

Thaddeus Stevens (Modified)

Thaddeus Stevens was a member of the House of Representatives from Pennsylvania. He was a leader of the Radical Republicans within the Republican Party during the 1860s. This is a series of excerpts from a speech he delivered to Congress on March 19, 1867.

The cause of the war was slavery. We have liberated the slaves. It is our duty to protect them, and provide for them while they are unable to provide for themselves.

None will deny the right to **confiscate** the property of the Southern states, as they all made war as the Confederate States of America. The bill provides that each freed slave who is a male adult, or the head of a family, will receive forty acres of land, (with \$100 to build a house).

Homesteads are far more valuable than the immediate right of **suffrage**, though they should receive both.

Four million people have just been freed from slavery. They have no education, have never worked for money, and don't know about their rights. We must make the freed slaves independent of their old masters, so that they may not be compelled to work for them upon unfair terms, which can only be done by giving them a small **tract** of land to farm.

Source: *Thaddeus Stevens, speech to Congress, March 19, 1867.*

Vocabulary

confiscate: take or seize someone's property

homestead: a piece of land gifted by the government to a citizen who lives on and farms it

suffrage: the right to vote

tract: an area of land

Andrew Johnson (Modified)

Andrew Johnson was a Democrat who served as President of the United States from 1865 to 1869. The following is a series of excerpts from a campaign speech that Johnson gave in September 1866 in Cleveland, Ohio. In the speech he discusses the Freedmen's Bureau, which was a federal agency designed to help former slaves with jobs and education. Radical Republicans, like Thaddeus Stevens, supported additional funding for the Freedmen's Bureau.

Before the Civil War there were 4,000,000 black people held as slaves by about 340,000 people living in the South. That is, 340,000 slave owners paid all the living expenses of the slaves. Then, the war began and the slaves were freed . . . Now to the Freedmen's Bureau bill. What was it? Four million slaves were emancipated and given an equal chance and fair start to work and produce . . . But the Freedmen's Bureau comes and says we must take charge of these 4,000,000 slaves. The bureau comes along and proposes, at a cost of \$12,000,000 a year, to take charge of these slaves. You had already spent \$3,000,000,000 to set them free and give them a fair opportunity to take care of themselves - then these [Radical Republicans], who are such great friends of the people, tell us they must be taxed \$12,000,000 to sustain the Freedmen's Bureau.

Source: Andrew Johnson, campaign speech, September 3, 1866

Andrew Johnson (Modified)

Andrew Johnson delivered the following speech to Congress on March 2, 1867, after he vetoed legislation that would have given freedmen the right to vote.

The purpose and object of the bill is to change the entire structure and character of the State governments. Blacks have not asked for the privilege of voting. The vast majority of them have no idea what it means. The Federal Government has no jurisdiction, authority, or power to regulate such subjects for any State. To force the right of suffrage out of the hands of the white people and into the hands of the blacks is an arbitrary violation of this principle.

Source: Andrew Johnson, speech to Congress, March 2, 1867.

Vocabulary

jurisdiction: the official power to make legal decisions

suffrage: the right to vote

Guiding Questions

Thaddeus Stevens

1. (Sourcing) Thaddeus Stevens was a Radical Republican. What did Radical Republicans stand for?
2. (Close reading) Based on this document, what were three policies that the Radical Republicans proposed for Reconstruction?
3. (Context) Given what was going on in the country at the time, why might Democrats have opposed these plans?

Andrew Johnson

1. (Close reading) What reason did Andrew Johnson give for opposing funding to help the freed slaves?

2. (Contextualization) The first Johnson document is a campaign speech. How might this influence what he says?

3. (Close reading) What were two reasons why Andrew Johnson opposed giving African Americans the right to vote?

Write one paragraph in response to the following questions: Why was the Radical Republican plan for Reconstruction considered “radical”? Do you think it was “radical”?