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History and Anthropology

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Slavery

Slavery became the national political issue, as vast lands from Mexico were captured during the years of the 1840s. With capturing of the new lands, a new conflict, concerning permitting slavery or not, aroused between the Southern and the Northern states. This was the same time when the economic choices of the Northern and the Southern were changing, both the sides were looking for new alternatives to boost their growth (Immerwahr). Resultantly, Northern states turned toward industry and Southern states adopted agriculture. Based on the economic differences, and coupled with the rise of sectionalism, the issue of slavery turned as a national issue (Immerwahr).

To deal with the issue of slavery, the first compromise was the 3/5ths compromise. It was neither a statement for or against slavery. It was set up because the South wanted to include it slave population numbers in the census and the Mid-Atlantic and New England states saw a disadvantage to them because they would not be adequately represented in the House of Representatives. This was at a time where the population of Virginia was the largest in all the states (Sparrow et al.). The compromise helped in the evolution of the American Emancipation movement because by the time of the civil war the Northern and Free States did have a larger representation than the South.

Slavery was continued to be debated by the Federal government because there were numerous points of disagreement, so debates on fine points of most sections of the Constitution were continued. The pressing and most important of them was the representation in Congress, slavery, the power and organization of the new executive branch, and Congresses ability to tax and handle revenue (Sparrow et al.). Congress consisted of one representative from each state since they viewed each state as an independent country willingly participating in the confederation of states. The debate ended with the formation of two entities: a bicameral congress which will include the House of Representatives elected on the basis of population, and Senate will have equal representation by each state, and the Electoral College for electing the president (Sparrow et al.).

Slavery again became the issue in the 1840s because the free-soil states came into the majority in Congress, so they felt entitled to the South’s slave-profits. These states went about attempting to pass taxes on imports of goods consumed mainly by the Southern States, which were exchanged for slave-products like cotton and other textiles. For the North to do this, required prohibiting slavery in the territories, so that the new states that they became, would represent the free-soil vote in Congress; and existing free-soil states refusing to allow slaves to pass through them. In order to get there; as well as refusing to return fugitive slaves, as the law required. As these were all, unconstitutional— as was imposing taxes against the general welfare, therefore, during the 1840s it again became an issue (Immerwahr).

The Southern residents of that time United States did come up with rationales justifying their continuing to hold slaves (Wiegand). Many of these included that an unexpected end to the economy developed by the slave economy can have a killing economic impact in the South where dependence on slave work was the basis of their economy. Some believed that if all the slaves were allowed to leave, there would be extensive joblessness and disorder. This would lead to uprisings, bloodshed, and anarchy slavery had occurred throughout history and was the natural state of mankind. However, those who were against slavery argued that slaves are economically productive, but have no capacity to consume the things they produce since they don't receive any wages.

The civil war could be avoided because the Constitution counted slaves without a vote as 60% of a person, the South had held the balance of power in the Congress since the 1780s. Because of the Supreme Court's decisions on Dred Scott and on the Fugitive Slave Act, persons in the North were forced to assist slave owners and persons of unusual skin colour in the North were at threat of kidnapping into slavery (Immerwahr). The slavery issue was tearing the nation apart. It had economic as well as moral consequences.

Works Cited:

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