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## Class Conflict and the Confederate Conscription Acts in North Carolina, 1862-1864

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CLASS CONFLICT AND THE CONFEDERATE CONSCRIPTION ACTS IN  
NORTH CAROLINA, 1862-1864

by

Tyler C. Cline

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors  
(History)

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis will analyze the effect that Confederate conscription policies during the American Civil War from 1862 to 1864 had on the social order that existed in North Carolina. Conflicts arose during the war between the slave-owning aristocratic class and the yeomen farmers who owned few slaves, if any, and thus were not dependent on the slave system in the pre-war era. A regional approach, exploring the impact of geography on social development, illustrates that the undermining of this social stability led to growing class-consciousness among the middle class farmers who dominated the Piedmont region of North Carolina. It will also challenge the more traditional narrative of the South that often views it as a unified body fighting against the more culturally and socially diverse Union. This work reveals the stress that the war inflicted upon the traditional social strata of the South and the conflicts that intensified among the social classes in North Carolina.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my parents, Erik Cline and Judith Fanning, and my brother Zachary for all their support through the years. I would also like to thank Professor David Turpie and Professor Micah Pawling for their advisement and their help in pushing this project to completion. The insights of the History Department members of my committee, Professor Alexander Grab, Professor Elizabeth McKillen, and Professor Stephen Miller, each of whom read sections of my thesis, are greatly appreciated. I would also like to express my gratitude to committee member Professor Nancy Ogle for her help charting my intellectual development in my reading list.

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## INTRODUCTION

To the yeomen farmers of North Carolina, resistance to conscription was more than a political act aimed at an unpopular war. It was representative of the stirrings of an awakened class-consciousness within those middle class farmers from North Carolina. Many historians largely ignored these men and women, who had been independent from the planter system for over a century. Instead, historians have too often focused on the aristocratic elite who dominated Southern society or the Unionists in the South who were opposed to the necessity of independence. Conscription resulted in the disruption of the traditional social strata in the Confederacy. The yeomen began to attack the old social order as their exploitation by the aristocratic plantation owners increased throughout the war. North Carolina, as both a major source of troops to the Confederate Army and a reluctant secessionist state, provides an interesting contrast of Southern patriotism and opposition to the centralized government in Richmond.

In order to confront the industrial and human advantages of the Union, the Confederate States of America (hereafter CSA or Confederacy) instituted a national conscription law in April 1862, the first in American history. To protect both the manufacturing fields that powered the war effort and the plantation system that dominated Southern society, the government placed exemptions in the law. These exemptions applied to occupations or governmental positions that the Confederate and state governments saw as vital to the war effort at home, rather than on the frontlines. The same act inserted a substitution system that allowed wealthy individuals to avoid the draft by paying a substitute to take their place. In this way, affluent Southerners, who the Confederate government expected to be major contributors to the wartime economy, were



not subject to military service if they chose. Both of these articles benefited the upper class, creating a rift between those who benefitted from exemption and substitution and the lower class that was subject to conscription and military service.<sup>1</sup>

There is abundant evidence of the anger that many North Carolinians felt towards the Conscription Acts. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Wilson Library provides a wealth of primary material related to North Carolina's conflict with conscription. Correspondence between the state conscription officer and the Confederate War Department reveals the resistance towards the draft and the desperation of the Confederate government to get men onto the battlefield. Letters between soldiers and their families expose the discontent of those already serving in the army. There is even a letter from three brothers to a local conscription officer in which the brothers threatened the officer with violence or death if he attempted to enforce conscription in the Appalachians. Newspapers were soundboards for the Southern populace, allowing them to air their grievances about conscription and the Confederate government. State records for North Carolina and the Confederacy are spotty due to the haphazard nature of the new governments formed during wartime and the ravages of the war itself, which took place almost exclusively on Confederate soil.<sup>2</sup>

Much of the secondary material on conscription resistance addresses defiance towards the Confederate government. Many view opposition to the draft as a political act, much like the actions of the state governors who opposed the expansion of central authority into state power. Emory M. Thomas's *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865*

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<sup>1</sup> Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 32.

<sup>2</sup> Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979), 284.

detailed the complex inner workings of the Confederate state, from the central government in Richmond to the various state governments.<sup>3</sup> Thomas characterized the relationship between state and federal government as a fight to establish social and national identities in the midst of the first major industrialized war. The immense war demands and the Southern struggle to decide its own path defined the turbulence of the period.

Regional approaches to the Civil War in North Carolina often focus on political action, as well as wartime hardship, in relation to conscription. Paul D. Escott's *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* is an overview of the political history of North Carolina in the late nineteenth century, focusing on the relationship between the aristocratic planters and the common folk.<sup>4</sup> Escott believed that the North Carolina aristocracy's anxiety over the potential of the majority to seize the reins of power led to the common people's repression. The aristocrats restricted voting rights to property owners in North Carolina from the 1830s through to the coming of the Civil War, with few of the democratic structures that even other states in the South possessed.<sup>5</sup> These restrictions created an oligarchy that the lower class struggled with before and during the war.<sup>6</sup> Escott's work demonstrated the pre-existing conditions for open class conflict that were exacerbated by wartime demands like conscription.

Chapter one of the thesis will focus on the expansion of class conflict in wartime North Carolina and introduce the importance of a regional approach. It will outline the pre-existing class structure of the antebellum South and demonstrate how it applied to

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas, *Confederate Nation*.

<sup>4</sup> Escott, *Excellent People*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

North Carolina's particular geographical distinctiveness. Each region of the state faced different economic and social realities due to the development of the state and the impact of immigration. Aristocratic landowners who had arrived in the early days of colonial development controlled the rest of the state from the Atlantic coast. The yeomen farmers, many of whom lived in the Piedmont in the middle of the state, came later in waves of immigration to find a fertile interior. The land allowed them to set up homesteads, free from the power of the aristocrats. In the west, poor whites who arrived in the late colonial period eked out a living in the difficult land of the Appalachian Mountains.

Chapter two will examine the context that led to the proclamation of conscription. The precarious situation of the Confederate army, which was an all-volunteer force prior to conscription, and the wartime industrial demands of the war combined to create both the need for conscription and the need to exempt those individuals whose talents were more valuable as citizens to the war effort. This process was fraught with difficulty, as men's desire to avoid service clashed with the Confederacy's desperate manpower needs as the war dragged on and the Union's resources came to bear. This led to the exploitation of laws that allowed men out of service as well as the Confederate government's attempts to secure the service of as many men as it could through whatever means possible.

Chapter three explores the resistance to the Confederate Conscription Act of 1862. It will analyze the development of class-consciousness among the yeomen farmers in the face of the centralization of political and economic power and military control in the hands of the planter class that dominated the Confederate government in Richmond. Class in Southern history is defined as, "a common set of values and notions about the

world...[that] helps to create a feeling of distinctiveness.”<sup>7</sup> The yeomen farmers, who were economically and socially distinct from the aristocratic planters, clearly fulfilled this definition. Class-consciousness can manifest itself in many different forms. It can be the awareness of the social order and one’s own position within that order, one’s awareness of the social structures that form a society, or the interests that most pertain to a certain distinct group of people.<sup>8</sup> In the case of this thesis, the growth of class-consciousness is seen through the yeomen’s increased resistance to the aristocratic Confederate government’s actions, both in their actions and in their words. Communities banded together to fight off the encroachment of the Confederate government into previously socially independent areas. This chapter also examines the pro-Unionist resistance in the North Carolina Appalachians that responded to Confederate attempts at expanding effective control to the region with intimidation and violence.

Chapter four demonstrates the ultimate failure of the conscription acts. The exploitation of the exemption and substitution clauses in the Conscription Act of 1862 not only impacted the military readiness of the Confederacy by reducing the flow of manpower to the army, but it also disillusioned those still required to go off to war. This failure can be seen in the widespread exploitation of the means of avoiding military service that limited the number of troops available to the Confederate armies in the field, as well as in the alienation of the population as wartime demands grew. Thousands of men flooded exempted occupations seeking to avoid the war, while thousands more used their wealth or cunning to procure a substitute. The failure of the Conscription Act of

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Werner S. Landecker, “Class Crystallization and Class Consciousness,” *American Sociological Review* 28, no. 2 (April 1963), 221.

1864 will also be analyzed. In 1864, as the tide of war turned irrevocably towards the Union, the Confederate Congress expanded conscription to all men up to the age of 50 and eliminated many of the exemptions that had existed under the Conscription Act of 1862. At this time, however, much of the Confederacy either lay under Union control, too far from the Confederate center of power for any government proclamation to have any true effect, or bled white by three years of war.

