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Am. History Pd.8 DBQ- Essay

Technological advances have always impacted humans, either in a positive way or even a negative way. The cotton gin had a huge impact on the United States. The cotton gin caused more cotton to be produced and was given the name “King Cotton” in the South. Cotton became the leading export of the United States after a few years of the invention of the cotton gin. Unfortunately, it also spiked the population of slaves in the South. The cost and value of a slave tripled from $600 in 1800 to $1,800 in 1860. Cotton production went from only 73,000 bales of cotton in 1800 to 3,841,000 bales of cotton, a difference of 3,768,000 bales of cotton. The mass production of cotton caused the North to become very industrialized with many factories. The many factories would demand for more cotton to produce more clothing and then more factories would be built with the endless waves of the immigration workforce. This was a cycle where more slaves would be bought to pick the cotton, more cotton produced because of the cotton gin, and then more factory workers to make even more clothing in textile mills using the sewing machine.

The invention of the cotton gin created many positive effects to the appreciation of the South. The cotton gin’s design was a work of great efficiency by its inventor, Eli Whitney. It had a series of dividers such as a spin-wheel to sort out some seeds and then pass through a metal mesh with a saw that cut up the rest of the seeds from the valuable cotton (Doc. 1). The final product was known as lint cotton. This increased the separation of cotton from the seeds to fifty times faster than the by the human hand. The cotton gin increased cotton production from 73,000 bales in 1800 to a colossal production of 3,841,000 bales in 1860 (Doc. 2). Cotton earned the name “King Cotton” by becoming the chief United States export at 57.5% of all exports (Doc. 2). The total crop value of cotton was $8,085,000 in 1800 while in 1860; it was a booming $248,757,000 (Doc. 2). The cotton gin reduced the labor of removing the seeds from the cotton (Doc. 3a). The cotton gin played a big part in the revival of the Southern economy. The agrarian economy of the South was failing because a lot of the cotton produced was wasted because the stage of removing the seeds from cotton simply took too long. The cotton plants would soon die before half of the field was even picked. The cotton gin saved the Southern economy by making the stage of removing the seeds from cotton quicker and easier. The continuation of the Industrial Revolution now depended on the immense cotton production because the textile mills needed to make clothing were in need of the cotton. The cotton gin had increased the power of the United States by powering up the Southern economy again.

The cotton gin, unfortunately, had many drawbacks to it. The cotton gin increased the popularity of African slaves in the South. The slaves were needed to pick the cotton and work it through the cotton gin. The cost and the value of a slave became dependent on the cotton production. Since more and more cotton was being produced, slaves were very important to plantation owners. The slave cost was about $600 in 1800. It tripled to about $1,800 in 1860 (Doc. 2). The growing of cotton increased demand for slave labor and land. The count of slave states was also rising. In 1790, there were 6 slave states (Doc. 3a). In 1860, though, there were 15 slave states (Doc. 3a). By 1860, almost 1 in 3 Southerners were slaves (Doc. 3a). The cotton production also caused more land to be developed to be plantations, making the growth of cities and factories slow (Doc. 3b). The price of land became very high (Doc. 3b). The cruel cycle of slaves being bought to bring in profit from the cotton which was used to buy more slaves was common in the Southern plantations. Slave life was unbearably harsh. Many slaves were beaten when they became tired and couldn’t work. Slaves were not allowed the right to court, to be educated, bear arms and even leave the plantation without the consent of the owner. Plantation owners with many slaves were usually the controllers of Southern politics and on top of the social class. This was known as “cottonocracy”. The cotton gin led to, indirectly, a strong feeling of sectionalism, mainly between the North and South. The slave increase because of the cotton gin led to different beliefs. The North believed in the abolition of slavery (with the exception of some factory owners); the South believed that slaves were essential to their way of life, and that the North was threatening it. These disagreements soon led to the grim years of the Civil War. The cotton gin also caused more land to be used because cotton easily sucked out the nutrients in the fertile Southern soil. This encouraged Manifest Destiny, the belief that Americans had the right to take land toward the West in North America. Manifest Destiny tightened tensions with the Native Americans, who would fight until the end to protect their land. The South became to be a notorious state of where slaves were owned as if they were “things” and that the South had made tensions with many groups of people: the African slaves, the North and even the Native Americans.

The cotton gin had become an invention that shaped the American desperation. The South was desperate of a miracle to save its dying economy and became desperate of saving slavery, even trying the choice of seceding and fighting a war. The North became desperate of cotton to power its industrialized economy and became desperate of eliminating slavery from America. The cotton gin revived slavery, which ultimately led to the Civil War, the fight between the North and the South.