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**A House Divided: The South at the
Beginning of the War - I**

Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is "A House Divided."

Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: As the bonds that held the American Republic frayed and gradually reached the breaking point in the beginning of the 1860s, the two regions faced the prospect of separation and perhaps violent conflict. They were by no means equally matched.

The 1850 census revealed an ominous demographic trend. Slave states were fast slipping behind free states in total population. This trend was driven by several factors. Land was not as abundant in the South since the region was not growing and much of the land which remained was devoted to large plantations involved in cash crop agriculture, cotton and tobacco. Jobs simply were not being created for non-land-owning unskilled white laborers. They were forced to compete with slave labor for the few jobs that were available. Therefore, three times as many whites were migrating out of the South than whites were moving out of the North into the South. In addition, the vast majority of

immigrants from Europe and to a lesser extent, Asia, moved into the free states. The South had little available land and fewer jobs.

While the American birth rate, which had been outstripping Europe for decades, actually declined from 1800 to 1850, the overall population soared due to immigration. Thus by 1860 out of a total of about 32,000,000 U.S. inhabitants, the future Confederacy in any conflict could only fill its armies from a population of just over five million whites. There were 3.5 million slaves and a tiny number of free blacks. They could be hewers of wood and could dig fortifications but few whites would even consider arming slaves even to defend the

homeland. Not until its cause was on the ropes in spring 1865 did the Confederacy vote to put a gun in a black man's hand. Next time: Southern industry and transportation, such as they were.

From Richmond Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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