This work is important because it demonstrates that the South was not a monolithic entity, as many in the North and South have thought and in some ways continue to think.<sup>9</sup> Instead, the South experienced distinct social tensions, lessened in the years preceding the war by the economic prosperity of both the aristocrats and the yeomen, but exacerbated by the wartime demands of the Confederate government. The aristocratic planters were able to avoid service through their wealth and exemptions aimed at their livelihoods, while the yeomen withstood conscription. Yeomen communities across North Carolina banded together, angered by the strains that the war put on them and the immunity from those burdens that the aristocrats seemed to enjoy. This work hopes to demonstrate that these men and women fought together to reassert the social independence they had lost to the Southern aristocrats during the war. The aristocrats exploited the yeomen and others throughout the war, and the resistance to their actions faced revealed the strength that the yeomen possessed, despite their abuse.

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<sup>9</sup> Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe, *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 12.

## CHAPTER 1: THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ANTEBELLUM NORTH CAROLINA

This chapter will analyze the social structure in the antebellum South. A distinct class structure existed in North Carolina, as the aristocratic plantation owners dominated the upper levels of the social, cultural, and political spheres. Cash crop agriculture, where planters cultivated labor and expensive crops like cotton and rice for export to the industrialized North or to European markets, was the major economic system of the South. This chapter will demonstrate the underlying tensions that existed in the South, and North Carolina in particular, and how those pressures contributed to the growth of class-consciousness as the war continued.

In many ways, the class structure of the South before 1860 looked like a feudal society more than it resembled the rest of the United States.<sup>10</sup> At its heart, class in the South was based on the division between slave owners and non-slave owners.<sup>11</sup> The agricultural economy in the South stunted the growth of a large bourgeoisie class and concentrated wealth in the hands of the planter aristocracy. In some cases, the aristocrats were the descendants of the younger sons of English nobility. The plantation owners, who possessed large landholdings and sizable sources of slave labor, produced cash crops at a level that allowed for profit and sustainability. In Deep South states like South Carolina and Alabama, cotton was the preeminent cash crop, but in the upper South states like North Carolina, there was a greater variety of agriculture due to the different climate. Across the South, the aristocrats defended their political power by limiting the voting rights of the lower class. They maintained high levels of property ownership prerequisites

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen V. Ash, "Poor Whites in the Occupied South, 1861-1865," *Journal of Southern History* 57, no. 1 (February 1991), 40.

<sup>11</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the American South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 71.

for voting that most men in the South were unable to meet. The aristocrats viewed themselves as the governors of society and enforced obedience and deference to their influence.<sup>12</sup> Many aristocrats saw the common man as something to be feared, a threat to the oligarchy that had been built on the back of slaves working on plantations.

Next in the class structure was a group of independent farmers, referred to as yeomen for their resemblance to the yeomen farmers of England. They were “farmer folk who...cherished a fierce devotion to the principles of personal independence and social equalitarianism.”<sup>13</sup> These farmers owned land and occasionally a small number of slaves, but did not possess the resources to compete with the plantation owners in the cash crop market. Instead, the yeomen focused on food crops that they could sell to local markets and make a small profit. They were capable of producing agricultural outputs above the subsistence level, allowing them to attain some additional income. Due to their higher level of earning, the yeomen were able to live independently of the plantation system, which limited the extent of social unrest that existed in the antebellum period. This independence disappeared as the Confederate government increasingly centralized Southern society.

At the bottom of the Euro-American class structure were the poor whites, who were often unable to own land. In many cases, these people worked for plantation owners or rented land from them and often struggled to subsist for their families. In North Carolina, many of these poor farmers were the mountain folk, a population who arrived in the South after the establishment of the plantation system and the influx of yeomen

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony S. Parent, Jr., *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 200.

<sup>13</sup> David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York: Harpers Torchbooks, 1976), 472.

farmers. These new immigrants were forced to settle the open lands of the Appalachian Mountains. In the mountainous regions of North Carolina, poor farmers eked out a living in scattered communities, isolated from the rest of the state for the most part. These communities lived in extreme poverty and were resentful of the plantation owners and the slave labor that replaced the need for paid field laborers.

At the bottom of the class structure were the slaves, the primary labor force for cash crop agriculture in the South. Since the invention of the cotton gin in 1790, slaves had become the key to the Southern cash crop economy, as cultivating cotton required a large number of laborers. Slave ownership was not restricted to the Southern aristocracy, as yeomen were occasionally able to afford a few slaves to work their land. Slavery and racism were seen as unifying features of Southern society, as the immense social separation between white and black made the separation between rich and poor seem insignificant.<sup>14</sup> In this way, the issue of race acted as a social construct that transcended the political and economic divides that existed between rich and poor in the South.<sup>15</sup> Blacks became “the other” that the white population, rich and poor, defined themselves against.<sup>16</sup> This emphasis on race hindered the class-consciousness of the yeomen, who defined themselves as white before they defined themselves against the economic and political power of the aristocrats. This racial unity fell apart during Reconstruction, as emancipation and increased voting rights for both blacks and whites broke the “rural paternalism” that had marked the antebellum South.<sup>17</sup> While this division certainly played

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<sup>14</sup> Harry P. Owens and James J. Cooke, *The Old South in the Crucible of War* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1983), 22.

<sup>15</sup> David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), 7.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Follett, Eric Foner, and Walter Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 61.



a major role in the social interaction between the aristocracy and the lower classes, the increasing economic separation between rich and poor created a sense of alienation that contributed to the unrest during the war.

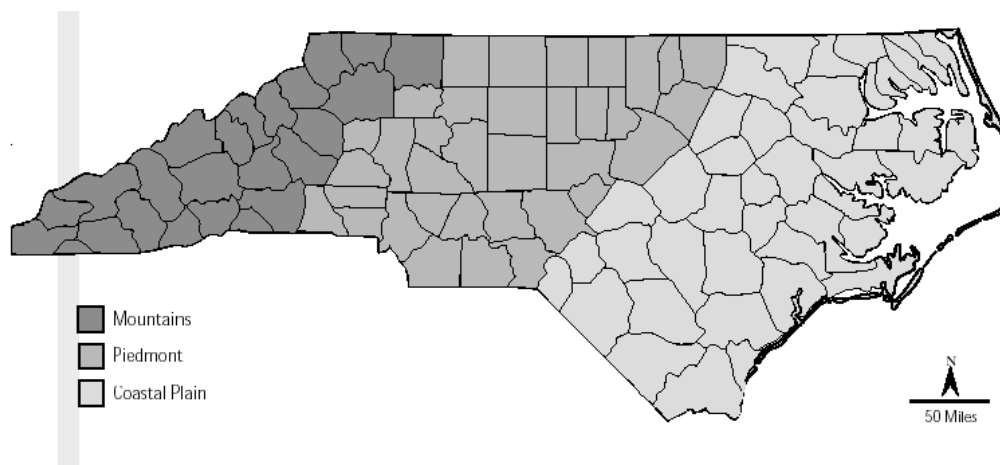


Fig. 1. "Regional Map of North Carolina." 1:50mi. North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State. <http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/images/region1.gif>

A stark sense of social regionalism marked North Carolina. The state consisted of three major regions, the Atlantic coastal plain in the east, the Piedmont plateau that dominated the middle of the state, and the Appalachian Mountains in the west. The English settled the Atlantic coastal plain in the mid-seventeenth century. Throughout its early history, outsiders viewed North Carolina as a humble buffer between South Carolina and Virginia, both of which had larger plantation systems, and thus more wealth, as well as a greater emphasis on lineage as the basis of aristocratic prestige.<sup>18</sup> North Carolina lacked the old families of its neighbors, and as such societal position and wealth led to prestige rather than family background. Property requirements established in 1835 prevented all but the most prosperous merchants and landowners from holding

<sup>18</sup> Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), xv.

governmental positions, creating a division between the aristocracy and the rest of the population, who were denied the ability to represent themselves in government.<sup>19</sup> As such, the percentage of planters and slave owners in the state legislature was higher than any other state in the South in 1860, on the eve of secession.<sup>20</sup>

The Piedmont, a plateau rising up from the Atlantic coastal plain, dominates the middle of North Carolina. Large plantations, like those along the coast, were largely replaced by a patchwork of independent farmers, as well as the beginnings of an industrial economy. In 1860, there were 127,946 slaves in the Piedmont, 26% of the population compared to the statewide 33%.<sup>21</sup> Though they never reached the wealth of the plantation owners, the yeomen farmers of the region were able to live comparatively well and avoid a reliance on the aristocracy and the plantation system. The economy of the region varied more than in other regions. For example, in Caldwell County, located in the heart of the Piedmont, merchants and wealthy planters invested in textile mills and other means of industrial production, seeking to diversify their assets as a means of protecting against agricultural downturns.<sup>22</sup> The Piedmont, though not as socially isolated as the communities in the Appalachians, was not dominated by the plantation system. This contributed to the discontent that grew during the Civil War, as interests of the slave-owning aristocrats increasingly began to clash with the lives of the yeomen, whose lives were heavily impacted by the strains of war.

