

Ch 12 Section 2 Reconstructing Society

Conditions in the Postwar South

Physical and Economic Conditions

- By 1870, all Confederate states in Union with Republican governments
- Buildings, infrastructure, farms destroyed throughout South
- People poor; property value plummets, Confederate bonds worthless
- 1/5 white males dead, many maimed; tens of thousands black males dead

Public Works Programs

- Transportation; homes for orphans, disabled; public schools built
- Northern capitalists do not invest in South; states must raise taxes

Politics in the Postwar South

Scalawags and Carpetbaggers

- Democrats call Southern white Republicans **scalawags**
 - most are small farmers
 - want better economic position
- **Carpetbaggers**—Northerners who moved to South after war

African Americans as Voters

- African Americans are largest group of Southern Republicans
- In many areas, 90% of African-American voters vote

Political Differences

- Few scalawags support civil rights for blacks; many rejoin Democrats
- Republican governors appoint Democrats; do not win white support
- Some whites support Republicans; think end of slavery good for South
- Many whites refuse to accept new status or equal rights for blacks
- Several thousand Southerners emigrate to Europe, Mexico, Brazil

Former Slaves Face Many Challenges

New-Won Freedoms

- At first, former slaves cautious about testing limits of freedom
- Some travel to new places
- Many leave plantations to find work in Southern towns

Reunification of Families

- Many search for loved ones on different plantations
- Couples can marry legally and be sure of keeping their children

Education

- Freed people of all ages seek education
- African Americans establish schools and universities
- Initially, most teachers Northern whites; by 1869, most are black

Churches and Volunteer Groups

- Many African Americans found churches; mostly Baptist, Methodist
- Black ministers become influential community leaders
- African Americans form thousands of volunteer organizations:
 - foster independence
 - give financial, emotional support
 - offer leadership opportunities

Politics and African Americans

- 1865–1877, African Americans hold local, state, federal office

- At first, most officeholders freeborn; by 1867 some former slaves
- Almost as many black as white citizens; black officeholders minority
 - only 16 African Americans in Congress
 - **Hiram Revels** is first black senator

Laws Against Segregation

- By 1866, Republican governments repeal most black codes
- Anti-segregation laws created, but many not enforced
- Blacks focus on building up their community, not total integration

Changes in the Southern Economy

40 Acres and a Mule

- Sherman: slaves who follow him can have 40 acres, use of army mules
 - freed slaves settle on abandoned land
 - Johnson orders them evicted
- Many Republicans reject seizing property; pass weak land-reform laws

Restoration of Plantations

- African Americans, poor whites want small farms
- Planters, Northern merchants, mill owners want cotton plantations
- Planters fear will be unable to make profit if must pay wages
- Freedmen work in mills, railroad, farming
 - planters prevent them getting land

Sharecropping and Tenant Farming

- Landless African Americans sign labor contracts with planters
 - neither freedmen nor planters happy with system
- **Sharecropping**—owner gives land, seed, tools for part of crops; was least beneficial for sharecroppers
- **Tenant farming**—rent land from owner; buy own tools

Cotton No Longer King

- Other countries increase cotton production; South creates oversupply
- Try to diversify—textiles, tobacco products; wages lower than North
- Banks hold Confederate debt, mounting planters' debts; many fail