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## Book Review: Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction

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BOOK REVIEWS

***Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction***, by C. Vann Woodward. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951. pp. x, 263, \$4.)

Had Florida's electoral vote been cast in accordance with her popular vote, Rutherford B. Hayes would have lost the presidential election to Samuel J. Tilden by three vote instead of winning it by one, and the Compromise of 1877 would not have been. This compromise, as important as any compromise in American history, hinged on the willingness of the Southern Democrats to acquiesce in abandoning Tilden, who was apparently the rightfully elected candidate, against the vigorous protests of their Northern Democratic colleagues. Here was a Southern Democrat-Republican coalition that worked.

The compromise required the delivery of the challenged electoral votes of Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana to the Hayes column. The consensus of recent historical scholarship is that Tilden was entitled to the four electoral votes of Florida, that Hayes was probably entitled to the votes of South Carolina and Louisiana, and that Tilden was therefore elected by a vote of 188 to 181. The election produced these results in Florida: presidential vote to the Republicans, gubernatorial vote to the Democrats, congressional seats to the Republicans, and the majority in the legislature to the Democrats. Thus Florida was nationally Republican and internally Democratic.

In return for the presidency, the Republicans promised that Federal troops would be withdrawn from the Southern states and home rule restored, and in this the compromise was born. Existence of the "deal" has long been known but it has taken this painstaking work of Dr. C. Vann Woodward to elevate it to the level of a major compromise.

The greatest contribution of the volume lies in bringing out the importance of the economic factors underlying the com-

promise. Centering largely around subsidies for the railroads, these considerations are held to have been far more influential than many of the apparent political factors. Although the author does not present these economic factors as the sole motivating force, he gives them a new emphasis. Woodward concludes that a whole series of agreements had been made some time before the so-called Wormley Conference and that the bargain was much broader than has been commonly believed.

The volume emphasizes the fact that while the liberal wing of the Republican party clung to its idealistic aims about liberating and elevating the Negro, the conservative Republicans were so anxious to preserve the economic gains of the Civil War period that they were willing to surrender the party's idealism. In like manner it was the desire of Southern Democrats to secure a larger share of federal appropriations for internal improvements that led them to agree to the inauguration of the Republican nominee.

Although not all the terms of the bargain were finally carried out, the Compromise of 1877 prevented strife and possible violence at a critical period in the history of the United States. Though her votes may have made the compromise possible, Florida received no special favors in the arrangement. Removal of the troops was the most tangible result and this the South bought at the price of becoming for all practical purposes a satellite of the Northern industrial and financial system. Saving the Union from a resurgence of civil strife as it may have done, Woodward feels that the price for the South was high, higher than it need have been.

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