

**AMERICAN CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF AUSTRALIA  
(NEW SOUTH WALES CHAPTER)**

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN:**

**IDEALIST EMANCIPATOR OR POLITICAL REALIST?**

**THE POLITICS OF SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION**

**June 2007**



This paper has been prepared by John Diamond as the basis for his presentation at the June 2007 meeting of the New South Wales Chapter of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia.

It is the second in the series of lectures on the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America and is meant to follow on and complement John Cook's previous lecture: A SURPRISE NOMINATION – LINCOLN'S PATH TO THE PRESIDENCY.

These presentations are not intended to be a comprehensive study of Lincoln's life; rather, they seek to provide a series of snapshots of Lincoln's political genius that enabled him to guide the country through the turbulent times leading up to and throughout the Civil War.

The paper focuses primarily on Lincoln's actions regarding the issue of slavery from the time of his election until his death in April 1865. As the issue of slavery was one of the key issues around which the Southern States seceded it is important to understand not only Lincoln's actions, but his motivation behind those actions and to obtain a deeper understanding of why Lincoln, even today, is revered as a compassionate and very human and to a certain extent, tragic, figure, and whether he truly does deserve the reputation he now enjoys.

Today one hundred and forty seven years after his election, Lincoln's name no longer evokes the anger that seethed in the southern states as it did in that fateful time in November. Mention 'Abraham Lincoln' to the 'average man in the street' and most will associate him with 'freeing the slaves'. This lecture asks the question whether he really does deserve the title of "Great Emancipator".

This paper is commended to all those people who not only have an interest in the American Civil War, but to any person who believes in a 'fair go' and to those, who in Lincoln's words believe in :

“ the right to be free, to enjoy the fruits of their labour, to have a family and to acquire property”

*John Diamond*

In the few years of his Presidency, Abraham Lincoln changed the nature of his country, and gained a reputation, not just in his own nation, but abroad as well, as the epitome of humanity, compassion, justice and wisdom. He was posthumously given the title of “Great Emancipator” and is universally known as the man who ‘freed’ the slaves. But how accurate is this description? To understand Lincoln and fully appreciate his later fame, it is necessary to examine the motives behind such actions as the Emancipation Proclamation and his refusal to endorse the Crittenden Compromise. His anti-slavery views were slow in coming to the fore, but his moral outrage at slavery was tempered by his, almost fanatical, devotion to the Union. For the first eighteen months of his administration he took no steps to abolish slavery. But the title “Great Emancipator”, while inaccurate, was bestowed because he took steps in the right direction, whatever his underlying motives might have been.

There is no doubt that in Lincoln’s mind the preservation of the Union was his first priority. On the list of political values he placed none higher than the United States itself. The preservation of the Federal Union was more important than peace, abolition, state’s rights and even, arguably, the Constitution itself. Lincoln believed in the uniqueness of the United States. He perceived its government and society to be a unique experiment, and one that should, and would, be successful and serve as an example to the rest of the world. However this success had to be demonstrated to sceptical and less happy nations.<sup>1</sup>

It was Lincoln’s belief that the United States’ distinctiveness stemmed from its system of government. The source of America’s political prosperity and stability, the ideal of free government, meant that other ideas such as language, common descent, cultural tradition, historical territory or religion were set aside, to promote a form of nationalism that Lincoln espoused.<sup>2</sup> The Constitution and the Declaration of Independence were unique documents. It is for these reasons that he was prepared to go to any length to prevent the break up of the Union, even to war. He was not however, prepared to go as far in his attempts to prevent the extension of slavery. This could only be considered once a war was being fought for the preservation of the Union that he could proclaim the emancipation of the slaves.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it was only when the nation had been irrevocably split, and after nearly two years of bloody conflict did he take such a daring step.

Lincoln could not see the actions of the Southern States as anything other than as a rebellion.<sup>4</sup> While he accepted the fact that the states possessed the rights and powers reserved to them under the Constitution, he was equally adamant that secession was not one of those reserved rights. In his view therefore, secession was illegal and was contrary to the Constitution of the United States.<sup>5</sup> He was also convinced that secession was morally unjustified, and would do more harm than good. It would be a blow to democratic and free government the world over. It would prove to those ‘sceptical and unhappy nations’ that a democratic government lacked the necessary qualities for good and effective leadership.<sup>6</sup> It was to these ideals, of effective, democratic government, of the United States, to which Lincoln was intensely devoted.

