Class Notes on Reconstruction

Reconstruction 1863 – 1877

**War Time Reconstruction:**

* War time reconstruction refers to the period of time during the civil war when efforts were made to reunite and pass reforms during the war
* Conflicts and issues during this period were:

*Emancipation (freedom) and the rights (citizenship) of African Americans*

*The fate of the Confederacy / restoration of the Union*

*Land ownership in the South*

*Transformation of the southern labor system and economy*

**President Lincoln’s goals:**

* Lincoln wanted to win the war without destroying the old south / congress wanted transform southern society immediately
* Lincoln’s ultimate goal was to reunite the union
* Lincoln wanted to abolish slavery, but he realized that it would totally destroy the South’s economy and drive away supporting boarder states
* Lincoln wanted to slowly introduce emancipation
* Lincoln issued two proclamations:

**Emancipation Proclamation** – issued in January 1, 1863

This proclamation freed all enslaved people in states under control of the Confederacy. It did not free slaves in Confederate states under union control or within boarder states.

Lincoln wanted to cripple the southern economy under Confederacy’s control. It would take away the forced labor force of the confederacy. It also allowed the enlistment of freedman to join Union forces to fight for freedom.

***The Emancipation Proclamation made slavery the central issue of the war.***

Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction (Lincoln’s Ten-Percent Plan)

* This proclamation promised the following:

Pardon all Confederates that signed the oath of Allegiance to the U.S.A

It did exclude all confederate government and military leaders.

Recognition of any southern state governments provided that ten percent of state voters would pledge their allegiance to the United States of American in the election of 1860.

Protection of lower ranking Confederate officers from trial for treason and execution

The return of political rights and lands once Confederates received pardons and accepted emancipation of African Americans

Prosecution of Confederate military and civilian officials who left federal positions to join the Confederacy. Former Confederates who killed or tortured Union soldiers both white and black would be denied Amnesty.

**Congress Acts:**

* Congress wanted a more aggressive plan for the south and to free slaves. Many republicans in congress did not agree on many things but they did want to punish the south.
* Slaves in the District of Columbia were freed and their owners were paid compensation (First Confiscation Act).
* Slaves who were help by confederate government officials and slaves who had escaped to behind Union lines were granted freedom (second Confiscation Act)
* Republicans in congress opposed Lincoln’s Ten percent plan and passed the Wade-Davis Bill. This bill appointed military governors in former Confederate states it also required 50% of white men to take the oath of allegiance to the Union before a new constitution could be drafted.
* Wade-Davis Bill was “pocket vetoed” by Lincoln, congress adjourned at the end of the year, the bill just died.

**Union Military Leaders Act:**

* At the beginning of the war many Union commanders believed that the war was about preserving the Union and not about slavery---they often returned run away slaves.
* As the war progressed thousand of black refugees sought help from the union soldiers. Many of these union military encouraged emancipation to relieve them of the responsibility of caring and providing for these refugees.
* ***Port Royal Experiment***: Gen Sherman asked the federal government for teachers to be sent to instruct former slaves on the sea islands of South Carolina.

This request resulted in the establishment of educating and organizing black communities. Lincoln freed all enslaved sea black islanders. Plantation lands were distributed to freedman and freedmen produced cotton for northern textile factories

White and Black missionaries established many schools for educating freedmen. Following Lincoln’s death government funding for these schools disappeared.

* **General Order 11:**

Military leaders ignored Lincoln’s orders banning slaves in the military and actively recruited for military service. Lincoln nullified general order 11 and disbanded the units

\* **Special Field Order 15:**

Gen Sherman redistributed confiscated plantations into 40- acre parcels to Freedmen in Florida, Sea Islands off Georgia, and South Carolina

Freedmen received forty acres and surplus government mules.

Following Lincoln’s death, Andrew Johnson reclaimed the land and returned the lands to white planters. Many of the freedmen became destitute.

**The Freedmen’s Bureau (Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands):**

* Agency was created a month before the war’s end. It was responsible to provide food, clothing, and medicine to freed peoples and poor whites.
* The bureau also founded the Freedmen’s Bank and established schools
* It also provide protection to freedmen from aggressive white that took advantage of the recently freed slaves
* Underfunded by congress the Freedmen’s Bureau did not have the manpower or funds to meet the challenge of the task it was charged

***On April 14th 1865, President Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth at Ford’s Theater. This ended any plans that Lincoln had put in place for Reconstruction. Andrew Johnson, Lincoln Vice-president, became president beginning “Radical Reconstruction”***