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Fire Eater! Editor

Dog Fighting

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"We are happy to announce the addition of MacDonald King Aston to the list of staff writers here at DixieInternet.Com. Sometimes controversial, often outspoken, but always an erudite writer."

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There has, of late, been an outpouring of articles on the future of the Southern movement. Of particular interest has been the focus on the infighting in the movement, and rightly so. As James Dolan recently wrote on the Demastus email list, "I am quite sure that our detractors look upon us with great glee when they see us besmirch each other, and cause dissension in our ranks." [22 December 2003] Mr. Dolan is correct, of course, but the issue is slightly more complex than it appears at first glance.

Recently, I wrote a piece enttitled Defining the Future, in which I argued, in essence, that all the infighting isn't per se "bad" at all. This article continues that thought.

As many of you know, the Colorado Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans has disintegrated. (For more details, see This) Because I have been embroiled in this mess, it has given me an opportunity to experience both the infighting itself as well as the consequences of it. While the events out west have proven truly nasty (with the new Division Commander illegally expelling a Camp 1205 member from the SCV, for example), nevertheless, there have been some positive notes sounded as well.

First, like all activist movements, infighting delinates well the differences among dissenting views, and these differences are thrown then into high relief. The result is not necessarily a bad thing, in that the movement benefits by a weeding-out process. As various views are raised and bruited about, consensus begins to build as to the right course to take (and the wrong).

Second, all movements are affected by the larger context in which they operate. For the Southern movment, this fact means that the dramatic polarisation within the united States, both politcal and cultural, by necessity is reflected back at those within the movement. One can clearly see this phenomenon at work in the doings of the "Save the SCV" group, which basically holds that Southerners should simply resign themselves to eternal occupation by the yankees in DC and their empire. "Let us be good Americans," so their mantra goes, "who just happen to be decendents of Confederate soldiers". On the other side is, among others, the members of the League of the South, who are under no illusions about what it means to be subjects of an empire rather than free citisens of a constitutional republic.

Another example is the bickering over how Christian a Christian South should be, with two camps at each others' throats, one camp holding that the South should be a strictly Christian culture along the lines of what the media calls "fundamentalist" Christianity, and the other camp holding that the South should reflect its unique heritage of religious tolerance as extended, historically, to Jews,

Indians, and other groups with religious convictions at odds with a theocratically based South. (There is a middle course, to which I subscribe, namely that the South, and America for that matter, would be better off recognising that its foundations are built solidly upon the Judaeo-Christian culture of Europe, and upon that foundation we are able to forge a common culture beneficial to all.)

With these two points in mind, the Southern movement is, perhaps noisily, finding its way to a consensus of some sort, though that consensus may take a long time. Consider the Scots, who share a certain X-shaped flag in common with the South, who have taken 800 years or so to arrive at divesting themselves of the British empire, and now are quite close to that goal.

As I have said previously, "...the Southern movement itself is undergoing a crucial definition...largely shaped by the struggles between activists and non-activists." In the SCV, for example, the struggle is sometimes between those who salute a yankee flag and those who dont even recognise such a flag. Forgetting the empire for a minute, the Southern movement has been growing steadily into two camps. One camp wants a free South. The other wants the empire to treat the South better. Along with this phenomenon, the explosive growth of the reenactor community has had its effects felt as well. To many reenactors, those of us who are activists are "radical". We don't just dress up and play soldier, we actually do, by our God, believe in those ideals such as freedom, family, God, and the constitutional republic that our forefathers created upon this continent.

To sum up, I see a growing polarisation in the Southern movement, mainly between activists and non-activists. Is that polarisation a bad thing? I've come to a point where I now believe such a polarisation is necessary as a part of the larger shakeout that is taking place as the South struggles for its identity again. I tend to the positive, oddly enough, on the issue, for I am under no illusions about the worth of any "majority". Were Washington and Madison and Henry to have worried about a "majority", there would never have been a constitutional republic in the first place.

The political split within the Southern movement seems to match fairly well the split in the empire, where there seem to be only two camps: the left and the pseudo-right. And we all know the danger there: neither the left nor the right represents the people."

Thus, I survey the horizon of the Southern movement and see a "shaking out" taking place. Due to my natural optimism, perhaps, I see this shaking out as beneficial to the movement and to the South. For when the apples have fallen to the ground, we will know the rotten fruit from the good.

In the meanwhile, there are lessons to be learned from all the dog fighting:

1) Keep your eyes on the prize. Let those who merely want to dress up in Confederate uniforms and play soldier do precisely that. Let the SCV and SSCV have their squabbles. The real goal lies in front of us, in the future, and with our children: freedom.

2) Remember also that our struggle is preeminently political, not exclusively geographical. This fact is of great importance to the League of the South, for example, which welcomes not only those with Confederate ancestors in their lineage, but dedicated Copperheads as well, many of whom contribute much of value to our cause. It isn't the case that one needs a card that says "I am a son of a Confederate soldier". What is the case is that those who are privileged by our Creator to take up the cause of the South (which is the same cause as the cause of the American constitutional republic) continue to forge ahead in the name of liberty.

3) Our differing views dont always have to seek congruence. There is something to be said for "healthy debate". It is perfectly OK with me if you belong to the Southern Baptists, or the Pentecostals, or Judaism (there were five synagogues in Charleston in 1861), or Buddhism for that matter. What is important is to realise that our Southern (and American) culture was founded on the Judaeo-

Christian ethos. To argue otherwise is simple historical ignorance.