

He also opposed the protective tariff, the suspension of silver coinage, and the Force Bill, which would have provided federal protection for voters and elections threatened by intimidation and violence.

Meanwhile, Coke continued his involvement in Texas politics. He spoke as a strong opponent of prohibition throughout the state.

In 1892, he traveled home to support the reelection of Gov. James S. Hogg over George Clark of Waco, Coke's former friend and campaign manager. Coke was reelected to the Senate in January 1883 and again in January 1889, both times by unanimous vote in the legislature. In 1894, he announced that he would not seek another term.

In the spring of 1897, he suffered from exposure while caring for his flooded Brazos valley farm and was ill for three weeks. He died at his home in Waco on May 14. After a state funeral, he was buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Waco.

Information about Coke's religion is scanty; he was probably raised as an Episcopalian but in later years attended the Baptist Church.

A white-bearded, hulking figure who towered six feet, three inches and weighed 240 pounds, Coke was a commanding presence. It is said that on the political platform he could bellow "like a prairie bull." His Senate speeches, while often ponderous, were factual, well-organized, and persuasive. He is considered one of the important leaders in Texas in the late nineteenth century.

The following information was also found about Governor Coke.

In 1865, Coke was appointed a Texas District Court judge, and in 1866 he was elected as an associate justice to the Texas Supreme Court. The following year the military governor General Philip Sheridan fired Coke and four other judges as 'an impediment to reconstruction', in pursuit of unionist Reconstruction policies. The firing of the five judges became a cause célèbre and made their names famous, synonymous in the public eye with resistance to Union occupation.

No one benefited more from prevailing public sentiment than Richard Coke, who in 1873 leveraged resentment at Union occupation to construct a Democratic electoral coalition that ruled Texas for more than 100 years. This Democratic power was based on disfranchisement of blacks, Mexican Americans and poor whites through the use of poll taxes and white primaries. For example, the number of black voters decreased sharply from more than 100,000 in the 1890s to 5,000 in 1906.

Having been fired by military governor Philip Sheridan, Coke ran for Governor as a Democrat in 1873 and took office in January 1874. The Texas Supreme Court - forever after known as the "Semicolon" court

thanks to this case - ruled his election invalid in an extraordinary habeas corpus writ styled Ex Parte Rodriguez. As recounted by the Texas State Historical Association, in response, "Disregarding the court ruling, the Democrats secured the keys to the second floor of the Capitol and took possession. Incumbent Gov. Edmund Davis was reported to have state troops stationed on the lower floor. The Travis Rifles (a Texas military unit

created to fight Indians), summoned to protect Davis, were converted into a sheriff's posse and protected Coke. On January 15, 1874, Coke was inaugurated as governor. On January 16, Davis arranged for a truce, but he made one final appeal for federal intervention. A telegram from President Ulysses S. Grant said that he did not feel warranted in sending federal troops to keep Davis in office. Davis resigned his office on January 19. Coke's

inauguration restored Democratic control in Texas." Coke's administration was marked by vigorous action to balance the budget and by a revised state constitution adopted in 1876. He was also instrumental in creating the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, which became Texas A&M University. Having once been fired from the Texas Supreme Court, as Governor he appointed all its members, naming as Chief Justice Oran

Roberts (after the US Senate had refused to seat him). George F. Moore, who was Chief Justice when he'd been fired along with Coke, became the first Chief Justice elected under Texas' 1876 Constitution, an honor he held until his death. Others from the Texas judiciary under the Confederacy received key appointments.

Once the new Constitution had been negotiated, Coke resigned his office in December

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