionists, the destruction of houses, barns, and fences, and the plundering of stock and grain were urged in justification of such summary action. "Let the Imps of Hell," advised the Fighting Parson, "die the death of traitors and upon the shortest possible notice."¹³ Even this treatment did not seem adequately severe for former members of Rebel drumhead courts-martial.¹⁴

While calling on others to avenge their wrongs, Brownlow was not remiss in practicing what he preached. He attributed most of his personal misfortunes to certain Confederate leaders in Knoxville who

¹⁰ Brownlow's *Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator*, November 11, 1863. In February, 1866, this paper's name was shortened to *Knoxville Whig*. Hereafter Brownlow's paper and its successors will be cited as *Whig*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, January 9, 1864.

¹² Bird Manard to T. A. R. Nelson, June 28, 1865, Nelson Papers (McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library).

¹³ *Whig*, January 9, 1864.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, April 9, 1864.

assisted in arresting and imprisoning Unionists during the war. In January, 1864, he brought suit against three of these leaders for \$25,000.¹⁵ When the case came up in circuit court the jury returned a judgment for the full \$25,000 in Brownlow's favor after only five minutes' deliberation.¹⁶ The defendants got an annulment of this decision in 1868, but they lost their rents collected during Brownlow's possession and also were held liable for taxes for the same period.¹⁷ Brownlow then threatened new action for \$40,000, but apparently he never actually got around to filing the suit.¹⁸

Other Unionists were urged to follow Brownlow's example, and many did so. T. A. R. Nelson, who had the confidence of the Confederates, received frequent requests to represent persons being sued for damages. In one such case the Confederate commanding officer of the post at Jonesboro was sued for \$5000 on the ground that he had imprisoned a Unionist for two days. The same man was subjected to another suit for \$50,000 for imprisoning another Unionist for thirty-seven days.¹⁹

In January, 1864, Rebel prisoners held in Knoxville were ordered sent north. The officers, who were quartered at the home of a Knoxville physician, were permitted to have visitors on the Saturday evening before their departure. Confederate sympathizers brought liquors and wines for the farewell celebration. The next day, according to Brownlow, "she rebels" made a "bold, impudent *flirting* demonstration" as the officer prisoners passed along Gay Street on their way to the depot.²⁰

This led the Parson to use strong words about the Confederate-sympathizing ladies of Knoxville. He recognized two kinds: "the prudent, quiet kind (which are few and far between)" and the more numerous class, "brazen as the Devil, full of impudence, with but little sense, and less prudence, flirting about, meddling in everybody's affairs, and seeking notoriety by acting and talking as a *well raised lady* would be ashamed to act or talk." Brownlow advocated sending the latter group south to remain for the duration of the war.²¹ Rebel preachers also felt the effect of his wrathful pen. Nor were these attacks purely theoretical. The Parson believed in the union of theory and practice. During January and February, 1864, numerous persons of Confederate sympathies were deported to the cotton states

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, January 9, 1864.

¹⁶ Coulter, *Brownlow*, 254.

¹⁷ Samuel C. Williams (ed.), "Journal of Events (1825-1873) of David Anderson Deaderick," East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications*, No. 9 (1937), 109. The original is in the McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library.

¹⁸ Coulter, *Brownlow*, 275.

¹⁹ James A. Rhea to T. A. R. Nelson, October 10, 1865, Nelson Papers.

²⁰ *Whig*, January 16, 1864.

²¹ *Ibid.*, January 9, 1864.

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East Tennessee Rebels, however, did not wither away at the wave of Brownlow's editorial wand. Guerilla bands of Confederates remained active in many counties. Bushwhacking was common on both sides. Rebel guerillas were charged with forcing Union men to serve as covering guides in order to shield them from Unionist bushwhackers.²³ A favorite sport of Rebel bushwhackers was to hide in trees along the railroads and shoot at Yankee soldiers and Unionists on the trains. To counteract this the Federals set out to clear the timber from the sides of the railways for a distance of one-half mile on each side. This served the dual purpose of removing cover for bushwhackers and providing fuel for locomotives, wood being commonly used at that time instead of coal.²⁴

