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**A House Divided: The Southern
Economy, Such as it Was**

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 American sectional crisis loomed in the 1840s and 1850s, thoughtful Southern leaders were growing alarmed over the economic disparity between slave and free states. By nearly indicator, the region that would comprise the Confederacy was

falling behind. Industrial canal mileage was just 14% of the national total. Southern railroads comprised about a third of the nation's trackage. By the war years, Southern manufacturing capacity was less than a fifth of the national whole. For instance, a single Massachusetts town, Lowell, had more textile spindles in operation than all eleven Confederate states combined.

Some Southern industrial boosters such as James B.D. DeBow lamented what appeared to be unrelenting economic vassalage and urged that the south engage in strenuous efforts at development. "The North grows rich and powerful whilst we, at best, are stationary."

To its credit the South did make improvements in its economic circumstances in the 1850s, but the North grew much faster, leaving the slaves states far behind. By the time of the war one bitter Alabama writer voiced his frustration about the region's clear economic dependency. Southerners, he wrote, ride on Yankee saddles, read Yankee books, and even assert their rights on Yankee paper, with Yankee pens filled with Yankee ink. Even the one area where Southern superiority was clear, that of staple agriculture, had a downside. Like some third world country in modern parlance, cotton might be grown in the slavocracy, but it was shipped North or to Europe where the value added

commodity, the cloth produced with that cotton, once sold, made fabulously rich the industrialists who then sold it back to Southerners at a premium to clothe the slaves who grew it. Next time: the irresistible force of King Cotton.

From Richmond, Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.

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