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A D D R E S S
OF THE
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE
CONSTITUTIONAL UNION PARTY *National*
TO THE *Committee*
PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

ROOMS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,
357 D street, Washington, D. C., August 1, 1860.

FELLOW-CITIZENS: We beg leave to present to you, for your consideration, a few of the reasons which, in our judgment, make it the imperative duty of the reflecting and patriotic voters of the United States to cast their suffrages at the coming Presidential election for JOHN BELL and EDWARD EVERETT, the candidates of the Constitutional Union party. All men, whatever be their political convictions, and in whatever parts of the country they may live, must admit that our political condition at this time is at once unnatural and alarming. In all free countries, governed by representative bodies, there are, and ever must be, political parties. The natural division of these parties is in conformity with certain original principles in humanity itself. One party represents permanency, and one progression; one the propelling and one the guiding principle. The prosperity and healthy growth of free countries depend upon the adjustment and proportion of the forces represented by these two parties, moving within the sphere of the Constitution, and alike inspired by patriotic impulse. The parties which, under various names, have, until a few years past, divided the country, have represented, or professed to represent, these principles, though it has often happened that the particular issues on which they were opposed were accidental, and not essential.

THE SLAVERY QUESTION.

But recently a change has come over the spirit of our politics, and the natural antagonism of parties has been disturbed. In fifteen of the thirty-three States which now compose our Confederacy, the institution of African slavery exists; and all admit that, within these States, it is entirely beyond the sphere and jurisdiction of the National Government. At the time of the formation of the Constitution it had a legal existence, at least, in nearly all the States. From that time to this it has been a subject powerfully moving the sympathies and passions of a portion of the community, and it cannot be denied that it has considerably enhanced the difficulty of governing and administering the country. But the grave questions which grew out of the existence of slavery were always met with that wisdom and patriotism which were requisite for their adjustment and solution. The Constitution itself was the birth of a spirit of generous concession and magnanimous compromise; and in a like spirit the country was long governed. One crisis of more than common magnitude and peril occurred in 1820,

upon the admission of Missouri; and another in 1850, upon the admission of California; but both were happily passed, and in both cases, after some moments of anxious suspense, the coals of strife were quenched, and harmony was restored.

At the adjournment of Congress in 1850, the country was at peace. There was no portion of the territory of the United States which had not its condition fixed by positive, and as was supposed, irrevocable law. The anti-slavery agitation had been mainly confined to a few over-zealous persons in certain localities. It had excited a disturbing force in the politics of some of the States; it had sent some ardent partisans to the national legislature; but it had no marked influence upon the politics of the nation. No better proof can be adduced in support of this position, than the fact, that at the Presidential election in the autumn of 1852, Mr. Hale, the candidate of the Free-soil party, received but 158,123 votes, to Mr. Pierce's 1,596,395, and General Scott's 1,393,089.

REPEAL OF THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE.

But this auspicious calm was disturbed, and all the winds of sectional strife were let loose by events occurring between the Presidential election of 1852 and that of 1856. Prominent among these were the untoward abrogation of the Missouri Compromise in 1854, the acts of violence which occurred in Kansas, and the persistent efforts of the Federal Administration to force that Territory in the Union. So great was the effect produced by these causes, that instead of Mr. Hale's meagre vote of 158,128, Col. Fremont, the Republican candidate, had 1,341,514, to Mr. Buchanan's 1,838,232, and Mr. Fillmore's 874,707. Since that time the Republican party has maintained its imposing character, and now presents as formidable a front before the country as it ever did.

REPEAL OF THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE A DEMOCRATIC MEASURE.

Great pains have been taken in the northern States by Republican speakers to represent the disturbance of the Missouri Compromise as a Southern measure, and one of the acts of what they are wont to call the slave power; but such speakers show more party zeal than love of truth. The feelings in regard to that compromise was substantially the same in both sections of the country; each conceived that it had yielded something of constitutional right, but both acquiesced in the result as a measure of healing and peace. Its repeal took the North and South alike by surprise; not a petition to that effect was presented from any southern State, and the hand that set this disastrous ball in motion was the hand of a northern Senator. Thirteen Senators voted against him, but thirty-seven voted with him, and of these fourteen were from the northern States; had these fourteen voted the other way, the compromise would not have been disturbed. The measure was a Democratic measure, and the leaders of the Democratic party are alone responsible for it, and for its consequences. They having sown the wind, are now reaping the whirlwind. The retribution which has fallen upon their once powerful organization can awaken no sympathy, for it is no more than the righteous penalty exacted from those who

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break the law of right. Their party is now cleft in twain, and the two divided portions turn towards each other a countenance of "irrepressible conflict" and unextinguishable animosity. There are no quarrels like family quarrels, and there is no hatred like the hatred that once was love.