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<sup>19</sup> Paul D. Escott and Jeffrey J. Crow, "The Social Order and Violent Disorder: An Analysis of North Carolina in the Revolution and the Civil War," *The Journal of Southern History* 52, no. 3 (August 1986), 378.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Census Office, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 358-359.

<sup>22</sup> Escott, *Excellent People*, 5.

The Appalachian Mountains mark the western part of North Carolina. The Appalachian region of the state was first settled in large numbers in the late eighteenth century, as a part of the emigration of Scotch-Irish from Ireland to North America.<sup>23</sup> These migrants, finding the more valuable land in the eastern part of the state already taken, moved to the difficult lands in the mountains. The rugged terrain of the region hindered large-scale agriculture and the development of major cities. Instead, the immigrants created dispersed towns and communities built around family ties and social relationships with neighboring families. As part of the lack of large-scale agriculture, the percentage of slaves in the region was much lower than in the eastern part of the state and the Piedmont. Approximately five percent of the population in Appalachian counties was enslaved, compared to the statewide thirty-three percent.<sup>24</sup> This major demographic difference highlighted the socio-economic separation that existed within the state. Slave owners, specifically the plantation owners with twenty or more slaves, dominated political life in the state, while non-slave owners, especially those living in the Appalachians, were marginalized because of their limited economic impact.

In 1860, North Carolina had a population of 992,622, making it the fourth-highest populated state in the South at the start of the Civil War.<sup>25</sup> 115,369 men were of military age.<sup>26</sup> One-third of the total population, or about 331,059 people, was enslaved.<sup>27</sup> North Carolina, like the rest of the upper South, had closer ties to the North than the Deep South, as “King Cotton” was not the economic power in the state that it was in the rest of

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<sup>23</sup> Patricia Duane Beaver, *Rural Community in the American South* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 10.

<sup>24</sup> Beaver, *Rural Community*, 19; U.S. Census Office, *Eighth Census*, 356.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Census Office, *Eighth Census*, iv.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

the South. Therefore, North Carolina lacked the incentive to leave the Union that many of its southern compatriots had. Where the Deep South had large international markets for its cotton, the upper South stood to lose its economic ties to markets in the North if secession occurred. The firebrands who advocated so strongly for secession in South Carolina and the rest of the Deep South were far less influential in North Carolina. Indeed, the driving political force in the state was Unionism coupled with continued support for slavery. Only the firing of the first shots of the American Civil War at Fort Sumter and the subsequent secession of Virginia, leading to the Confederacy fully surrounding the state, led North Carolina to leave the Union.

The pressures the war placed on the Southern social structures can be clearly seen in North Carolina, where regional and economic divisions were paramount. Many plantations were located along the eastern coastline, the site of the earliest settlements in the state. The Appalachian region in the mountainous western part of the state, populated by hardscrabble whites who had moved west for cheap land, was poorer and less dependent on slave labor. Anti-Confederate resistance was significant in the Appalachian region in North Carolina, a situation similar to the Appalachian regions of other states, as the poor whites of the area opposed their political and economic subjugation by the planter aristocrats. In between these two areas, the highland Piedmont region in the interior of the state was comparatively middle class, with fewer slaves than along the coast but operating above the subsistence level. This area was marked by yeomen farmers who “cherished independence, self-reliance, and individualism,” in the face of the powerful planter aristocracy.<sup>28</sup> The yeomen of the Piedmont had lived independent of the plantation system since their arrival in North Carolina. They instead worked their own

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<sup>28</sup> Owens and Cooke, *The Old South*, 21.

land and remained determined advocates of democracy in the face of the powerful planter oligarchy.<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, the conflict between aristocratic traditions and democratic idealism shaped class conflict in North Carolina.<sup>30</sup> The coming of a war that required massive levels of participation from all levels of Southern society meant that the hierarchy and control of the planters was no longer convention, but a codified system of oppression. War demands concentrated even more power in the hands of the planters and forced the yeomen to take matters into their own hands in order to protect their ideals.

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<sup>29</sup> Owens and Cooke, *The Old South*, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders' New World Order*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 99.

## CHAPTER 2: THE CONTEXT OF CONFEDERATE CONSCRIPTION

This chapter examines the context and nature of conscription, detailing the growing needs of the Confederate Army for manpower after the first year of the war. The Confederacy called upon its population to defend itself from the invading Union troops. To ensure the maintenance of the economy during the tumult of war, it established exemption and substitution policies. The Confederate government extended exemptions to occupations and positions seen as vital to the continuation of the Confederate economy and bureaucracy, protecting those men from service in the army. Substitution, on the other hand, was a policy in which a man with wealth, but otherwise subject to conscription, could pay an exempted individual to take his place in the army. Both policies benefitted the upper class and the wealthy while creating a larger imposition on the lower class that was increasingly responsible for the burden of military service.

After the Union defeat at the Battle of Bull Run in July 1861, the first major battle of the war, Confederate hopes for independence were high. The supremacy of Southern martial skill seemed to be proven along the Bull Run. This hope turned to despair as the Union armies and navy made great strides in the west. The fall of Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862 to General Ulysses S. Grant and the Army of the Tennessee opened the Mississippi River to the Union. Grant followed up on these victories by defeating the Confederate Army of the West at the Battle of Shiloh in early April, temporarily forcing the Confederacy out of western Tennessee.<sup>31</sup>

In the east, the jubilation that followed the victory at Bull Run turned to a growing sense of dread. The failure of Generals P.G.T. Beauregard and Joseph Johnston,

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<sup>31</sup> Stephen W. Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1992), 87.

commanders of the Confederate army that had won the day at Bull Run, to pursue the defeated Union army back to Washington created a stalemate between the national capitals of Washington and Richmond, which had become the center of the Confederate government on June 7, 1861.<sup>32</sup> This failure gave the North a second life, allowing Union manpower and industrial strength to coalesce into the Army of the Potomac, 121,500 men strong.<sup>33</sup> The massive size of the Union army that faced the Confederate troops defending the capital put fear into the hearts of many in the South. Many saw the volunteer system as not providing enough troops for the army, while the enlistments of soldiers in 148 regiments across the Confederacy were set to expire in May 1862, the middle of the upcoming campaign season.<sup>34</sup> The Confederate War Department faced both the Southern manpower disadvantage and the dissolution of the battle-hardened backbone of its scattered armies. Action had to be taken before the army dissolved.

The solution appeared to be conscription. President Jefferson Davis believed conscription was the key to the South's military issues. It would allow him to keep the volunteers who had made up the Confederate Army up to that point in service, where their experience was needed, and add new recruits to an already numerically outmatched army. Conscription would also ease the burden of combat from the most patriotic of Southerners by mandating service in the army. The act established that, "once enrolled, all persons between the ages of eighteen and forty-five shall serve their full time" of three years of service.<sup>35</sup> With the growing realization that the war would not be a quick one, it

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<sup>32</sup> Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979), 103.

<sup>33</sup> Sears, *Gates of Richmond*, 24.

<sup>34</sup> Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1924), 14.

<sup>35</sup> James M. Matthews, *The Statutes at Large of the Confederate States of America, Passed at the Second Session of the First Congress; 1862* (Richmond: R.M. Smith, Printer to Congress, 1862), 62.

became imperative to the Confederate government to maintain and expand the army that been formed in the first days of the war, and these conscripts were crucial to the expansion of the military. In addition, with the need to keep the volunteers in the army, the act declared, “All of the persons aforesaid who are now in the armies of the Confederacy, and whose term of service will expire before the end of the war, shall be continued in the service for three years from the date of their original enlistment.”<sup>36</sup> The act that ensured the volunteers already in the army would remain with the army. The departure of the early volunteers would have crippled the army on the eve of the Union advances in 1862 on Richmond, marching up the Virginia Peninsula, and on the fortified city of Vicksburg, which was the key to the Mississippi River.

The conscription bill passed easily in both the Confederate House and Senate, but not without heated debate. Reflecting the arguments occurring across the South, some Confederate legislators questioned the need for conscription, seen by many as a source of military centralization and “European despotism,” as only the European powers of the time, France and Prussia chief among them, had previously enacted national conscription.<sup>37</sup> Others in Congress saw conscription as an attack on traditional Southern values of individualism and cavalier courage.<sup>38</sup> Despite these fears, the Conscription Act passed on April 16, 1862.<sup>39</sup> In the preamble to the act, Congress declared, “The Confederate States are engaged in a war, the extent of which has no parallel in modern history.”<sup>40</sup> National conscription was one of the unparalleled actions the Confederacy was

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<sup>36</sup> Matthews, *Statutes at Large*, 30.

<sup>37</sup> George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 139.

<sup>38</sup> Moore, *Conscription*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Matthews, *Statutes at Large*, 66.



forced to take. Both as a means of impressing men into service and coercing those who did not want the stigma of “conscript” permanently attached to them, the First Conscription Act was successful at providing troops for the beleaguered Confederate armies in the field. However, the substitution and exemption policies placed within the act created substantial controversy.

