



UNION IS DISSOLVED!

Slavery as a Cause of the Civil War

In the time between the election of Abraham Lincoln as the first Republican president and the firing on Fort Sumter, Southerners voiced their beliefs as what they saw as the immediate cause of Southern secession and the formation of the Confederacy. Lincoln reassured Southerners that he did not advocate the abolition of slavery but many Southern leaders saw something different in the Republican Party Platform of 1860.

Republican Party Platform: Eighth Plank



Nat. Portrait Gallery

1860 candidates Lincoln and Hamlin

“That the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom; That as our Republican fathers, when they had abolished Slavery in all our national territory, ordained that ‘no person should be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law,’ it becomes our duty, by legislation, whenever such legislation is necessary, to maintain this provision of the Constitution against all attempts to violate it; and we deny the authority of congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individuals, to give legal existence to Slavery in any Territory of the United States.”

Southern Reactions to Republican Platform



White House Historical Assoc.

Abraham Lincoln

“Is there a cause for this discontent? The question tendered to the people of the South is well expressed in the language of the President elect - that this agitation must go on until the northern mind shall rest in the belief that slavery is put in the condition of ultimate extinction.”

John H. Reagan (Tex.) - helped draft the Confederate Constitution

“The triumph of the principles which Mr. Lincoln is pledged to carry out, is the death-knell of slavery.”

Rev. James Henley Thornwell (S.C.) - 1861 pamphlet “The State of the Country”

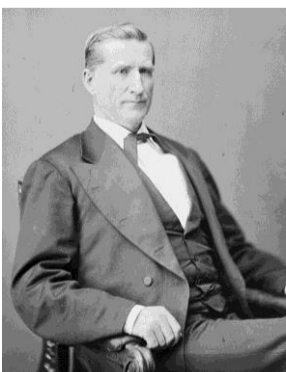
“The animating principle of the [Republican] party is hostility to slavery.... Its success is a declaration of war against our property and the supremacy of the white race. The election of Lincoln is the overt act.”

Jabez L. M. Curry (Ala.) - helped draft the Confederate Constitution

“Unfortunately wherever you find the presence of Black Republicanism it is engaged in this work of educating the hearts of the people to hate the institution of slavery.”

Howell Cobb (Ga.) - chaired the Montgomery Convention

Constitutional Rights of the Southerners



Library of Congress

John Goode, Jr.

“The North pledged anew her faith to yield to us our constitutional rights in relation to slave property. They are now, and have been ever since that act, denied to us, until her broken faith and impudent threats, had become almost insufferable before the late election.” *William L. Harris – commissioner from Mississippi to the Georgia General Assembly, Dec. 17, 1860*

“That negro slavery, as it exists in fifteen States of this Union, composes an important portion of their domestic institutions, inherited from their ancestors, and existing at the adoption of the Constitution, by which it is recognized and constituting an important element of the apportionment of powers among the States” *Jefferson Davis (Miss.) - President Confederate States of America*

“And when we of the South have begged of the people of the North for peace... they have replied ... that there can be no peace so long as we claim the right to hold property in slaves. There, sir, is the foundation of the whole difficulty.”

John Goode, Jr. - delegate to the Virginia Secession Convention

Secession

"I have, senators, believed from the first that the agitation of the subject of slavery would, if not prevented by some timely and effective measure, end in disunion."

John C. Calhoun – (1850) U. S. Senator, South Carolina

"Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery – the greatest material interest in the world."

Mississippi Declaration of Causes of Secession, January 1861



Museum of the Confederacy

First National Confederate Flag, 3rd Florida Infantry

"We have dissolved the late Union chiefly because of the negro quarrel."

Robert H. Smith (Ala.) - helped draft the Confederate Constitution

"There is one disturbing, one dangerous cause, - the angry controversy arising on the institution of African slavery, and unless this controversy can be amicably adjusted there must be a perpetual end of the Union, an everlasting separation of the North from the South."

Richard Keith Call - territorial delegate to the U.S. Congress and as Governor of Florida

"The greatest of all wrongs, one which in my judgment would require separation from the North if they had never otherwise injured us, is the translation of anti-slaveryism to power... now that it has become an efficient agent in the government, it is no longer safe for a slave State to remain under that government."

George Wythe Randolph – delegate to the Virginia Secession Convention

Constitution of the Confederate States of America

On March 11, 1861 the newly formed Confederate States of America adopted a constitution. It was created with the southerner's rights in mind, particularly those concerning the millions of dollars invested in slave property. The following are excerpts taken from the Confederate Constitution and quotes from some of the men that assisted in its creation.

Article I, Section 9

(4) No bill of attainder, ex post facto law, or law denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves shall be passed.

Article IV, Section 3

(3) ... the institution of negro slavery, as it now exists in the Confederate States, shall be recognized and protected by Congress and by the Territorial government; and the inhabitants of the several Confederate States and the Territories shall have the right to take to such Territory any slaves lawfully held by them in any of the States or Territories of the Confederate States.

"We have now placed our domestic institution, and secured its rights unmistakably, in the Constitution; we have sought by no euphony to hide its name – we have called our negroes 'slaves,' and we have recognized and protected them as persons and our rights to them as property."

Robert H. Smith - helped draft the Confederate Constitution



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1861 map showing the newly formed Confederate States of America in red.

"The new constitution has put at rest, forever, all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institution - African slavery as it exists amongst us – the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution."

Alexander H. Stephens (Ga.) - Vice President of the Confederate States of America