The question therefore must be asked, that if he was so devoted to the preservation of the Union at any cost, why did he not give into the demands of the secessionist and pro-slavery states, to preserve that which, politically, he adored above all else, his precious Union? After his election, secessionists were urged to take no action until after his inauguration. Immediate secession had been the cry of the ‘fire eaters’ like William L Yancey of Alabama, Robert Toombs of Georgia and Robert Barnwell Rhett of South Carolina. They had argued that in the very act of electing Lincoln,

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<sup>1</sup> D. Fehrenbacher, ed. *The Leadership of Abraham Lincoln*, (New York, 1970), pp. 172-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p172.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p184.

<sup>4</sup> T.J. Pressley, *Americans Interpret their Civil War*, (New York, 1962), p35.

<sup>5</sup> Fehrenbacher, p185.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p186.

the North had declared war against the South. Not all southerners went so far or so fast. Many advocated delay, at least until he was in office and had committed some 'overt act'. If the South remained in the Union, it was argued, the Republican Party would not control Congress or the Supreme Court.

At the time of his election Lincoln had made no *public* stand as to his course of action regarding slavery. His attitude and purposes were sought by his opponents in speeches that he had made earlier, particularly those that he had delivered in his debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858. On the question of slavery and the territories the Republican platform was not altogether clear. Lincoln was urged to clarify and broadcast his position in public. Representatives from all sides of the political spectrum, whether radical abolitionists, Southern Unionists and even his own party members, urged him to issue authoritative statements, sympathetic to whichever group the petitioners represented. There were hopes for a compromise that would settle the matter and avoid any extreme action as the spectre of Civil War seemed to hang over the nation.<sup>7</sup> The compromise that was most widely supported was that of the Kentucky Senator John J Crittenden who proposed amendments to the Constitution.<sup>8</sup>

It consisted of six un-amendable amendments to the Constitution. These amendments would have made permanent the Missouri Compromise of 1820, denied Congress any power to interfere with the interstate slave trade, compelled Congress to compensate owners who lost slaves in the North through illegal interference with the fugitive slave laws, made perpetual the fugitive slave law and the three-fifths compromise to the Constitution, and denied to Congress any power to interfere with slavery in the existing Southern states. Therefore, the proposed amendments guaranteed slavery in the places where it already existed. The most important, as it was to become the most controversial, was the division of territories between slave and free, by reaffirming the old Missouri Compromise line.<sup>9</sup> The Crittenden Compromise gained great support, and many prominent Northerners and Southerners, Republicans and Democrats, endorsed it. The Proposal came to naught. Negroes and abolitionists were angered at the Crittenden's proposal that these amendments once introduced were to be consequently unamendable.<sup>10</sup>

Ultimately, the failure of the Crittenden Compromise was due to the man who loved the Union and would do anything to maintain it. Except endorse another compromise over slavery. For Lincoln to allow the compromise would mean that all the labour of the Republicans and those opposed to slavery, would have been for nothing and that the contest would have to wage all over again.<sup>11</sup> He also believed that continued compromises with the pro-slavery states would put the United States on the road to a slave empire.<sup>12</sup> Lincoln's attitude at this stage must be given careful consideration. He refused to give *in public* the same assurances as he did in private.<sup>13</sup> In private he was willing to approve Crittenden's proposal guaranteeing slavery within the states. He found no objection to the idea that Congress should recommend the repeal of the 'personal liberty' laws, which obstructed the return of fugitive slaves.

The key factor here, however is his refusal to give an endorsement on the proposal on the division of territories, into slave or free.<sup>14</sup> This was a fundamental issue. Lincoln would give no approval to the territorial proposal because it would, he believed, open the prospect of extending slavery into Cuba and elsewhere below the Rio Grande. When Lincoln's views were finally made public in the New York *Tribune* on December 22 1860, South Carolina had, two days earlier,

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<sup>7</sup> R. Current, *The Lincoln nobody knows*, (New York, 1964), p80-83.

