



# **War Governor of the South: North Carolina's Zeb Vance in the Confederacy (New Perspectives on the History of the South)**

*Joe A. Mobley*

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Zebulon B. Vance, governor of North Carolina during the devastating years of the Civil War, has long sparked controversy and spirited political comment among scholars. He has been portrayed as a loyal Confederate, viciously characterized as one of the principal causes of the Confederate defeat, and called “the Lincoln of the South.”

Joe A. Mobley clarifies the nature of Vance’s leadership, focusing on the young governor’s commitment to Southern independence, military and administrative decisions, and personality clashes with President Jefferson Davis.

As a confirmed Unionist before the outbreak of the war, Vance endorsed secession reluctantly. Elected governor in 1862, Vance managed to hold together the state, which was divided over support for the war and for a central government in Richmond. Mobley reveals him as a man conflicted by his prewar Unionist beliefs and the necessity to lead the North Carolina war effort while contending with widespread fears created by Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and such issues as the role of women in the war, lawlessness and desertion among the troops, the importance of the state’s blockade-runners, and the arrival of Sherman’s troops. While the governor’s temperament and sensitivity to any perceived slight to him or his state made negotiations between Raleigh and Richmond difficult, Mobley shows that in the end Vance fully supported the attempt to achieve southern independence.

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