The policy of exemption placed in the Conscription Act of 1862 served as a means of protecting the intellectual and capital resources required by the expanding industrial base of the South in wartime. Intended to keep those whose talents were better served in civilian fields out of combat, in many cases exemptions were used as political tools or simply as a means to avoid military service. Exempted fields were flooded with new applicants, from teaching to apothecaries, while state offices like constable, coroner, and county clerk suddenly became positions to be vied for, as they allegedly provided a civic service indispensable to the general war effort.<sup>41</sup> In many cases, exemptions amounted to little more than a way of avoiding the hardships of military service, while legitimately important occupations like the arms industry faced labor shortages.<sup>42</sup> Factory owners in the South were often reduced to pleading to the Confederate authorities to keep their workers and supply the Confederate army with much needed weaponry.<sup>43</sup> The exemption system became a source of dissatisfaction, as many in the South saw the unfair distribution of exemptions and continued shortcomings of the Confederate industrial complex.

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<sup>41</sup> Moore, *Conscription*, 54-57.

<sup>42</sup> Anne Kelly Knowles, “Labor, Race, and Technology in the Confederate Iron Industry,” *Technology and Culture* 42, no. 1 (January 2001), 16.

<sup>43</sup> Anne Kelly Knowles, *Mastering Iron: The Struggle to Modernize an American Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 186.

However, a more controversial exemption was also extended to the plantation owners of the South. Widely known as the “twenty-slave law,” owners and overseers on plantations of twenty or more slaves were exempted from military service. It was passed to protect against slave rebellions and maintain agricultural production. For instance, Olivia Andrews, the widow of a slave owner, requested an exemption for her plantation’s overseer on the grounds that the slaves might “become a nuisance.”<sup>44</sup> However, the exemption was opposed by many among the yeomen and poorer citizens of the Confederacy, who saw this as a method of the upper class to maintain both their lives and livelihoods while the poor fought to protect the new republic. The cash crop focus of the aristocrats and the conscription of the yeomen food producers contributed to food shortages. David Schenck, a lawyer and Confederate official noted in his diary that, “the conscript law too which takes so many producers from the country will reduce the crops one half and a scarcity of Bread stares us in the face.”<sup>45</sup> Many women on the home front felt that the law was inequitable as they dealt with the ever-deteriorating situation behind the lines without the help of their husbands, who fought in Confederate armies while the planters seemingly did nothing for the war effort.<sup>46</sup>

Substitution was another policy put into the conscription law with classist implications. Intended to keep the talent necessary for wartime industries and pacify some of the discontent faced by the Conscription Act of 1862, one could avoid military

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<sup>44</sup> Olivia Andrews to George Logan, August 25, 1863. George William Logan Papers, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina (hereafter UNC). <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/08/25/25-august-1863/> (17 April 2014).

<sup>45</sup> David Schenck. Diary entry, May 6, 1862. David Schenck Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2012/05/06/6-may-1862> (16 April 2014).

<sup>46</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 165.

service by hiring someone not yet subject to conscription.<sup>47</sup> Those seeking to avoid combat instead exploited the substitute policy to their own advantage, rather than protecting the industrial base of the South. Due to the hiring process involved, substitution involved wealth, rather than preserving necessary talent. Like the twenty-slave law, those unable to gain from it resented the practice of substitution. It was seen as a method for the aristocracy to avoid the war, as many with the necessary funds utilized substitution whether or not their talents were useful to the Confederate wartime economy.<sup>48</sup> By the time of substitution's abolishment in 1863, many considered it the worst facet of conscription because of its negative effects on military morale, manpower, and class divisions.<sup>49</sup>

The exemptions in the Conscription Act of 1862 and the policy of substitution represented clear illustrations of class inequality in military service, as the Confederate government's attempts at protecting its native talent miscarried. The Confederate War Department and President Jefferson Davis gave exemptions to men seen as important to the Confederate war effort. These men included participants in the industrial economy of the South that experienced wartime growth, as well as the males on plantations with twenty or more slaves, freeing both groups from military service in the field. This last provision created tension between the planter class that dominated Southern economic and political life and the poorer slave owners and non-slave owners who were economically threatened by being sent to war. The substitution act placed within the Conscription Act of 1862 also benefited the upper class, as those who could afford to hire a substitute were exempted from joining the army. The requirement of military service

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<sup>47</sup> Moore, *Conscription*, 27.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

for men who neither had the skills nor money to avoid it and the centralization of power by the aristocratic Confederate government upset the balance that had existed for decades between the slave-owning aristocracy and the yeomen farmers. This led to growing class-consciousness among the middle class farmers of North Carolina as they banded together against the ever-growing power of the aristocracy. They attacked conscription and other Confederate initiatives as an encroachment upon their natural rights as inheritors of the American Revolution.

### CHAPTER 3: CLASS RESISTANCE TO CONFEDERATE CONSCRIPTION

The extent of class resistance to the Conscription Act of 1862 is the focus of this chapter. Yeomen farmers in the Piedmont opposed the acts, as conscription gravely affected their homes and livelihoods. They bore the brunt of the draft and had less economic flexibility for their families to survive without them than the plantation owners, who had the wealth and economic resources to maintain some semblance of their previous lifestyle.

In order to oppose the Confederate government's demands for more troops, communities joined together and declared their civic opposition in public meetings. Townspeople rejected conscription and other governmental policies seen as emblematic of the increasingly-despotic nature of the Confederacy. In areas with large numbers of deserters, the community created secret networks of communication, protecting the gatherings of deserters and thwarting the Confederacy's attempts to bring them back into the army. Even more extreme was the reaction in the Appalachians of North Carolina, where resistance to conscription erupted into violence. The mountain folk came together in large groups, often a thousand or more, armed and ready to fight back against Confederate officials. Combined together, the two forms of resistance greatly impacted the Confederate war effort and the government's ability to effectively control its own territory.

Immediately after the Conscription Act passed in 1862, there was opposition to the draft. For many Southerners, conscription represented the most authoritarian intrusion of a government into the lives of its citizens. As a nation founded on the ideals of individualism and states' rights, compulsory service to the central government was an

anathema across the social spectrum, from the poorest farmer to the richest plantation owner. State governments opposed the imposition of the national government into what had been their sphere of control. The yeomen farmers were the hardest hit by the draft, as they faced a severe disruption of their economic and social lives.<sup>50</sup> Though they lived above the subsistence level, the prospect of three years of service in the Confederate Army, away from their families, was an idea that filled many yeomen with resentment towards the new government. One letter stated that, “men can’t be prevented from deserting when they think there is no prospect ahead for getting home,” indicating the despair that had come over many Confederate soldiers as the war dragged on and victory seemed no closer.<sup>51</sup>

Demonstrations and meetings became filled with anti-Confederate opinions as unpopular policies affected the populace. One response was escape. As the pains of military service became more apparent, desertion exploded, growing from a few individuals escaping camp to large bands leaving en masse. Joseph Norwood, a teacher, noted in a letter that, “desertion is rife the men regard their money as worthless & the government is unable to remedy the evil,” showing the difficult situation that the soldiers were facing by the summer of 1863.<sup>52</sup> Groups of soldiers returned to their communities and established anti-Confederate holdouts. They formed intricate networks designed to prevent the soldiers’ forced return to the army.<sup>53</sup> Local home guards were often tasked with dealing with the deserters when Confederate units were unavailable, but these troops

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<sup>50</sup> Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979), 234.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Davidson Graham to William Alexander Graham, August 20, 1863. William A. Graham Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/08/20/20-august-1863/> (17 April 2014.)

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Norwood to Thomas Lenoir, August 13, 1863. Lenoir Family Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/08/13/13-august-1863-2/> (16 April 2014)

<sup>53</sup> John McRae to Peter Mallet, April 22, 1863. John McRae Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/04/22/22-april-1863> (16 April 2014).

had “no power at home to take them [deserters]...the militia officers have not the force and are not sustained by the people,” as David Schenck, a lawyer and Confederate official, stated in his diary.<sup>54</sup> The efforts of the communities that harbored deserters greatly hindered the Confederacy’s attempts to bring them back.

The social alienation caused by the governmental policies of the Confederacy created a great deal of resentment. Conscription had the most impact on the masses, especially as manpower shortages in 1863 and 1864 dictated even larger demands for troops. The demand for troops combined with other wartime measures to create major opposition to the Confederate government. The Confederate Constitution had maintained the rights given to citizens under the Bill of Rights, rights that were extremely important to the Southern populace. The suspension of *habeas corpus* in February 1862, which allowed the state to imprison anyone without trial, was a reaction to threat many saw in potentially seditious editorials and speech to the Confederate war effort and the patriotism of the new country. This act was a clear violation of the ideals that had led to the American Revolution and formed the basis of American society, both North and South. The people saw related wartime actions as contributing to the despotic nature of the new Southern political system.<sup>55</sup>

In January and February 1864, seven Piedmont counties held community meetings in which they aired their grievances towards the Confederate government.<sup>56</sup> In Guilford County, located in the heart of the Piedmont, the published account of the

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<sup>54</sup> David Schenck. Diary Entry. June 11, 1863. David Schenck Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/06/11/11-june-1863/> (16 April 2014).