<sup>8</sup> B. Quarles, *Lincoln and the Negro*, (New York, 1961), p63.

<sup>9</sup> A Brinkley, *American History: A Survey*, vol. 1, (New York, 1991) p265.

<sup>10</sup> Quarles, *op.cit.*, p63.

<sup>11</sup> D. Potter, *Lincoln and his Party during the Secession Crisis*, (London, 1962), pp157-8.

<sup>12</sup> Quarles, *op.cit.*, pp63-4.

<sup>13</sup> Potter, *op.cit.*, p159.

<sup>14</sup> Current, *op.cit.*, p89.

already seceded from the Union.<sup>15</sup> Political compromise on the issue of slavery was at its very heart a political death sentence for Lincoln's Republican Party. His refusal to compromise also came from a deep-seated and far sighted concern for the future of the USA. He had believed, a decade beforehand, that slavery would die out of its own accord but the events of the US- Mexican war and the extension of slavery into states where it had not existed in the former Mexican territories left him gravely concerned.

If Lincoln was concerned with preserving the Union he was also concerned with stopping the spread of slavery within the Union. This is particularly shown in his "House Divided" speech of June 16<sup>th</sup> 1858. It was this speech, and the Lincoln Douglas debates, conducted between August and October, 1858, that reveal how Lincoln felt about slavery within the Union. The "House Divided" speech clearly shows that Lincoln believed that the United States ' could not endure, permanently half slave and half free' and that the Union would one day 'become all of one thing, or all of another'.<sup>16</sup> The debates with Stephen A. Douglas clearly showed which path, Lincoln believed, the institution would take in the United States.

Lincoln was of the opinion that the phrase 'all men' in the Declaration did not exclude Negroes. Lincoln was morally outraged at slavery (even though he held a belief in white supremacy).<sup>17</sup> He believed that all men, black and white, had natural, God given rights. He could never consider the Negroes morally and intellectually the equal of whites but with regards to the laws, they were to be deemed equal. The Declaration and the Constitution enshrined these rights: the right to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. In essence, to Lincoln this implied the right to be free, to enjoy the fruits of his labour, to have a family and to acquire property.<sup>18</sup> It was these ideals that contributed to the greatness of the United States and therefore, in Lincoln's mind, for the Declaration and the Constitution to have validity, they had to be available to 'all men'. The legal status of the Negro would have to change. Given time, Lincoln believed, slavery could die out of its own accord, as long as it was not allowed to spread.<sup>19</sup>

Lincoln's morale outrage at the institution of slavery was tempered by his respect for private property, by his constitutionalism, by his fear of losing the support of the loyal slave states, by his understanding of the problems of coexistence between the two races, by his recognition of the depth of feeling and by the irreconcilable differences of opinions and attitudes between the North and South.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it must be remembered that initially Lincoln did not openly oppose slavery, he opposed the *extension* of slavery.<sup>21</sup> So by condemning slavery as morally wrong, by urging free western territories for white men (but omitting concrete proposals) and by pledging devotion to white supremacy at home, the Republicans were victorious in the elections of 1860.<sup>22</sup>

During the winter of 1860-61, Lincoln had to choose whether to hold the Union together with or without accepting a compromise. It was clear to him that the lame duck Buchanan was adopting a 'wait and see' approach. And from Buchanan's view point, the longer he 'sat and waited' the less likely that he himself would have to deal with the looming crisis. At the time it did not appear to Lincoln that to accept the compromise would mean peace or that its rejection would mean war.<sup>23</sup> Lincoln believed in a peaceful 'reconstruction' of the Union, through voluntary action by the Southern States. He placed his faith in the large body of Unionists in the South, and assumed that

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<sup>15</sup> Quarles, *op.cit.*, p63.

<sup>16</sup> D Fehrenbacher, ed., *Abraham Lincoln: A Documentary Portrait through his Speeches and writings*, (Sydney, 1964), p95.

<sup>17</sup> V.J.Voegel, *Free but not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War*, (Chicago, 1967), pp3-4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p4.

<sup>19</sup> Quarles, *op.cit.*, p37.

<sup>20</sup> Voegel, *op.cit.*, p4

<sup>21</sup> Fehrenbacher, *Leadership*, p131.