MR. DOUGLAS AND MR. BRECKINRIDGE.

Mr. Douglas, representing the principle or rather the policy (for we deny it the name of principle) of popular sovereignty, is strong at the North. Mr. Breckinridge, representing the doctrine of national intervention in behalf of slavery, and identified with the present Administration, is strong at the South. Mr. Douglas will probably command a larger popular vote than Mr. Breckinridge, but he certainly cannot carry a single southern State, and unaided by other parties his success in any northern State is questionable. It is doubtful whether Mr. Breckinridge can obtain the vote of more than one southern State, and he cannot hope to carry a single one in the North.

NO CHANCE FOR DOUGLAS OR BRECKINRIDGE.

But we deem it unnecessary to speculate upon an event which can never take place. The election of either Mr. Douglas or Mr. Breckinridge is simply an impossibility, and the Democratic party North and South may as well look this fact steadily in the face to-day as hereafter, for to this conclusion they must come at last. A political house divided against itself cannot stand. Every man in the country of sound mind, whose wish is not father to his thought, must be convinced that neither of the Democratic candidates can be chosen by a popular vote.

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY A SECTIONAL PARTY.

Before the people of the United States the contest is between Mr. Bell and Mr. Lincoln; and, assuming this as a fixed fact, we proceed to state some of the reasons which should induce all well-wishers to their country to vote for the former rather than the latter. These reasons apply with equal force to the North and the South.

The great, the obvious, the insuperable objection to Mr. Lincoln's claims is founded upon the fact that he is a sectional candidate, and that the Republican party is a sectional party. In fifteen out of the thirty-three States which compose our Union, the Republican party has no substantial existence; and, should Mr. Lincoln be chosen, his administration could have no southern support, but only southern opposition. We are well aware how energetically the Republican party disclaims all designs hostile to the constitutional rights of the South; we believe that many of its members are sincere in these disclaimers; the distrust awakened throughout the South by the existence and attitude of the Republican party may be a groundless distrust. That the Republican party is honestly believed throughout the whole South to be a sectional party, and as such is viewed with uncompromising hostility, is enough for the purposes of our argument. If they have earned such a reputation without deserving it, it is a misfortune, to the consequences of which they must

submit. But surely they have not earned it without cause. To say nothing of the atrocious and unwarrantable language which their most popular speakers are in the habit of using—to say nothing of the fact that many of their campaign documents are mere abolition harangues, made up of the foulest and fiercest abuse of the entire South—the unconstitutional statutes which some of the Northern States have passed, against the execution of the Fugitive Slave law, are in direct opposition to the professions of the party, and justify the distrust which the South entertains of them. We do not say that the election of Mr. Lincoln would be fatal to the Union. We are no disunionists; and no disunionist has a right to be a member of the Constitutional Union party. Under any possible combination of circumstances, we cannot conceive of a dissolution of the Union as anything but the greatest of calamities. Come what will, we shall stand by the Union as the most precious jewel of our souls. But knowing the proud and sensitive spirit of the Southern people, we do say that the election of Mr. Lincoln would expose the Union to a peril to which no true patriot should wish to see it exposed. And, further, we do say that the attempt to govern the country upon the distinctive and peculiar principles of the Republic party would be fatal to the Union. In other words, the attempt on the part of the National Government, by positive law, to exclude slavery from such portion of the national domain as would become slave territory but for such exclusion, would, in our opinion, break up the Union. And the converse of the proposition is equally true; any attempt on the part of the National Government to force slavery, by positive law, into such portion of the national domain as would become free territory but for such intervention, would also break up the Union.