Warning notices frequently appeared on trees and buildings threatening dire happenings to opposing guerillas. One such, signed "Old Soldier," was found near New Market. "All damned rebels," it proclaimed, "are hereby notified to leave at once." Charging that the Confederates had promulgated the rule that Union men and Confederates could not live together, "Old Soldier" stated that local Unionists had adopted the rule with reverse implications; that "thieving Godforsaken, hell-deserving rebels" would now have to move.²⁵

In some cases men of property who had been Confederate sympathizers made their peace with the Unionist authorities but had sons who still participated in guerilla activity against loyalists. This was particularly true in Blount and Jefferson counties. Brownlow urged that the guerilla off-spring should be punished by the seizure and appropriation or destruction of their parents' property. "Throughout the length and breadth of East Tennessee, where roads are destroyed and Union property taken, let rebel property be reduced to ashes, and their livestock appropriated."²⁶ As for the guerillas themselves, Brownlow suggested that they be captured and "disposed of" without being imprisoned.²⁷

Another solution suggested by the fertile-brained Parson was to draft twenty thousand men into the militia of the state in order to protect property. He advocated making the Rebels come into this organization or be driven from the state.²⁸

²² *Ibid.*, January 30, and February 6, 1864.

²³ *Ibid.*, January 11, 1865.

²⁴ Brig. Gen. W. D. Whipple to W. J. Stephens, and A. A. Talmadge to J. H. Magill, February 8, 1865, Nelson Papers.

²⁵ Handbill dated July 24, 1865. A copy of original is found in the Nelson Papers.

²⁶ *Whig*, September 3, 1864.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, January 11, 1865.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, September 3, 1865.

One tragedy of the transition period was the burning of the home of the eminent Tennessee historian, J. G. M. Ramsey. The flames that destroyed "Mecklenburg" also consumed a valuable manuscript on Tennessee history. The physician-historian himself was compelled to flee beyond the Confederate lines and did not return until after the ousting of the Radical regime.²⁹

To the exiled Confederates from East Tennessee it appeared that "the bottom rails were on top" and that the "worst part of the Union element was uppermost."³⁰ Vigilante activities became so destructive of law and order that the Federal provost marshal for East Tennessee, Brigadier General S. P. Carter, was moved to issue orders against Union sympathizers punishing Rebel sympathizers. Patience was urged on Unionists. Appropriate punishment was promised for wrongs committed by Confederates, but officers and soldiers were ordered to arrest anyone attempting to take the law into his own hands.³¹

Troubles of equal magnitude beset East Tennessee in the economic field. Both armies had traversed almost the whole length of the region four times, living in the main off the countryside. In many cases bands of outlaws had followed in the track of the armies. The last Confederate retreat before Burnside had been particularly disastrous. Thinking they were seeing East Tennessee for the last time, the retreating Rebels seized as much livestock and movable property as they could carry with them. Persons of known Unionist sympathies were deliberately plundered of everything they had. Barns, dwellings, and pastures were stripped. Even such items as blankets and shoes were requisitioned forcibly from their owners.³² Around Knoxville a great deal of what reserve the farmers had managed to retain after the occupation of both armies was used by Burnside while he was being besieged by Longstreet in November, 1863. According to Brownlow, Burnside's army received daily during the siege more than one hundred wagon loads of flour and forage, "and every night [the farmers] floated boat loads of provisions down the river, through the fog and darkness, past the pickets of the enemy."³³

In the cities and towns conditions were equally bad. Shops when still open had little on their shelves. Many articles of common use disappeared from the market. Prices rose so high that only a few had the means to buy anything. Typical Knoxville prices in Feb-

²⁹ William Rule (ed.), *Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee*. . . . (Chicago, 1900), 506.

³⁰ Walter L. Fleming (ed.), *Documentary History of Reconstruction* (Cleveland, 1906), I, 40-41.

³¹ *Whig*, January 16, 1864.

³² *Ibid.*, March 5, 1864.