<sup>22</sup> Voegel, *op.cit.*, p4

<sup>23</sup> Potter, *op.cit.*, p219.

even though many may have supported secession initially, when they saw the new government acting in a peaceful and law-abiding way, secession would be repudiated. This belief was held by many, both in the North and the South.<sup>24</sup> Even though he was deeply concerned when South Carolina seceded, he still believed that the crises would be averted.

From the defeat of the Crittenden Compromise, until the inauguration of Lincoln, the Republicans attempted to facilitate the expected Unionist reaction in the South, and to prevent any developments that would hinder a peaceful reconstruction.<sup>25</sup> It was believed that the secessionists would destroy themselves by leading the pro-slavery states into an untenable position. This was why Lincoln and his party viewed the first acts of secession with such calm. Lincoln's increasingly unrealistic perceptions were significant because his opposition to the compromise led him to underestimate the crisis and thus precipitate war.<sup>26</sup> It was not because of his anti-slavery views that the Union was split, but because of his misconceived views on the depth of Southern feeling that led to the Civil War. This fact is frequently neglected when considering the actions, before and during the war, of the "Great Emancipator".

On the eve of the Civil War, Lincoln had no intention to emancipate the slaves. Abolitionists, both black and white, having waited in hopeful anxiety were greatly disappointed after Lincoln delivered his inaugural address.<sup>27</sup> Lincoln was no social revolutionary. He was a cautious politician, assailed from all sides by extremists from both pro and anti-slavery camps. Lincoln was also a man of his times and in this, he shared many of the racial prejudices of his contemporaries.<sup>28</sup> Lincoln believed that the Negro was mentally inferior, and even if he supported Negro freedom he in no way advocated Negro social or political equality. In his home state he supported the Illinois law forbidding intermarriage. He never advocated Negro office holding, Negro voting, or Negro service on juries. Lincoln, however, was not 'anti Negro', despite the strong racial prejudices of his time.<sup>29</sup>

Even after fighting began in earnest, Lincoln stuck to his long-held position on the slavery issue by countermmanding orders by Union generals to free slaves. In July 1861, General John C. Fremont -- the Republican party's unsuccessful 1856 Presidential candidate -- declared martial law in Missouri, and announced that all slaves of owners in the state who opposed the Union were free. President Lincoln immediately cancelled the order. Because the Southern states no longer sent representatives to Washington, abolitionists and radical Republicans wielded exceptional power in Congress, which responded to Lincoln's cancellation of Fremont's order by passing, on August 6, 1861, the (first) Confiscation Act. It provided that any property, including slaves, used with the owner's consent in aiding and abetting insurrection against the United States, was the lawful subject of prize and capture wherever found.<sup>30</sup>

In May 1862, Union General David Hunter issued an order declaring all slaves in Georgia, Florida and South Carolina to be free. Lincoln promptly revoked the order. An irate Congress responded by passing, in July, a second Confiscation Act that declared "forever free" all slaves whose owners were in rebellion, whether or not the slaves were used for military purposes. Lincoln refused to sign the Act until it was amended, stating he thought it an unconditional bill of attainder. Although he did not veto the amended law, Lincoln expressed his dissatisfaction with it. Furthermore, he did not faithfully enforce either of the Confiscation Acts.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, p224-30.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p249.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p247.

<sup>27</sup> Quarles, p65

<sup>28</sup> Feherenbacher, *Portrait*, pp129-131.

<sup>29</sup> Quarles, p36.

<sup>30</sup> Current, *op.cit.* p221.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p221.

Lincoln's first attempt at dismantling the institution of slavery was his proposal for compensated emancipation. For Lincoln this was particularly aimed at the border states: Kentucky, Delaware, Maryland and Missouri. To the President this was undoubtedly the fairest way of solving the problem of slavery, by proposing a 'pay for slaves' policy. He felt that as long as these States maintained slavery, their sympathies would always lay with the south. If slavery was abolished in these areas, their allegiance would remain with the North.<sup>32</sup> Even though his proposal met with very little support amongst the population of the targeted states, abolitionists everywhere, although wanting further action, were pleased that the President was attempting to do something and the legend of the "Great Emancipator" was being born.

