

Dbq for apush

Law, Constitution



In the early nineteenth century the United States began to split, but as mid-century came around, people became more polarized in their views and the union started to separate drastically. During the period of 1850, until 1861 when the Confederate States of America was formed, the union was clearly divided between the North and South.

Although the Constitution was not the only factor leading to sectional tension in America, there are many strong points in the North and South favoring the statement, “ By the 1850’s the Constitution, originally framed as an instrument of national unity, had become a source of sectional discord and tension and ultimately contributed to the failure of the union it had created. ” Northerners, during mid-century America believed in the preservation of the undissolvable Union.

When the Constitution was framed in 1787, the founding fathers were concerned about leaving Britain and becoming a Union, as opposed to the issue of slavery that would later prevail. Henry Clay created the Compromise of 1850, which helped solve the problem of slavery in the territories (Document A). This was not included in the Constitution . . . When the Missouri Compromise was ruled unconstitutional under the Dred Scott decision, the due process clause, for the first time, was interpreted to state that people could not be denied their property, displaying that Calhoun was right all along.

It is evident that although the Constitution is the supreme law of the land, many Northerners depicted its flaws. An anonymous Georgian, although somewhat contradictory, explained, “ Two Constitutional provisions are

necessary to secure Southern rights upon this important question,--the recognition of slavery where the people choose it and the remedy for fugitive slave” (Document B). Sectional difficulties that lead to the break up of the Union can be traced to flaws in the Constitution, although there are other factors as well.

In events such as John Brown’s Raid, the North solemnly respected Brown, holding commemoration services in his memorial. This shows that the founding fathers thought well ahead of their time and created a Constitution that included answers to many questions, although, in general, this document eventually contributed to the collapse of the Union. President Jefferson Davis of the Confederate States of America, believing that states were sovereign over the Union, stated, “The separate and independent sovereignty of each State was merged into one common government and nation” (Document H). The Constitution includes the three-fifths clause, along with an end to the African slave trade. After the fugitive slave law was enacted, many personal liberty laws were created in the North and colored people were notified, “ You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and advised, to avoid conversing with Watchmen and Police Officers of Boston” (Document C). Just as Northerners saw flaws in the Constitution, Southerners viewed it not to be perfect as well.

President James Buchanan, a northern man with southern sympathies clarified, “ As sovereign states, they and they alone, are responsible before God and the world for the slavery existing among them” (Document G). Regarding the Fugitive Slave Law, a Bostonian Transcendentalist, Ralph

Waldo Emerson stated, “ As soon as the Constitution ordains an immoral law, it ordains disunion...The Union is at an end as soon as an immoral law is enacted” (Document D). The constitutionality of the protective tariff was questioned during the panic of 1857, which Northerners blamed on the South.

Yet another Bostonian, William Lloyd Garrison, an abolitionist reformer exclaimed, “ The Constitution which subjects them [slaves] to hopeless bondage is one that we cannot swear to support” (Document E). Although the Constitution is clearly flawed because extremist on both sides had problems with it, this document, which is the supreme law of the land, does have positive aspects. ----- By the 1850’s the Constitution, originally framed as an instrument of national unity, had become a source of sectional discord and tension and ultimately contributed to the failure of the union it has created.

This was shown by ambivalent interpretations of the constitution and other important documents when assorted together. It is known that the union did not last, for there was the Civil War. If everyone could agree on what the constitution implied, then there probably would not have been a civil war. From several of the documents, there are arguments about what the constitution states. (Document E), “ To the Argument, that the word ‘ slaves’ and ‘ slavery’ are not to be found in The Constitution, and therefore it was never intended to give any protection or countenance to the slave system, it is sufficient to reply, that no such words are contained in the instrument, other words were used, intelligently and specifically, to meet the necessities

of slavery. ” This indicates that the constitution CAN be interpreted differently, and when used with other pertinent documents, can be incongruous. Those views that differentiated were of those in the North and South. The Constitution can be interpreted in many different ways, which leads to sectional discord and tension. For many reasons, the South evidently did not like what the constitution said.

There were many confictions with the compromise of 1850, map shown in (Document A) and the fugitive slave act. Certain northerners were so against slavery and the fugitive slave act that they even posted warnings for the slaves. (Document C), [shows how kidnapers were being sent after the slaves, and how Northern abolitionists were revolting against the South’s rules and regulations.] This fugitive slave act also helped drive the tension deeper into the Un-United States. With drama now rumbling in the American underbellies, the small weight of anything slightly bad could set off a secession bomb.

A freesoiler does not want to spread slavery, but he is okay with keeping it in a state it is already in. When the idea of popular sovereignty came about with the compromise of 1850, map shown in (Document A), those freesoilers in office were pushed harder into complex decisions over the popular sovereignty issue. (Document F) “ FORCING SLAVERY DOWN THE THROAT OF A FREESOILER,” illustrates this in a very blatant text and disturbing political cartoon. All of the tension gathering, even authors were predestining the Civil War.

Ralph Waldo Emerson believed that the Constitution, (when assorted with others like the fugitive slave law or the compromise of 1850) were contradictory, and that they aid to the now inevitable seeming end of the union. (Document D) “ What kind of legislation is this? What kind of constitution which covers? ... I suppose the union can be left to take care of itself.... But one thing appears certain to me, that , as soon as the constitution ordains an immoral law, it ordains disunion. The law is suicidal, and cannot be obeyed.

The union is at an end as soon as an immoral law is enacted. And he who writes a crime into the statute-book digs under the foundations of the capitol to plant there a powder-magazine, and lays a train” This proves that By the 1850’s the Constitution, originally framed as an instrument of national unity, had become a source of sectional discord and tension and ultimately contributed to the failure of the union it has created. This was shown by ambivalent interpretations of the constitution and other important documents when assorted together