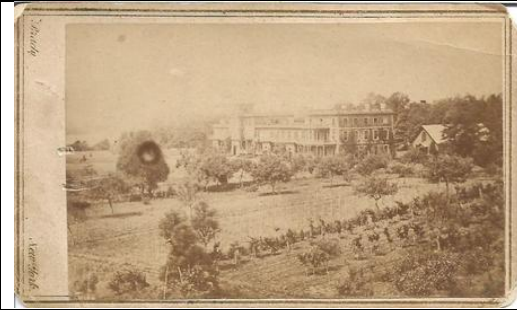


Chapter 291 – The Proposed Republican Ban On Slavery Poses An Existential Threat To The South



Dates:
November
1860 Forward

Sections:

- The Republicans Think The South Is Bluffing Over Secession
- The Reality Is That A Ban On Expanding Slavery Will Devastate The Southern Economy

Date: Fall Of 1860

The Republicans Think The South Is Bluffing Over Secession

The Presidential election of 1860 will sound the death knell for the Union and for the 750,000 Americans who will eventually die during the course of the four year Civil War to follow.

To some extent this outcome results from a profound misunderstanding among Republican politicians about the Southern response to a Lincoln victory. The assumption is that the Slave Power will bluster about secession to try for concessions, but then back off in the end. The *New York Tribune* hypothesizes this outcome from the start:

The South could no more unite upon a scheme of secession than a company of lunatics could conspire to break out of bedlam.

Henry Seward agrees:

Who's afraid? Nobody's afraid. Nobody can be bought.

Lincoln himself shares the belief. He says so back in 1856:

All this talk about dissolution of the Union is humbug, nothing but Folly.

Four years later, after his nomination, his mind is unchanged:

The people of the South have too much of good sense, and good temper, to attempt the ruin of the government...At least so I hope and believe."

And he will continue this hope even after the election is won, in the famous closing passage of his Inaugural address:

We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

What the Republicans fail to recognize is the devastating effects their ban on slavery in the west will have on the economic future of the entire South.

Date: Fall Of 1860

The Reality Is That A Ban On Expanding Slavery Will Devastate The Southern Economy



A Typical Southern Plantation

The belief that Northerners are a threat to their wealth is not new among the men of the South.

Early on the peril is the protective tariff on finished goods imported from the UK which suppresses the demand for their raw cotton exports. This comes to a head with the so-called 1828 Tariff of Abominations, with Senator John C. Calhoun and the state of South Carolina refusing to collect the duties at their ports. This action ends abruptly when President Andrew Jackson announces his intent to send federal troops to collect the payments.

A relative truce between the regions prevails until the Texas Annexation of 1845 and the Mexican War of 1846-7 opens up the prospect for new cotton plantations from the Mississippi River to California. What would clearly be a boom for the Southern economy is suddenly put on hold by Northern opponents of slavery. David Wilmot's 1846 Proviso seeks to cleanse the west of blacks for the benefit of free white settlers and the dignity of their labor, while the abolitionist reformers call for the end of slavery in its entirety.

Underlying this mounting tension is the fact that, unlike the North, the shift to a modern industrial economy never takes hold in the South. In 1860, for example, it accounts for only 14% of the nation’s manufacturing workers, 20% of the railroad tracks and 13% of the banks.

Location Of Manufacturing Workers

	1820	1840	1860
Northeast	62%	63%	69%
Northwest	7	14	17
Border	12	8	5
Southeast	16	11	5
Southwest	3	4	4
	100%	100%	100%

Meanwhile the North produces 17 times as many textiles as the South, 30 times the leather goods, 20 times the pig iron and 32 times the firearms.

The reason for these differences is simple. Between 1830 and 1860 the South continues to enjoy truly remarkable gains in wealth from its traditional sources of revenue: the sales of cotton and of “excess slaves.”

By 1860, there is no doubt as the South Carolinian John Henry Hammond says on the floor of the Senate, “Cotton is King!” The worldwide demand for the “white gold” has skyrocketed, with four-fold growth over the past three decades -- as have profits to the planters and others across the supply chain.

Trends In Cotton Sales, Prices And Value (millions)

Year	Lbs. Sold	Price/Lb	Total Value	Index
1830	306.8	\$9.68	\$ 297	100
1840	586.7	9.00	526	177
1850	933.5	10.49	957	322
1860	1,712.0	7.30	1,218	410

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Along with this growth in sales of raw cotton comes increased demand for the South’s “other crop” – the slaves who work the fields. While the U.S. slave population is doubling between 1830 and 1860, the “selling price” is growing even more rapidly, especially for “prime” field hands.

Trends In The Slave Population And Their “Value”

Year	# Slaves	\$/ Slave	Total Value	Index
1830	2.0 mil.	\$273	\$ 548.5 mil	100
1840	2.5	377	937.6	182
1850	3.2	377	1,207.9	220
1860	4.0	778	3,076.2	561

Astonishingly, in 1860 the economic value of these slaves exceeds the invested value of all of the nation's railroads, factories, and banks combined!

The acceleration in the total “value” is particularly noteworthy between 1850 and 1860 and it mirrors the transport and sale of slaves from the South’s east coast states to new plantations starting up to the west.

The Westward Shift In The Slave Population

East Coast	1840	1860	# Ch	%Ch
Delaware	2.6	1.8	(0.8)	
Maryland	89.7	87.2	(2.5)	
Virginia	449.1	490.9	41.8	
North Carolina	245.8	331.1	85.3	
South Carolina	327.0	402.4	75.4	
Georgia	280.9	462.2	181.3	
Florida	0	61.7	61.7	
	1,395.1	1,837.3	442.2	31%
Inland				
Kentucky	182.2	225.5	43.3	
Tennessee	183.1	275.7	92.6	
Alabama	253.5	435.1	181.6	
Mississippi	195.2	436.6	241.4	
	814.0	1,372.9	558.9	69%
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Louisiana	168.4	331.7	163.3	
Missouri	58.2	114.9	56.7	
Arkansas	19.9	111.1	91.2	
Texas	0.0	182.6	182.6	
	246.5	440.2	193.7	79%

Through Southern eyes, the Republican's platform calling for a ban on slavery in the new territories is an existential threat to their entire economic future.

In downplaying these concerns – in calling them another “bluff” – the Republicans, including Lincoln, mistake the genuine desperation felt across the South.

The result will be a civil war.