

History 225

Re: Notes w/ Johnson & Presidential Failure
and Chpt. on Ambiguities of Free Labor

Opening Statement: There are at least two diametrically opposed schools of thought about the Republican party's ideology in the 1860s:

1. One school holds that Republican ideology (view of the Constitution) holds that the party was politically and constitutionally moderate. That its adoption of laissez faire principles of political economy and its reading of the Constitution was conservative and this placed restraints on its attitude toward social change. And that this conservatism doomed Reconstruction from the very start.

Most Republicans were not addicted to abolitionist principles and were not revolutionary in their attitudes toward action.

2. The other view sees the party of Lincoln as quite radical. As the party of Lincoln they saw the war as a struggle to create a More Perfect Union by extending the democratic principles of 1776 to include emancipation and civil equality for blacks. They moved from a position of support for a limited war towards a total war with positive revolutionary aims.

In Chpt. 4 Foner lays out the irreconcilable differences between the former planters and the newly freed bondmen about the meaning of freedom and what kind of postwar labor system would exist in the postbellum agrarian South.

How did Republicans from all wings of the party look upon the problem of the defeated Confederate states. What were their relations to the national government after the war.

There were a variety of views, notions, and propositions offered by Republicans:

1. State Suicide /
2. States had reverted to territories / 3. *Conquered provinces* -

These were the most extreme and offered up by the radical branch of the party.

The more moderate views and those held by a majority of the Republican party were the following:

1. "in the grip of war" doctrine. This view denied that it was the policy of the Republicans to impose broad, permanent and extensive national legislation over the defeated South. But that

History 225

re: Notes w/ Johnson's Presidential Failure

Page two

there were certain irreducible minimums that were expected of the South. The federal power would hold the South and her new governments (which were still in the 'grip of war") responsible for assuring the public safety and security of loyal whites and blacks by passing laws and Constitutional Amendments to guarantee these rights. The federal power over the South would remain in place until the people of the South do what the North thinks is reasonable for the security of the public.

The implication here was that the Southern states would voluntarily come forward and satisfy these requirements once they were aware of what was expected. It was not the role of the federal power to impose these guarantees. Protection of loyal whites and former slaves rights were to be accomplished with minimal alteration of the traditional boundaries between the states and the national government. In short, the majority of Republicans were not interested in overturning the Constitutional prescribed federal policy.

2. A corollary here was the assertion that the Constitution gave authority to the US Congress to guarantee to every state a republican form of government.

Question: After reading Foner's Chpt. on The Ambiguity of Labor and especially his depiction of the work of the Freedmen's Bureau does this jive or contradict the above?

1. FB's was an emergency response to the destruction and social disintegration in the immediate postwar South. How long was it to do its work? How was it financed?

2. What was the extent of Union military in the South by the fall of 1866. How many Union soldiers made up the "occupying power" in the South?

3. Role of the FB's courts. Was it the purpose of these courts to replace the standing southern judiciary?