

A.P. U.S. HISTORY NOTES

Chapter 23: "The Ordeal of Reconstruction"

~ 1865 – 1877 ~

- I. The Problems of Peace
 1. After the war, there were many questions over what to do with the free Blacks, how to reintegrate the Southern states into the Union, what to do with **Jefferson Davis**, and who would be in charge of **Reconstruction**.
 2. The Southern way of life was ruined, as crops and farms were destroyed, the slaves were now free, and the cities were bombed out, but still, some Southerners remained defiant.
- II. Freedmen Define Freedom
 1. At first, the freed Blacks faced a confusing situation, as many slave owners re-enslaved their slaves over and over again after Union troops left.
 - i. Other planters resisted emancipation through legal means, citing that emancipation wasn't valid until local or state courts declared it.
 - ii. Some slaves loyally stuck to their owners while others let out their pen-up bitterness in their freedom, pillaging their former masters' land, property, and even whipping them.
 2. Eventually, even resisting plantation owners had to give up their slaves, and afterwards tens of thousands of Blacks took to the roads to find new work or look for lost loved ones.
 3. The church became to the focus of the Black community life in the years following the war.
 4. Emancipation also meant education for Blacks, but despite all the gains Blacks made, they still faced severe discrimination and would have to wait a century before attaining their rights.
- III. The Freedman's Bureau
 1. In order to train the unskilled and unlettered freed Blacks, the **Freedman's Bureau** was set up on March 3, 1865; Union General **Oliver O. Howard** headed it.
 2. The bureau taught about 200,000 Blacks how to read, since most former slaves wanted to narrow the literary gap between them and Whites and also read the word of God.
 3. However, it wasn't as effective as it could have been, as evidenced by the further discrimination of Blacks, and it expired in 1872 after much criticism by racist Whites.
- IV. Johnson: The Tailor President
 1. **Andrew Johnson** came from very poor and humble beginnings, and he served in Congress for many years (he was the only Confederate Congressman not to leave Congress when the rest of the South seceded).
 2. Feared for his reputation of having a short temper and being a great fighter, but he was a dogmatic champion of states' rights and the Constitution, and he was a Tennessean who never earned the trust of the North and never regained the confidence of the South.
- V. Presidential Reconstruction
 1. Since **Abraham Lincoln** believed that the South had never legally withdrawn from the Union, restoration was to be relatively simple: the southern states could be reintegrated into the Union if and when they had 10% of its voters pledge an oath to the Union and also acknowledge the emancipation of the slaves; it was called the **Ten Percent Plan**.
 2. The **Radical Republicans** feared that such a lenient plan would allow the Southerners to re-enslave the newly freed Blacks again, so they rammed the **Wade-Davis Bill**, a bill that required 50% of the states' voters to take oaths of allegiance and demanded stronger safeguards for emancipation than the 10% Plan, through Congress.
 - i. However, Lincoln pocket-vetoed the bill by letting it expire, and the 10% Plan stayed.

3. It became clear that there were now two types of Republicans: the moderates, who shared the same views as Lincoln and the radicals, who believed the South should be harshly punished.
 4. When Andrew Johnson took power, the radicals thought that he would do what they wanted, but he soon proved them wrong by basically taking Lincoln's policy and issuing his own Reconstruction proclamation: certain leading Confederates were disfranchised, the Confederate debt was repudiated, and states had to ratify the 13th Amendment.
- VI. The Baleful Black Codes
1. In order to control the freed Blacks, many Southern states passed **Black Codes**, laws aimed at keeping the Black population in submission; some were harsh, others were not as harsh.
 - i. Blacks who "jumped" their labor contracts, or walked off their jobs, were subject to penalties and fines, and their wages were generally kept very low.
 - ii. The codes forbade Blacks from serving on a jury and some even barred Blacks from renting or leasing land, and Blacks could be punished for "idleness" by being subjected to working on a chain gang.
 2. Making a mockery out of the newly won freedom of the Blacks, the Black Codes made many abolitionists wonder if the price of the Civil War was worth it, since Blacks were hardly better after the war than before the war.
- VII. Congressional Reconstruction
1. In December, 1865, when many of the Southern states came to be reintegrated into the Union, among them were former Confederates and Democrats, and most Republicans were disgusted to see their former enemies on hand to reclaim seats in Congress.
 2. During the war, without the Democrats, the Republicans had passed legislation that had favored the North, such as the **Morrill Tariff**, the **Pacific Railroad Act**, and the **Homestead Act**, so now, many Republicans didn't want to give the power that they had gained in the war.
 3. Northerners now realized that the South would be stronger politically than before, since now, Blacks counted for a whole person instead of just 3/5 of one, and Republicans also feared that the Northern and Southern Democrats would join and take over Congress and the White House and institute their Black Codes over the nation, defeating all that the Civil War gained.
 4. On December 6, 1865, President Johnson declared that the South had satisfied all of the conditions needed, and that the Union was now restored.
- VIII. Johnson Clashes with Congress
1. Johnson repeatedly vetoed Republican-passed bills, such as a bill extending the life of the Freedman's Bureau, and he also vetoed the **Civil Rights Bill**, which conferred on blacks the privilege of American citizenship and struck at the Black Codes.
 2. As Republicans gained control of Congress, they overrode Johnson's vetoes by passing the bills over his veto through a 2/3 majority.
 3. In the **14th Amendment**, the Republicans sought to instill the same ideas of the Civil Rights Bill: (1) All Blacks were American citizens, (2) If a state denied citizenship to Blacks, then it's representatives in the Electoral College were lowered, (3) Former Confederates could not hold federal or state office, and (4) The federal debt was guaranteed while the Confederate one was repudiated.
 4. The radicals were disappointed that Blacks weren't given the right to vote, but all Republicans agreed that states wouldn't be accepted back into the Union unless they ratified the 14th Amendment.
- IX. Swinging 'Round the Circle with Johnson
1. In 1866, Republicans would not allow Reconstruction to be carried on without the 14th Amendment, and as election time approached, Johnson wanted to lower the amount of Republicans in Congress, so he began a series of 'Round the Circle speeches.
 2. However, as he was heckled by the audience, he hurled back insults, gave "give 'em hell" speeches, and generally denounced the radicals, and in the process, he gave Republicans more men in Congress than they had before—the opposite of his original intention.