Lincoln's plans for compensated emancipation had other underlying motives. Lincoln always feared racial conflict<sup>33</sup> and although he believed that there was plenty of room for both sides to live in the United States for all to be free, irreconcilable differences would always lead to conflict. In Lincoln's view the most outstanding solution to the whole racial dilemma could be solved by sending the Negroes out of the country.<sup>34</sup> His plans for compensated emancipation were based on the idea that the newly freed slaves would not stay in the United States. He planned to have the freed slaves deported. This was necessary to assuage the fears of Northern whites who believed that the country would be 'swamped' with newly released Negroes. It was not only these compensated emancipation slaves that Lincoln would have to deal with, but as the war was widening in scope, thousands of fugitive slaves from the southern states had drifted into the Union lines. There was a great fear, amongst farmers and unskilled labourers that an inundation of ex-slaves would reduce wages or, even worse, the poorer whites would find themselves unemployed.<sup>35</sup>

To have the slaves deported and settled either in Liberia or somewhere in South America would serve a dual purpose. It would rid the south of that 'institution' and it would rid the country of the coloured man. Slavery and the country's racial dilemma would both vanish simultaneously. It is rather ironic that the 'Great Emancipator' actually favoured ridding the country of the Negro. The colonisation scheme was not only an attempt at racial harmony, but also a political weapon. Lincoln sincerely believed in his deportation and colonisation program. He knew that he had little to lose politically and much to gain by supporting the removal of Negroes from the United States. It was also his attempt to convince voters in the Midwest elections of 1862, that the Republican Party had a solution to the race problem that would reconcile freedom for the slaves and white supremacy.<sup>36</sup> Although a few were enthusiastic, the vast majority of Negroes were opposed to Lincoln's colonisation scheme, so eventually, despite the President's eagerness, the scheme came to nothing and was abandoned.

The Emancipation Proclamation, the preliminary of which was issued on 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1862, five days after the Battle of Antietam, suddenly extended the union's war aims to include the overthrow of slavery in the South, as well as the preservation of the Union.<sup>37</sup> Many admirers of Lincoln view the Emancipation Proclamation as the grand climax of Lincoln's career. Many would argue that Lincoln had aimed at such a move for many years.<sup>38</sup> It was undoubtedly a bold and daring step, particularly by someone with Lincoln's cautious and conservative nature. The Emancipation Proclamation would change the social and economic pattern for the nation for all time.<sup>39</sup> So why was it issued?

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p101.

<sup>33</sup> Fehrenbacher, *Portrait*, p135.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p135.

<sup>35</sup> Vogoel, *op.cit.*, p5

<sup>36</sup> Vogoel, *op.cit.*, pp45-6.

<sup>37</sup> Pressley, *op.cit.*, p35.

<sup>38</sup> Current, *op.cit.*, p215.

<sup>39</sup> B. P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography*, New York, 1952 pp343-44.

In its initial impact, the Proclamation freed very few slaves, if in fact any at all. It did not apply to the slaves in the Border States and in areas already under Federal control in the South. In other words, the Emancipation Proclamation, applied *only* to slaves in areas where Lincoln's government had no authority. It did not apply to areas where he did have the authority to act. Or more to the point, areas that would allow his authority to be acted upon. The slaves that were owned by slaveholders in the Union loyal areas were not covered by the Proclamation.<sup>40</sup> So what was the point? Why issue a Proclamation over areas that refuse to acknowledge your authority? Besides the humanitarian and moral aspects of the Proclamation, it is necessary to consider what other impacts the Emancipation Proclamation had.

In the first eighteen months of his administration, Lincoln had endorsed and shaped policies to ensure the support of Republicans, war Democrats and loyal Border State slave owners. Numerically, the largest group were the antislavery republicans and he could no longer disregard their views and still command the support he needed to win the war.<sup>41</sup> Within his own party the Radicals, committed to the destruction of slavery, became the dominant faction and were determined to use the war as an opportunity to abolish the hated institution.<sup>42</sup> The trend of public opinion in the North favoured abolition. Lincoln had tried to court the favour of the Border States with compensated emancipation and had failed. He now sought to appease the majority in his own party.<sup>43</sup>

