

Lincoln's Plan and Its Critics **R. Pierce**

"Slavery is dead, the Negro is not, there is the misfortune." - Cincinnati *Enquirer*

Lincoln's strategy

1. [Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction](#) (issued December 8, 1863)
 - Offered full pardon and the restoration of all rights "except as to slaves" to persons who took an oath of future loyalty and pledged to accept the abolition of slavery.
 - A few groups, including high-ranking civil and military officers of the Confederacy, were excluded.
 - When in any state the number of loyal southerners amounted to 10% of the votes cast in 1860, this minority could establish a new state government.
 - The new state constitution must abolish slavery, but it could adopt temporary measures regarding blacks "consistent . . . with their present condition as a laboring, landless, and homeless class."
 - Most historians accept that while Lincoln proposed and defended the plan, his real focus was on shortening the war and solidifying white southern support for emancipation.
2. Loyal slave states and states under military control began reorganization with mixed results.
 - Maryland, Tennessee, Louisiana, Sea Islands of South Carolina
 - In each case blacks were left with unequal protection under the law. While some gains were made -- it was better than slavery -- it was still largely a situation where blacks suffered for white economic advancement.

Dissatisfaction with Lincoln's 10% plan

1. [Wade-Davis Bill](#) (July 1864)
 - Authored by Radical Republicans Senator Benjamin F. Wade (Ohio) and Congressman Henry W. Davis (Maryland)
 - The supporters of the bill thought that the reason for such unequal treatment for blacks stemmed from the fact that too few people (only 10%) had signed on as a prerequisite for statehood.
 - The bill proposed to delay the start of Reconstruction until a *majority* of a state's white males had pledged to support the federal Constitution.

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- After a majority had signed, elections would be held for a constitutional convention, with suffrage restricted to those who swore under the Ironclad Oath that they had *never* aided the Confederacy.
- The bill also guaranteed black equality before the law, although not the franchise.
- Suffrage was thus limited to a very small number of people.
- Lincoln pocket-vetoed the bill, whereupon its Radical authors issued an intemperate "manifesto" accusing the President of exercising "dictatorial usurpation."
- Remember that all of this is taking place during the war. When they squabbled, the politicians still maintained cohesiveness regarding the war effort itself.

2. Differing views

- The differences between Lincoln and the Radicals show the different views each had during Reconstruction.
- Lincoln viewed Reconstruction as part of the effort to win the war and secure emancipation. His aim was to weaken the Confederacy by establishing state governments that attracted broad southern support.
- For Radicals, however, Reconstruction implied a far-reaching transformation in southern society. As a result, they wished to delay the process until after the war was completed and to limit participation to a smaller number of "iron-clad loyalists."

Black agency: the New Orleans *Tribune*

1. Key players

- The founder of the New Orleans *Tribune* was Louis Roudanez, the wealthy son of a French merchant and a free woman of color, who had both earned medical degrees
- The editor of the *Tribune* was Jean-Charles Houzeau, born to an aristocratic Belgian family -- he had opposed secession and in 1864 arrived in Louisiana.

2. Activism

- The *Tribune* demanded black suffrage, and their call was championed by other black radicals in Louisiana
- As the Civil War was drawing to its close, perhaps the most articulate and politicized black community was thoroughly estranged from the military and civil authorities
- However, this group could not be ignored. Roudanez traveled to Washington to talk with Lincoln about suffrage. Afterwards, Lincoln sent a

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private note to the Louisiana governor asking if some provision could be made for the "ablest" blacks to vote.

3. With efforts such as this, blacks were able to put the issue of the black franchise on the national agenda and keep it there. It was clearly an unsettled issue when Congress adjourned in March 1865.

Freedman's Bureau

1. The creation of the Bureau in March 1865 symbolized the widespread belief among Republicans that the federal government must shoulder broad responsibility for the emancipated slaves, including offering them some kind of access to land.
2. The Bureau was empowered to distribute clothing, food, and fuel to destitute freedmen and oversee "all subjects" relating to their condition in the South.
 - Congress authorized the Bureau to "rent" confiscated land.
3. Despite its widespread responsibilities, it was clearly seen as a temporary agency -- its lifespan was only to last one year.

Lincoln's wish

1. On April 11, 1865, Lincoln delivered what would be his [last speech](#).
 - In the speech, he said that he would prefer that the vote "were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers."
2. The *New York Times* reported the Lincoln had judged the time not yet ripe for "the statement of a settled reconstruction policy." ("The President's Speech," 13 Apr. 1865)
3. Four days later, he was assassinated.