- X. Republican Principles and Programs
1. Now, the Republicans had a veto-proof Congress and nearly unlimited control over Reconstruction, but moderates and radicals still couldn't agree.
 - i. In the Senate, the leader of the radicals was **Charles Sumner**, long since recovered from his caning, and in the House, the radical leader was **Thaddeus Stevens**, an old, sour man who was an unswerving friend of the Blacks.
 2. The radicals wanted to keep the South out of the Union as long as possible and totally change its economy, and the moderates a quicker Reconstruction, and what happened was a compromise between the two extremes.
- XI. Reconstruction by Sword
1. The **Reconstruction Act** of March 2, 1867 divided the South into five military zones, temporarily disfranchised tens of thousands of former Confederates, and laid down new guidelines for the readmission of states (Johnson had announced the Union restored, but Congress had not yet formally agreed on this).
 - i. All states had to approve the 14th Amendment, making all Blacks citizens.
 - ii. All states had to guarantee full suffrage of all male former slaves.
 2. The **15th Amendment**, passed by Congress in 1869, gave Blacks their right to vote.
 3. In the case *Ex parte Milligan* (1866), the Supreme Court ruled that military tribunals could not try civilians, even during wartime, if there were civil courts available.
 4. By 1870, all of the states had complied with the standards of Reconstruction, and in 1877, the last of the states were given their home rule back, and Reconstruction ended.
- XII. No Women Voters
1. Women suffrage advocates were disappointed by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, since they didn't give women full suffrage.
 - i. After all, women had gathered petitions and had helped Blacks gain their rights.
 - ii. Frederick Douglass believed in the women's movement but believed that it was now "the Negro's hour."
 2. As a result, women advocates like **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** and **Susan B. Anthony** campaigned against the 14th and 15th Amendments—Amendments that inserted the word *male* into the Constitution for the first time ever.
- XIII. The Realities of Radical Reconstruction in the South
1. Blacks began to organize politically, and their main vehicle was the **Union League**.
 - i. It became a network of political clubs that educated members in their civic duties and campaigned for Republican candidates, and later even built Black churches and schools, represented Black grievances, and recruited militias to protect Blacks.
 2. Black women attended the parades and rallies of Black communities.
 3. Black men also began to hold political offices, as men like **Hiram Revels** and **Blanche K. Bruce** served in Congress (they represented Mississippi).
 4. Southern Whites hated seeing their former slaves now ranking above them, and they also hated "**scalawags**," Southerners who were accused of plundering Southern treasuries and selling out the Southerners, and "**carpetbaggers**," Northerners accused of sleazily seeking power and profit in a now-desolate South.
 5. Note that Southern governments were somewhat corrupted during these times.
- XIV. The Ku Klux Klan
1. Extremely racist Whites who hated the Blacks founded the "Invisible Empire of the South," or **Ku Klux Klan**, in Tennessee in 1866—an organization that scared Blacks into not voting or not seeking jobs, etc... and often resorted to violence against the Blacks in addition to terror.
 2. This illegal group undermined much of what abolitionists sought to do.
- XV. Johnson Walks the Impeachment Plank
1. Radicals were angry with President Johnson, and they decided to try to get rid of him.

2. In 1867, Congress passed the **Tenure of Office Act**, which provided that the president had to secure the consent of the Senate before removing his appointees once they had been approved by the Senate (one reason was to keep **Edwin M. Stanton**, a Republican spy, in office).
 3. However, when Johnson dismissed Stanton early in 1868, the Republicans impeached him.
- XVI. A Not-Guilty Verdict for Johnson
1. Johnson was not allowed to testify by his lawyers, who argued that the Tenure of Office Act was unconstitutional and Johnson was acting under the Constitution, not the law.
 2. On May 16, 1868, Johnson was acquitted of all charges by a single vote, as seven Republican senators with consciences voted “not-guilty” (interestingly, those seven never secured a political office against afterwards).
 3. Die-hard radicals were infuriated by the acquittal, but many politicians feared establishing a precedence of removing the president through impeachment.
- XVII. The Purchase of Alaska
1. In 1867, Secretary of State **William H. Seward** bought Alaska from Russia to the United States for \$7.2 million, but most of the public jeered his act as “Seward’s Folly.”
 - i. Only later, when oil and gold were discovered, did Alaska prove to be a huge bargain.
- XVIII. The Heritage of Reconstruction
1. Many Southerners regarded Reconstruction as worse than the war itself, as they resented the upending of their social and racial system.
 2. The Republicans, though with good intentions, failed to improve the South, and the fate of Blacks would remain bad for almost another century before the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s secured Black privileges.