

The missouri compromise



The Missouri Compromise is one of the agreements that would eventually lead to the shaping of the United States as it is today. The controversy that has arisen prior, upon and after the institution of the Compromise is based upon the principles of the Constitution and the principles underlying the Declaration of Independence. While the Constitution of the country during the Missouri Compromise allowed for the use of slaves, the validity and morality of holding slaves have been heatedly debated upon.

The United States have declared and fought for their independence on the principle that " all men are created equal. " That the United States continues to tolerate and use slavery is a paradox to the principle from which they have gained their independence. The Northern States have been fighting to abolish slavery. However, the Southern states' economy depended on their use of slaves, from which they have been relying upon for the past two centuries and has become an integral part of the Southern life. Slavery is an issue critical of the Missouri Compromise.

For decades, the United States Senate has maintained a balance of power by having equal representatives from " free" Northern states and slave-holding Southern states until the application for statehood by the Missouri territory in 1819 as a slave state. If Missouri is allowed to enter as a slave state, slave holding states would have more representations in the Senate. Even if they were allowed to enter as a free state, the territory at that time have about 2, 000 slaves and the representation would more likely to favor slavery.

Simply put, the future of the country, whether it will predominantly be composed of slave-holding states or of " free" states is at stake. New York Representative James Tallmadge proposed to admit Missouri into the Union

provided that the further introduction of slavery is prohibited and that all children born in the state shall be freed at the age of 25. However, the proposal was met with fierce opposition in the Senate. Fortunately, Maine has petitioned to enter as a “ free” state in 1820.

While Southern states refused to allow Maine into the Union without allowing Missouri to enter without restrictions and the Northern states refused to allow Missouri in to the Union without allowing Maine to enter without restrictions, the petition would resolve the balance of power in the Senate. Admitting Missouri and Maine at the same time as “ slave” and “ free” states respectively would result into an equal number of representations in the Senate. However, there is still the question of whether to allow future petitioners to enter the Union as “ free” or “ slave” states.

Eventually, the Missouri Compromise was agreed upon, allowing Missouri to enter as a “ slave” state and Maine as a “ free” state, with provisions that all future Louisiana Purchase territories that petitions for statehood north of the 36°30’ parallel would be prohibited to enter as “ slave” states. Unfortunately however, debates regarding slavery continued to persist until the Missouri Compromise have ultimately been repealed by the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854.

The Act provided for the settlers in the territories of petitioners for statehood whether to enter the Union as “ free” states or as “ slave” states. This is in contrast with the restrictions imposed upon by the Missouri Compromise. Furthermore, the United States Supreme Court in their decision in the Dred Scott case ruled that the Congress did not have the authority to prohibit slavery in the territories, implicating that the provision held in the Missouri

Compromise to be unconstitutional. The debates regarding slavery would divide the nation and eventually lead to the Civil War.