

Effects of Cotton Gin on Slavery

Students Name:

Institutional Affiliation

Course:

Date:

Eli Whitney born on 8 December, 1765 is credited with the invention of the cotton gin in the year 1794, a machine that was used to greatly enhance the separation of cotton fibers from cotton seeds using hooks to extract unprocessed cotton through a mesh screen that separated the cotton fiber from cotton husks and seeds. Formerly, before its inception cotton production involved separating seeds and husks from the cotton fiber by hand, a meticulous and labor-intensive activity carried out by slave workers on cotton plantation farms and required several working hours to produce a pound of cotton lint thus deemed merely profitable.

Implementing mechanization through the use of the cotton gin had an overall effect of heightening the production of cotton lint to 50 pounds per day reducing the price of cotton fabric. Growing cotton became more profitable and more land in terms of acreage was scaled up for use in cotton production and was evidenced by large sums allocated for cotton plantation farming in deep South American states such as Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. Though the tedious task of hand-picking cotton fiber from cotton seeds was weightlifted, the overall labor required to work in cotton plantation farms multiplied and the demand for slaves increased. With increased demand for fiber, plantation owners constantly continued to acquire large tracts of land this in effect caused a steep increase human labor required to plant, harvest and cultivate large plantation fields. As a result, there was an enormous rise in slave population. It is recorded that from 1790 to 1860 the number of states practicing slave trade in the South American states rose from 6 to 15, and the number of slaves shipped into the American continent grew from 700, 000 to 3 million by 1950 an indicator of changing in the economy to that of a slave dependent.

On the plantation farms, gang labor was practiced. Slaves were rounded up into a work crew and a white overseer stationed to supervise, and discipline when necessary a large number of slaves simultaneously. Work conditions in plantation farms were inhumane and was evidenced during peak harvesting seasons where slave workers would work from dusk till dawn. Unrelenting punishments exerted on slave workers in plantation farms was frequented with beatings and whippings used to compel defiant slave workers. The severity depended on the magnitude of the offense committed by a slave worker, slaves who tried to escape or resist labor were punished with mutilation of limbs or occasionally death. Furthermore, the slaveowners were credited for both physical and sexual violence against the slave workers, forced labor acute deprivation and mistreatment with the systems they enforced. Slave trade further contributed to the displacement of families as slave workers were constantly sold off from one slave trader to another. Due to poor working conditions and extreme brutality exercised by slave masters, many slave workers lost their lives. The packing of slaves into a slave ship during transportation also sparked off a spread of diseases.

In nutshell, the adoption of the Cotton Gin not only to did it reduce the intensive labor effort required in the production of cotton but also served to strengthen the tide of slavery across the South American continent.

References

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