

REVIEW  
CHAPTER  
**4**

Section 4

SKILLBUILDER PRACTICE *Forming Generalizations*

*The decisions by the Supreme Court during the 1870s had a major impact on efforts to make Reconstruction in the South work. What do the decisions and their effects reveal about the influence of the Supreme Court in general? Read the passage below, then answer the questions at the bottom of the page. (See Skillbuilder Handbook, p. R16.)*

**The Slaughterhouse Cases** In 1869 the legislature of the state of Louisiana had agreed to give all the slaughterhouse business in New Orleans to one company and to close all the other slaughterhouses. The butchers whose businesses had been closed sued the state for illegally taking away their occupation, in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment guarantee that no state could “abridge the privileges or immunities” of a United States citizen.

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Louisiana legislature and against the butchers. Basically, the Court interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment to mean that protection of rights under the amendment applied only to the rights people had because they were citizens of the nation, such as the right to travel safely between two states. The amendment did not apply, the Court said, to the basic civil rights a person acquires by being a citizen of a state. As a result, the federal government was not required to protect those civil rights from the states. The Fourteenth Amendment had been intended to prevent the

states from infringing on the rights of former slaves. The Supreme Court’s decision nearly nullified that intent.

**The Weakening of Reconstruction** The ruling in the *Slaughterhouse* cases and in other cases before the Supreme Court in the 1870s signaled the Court’s pulling of its support for Reconstruction. State and local officials found numerous loopholes in the laws to limit the rights of African-American men, confirming fears among Northerners that Reconstruction’s goal of equality could not be enforced.

Gradually, political support for Reconstruction also dwindled, helped by President Grant’s reluctance to use federal power in state and local affairs. Reconstruction officially ended in the South with the political deal known as the Compromise of 1877. By then, Southern Democrats had replaced Republicans in state legislatures and reversed Republican policies, thus limiting the rights and opportunities of free African-American men.

1. What were some short-term effects of the Court’s decision in the *Slaughterhouse* cases?

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2. What were some long-term effects?

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3. How would you generalize about the Supreme Court’s influence on other areas of American politics?

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