³³ *Ibid.*, January 30, 1864.

ruary, 1864, were flour, \$20 per barrel; butter, \$1.00 per pound; Irish potatoes, \$3.00 per bushel; and corn meal, \$3.00 per bushel.³⁴ Some comparison of prices before the war with those of 1864 will show the rise in living cost more clearly. Coffee rose from fourteen cents to \$1.00 a pound; salt, from two and one-half cents to thirty cents; brown sugar, from twelve and one-half cents to seventy cents. Calico cloth rose 800% and all clothing in proportion. Gold and silver almost passed out of circulation, and barter became a common mode of trade. Debtors eagerly paid their debts in the depreciated currency.³⁵

Concern over the disastrous economic situation led to public meetings in order to discuss ways and means of alleviating conditions. One such meeting at Knoxville resulted in the organization of the East Tennessee Relief Association. This organization immediately memorialized the Federal government for aid, asking payment of claims for property destroyed during the war, and asking the government to furnish transportation for any relief supplies that might be obtained. A more long-range suggestion was made; namely, that the Federal government subsidize the completion of the railroad from Cincinnati to Knoxville, which had already been projected and begun.³⁶

Nathaniel G. Taylor was appointed to represent the association in the northeastern states in an appeal for funds from private citizens.³⁷ Taylor proceeded to Cincinnati where he addressed a public meeting and received several hundred dollars to finance his further relief activities. Letters of endorsement were procured for him from Andrew Johnson and President Lincoln before he went to Philadelphia. At the latter city he addressed another meeting and helped organize a Pennsylvania chapter of the East Tennessee Relief Association, which was officered by some of the most prominent men in the state. Over \$15,000 was subscribed in Philadelphia almost immediately.³⁸

From Philadelphia, Taylor proceeded to Boston. There he addressed a gathering of prominent citizens in Faneuil Hall. An association was formed that included among its officers Edward Everett, the governor of Massachusetts, and the mayor of Boston. Everett gave an eloquent introduction to Taylor, in which he praised highly the land and the people of East Tennessee.³⁹ Taylor followed with a

³⁴ *Ibid.*, February 13, 1864.

³⁵ Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee*, 71.

³⁶ *Pennsylvania Relief Report*, 34-36.

³⁷ *Whig*, February 13, 1864.

³⁸ T. W. Humes, *The Loyal Mountaineers of Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1888), 309-310.

³⁹ *Whig*, March 12, 1864.

long address in which he recounted the sacrifices East Tennesseans had made for the Union cause. When he had finished, a letter was read from General Frank P. Blair in which he said that he had led an army to the relief of Burnside in Knoxville through East Tennessee, and knew that the country had been traversed by both armies several times; that the region had suffered particularly under the Confederate occupation because of the loyal sentiments of its inhabitants; and that although his own forces had been compelled to live off the country, "the people came out to meet us, bringing with them their scant supplies, and freely offered them to our soldiers."⁴⁰

The meeting then passed resolutions petitioning the Massachusetts legislature to appropriate funds for aid to East Tennessee. On the next day the president of the Boston association received a contribution of three dollars from one who signed himself "A Teacher in a Public School." From this humble beginning contributions to the Massachusetts fund reached a total of \$100,000 by June 4, following. Most of these donations came from Boston and its suburbs, but some came from other states and even from outside the United States. John Lothrop Motley, Jr., United States minister to Austria, sent \$200 in a letter that stated that "few episodes more moving or more instructive" will be found in history "than the record of those Tennesseans who have so long sustained the Republic and its principles, amid such trial and at such sacrifices." Later, in the spring of 1864, Taylor visited Maine and received \$11,000 from the governor of that state and from a relief association at Portland. From there he went to New York where he enlisted the aid of the poet William Cullen Bryant to promote the collection of funds in that state.⁴¹

While Taylor continued his tour the Pennsylvania relief organization, which had been organized as a result of his Philadelphia appearance, sent two commissioners to Tennessee. They met an agent of the Knoxville association at Cincinnati. The three then purchased large quantities of flour, bacon, rice, molasses, sugar, salt, and soda and sent them on their way to Knoxville by way of Nashville and Chattanooga. On the suggestion of the Sanitary Commission representative at Chattanooga, \$250 worth of garden seeds was included in the shipment to be distributed from Chattanooga and Knoxville.⁴²

The commissioners preceded the shipment to Knoxville and there conferred with the local relief association officials. The Pennsylvanians suggested that the supplies should be sold in all cases in

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, March 5, 1864.

⁴¹ Humes, *Loyal Mountaineers*, 316, 317, 393.

⁴² *Pennsylvania Relief Report*, 8, 9, 11.

