



Slavery's Opponents and Defenders

Student Name _____ Date _____

James Henry Hammond, "The Mudsill Theory," (1858):

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h3439t.html>

Question	Answer
According to Sen. Hammond, what makes societies civilized and why did he think this justified the enslavement of black people in America?	
What does Sen. Hammond mean by "the very mud-sill of society and of political government"?	
According to Sen. Hammond, why is the South more civilized than the North?	
Why does Sen. Hammond believe slaves exist in the North as well as the South? Who are these "slaves"?	
Why does Sen. Hammond believe southern slaves have a better life than northern "slaves"?	



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Excerpt from Abraham Lincoln, "Address Before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society" (1859):
http://www.nal.usda.gov/speccoll/exhibits/lincoln/lincoln_wisconsin.html

The world is agreed that labor is the source from which human wants are mainly supplied. There is no dispute upon this point. From this point, however, men immediately diverge. Much disputation is maintained as to the best way of applying and controlling the labor element. By some it is assumed that labor is available only in connection with capital--that nobody labors, unless somebody else, owning capital, somehow, by the use of that capital, induces him to do it. Having assumed this, they proceed to consider whether it is best that capital shall hire laborers, and thus induce them to work by their own consent; or buy them, and drive them to it without their consent. Having proceeded so far they naturally conclude that all laborers are necessarily either hired laborers, or slaves. They further assume that whoever is once a hired laborer, is fatally fixed in that condition for life; and thence again that his condition is as bad as, or worse than that of a slave. This is the "mud-sill" theory.

But another class of reasoners hold the opinion that there is no such relation between capital and labor, as assumed; and that there is no such thing as a freeman being fatally fixed for life, in the condition of a hired laborer, that both these assumptions are false, and all inferences from them groundless. They hold that labor is prior to, and independent of, capital; that, in fact, capital is the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed--that labor can exist without capital, but that capital could never have existed without labor. Hence they hold that labor is the superior--greatly the superior--of capital.

They do not deny that there is, and probably always will be, a relation between labor and capital. The error, as they hold, is in assuming that the whole labor of the world exists within that relation. A few men own capital; and that few avoid labor themselves, and with their capital, hire, or buy, another few to labor for them. A large majority belong to neither class--neither work for others, nor have others working for them. Even in all our slave States, except South Carolina, a majority of the whole people of all colors, are neither slaves nor masters. In these Free States, a large majority are neither hirers or hired. Men, with their families--wives, sons and daughters--work for themselves, on their farms, in their houses and in their shops, taking the whole product to themselves, and asking no favors of capital on the one hand, nor of hirelings or slaves on the other. It is not forgotten that a considerable number of persons mingle their own labor with capital; that is, labor with their own hands, and also buy slaves or hire freemen to labor for them; but this is only a mixed, and not a distinct class. No principle stated is disturbed by the existence of this mixed class. Again, as has already been said, the opponents of the "mud-sill" theory insist that there is not, of necessity, any such thing as the free hired laborer being fixed to that condition for life. There is demonstration for saying this. Many independent men, in this assembly, doubtless a few years ago were hired laborers. And their case is almost if not quite the general rule.

The prudent, penniless beginner in the world, labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land, for himself; then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new

beginner to help him. This, say its advocates, is free labor--the just and generous, and prosperous system, which opens the way for all--gives hope to all, and energy, and progress, and improvement of condition to all. If any continue through life in the condition of the hired laborer, it is not the fault of the system, but because of either a dependent nature which prefers it, or improvidence, folly, or singular misfortune. I have said this much about the elements of labor generally, as introductory to the consideration of a new phase which that element is in process of assuming. The old general rule was that educated people did not perform manual labor. They managed to eat their bread, leaving the toil of producing it to the uneducated. This was not an insupportable evil to the working bees, so long as the class of drones remained very small. But now, especially in these free States, nearly all are educated--quite too nearly all, to leave the labor of the uneducated, in any wise adequate to the support of the whole. It follows from this that henceforth educated people must labor. Otherwise, education itself would become a positive and intolerable evil. No country can sustain, in idleness, more than a small percentage of its numbers. The great majority must labor at something productive. From these premises the problem springs, "How can labor and education be the most satisfactory combined?"

Question	Answer
Does Lincoln believe that how you make a living is a fixed or permanent condition?	
According to Lincoln, in his day did most people (a) work for others, (b) work for themselves, or (c) hire laborers to work for them? Does Lincoln think this was different in the southern slaveholding states than in the northern free states?	
Does Lincoln believe a poor person can become wealthy? If so, what is the path to prosperity?	
How does Lincoln explain folks who remain "hired laborers" throughout their life?	
According to Lincoln, what advantages does free labor have over the "mud sill" approach to making a living?	