<sup>55</sup> Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), 68.

<sup>56</sup> The seven counties were Guilford, Granville, Wake, Rowan, Moore, Chatham, and Cabarrus County; Editorial, *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, NC), February 5, 1864.

people's meeting enumerated these grievances. Chief among their objections was the violations of "our inalienable rights and constitutional liberties," something that no "power on earth" had any right to violate.<sup>57</sup> The language harkened back to the Revolutionary period in its declaration of rights, innate to every citizen and inviolable by a government. The suspension of *habeas corpus* was seen as the precursor to "the establishment of an odious military despotism," a fear suggested by those who had opposed the Conscription Act of 1862 as the basis of autocratic rule.<sup>58</sup> One of their final protests was towards the Conscription Act of 1864, established in January of that year. If conscription was to be expanded, as the Confederate Congress planned, it "will greatly endanger the domestic peace and security of the state; and so derange our industrial pursuits as to add *famine* to the other horrors of war."<sup>59</sup> Exhaustion with the ongoing fighting drove the Piedmont population, many of whom had been skeptical of secession from the beginning, away from the planter-dominated government and towards a communal and social unity built upon their traditional rights.

Even pro-conscription editorials from early in the war, before the true horrors of the war had come, couched their opinion in what many hoped was the temporary nature of the acts. On April 17, 1862, a day after the Conscription Act was passed, *The Daily Journal* in Wilmington, North Carolina, posted an editorial that can be seen as a prelude to the grievances of the Piedmont. The author admitted the necessity of conscription, comparing it to the "overwhelming necessity which permits a man to take a human life in self-defence," as traditional values must be put aside for extreme situations.<sup>60</sup> In this case,

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<sup>57</sup> Editorial, *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, NC), February 5, 1864.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. (emphasis in original).

<sup>60</sup> Editorial, *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, NC), April 17, 1862, 2.



it was traditional Southern ideals of individualism and state sovereignty that had to be temporarily suspended, so that the Confederate armies could have the resources needed to repel the invading Union troops. The editorial stated,

We must look upon the action of the law as merely temporary...  
But as we must submit for a time to many things, from a sense of duty and conviction of their necessity, so we will submit to this when equally convinced.<sup>61</sup>

As the protests and grievances of 1864 show, the populace of North Carolina was unconvinced of the necessity of conscription, or any of the other moves towards despotism, and was willing to act against the government.

Desertion, a major reaction by the North Carolinian soldiers to the excesses of the Confederate government's policies, had a clear impact on the war effort. As early as August 1862, the Commandant of Conscription in North Carolina, Major Peter Mallet, complained of large-scale, organized desertion. In a letter to President Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War George Randolph related that Major Mallet reported, "desertions are numerous and that 200 men overpowered 10 guards and went off in a body."<sup>62</sup> This sort of occurrence, rare in 1862, became an all-too-common event as the war dragged on into its second, third, and fourth years and the Confederate home front began to collapse. By the end of the war, 12,000 North Carolinians had deserted from the armies of the Confederacy, a full ten percent of the manpower provided by the state.<sup>63</sup> These groups of deserters formed a grave internal threat to the Confederate government. They developed into self-defensive units designed to protect the local deserters and merged with

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<sup>61</sup> Editorial, *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, NC), April 17, 1862, 2.

<sup>62</sup> George Randolph to Jefferson Davis, August 5, 1862. The Peter Mallet Papers, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2012/08/05/5-august-1862> (17 April 2014).

<sup>63</sup> Katherine A. Giuffre, "First in Flight: Desertion as Politics in the North Carolina Confederate Army," *Social Science History* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1997), 246.

sympathetic local populations to threaten any attempt to round up the fugitives. Women protected their husbands and sons. John McRae, an officer assigned to bring the deserters back into the army, stated that communities created a “regular System of communication from house to house & place to place, & before I could reach a place with a squad of men they would be expecting us.” Communities used old social bonds and new ones created by the war to defend themselves against the planter government.<sup>64</sup>

Troops tasked with finding deserters often resorted to guerilla warfare tactics, reminiscent of colonial wars. Troops lay “in ambush near the paths that communicate from house to house,” in an attempt to capture informants and ease their efforts at recapturing deserters.<sup>65</sup> This strategy rarely brought about positive results, as the safe zones were secretive and well planned. John McRae ominously reported that, “the whole district is against us & no certain information can be gained any where,” demonstrating the depth of the desertion problem and its deep connection to the local level.<sup>66</sup> The same populace that was increasingly vocal in its opposition to the political actions of the Confederate government was now actively helping fugitives, giving them safe haven and denying Confederate influence at the local level.

In the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina, resistance to conscription was open and filled with the threat of violence. For much of the Confederacy’s existence, the Appalachians were a source of contention, as the rural populace had little to gain from the protection of slavery and faced losing their lives if they were forced into the Confederate Army. They were willing to resist, with violence if necessary, to protect themselves.

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<sup>64</sup> John McRae to Peter Mallet, April 22, 1863. The John McRae Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/04/22/22-april-1863> (16 April 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Three Dial brothers, Unionists who lived along the mountainous border of North Carolina and Tennessee, opposed conscription and stated in a letter to a state conscription officer, “Capt Quill Hunter if yo [sic] ever hunt for us a gin I will put lead in yo.”<sup>67</sup> The Dial brothers went on to say that, “we have never done yo any harms for yo to hunt for us.”<sup>68</sup> Their pained exclamation to Captain Hunter indicated the social separation between the Appalachian folk and the rest of the South. The yeomen farmers still considered themselves Southerners who had been alienated from the planters socially and politically by the excesses of the war. The people of the Appalachians saw no common cause for which they should be giving up their lives, only an oppressive oligarchy that sought to control their lives.

Violence aimed at the small detachments sent to bring in conscription-eligible men forced the Confederates to allocate valuable resources to take control. In the Dial letter, one of the brothers sketched a gun at the top of the letter, underscoring the grave nature of their threat and the violence they were willing to use to protect themselves.<sup>69</sup> Confederate authorities were not going to easily bring men who opposed conscription into the army, especially in Appalachia. The Confederates, desperate for manpower, launched expeditions into the mountains in order to drag as many potential soldiers back with them as they could. There they found “numbers variously estimated at from 800 to two thousand,” often armed with stolen weapons and organized in military fashion, complete with pickets and entrenched positions to defend their hiding places.<sup>70</sup> This

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<sup>67</sup> Wilse Dial to Captain Quill Hunter, July 29, 1863, Southern Historical Collection, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/07/29/29-july-1863> (17 April 2014).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Isaac Lenoir to his brother, December 5, 1862. The Lenoir Family Papers, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2012/12/05/5-december-1862> (16 April 2014).

massive reaction to Confederate intrusions, combined with the difficult terrain of the mountains, meant that these expeditions often came away with very little in terms of additional men and pulled troops away from the frontlines at the height of the Confederacy's fight for survival. Thomas Lenoir, serving in a company sent into the mountains on one of these expeditions, reported, "I slept two days without shelter & next day got very wet & have been much troubled by aches and pains since," demonstrating the difficulty of pursuing fugitives and the futility of the Confederate attempts to extend its authority over the Appalachians.<sup>71</sup> The Confederacy feared that the disloyalty in the mountains could become a full-blown rebellion that could threaten to break up entire states, as had occurred in Virginia with the secession of West Virginia in 1863.<sup>72</sup> Confederate troops carried out harsh reprisals, as in the case of the Shelton Laurel Massacre, where fifteen Unionists were shot, including young boys.<sup>73</sup> Since the Confederate government already lacked control, the mountains of North Carolina also became a haven for deserters and draft dodgers. This furthered the issue of sending troops into the area and the difficulty of exerting its authority in the region, as more of the Southern manpower reserve escaped the Confederate Army's grip.<sup>74</sup>

The disturbance of the social balance that had existed in the South by conscription led to the growth of class-consciousness in the South. The social structure of the South had been based on the separation between the planter class and the yeomen. This gave the yeomen the independence they desired while leaving the political and social power with

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<sup>71</sup> Thomas Isaac Lenoir to his brother, December 5, 1862. The Lenoir Family Papers, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2012/12/05/5-december-1862> (16 April 2014).

<sup>72</sup> Philip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 65.

<sup>73</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 142.

