

Labor problem at jamestown essay



The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607-1618 By Edmund S. Morgan In 1502, Columbus set sailed on his last voyage to the New World. The year 1606, James I issues a charter to the Virginia Company for tract of land along the mid-Atlantic coast.

This led to Jamestown. The first settlement in America was Jamestown. It was established in 1607 with a 104 male settlers, which was led by John Smith. This article is about the early hard times with Jamestown. Soon it led up to the American Revolution, but the article only goes up to 1618. The article overall idea was the problem with labor in Jamestown.

It talked about the people, laws, wealth, etc. The main points in this article were: Spanish discovers, Native American troubles, and working conditions. It seems to me that the author wrote this article because to educate others, and to show the conditions and problems they had in Jamestown that led to slavery. The thesis of this article is, " But in the absence of direct evidence we may discover among the ideas current in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century England some clues to the probable state of mind of the first Virginians clues to the way they felt about work, whether in the old world or the new clues to habits of thinking that may have conditioned their perceptions of what confronted them at Jamestown, clues even to the tangled web of motives that made later Virginians masters of slaves,"(page 3, Morgan).

It was the Spanish who had exploits surpassed all others. They knew things about the new world then anyone. The English started translating writings

from Spanish to learn these secrets. They were searching for good area to settle.

They first found an area that was ruled by a powerful Indian tribe which led them to leave, “ They picked an area with a more powerful, more extensive, and more effective Indian government than existed, King Powhatan, the Monacans,”(page 4, Morgan). Reading about the Spanish experiences led to discovers. Then Englishmen thought of one day they would eventually have the Indians useful English subjects. But they soon discovered that Indian labor was not going to sustain.

“ The company in England was convinced by 1609 that the settlers would have to grow at least part of their own food,”(page 5, Morgan). The settlers had to step up since Indian labor plan was not going to work well. The task they had to accomplish depended on their life. Settlers had to work from five in the morning to around eight at night. Winter conditions changed the time a little by taking off about 2 hours.

Complaints started coming up about laziness and irresponsibility from the workmen. People started raising prices to survive. Men were always hungry barely having the energy to work. That was one of the excuses some men brought up to explain why there working they way they are. The author explains more indebt of the laziness and problems. Even men with large amounts of land could not afford labors.

The government issued laws for problems with work and labor, “ Sometimes men were obliged to take on a poor boy as a servant whether they needed him or not. The parish might lighten the burden by paying a fee, but it might

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also fine a man who refused to take a boy assigned to him,”(page 7, Morgan). Things were falling apart. Jamestown was mostly used for pasture farming areas.

It was used to grow grain for bread. They got a lot of their food from the woods where there were nuts and berries. “ The most obvious English analogy to the Jamestown settlement was that of a military expedition,”(page 9, Morgan). Jamestown had a partly military set up.

They used the military for guidance. Soldiers were most part footmen. The soldiers went through a lot of hard times during their expeditions, “ Military precedent pointed to idleness, hunger, and death, not to the effective. Soldiers on campaign were not expected to grow their own food. On the other hand they were expected to go hungry often and to die like flies even if they never saw an enemy,”(page 10, Morgan).

After they went through hard times they started to develop which led to planting tobacco.