

Causes of the Civil War

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Kearney Smith's arguments [Yancey Common Times Journal, July 15, 2015] claiming that the issue of slavery as a major cause of the Civil War has been greatly exaggerated are totally unconvincing. An objective person who gives more than a cursory glance at the quotes that form his argument will find little substance there. In the first place, two of the four were not American and can not be expected to have sufficient understanding of the country for us to put much stock in their opinions. Furthermore, the quote by Karl Marx (Did he ever even visit the US?) is so far from typical of his writings about slavery in the US as to make me suspicious of Smith's motives. Charles Dickens did visit the US, but returned to the UK with such a well-publicized negative view of our country, that i can not credit any statement of his about the US with objectivity.

Of the Americans that Smith quotes, i believe that Lysander Spooner's was a manifestation of the common Abolitionists' attitude that the conditions of the former slaves in the South were not changed much after the war due to the prejudice of white Southerners. Though it may reflect his opinion about the (lack of) success of the war in eliminating slavery, it doesn't address the issue of slavery being a cause of the war. With regard to Woodrow Wilson's quote, his negative attitudes toward African Americans and women's rights are so well known that i can give no credence to his opinions on slavery and the Civil War.

The primary cause of the Civil War, which is strongly supported by the contemporaneous political writings and actions during the first half of the 19th century, was the **deep, deep political division between the Northern and Southern states**; war was then triggered by the attack by South Carolina on Fort Sumpter. The root cause of this division was slavery, as can be seen (among other writings) by the debates in Congress, and laws and compromises passed during that half century plus. This fact can also be verified by reading the articles of secession passed by such Southern states as South Carolina and Mississippi, which unambiguously state that slavery was the key factor. Those who believe that the cause was instead States' Rights may find it ironic that, e.g., South Carolina was one of the biggest opponents of States' Rights of Northern states who did not want to have to enforce the federal Fugitive Slave Act (a complaint explicitly spelled out in SC's act of secession).

I do not deny that some rich people and corporations in both the North and South welcomed the war for economic reasons. That has been the case

for all our wars. But for the vast majority of people in the country who supported the war, economics had little or no influence.