Lincoln's campaign pledges, his oath to preserve the Constitution and his own inclinations had prevented him from taking steps to attack slavery directly. This same oath to preserve the Constitution had pledged him to preserve the government and the nation by any and every means at his disposal. He also believed that measures otherwise unconstitutional might be acceptable, if and when, the nation was in mortal danger. In Lincoln's mind, any attempt to save the Constitution would prove in vain if, in his attempts to save slavery, he watched the nation destroy itself.<sup>44</sup>

Lincoln waited for a battlefield victory to make his Proclamation. After a string of resounding defeats, Antietam was the closest the Union armies in Virginia had come to victory in battle since the beginning of the war. The Proclamation was a drastic measure designed to weaken the Southern States. The abolition of slavery would paralyse the economic system of the enemy. Such a proclamation could be conceivably justified as a war measure, in fact a legitimate act of war.<sup>45</sup> This was not an original idea in itself. Lord John Murray, the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dunmore, the last British Governor of Virginia had passed a similar measure in 1776 offering freedom to the slaves of 'patriots' or in his terms 'wicked rebels', in return for service in the royal army. By the end of 1862 Lincoln, like Dunmore, was ready to exploit the white nightmare of being engulfed by the much greater numbers of blacks. Like Lincoln, Dunmore was no social revolutionary and whatever damage would be done to those who remained loyal would be repaired and restored after the war when the rebels were returned to their correct allegiance.<sup>46</sup> Lincoln of course would take the concept of 'service' by southern Negroes a step further: by enlisting many tens of thousands into the Union army. Approximately 180,000 African-Americans comprising 163 units served in the Union Army during the Civil War, and many more African-Americans served in the Union Navy. Both free Africans-Americans and runaway slaves joined the fight. On July 17, 1862, Congress passed two acts allowing the enlistment of African-Americans, but official enrolment occurred only after the September, 1862 issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

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<sup>40</sup> Fehrenbacher, *op.cit.*, p137.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, *op.cit.*, p333.

<sup>42</sup> Fehrenbacher, *op.cit.*, p 103.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas, *op.cit.*, p333.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p333.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p333.

<sup>46</sup> S Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, slaves and the American Revolution*, London 2005, p89.

Lincoln himself specifically cited "military necessity" as his reason for issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. After more than a year of combat, and in spite of its great advantages in industrial might and numbers, federal forces had still not succeeded in breaking the South. At this critical juncture of the war, the President apparently now hoped, a formal edict abolishing slavery in the Confederate states would strike a blow at the Confederacy's ability to wage war by encouraging dissension, escapes, and possibly revolt among its large slave labour force.<sup>47</sup>

As the war progressed, black labour had become ever more critical in the hard-pressed Confederacy. Blacks planted, cultivated and harvested the food that they then transported to the Confederate armies. Blacks raised and butchered the beef, pigs and chicken used to feed the Confederate troops. They wove the cloth and knitted the socks to clothe the grey-uniformed soldiers. As Union armies invaded the South, tearing up railroads and demolishing bridges, free blacks and slaves repaired them. They toiled in the South's factories, shipping yards, and mines. In 1862, the famous Tredegar iron works advertised for 1,000 slaves. In 1864, there were 4,301 blacks and 2,518 whites in the iron mines of the Confederate states east of the Mississippi.<sup>48</sup>

Blacks also served with the Confederate military forces as mechanics, teamsters, and common labourers. They cared for the sick and scrubbed the wounded in Confederate hospitals. Nearly all of the South's military fortifications were constructed by black labourers. Most of the cooks in the Confederate army were slaves. Of the 400 workers at the Naval arsenal in Selma, Alabama, in 1865, 310 were blacks. Blacks served with crews of Confederate blockade-runners and stoked the fire rooms of the South's warships.<sup>49</sup>

Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, the legendary cavalry commander, said in a postwar interview: "When I entered the army I took 47 Negroes into the army with me, and 45 of them were surrendered with me ... These boys stayed with me, drove my teams, and better Confederates did not live."

On several occasions, Lincoln explained his reasons for issuing the Proclamation. On September 23, 1862, the day after the preliminary proclamation was issued, Lincoln met with a delegation of pro-abolitionist Christian ministers, and told them bluntly: "Understand, I raise no objections against it [slavery] on legal or constitutional grounds ... I view the matter [emancipation] as a practical war measure, to be decided upon according to the advantages or disadvantages it may offer to the suppression of the rebellion."