<sup>74</sup> Martin Crawford, "Political Society in a Southern Mountain Community: Ashe County, North Carolina, 1850-1861," *The Journal of Southern History* 55, no. 3 (August 1989), 388.

the planter elite. The growing Confederate war effort, specifically the Conscription Act of 1862, undermined this separation and forced the yeomen into a close relationship with the planters, who now formed not only the social and political elite, but were now the policy makers of a hopeful nation. Where they had once been independent farmers, free to choose their paths in their lives, the yeomen now felt the effects of the creeping power of the planters, who staged a war for their own benefit and used the yeomen as the military force that could win them their independence. The yeomen rebelled in ways that they could. They attacked the Confederate policies of conscription and the revocation of *habeas corpus* as an affront to their natural rights as human beings and inheritors of the American Revolution. They deserted in droves and established safe zones in their local districts. Whole communities resisted Confederate control. Resistance to the Confederacy existed in other states, but the high number of deserters in North Carolina, the most of any Confederate state, created a situation unlike that in most of the Confederacy.<sup>75</sup> In the Appalachians, the situation was more extreme. The Confederate power structure in the region broke down completely as missions sent to retrieve fugitive conscripts and bring the Appalachian folk under control faced the beginnings of a guerilla war the Confederacy could ill afford. Conscription and the Confederate government's attempt to control its war effort not only divided North Carolinians from their political leaders, but it also brought them together as a means of protecting themselves from the overreaching efforts of the government. Public figures across the Piedmont attacked the extension of administrative influence and control into the community and lives of those within the community. The principles of individualism and the protection of natural rights,

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<sup>75</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 124.

cherished by the yeomen class, were violated by the imposition of conscription. As such, the yeomen population rose up and fought back as a means of reclaiming their principles.

CHAPTER 4:  
THE FAILURE OF CONFEDERATE CONSCRIPTION IN NORTH CAROLINA

The exploitation of the exemption and substitution policies within the Conscription Act of 1862 represented the greatest failure of conscription in North Carolina. This failure can be seen in the widespread exploitation of the means of avoiding military service. This exploitation limited the number of troops available to the Confederate armies in the field and alienated the population as wartime demands grew. Exemption and substitution were policies designed to preserve talent necessary for political and economic practices in the new nation that instead allowed men to escape service in the army while contributing little of the talent that the government had expected. Occupations seen as necessary for communities to survive were flooded by those hoping to avoid the army, while state governors who sought to flex their constitutional power exempted officials and involved themselves in military politics. These gubernatorial actions strained the relationship between the federal government and the states. Substitution was another major source of failure within conscription, as 50,000 to 150,000 men avoided service by hiring substitutes.<sup>76</sup> The substitution policy drained men from the frontlines and caused great levels of discontent for those who were unable to take advantage of the policy. It was the men who were unable to benefit from the policies that created social and class conflict, as the exploitation of the lower class became overbearing and the yeomen population struck out at its oppressors.

Conscription was necessary to provide troops to the beleaguered armies in the field and did provide troops that might not otherwise have served. However, the haphazard application of exemptions meant that sorting men with talents that might serve

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<sup>76</sup> Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1924), 40.

the state from the rest was fraught with difficulty. Meanwhile, substitution was intended to perform a similar function with direct correlation to the wealth of an individual and instead created problems for the central government in Richmond and resentment among the common people. Many men used the exemptions as a means of escaping the draft under the Conscription Act of 1862, flooding occupations that were seen as vital to the welfare of the state. Some state governors, wary of the centralizing influence of Jefferson Davis and the Confederate War Department and seeking the safety and security of their own state first and foremost, exempted many others.

A clear demonstration of the abuse of the exemption system was the rush of men into exempted professions. Certain professions, like pharmacists and teachers, were seen as vital to the maintenance of the new nation and were thus exempted from military service. The Confederate government intended for exemptions to preserve the talent that already existed and protect it from the ravages of war, but instead many men inundated these occupations as a means of avoiding military service. The act exempted educators, which caused “a spontaneous development” of public schooling in the South.<sup>77</sup> Young men became teachers in order to avoid service, a welcome improvement, despite the negative means of achieving it. Likewise, pharmacists, exempted for the necessary services they provided to the community, became a sought-after profession. Pharmacies came to resemble “variety stores or produce depots [rather] than drug-stores,” due to the lack of medical knowledge amongst the new pharmacists.<sup>78</sup> Whereas a doctor had to practiced for five years in order to qualify for exempt status, there was no requirement of a certain timeframe of previous work in the occupation for pharmacists, making it ideal

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<sup>77</sup> Moore, *Conscription*, 54.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



for exploitation.<sup>79</sup> The ease with which the exemption system could be taken advantage of by unscrupulous men seeking to avoid military service directly impacted the war effort, as it contributed to the high number of conscripts who were able to avoid service, estimated to be 44.9% of all troops who received their draft notice.<sup>80</sup> While some of these men had legitimate exemptions, it is evident that many were of no particular help to the state and drained manpower from the Confederate armies as they struggled against the numerically superior Union forces.

State governors also impacted the exemption system and allowed it to be exploited. As a means of exerting his influence and preserving his control over his own state, North Carolina governor Zebulon Vance gave out state officialdoms as a means of keeping talent in the state. Vance was well known for his opposition to the central government in Richmond, as he attacked any perceived encroachment upon his power as governor and the sovereignty of North Carolina.<sup>81</sup> In early 1863, Colonel Peter Mallett was removed from his post as head of the conscription office in North Carolina and his command was broken up and spread amongst several regiments outside the state as conscripts.<sup>82</sup> Vance saw this as a slight towards his officer and an attack on the integrity of his authority. He wrote to Secretary of War James Seddon and claimed that, “On hobbling back to Raleigh, he [Mallett] finds himself superseded by Colonel August... What is to become of him?”<sup>83</sup> Mallett regained his position due to Vance’s insistence of his authority over the appointment of state officers. This conflict over

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<sup>79</sup> Moore, *Conscription*, 69

<sup>80</sup> William L. Shaw, “The Confederate Conscription and Exemption Acts,” *American Journal of Legal History* 6, no. 4 (October 1962), 384.

<sup>81</sup> Richard E. Yates, “Zebulon B. Vance as War Governor of North Carolina, 1862-1865,” *Journal of Southern History* 3, no. 1 (February 1937), 62.

<sup>82</sup> Zebulon Vance to James Seddon, March 5, 1863. Peter Mallett Papers, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/03/05/5-march-1863> (17 April 2014).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

authority arose again in 1864, when Brigadier General W.L. Quarles asked for Vance's help in maintaining the integrity of North Carolina regiments in the face of the centralizing efforts of the Confederate War Department. Quarles saw Vance as powerful enough to countermand the orders of the central government. He stated, "we have with alacrity endeavored to obey every order that has emanated from your excellency," a statement of the power of the governor in the eyes of the army.<sup>84</sup> Ultimately, Vance exempted thousands of men for service as state officials, with many simply exempted for political or personal reasons.<sup>85</sup> Some were even exempted merely for Vance to assert his sovereign power as a governor.<sup>86</sup> The central government's inability to control its own constituency limited its power and made the war effort even more difficult. Vance is rightly seen as a hero in North Carolina for his protection of his citizens, but his efforts hamstrung the Confederate Army when it was in desperate need of troops.

Related to the state government's exemption of state officers was its involvement in the exemption of educators and their pupils. Students were not initially exempted from conscription. After the initial giddiness of the outbreak of war, a gloom set in amongst many Southerners, students included. John S. Henderson, a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, wrote a letter to his mother in which he asked about the dead from his home county and stated, "I don't suppose there is any doubt now, that I will have to go to the war next winter," reflecting the dissatisfaction many saw with military service by 1863.<sup>87</sup> It required the intervention of school administrators to bring

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<sup>84</sup> W.L. Quarles to Zebulon Vance, February 23, 1864. Southern Historical Collection, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2014/02/23/23-february-1864> (17 April 2014).

<sup>85</sup> Yates, "Zebulon Vance," 62-63.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> John Steele Henderson to his mother, September 8, 1863. John S. Henderson Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/09/08/8-september-1863/> (17 April 2014).

about change for their students. In the case of the University of North Carolina, President David L. Swain was instrumental in exempting his students. He used his connections with Governor Zebulon Vance to bring about the freedom of his pupils. Swain had seen conscription from the beginning as a threat to his institution. In 1862, he wrote that, “Fear of conscription threatens great injury here unless immediately allayed and I therefore urge prompt and earnest attention to the subject.”<sup>88</sup> In late 1863, Swain was finally successful in exempting his seniors from conscription. Before he was successful in gaining exemptions for his students, volunteerism and conscription took a heavy toll on the student body. A year before Swain received the exemptions, less than fifty remained, down from “no less than three or four hundred students” that normally attended.<sup>89</sup> At the school’s commencement in May 1863, there were “eight graduates; the number in peacetime between eighty & ninety.”<sup>90</sup> In November 1863, Swain received a letter from Colonel Mallet, head of the conscription office in North Carolina, that detailed the exemptions and stated, “I must express to you the great gratification and interest felt in perusing the report, which will be filed at this office with pride as a North Carolinian.” This quote illustrates the importance many in the state saw in the university.<sup>91</sup>

The University of North Carolina, the oldest public institution in the United States, had the resources available to it to bring about exemptions, but other schools were not so lucky. Wake Forest College, located in the heart of the Piedmont, was shut down during the war due to the Conscription Act of 1862, as “all but five of those in attendance

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<sup>88</sup> David Swain to Charles Manley, April 27, 1862. University of North Carolina Papers, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2012/04/27/27-april-1862> (17 April 2014).

