

# Radical republicans

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Members of the Radical Republican Party wanted the abolition of slavery and equality for freed slaves. Members also went against the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave Acts. There were many well-known members of the party that became a very powerful force in congress in the late 19th century such as: Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner, Benjamin Butler, Fredrick Douglass, and Benjamin Wade. Several members were appointed chairman of important committees. Thaddeus Stevens was appointed chairman of Ways and Means, Owen Lovejoy was appointed chairman of agriculture, and Henry Wilson was appointed chairman of judiciary and so on.

Radical Republicans often collided with Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. Issues arose when Lincoln was hesitant to back the recruiting of black soldiers into the Union Army. Also, the two forces faced problems again over Lincoln's treatment of Major John C. Fremont. Lincoln became very angered with Fremont after proclaimed all slaves owned by confederates in Missouri were free. Lincoln became angry because he feared the slave owners would join the confederate army. Fremont would end up losing his job for this.

In the early part of the war, Lincoln had only one senior member of his government who was sympathetic towards the views of the Radicals, Salmon Chase, Lincoln's Secretary of the Treasury. Throughout the war, other radicals such as William Fessenden and James Speed joined his cabinet. Radical Republicans were very critical of Lincoln's reconstruction plan. In 1862, radicals Benjamin Wade and Henry Winter Davis proposed a bill that argued that civil government should only be reestablished when half of the male white citizens took an oath of loyalty to the union.

Lincoln refused to sign the bill, but it was passed in July of 1864. Radical Republicans also opposed the policies of President Andrew Johnson. They fought over reconstruction ideas and policies and the passing of Acts, such as, the Civil Rights Bill, the extension of the Freedmen's Bureau, and the Reconstruction Acts. In November of 1867, congress voted to impeach Andrew Johnson for high crimes and misdemeanors. They charged him with pardoning traitors, defying Congress, denying the right to reconstruct the South and prevent the ratification of the 14th amendment. In March of 1868, Johnson's impeachment trial began.

The main group that was attacking Johnson was Radical Republicans such as Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens. Congress finished one vote short of the two-thirds majority requirement for impeachment. He was not impeached because the democrats voted to keep him in office and a few radicals because they did not like the idea of Radical leader Benjamin Wade to become president. In 1868, many of the Radical Republicans lost their seats in congress, including leader Benjamin Wade. In 1871, Congress passed the Ku Klux Act and it was the last substantial victory for the Radicals in Congress.