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which the applicants were able to pay. No one, however, would be turned away because of lack of money. Priorities in distribution should be on the following basis:

Union families who have suffered at the hands of rebels on account of loyalty should have the first and largest portion. After them other families who have adhered throughout to the Federal Government. Next, such as, whatever their past conduct, do now adhere to the same; and, lastly, to the old men, women, and children of such families as now have representatives in the so-called Confederate army. In our view, no part of this bounty was intended for secessionists of the fighting age.⁴³

Before the relief shipments began to arrive economic conditions had become worse. During the winter of 1864, ten thousand army animals died in East Tennessee for lack of feed and forage. Many civilians were forced to let their horses and cattle die for the same reason. Travelers in the spring of 1864 commented on the scarcity of the stock and the emaciated condition of the few seen. Barns looked empty, almost no fences were still standing, and hogs and poultry were rare sights. Flour had gone up to \$30 per barrel, coffee to \$1.50 per pound, and other commodities in proportion. Even the thrifty settlement of Quakers in Blount County, formerly one of the most prosperous communities in East Tennessee, was forced to apply to the army for quartermaster rations.⁴⁴ Little prospect for improvement was promised for the next year. Wheat sowings were only five to ten per cent of the pre-war average. Practically no oats or potatoes were left for seed, and observers estimated the probable corn crop as no more than twenty per cent of the usual acreage and yield.⁴⁵

Steps were taken by civilian and military authorities to stimulate farm production. A campaign was launched to stop the current practice of Federal troops of using the farmers' rail fences for fuel. Brownlow asked the military authorities to stop impressment of grain, horses, and mules in East Tennessee. He contended that the recent reopening of railway communication with Nashville rendered such procedure unnecessary. The practice had already been discontinued in Nashville. "Why should the rebels of Nashville be treated better than the loyal people of East Tennessee?" Brownlow asked.⁴⁶

Major General Schofield ordered all army animals unfit for military service to be loaned to East Tennessee farmers until called for by the chief quartermaster.⁴⁷ In order to mitigate the fear of a

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁶ *Whig*, March 5, 1864.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, April 16, 1864.

renewal of Confederate invasion, the government offered its guarantee of protection to all farmers planting crops in those parts of East Tennessee which were within Federal lines.⁴⁸ The agent of the Western Sanitary Commission in Chattanooga planted one hundred acres in vegetables and distributed many early garden seeds in that area.⁴⁹

As spring merged into summer conditions tended to improve. Relief supplies began to arrive in volume sufficient to alleviate destitution perceptibly. Shoes and other clothing arrived as well as food. Shipments continued through the fall. During December, 1864, there was a temporary interruption due to Hood's attempt to take Nashville.⁵⁰ Over \$10,000 worth of shoes and woolen goods destined for East Tennessee was purposely burned by the Federal army for fear the shipment would be seized by Hood.⁵¹ After General Thomas' victory at Nashville, December 15-16, 1864, the railroad was reopened to Chattanooga. Flour was shipped to Knoxville in great quantities. For a time the storehouses there became so full that there was a problem of what to do with the flour. Bad roads into the hinterland prevented county agents from the more remote areas from applying for and removing their quotas. This led to a temporary policy of the East Tennessee Relief Association of giving larger distribution in the immediate environs of Knoxville. In this way Knox and the adjoining counties were largely relieved of acute distress during the early part of 1865.

The spring of 1865 brought easier communication, and the surrender of Lee removed any military barrier to the extreme northeastern counties. On March 15, 1865, the association had already decided to distribute two-thirds of its supplies to the more remote counties, since Knox County and its immediate neighbors had received heretofore a disproportionate share and were now on the road to economic recovery. On August 1, Knoxville ceased operation as a local distributing center, retaining as its only local activity the furnishing of a physician for a refugee camp set up by the Federal army south of the river at Knoxville.⁵²

It had been the original intention to discontinue all activities of the East Tennessee Relief Association in the summer of 1865. However, extreme destitution in the northeastern corner of the region delayed suspension until the summer of 1868, but the amount of supplies distributed after the spring of 1867 was not great. After

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1864.

⁴⁹ *Pennsylvania Relief Report*, 26.

⁵⁰ *Whig*, May 23, 1866.

⁵¹ Humes, *Loyal Mountaineers*, 328.

