

The care to the  
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The history of the United States from the period of Reconstruction to the Progressive Era between 1877 and 1900 involved the rise of industrialization within the country which saw an increase in economic growth, enabling the United States to be the world's economic and industrial super power. The end of the Civil War in 1865 saw the country moving into a period of reconstruction which would see an end to slavery and the granting of citizenship to immigrants and slaves within the country. The period of Reconstruction in the United States took place between 1863 and 1877 after which the national government seized control of all the states in the southern parts of America. The political setting during this period was mostly dominated by Republicans and the presidential administration was that of Abraham Lincoln up until his assassination in April 1865. President Lincoln developed plans that would be used to reconstruct the country after the Civil War and also reintegrate the ex-Confederate states into America (Carlisle, 2008). Lincoln also developed the Thirteenth Amendment which would abolish slavery in America and to help the ex-slaves adapt to their new found freedom, he established the Freedman's Bureau in March 1865. The bureau would be used to provide employment, educational opportunities and health care to the slaves.

Lincoln's motives were however opposed by the Republicans who were afraid of the belief in slavery by the ex-Confederate states as well as Confederate nationalism. President Lincoln tried to impose restrictions that would prevent Confederate rebels from voting or holding positions of office within his administration as they would advocate for the reintroduction of slavery into the country. After President Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, President

Andrew Johnson took over the presidential office until the radical Republicans won the critical election of 1866. The Republicans introduced new constitutional and federal legal protections into the Freedman's Bureau, most of which would be vetoed after the white southerners regained control over all the Southern states in 1877 (Carlisle, 2008). The presidential win of Republican candidate Rutherford B.

Hayes marked the end of the Reconstruction period in America during the year 1877. As part of his presidential campaign, President Hayes vowed to end army control over the remaining three states that were under Republican law. This promise came true with the end of the Civil War where the Northerners accepted that there was no further threat from the Southern states. The end of Reconstruction also signaled the end of the civil rights and liberties accorded to the African Americans by President Lincoln. Many of the ex-slaves who had migrated to the South after the abolishment of slavery began to experience racism and racially motivated violence (Carlisle, 2008).

The Reconstruction period was mostly marked with a lot of bitterness and anger especially from the white Southerners who wanted to be a Confederate state. A group known as the Solid South was created to protest against the radical Republicans who were now in office. The Solid South mostly voted for Democrats in both the local, state and national elections to show their opposition of Republican rule. Apart from the opposition from the south, the end of Reconstruction was mostly characterized by corruption scandals and schemes such as the Gould-Fisk gold scheme where two financiers attempted to use the government's influence to buy all the gold that was available in the country.

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This saw a decline in the number of gold stocks that the country held between 1869 and 1877. Another scandal that dogged the Hayes administration was the credit mobilier scandal where the people charged with the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad used their own construction company to build the rail way line. The US Congress became involved in the scandal when several members of Congress were identified as the major stakeholders of the construction company. These scandals brought to an end the era of Reconstruction within the United States and paved the way for the Gilded Age which came to the fore during the Second Industrial Revolution in the 1880s (Carlisle, 2008).

The major highlights of the Gilded Age included an increase in wealth amongst the American society where various social classes for the rich began to emerge one of which was the Robber Barons. This society was able to dominate the American economy through their established business and family networks. During the Gilded Age, there were few political issues experienced in the country and even after the presidential election of 1880 that saw Republican James Garfield being elected as president, the political scene in America became very quiet for a long time. Garfield was however shot during the first months of his administration which caused a stir in the political scene but this would later be dealt with once the Vice President, Chester Arthur succeeded him (Calhoun, 2007). The presidential administration of Chester Arthur was mostly plagued with Third Party Systems which saw a contingent of powerful political parties engaging in corruption scandals. The major problems that existed during this era were

related to modernization, money laundering and the construction of railroads within the various states of America.

Arthur was to however relinquish his seat during the presidential elections of 1884 that would see Democrat Grover Cleveland becoming president of the United States. Cleveland was able to win the election because his campaign focused on reducing tariffs on the importation and exportation of goods within the US and also expanding civil services and private pension bills to ensure many American civil servants accessibility to their pension funds. Many Americans saw this as hurting his chances of being reelected again in the 1888 election but Cleveland was not bothered by this general opinion as he went on to gain a second term during the 1888 presidential elections (Calhoun, 2007). The political movement that existed during President Cleveland's administration was the Farmer's Alliances whose sole purpose was to unite all farmers in America by protecting them against class legislation and the encroachment of capital by outsiders.

The alliance also called for the nationalization of railroads and also the provision of debt relief services to deal with the increasing rates of inflation in the American society. The alliance also called for the establishment of government-owned storehouses that would offer low-interest lending facilities to the farmer's movement. During the late 1880s, a series of droughts affected the western parts of Kansas leading to the loss of life as well as the depletion of natural resources within the state (Calhoun, 2007).

To add on to the droughts, the McKinley Tariff introduced in 1890 was one of the highest that the country had ever experienced since it gained its

independence as it made it impossible for farmers to purchase farm equipment and machinery. To deal with the challenges, the Farmer's Alliance with the involvement of Southern Democrats decided to push for political power where there would be a Populist Party in the US. The major focus of this group was to address land issues, money as well as the construction of railroads in the southern and western states of America. The Populist Party gained a lot of strength in the western and southern strongholds of the US and they were able to garner a large amount of votes that would see their presidential candidate receiving a record one million votes during the 1892 elections.

However, the issue of money made it difficult for the Populist Party to achieve a win during the elections as they believed the problems in America arose because of a shortage in money circulation. Spokespeople from the South and Western states argued that increasing the volume of money in the federal banks would have an indirect impact on the increase in prices of farm products and supplements (Carlisle, 2008). This increase would in turn affect the industrial wages of workers employed in the various industries meaning that employers would have to pay their workers half salaries. The financial classes within the country saw such an act to be detrimental to the economy of the country arguing that once inflation started, it would be difficult to control and it would create devastating consequences to the country's economy. As the agenda of the Populist Party also covered the railroad sector which used railroad bonds as financial instruments, an increase in passenger and freight rates would render the railroad industry bankrupt, leaving many people jobless and also affecting the industrial economy of the

United States. The financial panic that took place in 1893 further increased the debate of increasing the volume of money where many banks in the southern and western parts of the country faced bankruptcy, increasing unemployment and also reducing the prices of crops (Carlisle, 2008). President Cleveland's inability to deal with the crisis almost caused the dissolution of the Democratic Party as it had supported the free trade of silver and gold. The Populist movement lost its credence and popularity among the American voters which was evidenced by their defeat in the 1896 presidential elections that were won by Republican William McKinley.

The following year after McKinley came into power, the country's financial status began to improve as investor confidence was regained and more people were employed in the various sectors of the country (Calhoun, 2007).

## References

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