40 Acres And A Mule Essay, Research Paper

Summary

In the pronouncement of “Special Field Order No. 15″ by General William T. Sherman,

Sherman gave a pronouncement that slaves could have 40 acres and a mule since the owners of plantations in the South fled their land so the slaves can claim it as theirs. The former slaves would raise the crops themselves and have the entire land as their own. The “Proclamation of Amnesty” by President Andrew Jackson did not support Sherman’s idea of land given to the former slaves. Jackson wanted to restore authority back to the U.S. so he gave pardon to all the Southern’s that rebelled against the union and he wanted their land to be given back to the owners. General Rufus Saxton wrote a “report” concerning how the southern blacks would respond. He wanted to fulfil the slaves hopes about getting land and he observed the positive side of getting the land to slaves. He saw the former slaves make settlements, they built schools, churches, roads and made vast improvements. “The Abandoned Lands” by Major General Oliver O. Howard talked about how Howard had to go to the slaves and convince them to give up the land back to the owners because of the President’s new policy. The Norfolk Virginian gave a statement about the “Rebellion at Taylor’s Farm.” At Taylor’s farm a meeting was made and several former slaves and white plantation owners talked about Taylor’s farm and how the white owners wanted it back. The former slaves said they would fight for it because of the pronouncement made my Sherman the land was rightfully theirs. “The Credit System” by D. Augustus Straker gave insight about the credit system that was created after the civil war to supposedly help the former slaves. The system would give credit to former slaves so that they could get farming tools and food and etc. Only the merchant that sold them all the items charged three times the actual price so the former slave would have to pay a lot more and would usually become in debt to the merchant the following year. According to the Grimes Family, their “Sharecropping Contract” would be too hard for former slaves to keep up with if they wanted to share land with the white plantation owner. If the former slave takes the contract but doesn’t fulfil it 100% then the owner would fine the person and get rich off of them and the former slave would be in debt and have to stay on the farm.

Analysis

Some individuals support land reform because they wanted to fulfil the slaves hopes that they too could own there own land and make a living on their own. They saw that slaves would make settlements and provide for their own without any help. Other individuals did not support the idea of land reform because they felt that since the North had won the war the Southern’s learned their lesson about not to rebel so they should be given all their property back even though the slaves would of claimed the land as their own. The individuals that opposed the idea of giving land to the slaves made it difficult for them to even get their own plot of land. The idea of sharecropping and the credit system looked appealing to many slaves so they tried the idea of both. Sharecropping let the slave share the land with the owner and they would split the earnings half way. But first the slave would have to go to a merchant to purchase all the equipment and items that he would need to survive. Since the slave had no money, he would use credit from the merchant. The merchant would hike up the prices and by the time of next year when the slave had to pay back the merchant he would either go broke or would be in debt. I believe that the idea of land reform that would make land available to the slaves if their owners fled was a good idea. Andrew Jackson was wrong for giving back the land to the owners because it would of taught them an even greater lesson by giving the white plantation owners the thought of having their land given to the slaves that worked on the land have having the slaves own it as if it was theirs from the beginning.