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the latter date funds were expended for purposes other than direct local relief. For example, \$500 was sent to victims of a fire in Portland, Maine.⁵³ The sum of \$2000 was turned over to two doctors in order to start a hospital at Knoxville. This grant was made with the understanding that the hospital would be named after Edward Everett and that half of the beds should be reserved for charity patients.⁵⁴ When the books of the association were closed in 1868, the balance was donated to this hospital to be used for the care of the "sick poor" in East Tennessee.⁵⁵

The East Tennessee Relief Association, in addition to its humanitarian work in relieving physical distress, attempted to assemble and preserve the original records of the war period and appealed to all who had had any connection with events in East Tennessee that might be of historical interest to put the experience in writing and deposited it with the association.⁵⁶

The power wielded by Brownlow during the transition period can hardly be overestimated. Not the least of the sources of this power lay in his holding a special agency under the United States Treasury Department. This position was given him originally in early 1863, before East Tennessee had been liberated. His headquarters were in Nashville, and his duty was "to permit or prohibit ordinary trading and commercial activities of all classes of people, powerful or insignificant, and especially to keep close watch on all cotton which should come into the possession of the Federal army, to guard it from the cupidity of speculators, whether private or officer."⁵⁷

When Burnside occupied Knoxville, Brownlow had his position transferred to East Tennessee with Knoxville as his headquarters. He then set out to see that all trade carried on in his district was done by persons of unconditional loyalty to the Union. Apparently he was given almost unlimited authority for achieving this end. His duty was to regulate all sale of goods, to seize all smuggled goods, and to seize and confiscate all "loose and perishable property left by rebels who have abandoned their homes and gone with the rebel army for protection."⁵⁸ His authority was backed to the limit by the provost marshal for East Tennessee, Brigadier General S. P. Carter.⁵⁹

By early February Brownlow was ready to announce some rules

⁵³ Nearly \$8000 had been received by the association from Portland in 1864.

⁵⁴ T. W. Humes, *Third and Fourth Reports to the East Tennessee Relief Association at Knoxville* (Knoxville, 1868), 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁶ *Whig*, April 23, June 18, 1864.

⁵⁷ Coulter, *Brownlow*, 246.

⁵⁸ *Whig*, January 9, 1864.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, January 16, 1864.

which experience had shown him would be necessary if the desired ends were to be achieved. Trade permits were to be issued only to East Tennesseans. The maximum monthly gross business for one trader was to be \$3000. No permits would be issued for selling distilled liquors. The army alone would handle this problem. Goods consigned to a certain place for sale must actually be sold in the place indicated on the permit. If smuggled goods were found in any shipment, the whole shipment was liable to confiscation, and the offender would have his permit revoked. Sutlers were allowed to sell as much as \$2500 worth of goods per month to soldiers, but they could not sell to civilians. No Confederate could get a permit, no matter how many oaths he might have sworn. Traders with secret Rebel partners were liable to confiscation of their goods and the revocation of their permits.⁶⁰ Brownlow was also the sole judge of a person's loyalty, and there was no appeal. He was custodian of abandoned Rebel farms, plantations, and other property, which he offered to rent or lease to persons properly qualified and of unconditional loyalty.⁶¹

By late February the Parson took stock of his administration as treasury agent and decided that he had been too lenient up to that point. He apologized to the loyal public for this fault and promised to pursue a stricter policy in the future. Implying that Rebels had been carrying on trade through dummy partners with loyal records, he promised prompt confiscation of goods handled in this way. No permits would be granted for the time being except in Knoxville, London, Kingston, Clinton, and Jonesboro. Goods brought into other centers would be promptly seized. No additional towns would be opened to trade until after conferences between Brownlow and the military leaders.⁶²

In April Brownlow retreated slightly on the liquor question. He announced that permits would be given to drug stores to bring liquor into East Tennessee for medicinal purposes, provided the druggists were known to him. At the same time he reiterated his refusal to grant permits to others. Considerable drunkenness on the streets of Knoxville both by civilians and soldiers was noted. This condition led the Parson to suggest that the military authorities close all liquor shops. Needless to say, this suggestion went unheeded.⁶³

While Brownlow carried out his duties as custodian of abandoned Rebel properties without undue timidity, he did not go so far as his editorials in this respect. Editorially he advocated outright confiscation of all Rebel properties "within the limits of loyal territory

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, February 20, 1864.

⁶¹ Coulter, *Brownlow*, 254, 255.

