Man That Blocks Up the Highway political cartoon, 1866

PERMANENT ID:
12338

LANGUAGE:
English

DATE:
1866

IMAGE DESCRIPTION:
Men driving carriages labeled "Freedmen's Bureau," "Civil Rights," and "Reconstruction" find their road blocked by a large log labeled "Veto." In front of the roadblock stands US president Andrew Johnson, who in 1865 vetoed the Civil Rights Act (it eventually passed in spite of his veto) and pardoned former Confederates who swore allegiance to the United States. In 1866, Johnson also vetoed an updated version of a bill to authorize the Freedmen's Bureau, which was established in 1865 to aid and protect the rights of freed slaves. Johnson, standing at the center of the image, is depicted with donkey ears. He describes the carriage drivers as "Radical Republicans" and shakes the hand of a man he has pardoned for counterfeiting. At left, former Confederate soldiers shake their fists at the men driving the carriages as they boast of killing Union officers during the Civil War, threaten to whip and collar the Northerners, and declare loyalty to Johnson. Vice president William Seward, standing behind the Johnson, pours whiskey for the Southerners. At right, Emperor Napoleon III of France puts his arm around John Bull, symbolizing Great Britain, and expresses admiration for Johnson. Boxes of pardons and political appointments for Southerners stand at Napoleon and John Bull's feet. Behind the roadblock, the carriage drivers discuss ancient Roman tribunes, elected representatives of the people's rights. This cartoon criticizes Johnson's leniency toward the South in the aftermath of the Civil War, which many Northerners viewed as a betrayal, and his opposition to Radical Republican goals of assisting former slaves and ensuring equal rights for Americans, regardless of race.

FORMAT:
Lithographs; Political cartoons