

Birth of the “New South”

Chapter 3 – Section 3



Plantations after the war

- Was hard for planters to find people willing to work for them (b/c picking cotton in the hot sun felt like slavery to newly freed African Americans)
- Could find better, higher paying jobs like railroads (\$2/day vs. 50 cents – women only made 6 cents)



Sharecropping

- Farming arrangement in which a family was paid w/ a share of the crop at harvest time
- Unfair b/c some were evicted w/out pay after harvest or charged for housing and other expenses (ending up in debt at end of year)
- Can't pay it so trapped on the plantation



Tenant farming

- Similar, but better
- Also didn't own the land, but rented it like an apartment
- Your own boss – chose what to grow, etc.
- Higher social status than sharecroppers



Changes in the Economy in the South during Reconstruction

- Change in labor force (40% white vs. 90% black before)
- Cash crops not food crops (cotton, tobacco, sugar cane – had to import food)



Economic changes cont.

- Cycle of debt - rural poverty among both blacks and whites (only 1 in 20 blacks owned land 10 years later)
- Rise of merchants (new class of wealthy southerners)



Railroads

- Rebuilding and addition of new railroads allowed small towns to turn into cities (Atlanta, Richmond, Nashville, etc.)



Still didn't rival the North

- Industrial growth in South didn't make finished goods like furniture
- Early, less profitable stages of production, sent North to be finished and sold



“Gospel of Prosperity”

- The strong belief that the growth of business would bring good times for everyone
- This philosophy guided reconstruction efforts throughout the 1870's



Importance of infrastructure

- The public property and services that a society uses
- The South had to be completely rebuilt
- Created business opportunities
- Roads, bridges, canals, railroads, telegraph lines



\$\$ for South

- In addition to rebuilding infrastructure, \$ was spent on services for citizens in South
- i.e. public schools by 1872 (which North already had)



Source of \$

- Some Reconstruction \$ came from Congress and private investors, but much of it came from heavy taxes on southerners (rich and poor)
- Resentful about financial burden on top of having war debt already.



Corruption

- Occurred in business and government
- Worst fraud with railroads
- Bribes paid to Senators – loans given – money spent on personal use and RR never build before claiming bankruptcy (today it is uncovered and prosecuted, but not back then)



Bad Reputation

- Reconstruction ended up with such a bad reputation b/c of the waste and corruption from all (black and white, Democrat and Republicans, North and South)