⁶² *Whig*, February 27, 1864.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, April 16, 1864.

and of all conquered territories," which properties should be given to Union men of the same section to compensate them for their losses during the war. Any surplus, he suggested, might be applied to the Federal war debt.⁶⁴

One abandoned piece of property Brownlow found it necessary to take over was the Rebel-owned ferry over the Clinch River at Clinton. This he rented to his fellow Unionist, Leonidas C. Houk. Under the terms of the contract entered into by Houk and Brownlow the former was to pay the government \$250 per year as rent. The expenses of upkeep and operation of the ferry were to be borne by the renter. Houk was to ferry all military personnel and supplies free and also to give priority to military over civilian traffic.⁶⁵

While wielding his trade dictatorship Editor Brownlow used his newspaper to further various economic ends. For one thing he desired that Knoxville and East Tennessee look to Cincinnati as the source of imports and rejoiced that this city was replacing Richmond and Lynchburg in this field.⁶⁶ He criticized the military authorities for attempting to fix prices and advocated letting supply and demand be the determining factors.⁶⁷ On the other hand he complained of sky-rocketing rents. Stores, Brownlow charged, were renting at three times the prices they should command. He hinted that a little rent control by the military authorities might be justified.⁶⁸ Traders were encouraged by the *Whig* to go to Kentucky, buy hogs at seven to eight cents per pound, and drive them to Knoxville, where the hogs would bring at least fifteen cents per pound. Thus, a good profit would be made and the public interest would also be served, since there was a serious shortage of pork in East Tennessee at that time.⁶⁹

In early 1865 a tendency became apparent for holders of trade permits to speculate on their businesses. Brownlow quickly propounded rules designed to inhibit such activity. He stated that when a trader sold his business the permit would have to go with the business. The seller would then have to retire. A similar rule applied to Rebel property rented to qualified loyalists. When a renter ceased to use the property it would revert immediately to the treasury agent. These rules largely eliminated speculation and subletting.⁷⁰

Brownlow resigned as treasury agent after his election to the governorship of the state in March, 1865. His son, John Bell Brownlow, succeeded him and continued in the office until the end of

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, April 9, 1864.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1864.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, April 2, 1864.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, March 3, 1864.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, March 17, 1864.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, October 5, 1864.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, February 15, 1865.

1865. At that time the office was discontinued, and such of its functions as were still necessary were taken over by the Freedmen's Bureau.⁷¹

One interesting phase of the transition period was the reorganization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in East Tennessee. Parson Brownlow played a leading role in this, as in all other activities of the period. In order to understand this development it will be necessary briefly to review the pre-war situation.

Prior to the heated controversies of the 1840's and 1850's the Methodist Episcopal Church of East Tennessee had a "reasonably consistent" record of opposition to slavery. When the church split in 1844 the dominant elements in the Holston Conference were pro-slavery, and they succeeded in leading the conference into affiliation with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. A sizable minority of its ministers, however, continued to oppose slavery, and no disciplinary action was taken against them until after secession.⁷²

During the war the leaders of the Holston Conference took a strong stand in support of the Confederacy. They did this on the ground that it was the duty of Christians to be "subject to the supreme authority where they may reside." Definite scriptural authority was cited for this position. Going a step further in the annual Holston Conference at Athens in October, 1862, the ruling body asserted its duty to discipline ministers who failed to use "all laudable means to enjoin obedience" to the established powers (the Confederate government).⁷³ Disciplinary action was brought against a considerable number of ministers. After trials several were expelled or suspended, and others were placed on probation.

Brownlow and the Unionist Methodists were infuriated by this action. As soon as there was a good prospect of Federal liberation for East Tennessee, they began negotiations with Bishop Mathew Simpson of the northern church. After the occupation of Knoxville by Burnside the first issue of the *Whig* contained a blistering attack on the southern church. Its members were worldly, according to Brownlow, and indulged in dancing and card-playing at their Sunday school picnics. This was typical of the "rebel" church. There had been no religion in East Tennessee since "we Christians" had been driven into Kentucky.⁷⁴

Bishop Simpson used his influence in Washington to get an order from Secretary of War Stanton placing "all houses of worship

⁷¹ Coulter, *Brownlow*, 263.

⁷² W. B. Hesseltine, "Methodism and Reconstruction in East Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 3 (1931), 43-44.