To Salmon Chase, his Treasury Secretary, the President justified the Proclamation's limits: "The original [preliminary] proclamation has no constitutional or legal justification, except as a military measure," he explained. "The exceptions were made because the military necessity did not apply to the exempted localities. Nor does that necessity apply to them now any more than it did then." Horace Greeley, editor of the influential New York Tribune, called upon the President to immediately and totally abolish slavery in an emphatic and prominently displayed editorial published August 20, 1862. Lincoln responded in a widely-quoted letter: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the coloured race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union ."

Concern about growing sentiment in the North to end slavery, along with sharp criticism from prominent abolitionists, was apparently another motivating factor for the President. (Abolitionists even feared that the Confederate states might give up their struggle for independence before the

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<sup>47</sup> B Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, New York 1952, p333.

<sup>48</sup> John H Franklin *From Slavery to Freedom* New York, 1964, pp283-286.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, pp286.

January first deadline, and thus preserve the institution of slavery.) Lincoln assured Edward Stanly, a pro-slavery Southerner he had appointed as military governor of the occupied North Carolina coast, that "the proclamation had become a civil necessity to present the radicals from openly embarrassing the government in the conduct of the war."

The Preliminary Proclamation also had an effect on international relations. Moral outrage against slavery strongly affected public sentiment in Britain and France.<sup>50</sup> The Proclamation was a blow to the Confederacy. The Southern delegations to the governments of Europe could no longer gain the recognition that the Confederate States so desperately needed. Although sympathetic to the South many of Britain and France's aristocracy, nevertheless still believed that slavery fatally handicapped the rebels.<sup>51</sup> Public opinion in both nations would not allow their respective governments to recognise a nation whose economic base depended on slave labour, despite the need for Confederate cotton. Britain's warehouses were full and by 1864 she was obtaining regular supply from India. With this one blow Lincoln shattered the main pillar upon which the Southern President, Jefferson Davis, had hope for since the commencement of the war. Europe would give no recognition to the Confederacy and would not intervene in the conflict.<sup>52</sup>

The act that perhaps qualifies Lincoln for his title was one of his last. The end of chattel slavery was a consequence of the Thirteenth Amendment. Lincoln played his part in bringing about this important constitutional change. When he was re-elected in 1864, it was on a platform that included a plank which stated that slavery was the cause of the rebellion and that a constitutional change was required to "strike a blow at this gigantic evil".<sup>53</sup> The new Congress with its overwhelming Republican majority encouraged Lincoln to feel justified that he had a mandate from the people for his new constitutional amendment. The amendment went to the states for ratification. One by one the states voted to act favourably upon it. For abolitionists, any lingering doubts were dispelled and many doubters were satisfied. The Thirteenth Amendment was the underlying reason for Lincoln's title, more so than the Emancipation Proclamation.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately Lincoln did not live to see the adoption of the Amendment.

Although Lincoln's first priority was the preservation of the Union, it is difficult not to accept that Lincoln did have real sympathy for the plight of the Negro. He grew in sympathy and succeeded in breaking the narrow bonds of his early environment. It is evident that his views and beliefs changed as he matured and this helps explain the contradictory images of Lincoln, from white supremacist, to friend of the common man, both black and white, and finally to be hailed as the 'Great Emancipator'.<sup>55</sup> The title is only misleading if one supports the view that Lincoln set out to free the slaves without considering his devotion to the Union. It is appropriate however if Lincoln is considered as a symbol of man's ability to outgrow his prejudices and those of his society and his action were partly in response to an institution that he felt was a moral wrong.

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<sup>50</sup> D.P.Cook, *The North, The South, and the Powers, 1861-1865*, New York, 1974, p195.

<sup>51</sup> Crook, *op.cit.*,p195.

<sup>52</sup> S Foote, *The Civil War, A Narrative, Vol 1: From Fort Sumter to Perryville*, New York, 1986, p709.

<sup>53</sup> Current., *op.cit.*,p229-239.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, pp233-4.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, pp234-236.