<sup>89</sup> Preston H. Sessoms to his sister, August 28, 1862. Jonathan Jacocks Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2012/08/28/28-august-1862/> (16 April 2014).

<sup>90</sup> John Steele Henderson to his mother, May 4, 1863. John S. Henderson Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/05/04/4-may-1863> (April 17 2014).

<sup>91</sup> Peter Mallett to David Swain, November 6, 1863. University of North Carolina Papers, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/11/06/6-november-1863> (17 April 2014).

were subject to military rule.”<sup>92</sup> A small, rural school in the Piedmont, it lacked the resources and political clout to protect its students like Swain, again demonstrating the social schism between the lower class and the plantation owners. A newspaper article reported that, “on the passage of the [conscription] bill, a member of the faculty wrote to the Secretary of War inquiring whether students would be exempted. He was told that they would not,” highlighting the difficulty of protecting students and the effort that Swain exerted in protecting his own student body.<sup>93</sup>

As the war dragged on and the importance of getting every available man into the field became more apparent, the substitution policy was revoked, an action that prompted fear among those with substitutes in the army and led several men to file lawsuits against the state in an effort to maintain their civilian lives. In December 1863 and January 1864, new laws repealed substitution and the exemption of men who had procured substitutes officially came to an end.<sup>94</sup> Men who had procured substitutes early in the war were now expected to serve, an act that worried many. R.M. Montgomery, a man who had procured a substitute earlier in the war, wrote to a friend as rumors of the repeal of substitution were swirling, “I certainly will be much amused if Congress calls us all in as there are many who have subs in [who] would much rather go to the gallows than return to the army.” This statement demonstrates the fear and anger that many felt towards the government’s plans for the substitutes.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Wake Forest College is present-day Wake Forest University, located in Winston-Salem, NC; Dennis Heartt, “W.F. College Suspended,” *Hillsborough Reporter*, 21 May 1862.

<sup>93</sup> Dennis Heartt, “W.F. College Suspended,” *Hillsborough Reporter*, 21 May 1862.

<sup>94</sup> Shaw, “Confederate Conscription,” 377.

<sup>95</sup> R.M. Montgomery to N.D. Tomlin, September 4, 1863. Samuel Hilton Steelman Papers, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/09/04/4-september-1863> (16 April 2014).

Legal cases were brought forward in an effort to forestall military service. The gradual revocation of substitution was a tricky legal situation for the Confederate government. In a letter, Mr. W. Gaither laid out his case to maintain his freedom from the army, as he had hired a minister to serve as his substitute. A line from his letter stated, “If I fail to get him in I will [sic] loose all. If I can get him in I will be safe.”<sup>96</sup> This quote reveals the dread that many men felt during the war, when their civilian lives could be ripped away from them at a moment’s notice. The Confederate government fought the legal cases due to the importance of getting every possible troop into the field, with many state courts often supporting the government. In North Carolina, on the other hand, the opposition to the central government led the state courts to support the procurers of substitutes. Chief Justice Richmond Pearson of the North Carolina Supreme Court “granted without restraint writs of habeas corpus to all applicants and discharged man after man from the army,” due to his opposition to the federal revocation of habeas corpus.<sup>97</sup> Richmond’s inability to institute central control allowed for situations like that to occur, damaging the war effort at a time when the war was already slipping away.

By 1864, the Confederacy was already nearing its end. The Union enacted their own form of conscription in 1863 and had more than 600,000 troops to face the 250,000 in the Confederacy.<sup>98</sup> The Mississippi River had been lost, cutting off the Trans-Mississippi states from the rest of the Confederacy. In the east, Ulysses S. Grant organized troops to begin the Overland Campaign against Richmond and Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia that would end in the final siege of the city. In April 1864, the

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<sup>96</sup> W. Gaither to William A Graham, November 1, 1863. William A. Graham Papers, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/11/01/1-november-1863> (16 April 2014).

<sup>97</sup> Shaw, “Confederate Conscription,” 398.

<sup>98</sup> Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979), 155.

Confederate Congress sought to reform the Conscription Act of 1862. It had already enacted modifications in the past year, such as the elimination of substitution.<sup>99</sup> In the Conscription Act of 1864, Congress went even further, ordering that, “the enrolment [sic] for military service during the war is hereby ordered of all white men, residents of the Confederate States, between the ages of seventeen and fifty years.” This act extended the minimum and maximum ages for conscription and calling upon nearly the entire Southern population to participate in the war effort.<sup>100</sup> At the same time, the 1864 act eliminated exemptions, an amendment that placed the Southern economy directly in the hands of the Confederate government that now controlled the labor force of the South.<sup>101</sup> The centralization of the Confederate government and the demands of the war destroyed the social and economic independence of the yeomen farmers.

At this point in the war, much of the South was under the control of Union forces, while the states that remained under the Confederacy, like North Carolina and Virginia, had already contributed greatly to the army and were beginning to feel the strain of their contribution. North Carolinians, in particular, felt bitterness towards the destruction that had been wrought for the benefit of the cotton states and the planter elite, and “there was even talk of the state’s desertion of the Confederacy.”<sup>102</sup> There was a belief among North Carolinians that the state’s interests may be better served by Lincoln and the Union that drove talk of leaving the Confederacy. North Carolina had been a reluctant secessionist state, as evidenced by being the last state to leave the Union, and the heavy burden of war

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<sup>99</sup> Shaw, “Confederate Conscription,” 377.

<sup>100</sup> Confederate States of America, Bureau of Conscription, *Circular No. 6* (Columbia, SC: Headquarters Conscription Department, April 1, 1864), 2.

<sup>101</sup> Moore, *Conscription*, 83.

<sup>102</sup> Archie K. Davis, “‘She Disdains to Pluck One Laurel from a Sister’s Brow’: Disloyalty to the Confederacy in North Carolina,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 88, no. 2, (April 1980), 146.

and conscription did little to improve on its reluctance to bear any more. The invasion of the North Carolina coast by the Union army in 1862 demonstrated the ambivalence held by many North Carolinians towards the Confederacy. The invasion force faced little in the way of popular resistance, quite dissimilar to areas in Louisiana and Tennessee under Union control at the time.<sup>103</sup> By 1863, four companies of North Carolinians had been raised for service in the Union Army.<sup>104</sup> The peculiar situation of the Confederacy, a nation attempting to implement some level of fair conscription while much of its population lay outside of its control, created the substantial load that lay upon those states fortunate enough, or perhaps unfortunate enough, to be spared extensive Union control.

Conscription failed in several ways. The exemption policy failed to achieve its goal of maximizing the talent of the Confederacy, instead allowing men to avoid service while forcing less fortunate citizens to serve. By permitting the men who flooded the exempted professions to avoid combat, the Confederate armies were drained of troops when they were needed on the frontlines. State governments like the one in North Carolina, which valued its power and sovereignty under the concept of state's rights, stripped troops from the frontlines in an effort to both protect its own territory and exert its authority against the government in Richmond. Even the education system was not free of the conflict over exemptions, as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was able to exempt its seniors while the draft stripped the poorer Wake Forest College, located in the Piedmont, of its students. By 1865, 16,564 men in North Carolina, 43.7% of the total conscripted, had been declared exempt by the government.<sup>105</sup> Many of these

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<sup>103</sup> Judkin Browning, "Removing the Mask of Nationality: Unionism, Racism and Federal Military Occupation in North Carolina, 1862-1865," *Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 3, (August 2005), 600.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 604.

<sup>105</sup> Moore, *Conscription*, 107.

men should have served in the Confederate Army. Substitution was another failure, as it did not serve to protect the economic interests of the state and led to a high level of resentment from the lower class. Removing the substitution clause created legal issues for the Confederacy, as those who already had acquired substitutes fought in the courts for their freedom. By the Conscription Act of 1864, which officially removed substitution and nearly every exemption, the war was nearing its end and the Confederacy had little left in reserve. The burden of war lay upon those states that still remained outside the Union's control, forcing states like North Carolina to contribute above and beyond their willingness to supply. This drain led to disloyalty and disillusionment. The Conscription Acts could have acted as a building block for the national identity that the Confederacy had hoped to create, as it had brought men from different states together to fight for a common goal. Instead, it simply served to highlight and intensify the divisions that existed in Southern society.