⁷³ *Whig*, February 13, 1864.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, November 11, 1863.

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belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in which a loyal preacher appointed by a loyal bishop does not now officiate," at the disposal of the northern Methodist organization. The wording of this order was such that no building was secure in the possession of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Armed with this economic advantage, Bishop Simpson proceeded to Tennessee in January, 1864. At Chattanooga he made arrangements with two Federal chaplains to reestablish the Methodist Episcopal Church in East Tennessee. The chaplains immediately began receiving loyal preachers into the Kentucky Conference of the church. They also made contact with Brownlow and arranged for a meeting at Knoxville for the purpose of reorganizing the Holston Conference.⁷⁵

At the Knoxville meeting, held on July 7, 1864, fifty-five delegates were present, of whom twenty-seven were preachers. Delegates' reports indicated that there were 112 loyal Methodist preachers in East Tennessee, sixty of whom were ordained. Forty more were vouched for but were not named due to fear of Confederate reprisals in the area in which they lived.⁷⁶

The report submitted by the general committee of the meeting, of which Brownlow was chairman, announced the determination of loyal Methodists to "no longer live under the iron rule of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South." Recommending return to the fold of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the report declared that loyal members were entitled to all the property of the Holston Annual Conference; that, in fact, the loyalists *were* the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Holston. The General Conference prohibition of slavery was accepted, and a petition was framed asking the General Conference to reorganize the Holston Annual Conference. The committee suggested, however, that this be done with native East Tennesseans in the leading positions.⁷⁷

During the following year a strong propaganda campaign was carried on in East Tennessee to get endorsements for the resolutions adopted in Knoxville. This was widely successful and resulted in another meeting at Athens in June, 1865. There the Holston Annual Conference was reorganized around a nucleus of forty East Tennessee preachers and six imported from other conferences. At the close of the meeting the conference claimed a lay membership of 6494 with fifty-three preachers.⁷⁸

Attempts to get the membership and clergy of the Methodist

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, February 20, 1864.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, July 23, 1864.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, July 23, 1864.

⁷⁸ Hesseltine, "Methodism," *loc. cit.*, 52.

Episcopal Church, South, to come over in a body to the parent church were only partially successful. Many churches were seized from the southern church, however, and in many cases the evicted membership had to meet in public halls, private dwellings, and groves.⁷⁹

The southern Holston Conference held its own annual meeting in September, 1865, at Marion, Virginia. This body took a moderate and conciliatory course. It declared its loyalty to the United States government and reconsidered the suspension and expulsion of Unionist pastors accomplished at Athens in 1862. The conference, admitting that this action had been hasty, petitioned the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to restore the victims of the purge to their former status. Since most of the "victims" had already affiliated with the northern church, this petition was scarcely more than a gesture.⁸⁰ The conference instructed all its ministers to take the amnesty oath and to accept the abolition of slavery as an accomplished fact and a closed issue.⁸¹

This conciliatory attitude on the part of the southern branch of the church did not endure for long, and it was never accepted by Brownlow and his followers. The *Whig* continued to attack southern Methodists in almost every issue. In McMinn County southern Methodist ministers were ridden on rails. On the other hand, the Klan warned "carpetbag" Methodist preachers to leave the region. In Washington County a controversy was waged over the remains of a deceased Methodist, rival preachers contending for the right to pronounce the final ceremonial prayer. The bitterness continued throughout the reconstruction period, and issues were never even approximately settled before the middle 1870's.⁸²

By April, 1865, considerable progress had been made in East Tennessee along the road to economic recovery. In all except the extreme northeast portion the threat of famine had been eliminated, and agricultural production was returning to normal. The bitterness between neighbors who had fought on opposing sides during the war had not subsided appreciably, however, and this bitterness continued to poison social relations throughout the reconstruction period and for long afterward.

⁷⁹ Coulter, *Brownlow*, 300.

⁸⁰ Isaac P. Martin, *Methodism in Holston* (Nashville, 1945), 90-92.

⁸¹ *Whig*, November 1, 1865.

⁸² Hesselstine, "Methodism," *loc cit.*, 57, 58, 61. The Klu Klux Klan, organized in Pulaski, Tennessee in May or June, 1866, did not become very active, however, in East Tennessee.

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