## CONCLUSION

The yeomen of North Carolina resisted conscription as an expression of their class-consciousness. The yeomen had already faced challenges to their democratic rights by the aristocrats in the years before the South seceded, then faced attacks on their social independence as the war dragged on and conscription became a heavier burden. Works with ideas similar to this thesis have become more prominent in recent years, as the myth of the “Lost Cause,” which dominated Southern history for years, slowly recedes from the American conscience.<sup>106</sup> For years, the history books of the South, and the North, were filled with stories of the bravery of the Southern soldier in the face of the innumerable troops and material goods of the industrial North.<sup>107</sup> Led by heroes like Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee, the courageous Southern man fought for four long years for their independence.<sup>108</sup> The problem with this story is that it whitewashes the real events that took place. The unified South was a myth propagated by those who could benefit from it. At first, it was the plantation owners who promoted this myth as they sought to preserve their way of life, based on the violation of basic human rights, then white supremacists who sought to protect their position in society in a South no longer built on the backs of slaves. Young Southern men were taken, often by force, from their homes and families to fight for the horrific system of slavery, an economic and social system that would never benefit them the way it did the aristocrats. A new national identity was necessary for a new nation, but the idea of a unified South ignored the fact that for many, the Confederate political sphere was inaccessible. Works like Stephanie

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<sup>106</sup> Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979), 306.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 6.

McCurry's *Confederate Reckoning* have shown the inherently undemocratic nature of the Confederacy, as neither women nor slaves had political power.<sup>109</sup> Along with the lack of voting rights for many of the yeomen and the poor, this contributed to the oligarchic nature of the Confederacy.

The Confederacy's poor handling of conscription cost them manpower, unity, and, in the end, the war. While action was clearly necessary to preserve the army in 1862 and increase its size, and in this way the Conscription Acts were successful, exemptions and substitution drained thousands of men from the frontlines. These men could have eased the shortages that the Confederate Army faced throughout the war, the primary motivation for conscription. On a deeper level, the class-based policies contained within the Conscription Act of 1862, like the exemption of plantation owners and their overseers or substitution, began breaking up the social balance that had existed for decades. These policies created discontent that impacted the Confederacy throughout the war. Adopting a regional approach allows for a closer analysis and an outgrowth of it the growing class-consciousness of the yeomen. North Carolina had a yeomen farmer population opposed to the growing dominance of the plantation owners and a state government willing to resist President Jefferson Davis and the Confederate government. For instance, by 1864 entire counties were meeting together and attacking the policies of the Confederacy as "the establishment of an odious military despotism."<sup>110</sup> Conscription became a major source of contention, as it solidified the disconnect between the yeomen who fought the war and the aristocrats who benefitted from the preservation of slavery and the Southern class structure.

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<sup>109</sup> McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 23.

<sup>110</sup> Editorial, *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, NC), February 5, 1864.

In North Carolina, the class resistance that upset the traditional Southern social structure was prevalent. Across the Piedmont region of North Carolina, communities and counties came together to attack the despotism they saw in the Confederate government's actions. Both the state government and the yeomen saw the acts as dangerous. Zebulon Vance saw them as a source of centralized power for the Confederate government, which led him to stymie it with his own state powers.<sup>111</sup> The yeomen saw the expansion of conscription as a dangerous measure that could destroy communities. They led statewide movements to prevent the effective application of conscription whenever possible.<sup>112</sup> Communities worked together to resist the Confederate government and the army by protecting deserters and harassing officials searching for the last bit of the manpower the state had to offer. They formed secretive networks designed to bewilder Confederate attempts to punish deserters or bring in reluctant conscripts.<sup>113</sup> This struggle against Confederate control demonstrates the common theme of the disruption of the social balance that runs throughout this thesis. What had once been an uneasy balance between the rich and politically powerful and the poorer and disenfranchised became open conflict as the stress of war revealed the inequities prevalent in North Carolina.

The resistance of the Appalachian folk to Confederate authority was another demand on the war effort, draining it of resources as regiments that could have been used on the frontlines were sent into the difficult terrain of the Appalachian Mountains in order to deal with its own internal problems.<sup>114</sup> Even more than the yeomen farmers of the

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<sup>111</sup> Richard E. Yates, "Zebulon B. Vance as War Governor of North Carolina, 1862-1865," *Journal of Southern History* 3, no. 1 (February 1937), 61.

<sup>112</sup> Editorial, *The Daily Journal* (Wilmington, NC), February 5, 1864.

<sup>113</sup> John McRae to Peter Mallet, April 22, 1863. The John McRae Papers. UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/04/22/22-april-1863> (16 April 2014).

<sup>114</sup> Philip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 71.

Piedmont, who limited their dissent to civic protests and the defense of local deserters, the people of the North Carolina Appalachians attacked the Confederate authorities that attempted to assert the influence of the central government over the region.<sup>115</sup> Armed resistance took the form of ad hoc units brought together to attack the Confederate troops who marched into the mountains in search of new conscripts and deserters.<sup>116</sup> Hundreds of deserters and thousands of Appalachian Unionists threatened Confederate excursions into the mountains, attacking the Confederacy's draft laws and its despotic attempts at control.<sup>117</sup>

Once the planters lost control of the yeomen and the people of the Appalachian Mountains, the war effort was doomed. The plantation system had been built upon the massive social, economic, and political influence possessed by the plantation owners, with the implied consent of the lower classes. This social harmony turned to open rebellion in many cases as the Confederate government, dominated by the planter elite, increasingly interfered in the affairs of the lower class. The yeomen farmer's tenuous financial stability was threatened by the demands of the Confederate War Department, as a term of service lasting three years could do irrevocable harm to the typical family farm, as both the head of the household and any hired laborers were forced into the army. This threat beset many farmers as they saw plantation owners and their workers exempted by the twenty-slave law, a policy clearly aimed at protecting the interests of the ruling elite of the Confederacy.

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<sup>115</sup> Wilse Dial to Captain Quill Hunter, July 29, 1863, Southern Historical Collection, UNC. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2013/07/29/29-july-1863> (17 April 2014).

<sup>116</sup> Thomas Isaac Lenoir to his brother, December 5, 1862. The Lenoir Family Papers, UNC.

<sup>117</sup> Paludan, *Victims*, 69.

Throughout this thesis, many illustrative points have come to light regarding the supposed unity of the class structure in North Carolina. Far from being united, the North Carolina was riven by class conflict, gender inequality, and a harsh racial caste system. The reaction to the Confederacy's wartime policies tore apart the social balance. The democratic veneer that marked Southern politics was broken up, as the yeomen, women, and slaves all chafed at the yoke that the aristocrats placed on them. In North Carolina, angry protests from Piedmont farmers attacked the despotism of the Confederacy that had purported itself to be the inheritor of the American Revolution. Conscription merely served to deepen the class divide and stirred the yeomen farmers to act against the inequities they faced in the Southern class structure. The significance of this thesis is the demonstration that even in the most unequal of societies, the lower class possesses the means of attacking the power structures that keeps it down, whether it is through their words or through their actions. Once peaceful communities obstructed and attacked governmental attempts at exerting its power. They saw the intensification of antebellum class divisions through policies like conscription and reacted strongly. Ultimately, the yeomen decided that if the aristocrats were unwilling to accept a democratic society, they were likewise unwilling to accept an aristocratic government. Even after the war was over, conflicts raged over "white democracy" during Reconstruction as the aristocrats held on to their control of government.<sup>118</sup> Despite their efforts, "planters...could not remake the postbellum world in their own image."<sup>119</sup> The yeomen, who enjoyed full enfranchisement due to the influence of the Radical Republicans in Congress and the

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<sup>118</sup> Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 85.

<sup>119</sup> Richard Follett, Eric Foner, and Walter Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 54.

Senate, exerted their own newfound influence. For a time, the yeomen led a “radical democracy” of popular sovereignty in North Carolina that was finally responsive to their wants and desires, rather than simply being controlled by a government acting in the interests of the aristocracy.<sup>120</sup> Reconstruction maintained white supremacy, but did not soothe the class divisions in North Carolina.<sup>121</sup> Instead, newly enfranchised whites promoted their interests in the new social structures that existed with the emancipation of the slaves while competing for economic and social control over the free blacks.<sup>122</sup> That the conflict over the class structure, ignited by governmental actions during the war, continued in the years following the destruction of the Confederacy reveals the depth of the social issues that faced North Carolina and the South. It was not simply a problem of men not wishing to fight. It was a problem of men not wishing to fight for an aristocracy that exploited and abused them without relent.

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<sup>120</sup> Escott, *Excellent People*, 86.

<sup>121</sup> Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Lincoln's Avengers: Justice, Revenge, and Reunion After the Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 179.

<sup>122</sup> Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1990), xv.

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