The calm and dispassionate observer can see in the Republican movement only a combination of the northern States to take the government of the whole country into their hands, and to administer it with reference to an exclusively northern policy. And in like manner, the supporters of Mr. Breckinridge propose to take the government of the whole country into their hands, with a view of administering it with reference to an exclusively southern policy. In either case, the result would be a diversion of the General Government from its legitimate sphere; or rather an assumption of powers on the part of the General Government, not delegated to it, which one-half of the Confederacy would regard as a usurpation, and to which it would refuse to submit. The fact that our Union is composed in part of slaveholding States, and in part of non-slaveholding States, imposes grave duties upon both sections—duties of forbearance, concession, and conciliation; respect for each other's convictions; tenderness in handling each other's sensitive points—in short, such rules of self-control and self-government as regulate in social life, and in the relations of business, the intercourse of gentlemen who may chance to differ widely on the gravest questions. To these duties we would fain recall both the North and the South. The Union is a blessing, the continuance of which imposes some sacrifices on both portions of the country. Neither pro-

slavery zealots nor anti-slavery zealots can use the powers of the General Government for the advancement of their own peculiar views, however honestly entertained.

SLAVERY AND ANTI-SLAVERY AGITATION.

It is a necessary consequence of the unhappy fact that our political contests have become mere struggles for the possession of power between the North and the South; that our political discussions have become little else than mutual criminations and recriminations. The people no longer listen to arguments, addressed to their reason, in defence of particular measures, or a certain course of policy, but to exciting appeals to their sectional prejudices, which only heat the blood and inflame the passions. The North is taught to hate the South, and the South is taught to hate the North. On both sides, language is used which is studiously selected for its galling and exasperating qualities. There is no recognition of the law of charity which suffers long and is kind; there is no admission of the tremendous difficulties which environ the whole subject of slavery; northern speakers denounce the South for maintaining the system, and yet they are unable to suggest any scheme for getting rid of it; southern speakers make no distinction between the rankest abolitionism, and that abstract opposition to slavery in itself, which is an almost universal sentiment at the North. And out of the immense mass of speeches on the subject of slavery which have been inflicted upon the country, in Congress and out of it, not one hint or suggestion can be gathered of the least practical value towards the solution of the problem of slavery, or even a mitigation of its assumed evils.

The consequences of this miserable agitation have been of the most melancholy kind. The attachment which formerly united the North and the South is fast disappearing, and estrangement, alienation, and ill-will are taking its place. The two sections of the country are learning to look upon each other as natural enemies. This state of feeling renders it impossible for the National Legislature to legislate calmly, judiciously, dispassionately, for the common good of the whole country. Congressional debates have degenerated into mutual vituperations and denunciations, and are disgraced by the most offensive personalities. All propositions are judged of, not by their essential expediency, but by the quarter from which they come. Of what use is it, then, for the Republican party to spread forth in their platform an elaborate array of measures and principles, so long as a sectional division exists in our politics which makes one-half of the country look with suspicion and distrust upon every movement of the other?

Nor is this all. The tendency of this sectional excitement is to repel wise and good men from the sphere of politics, and thus to lower the tone of government. Men endowed with statesman-like powers will not take part in an agitation which dwarfs the understanding while it inflames the passions. The consequence is, that while we are rapidly increasing in wealth and all the indications of material civilization, and surely not declining in virtue and intelligence, the series of our public men marks a descending scale, and the standard of Congressional debate is constantly

lowering. Intelligent foreigners who come among us are puzzled to account for the singular fact, that so few men of superior ability are taking part in the government of the country. Indeed, the virtue and the intelligence of the country are fast ebbing away from the sphere of politics, and its vices and passions are usurping their places.

THIS AGITATION UNNECESSARY.

The pro-slavery and anti-slavery agitation which has been so long convulsing the country, is as unnecessary as it is mischievous. The more conservative portion of the Republican party have tacitly acquiesced in the fugitive slave law, in the existence of slavery in the District of Columbia, and in the right to carry slaves from one State to another; and they have always disclaimed any right, or any intention, to interfere with slavery in the States themselves. The subject of slavery in the Territories, and the power of Congress over it there, are the only points they leave for discussion and difference. If government be a practical art, as surely it is—if the object of government be, not to enunciate principles, but to provide for each emergency as it arises—all this excitement, and all this conflict, are utterly purposeless and idle. We have been familiar with slavery long enough to know by what laws it is regulated and controlled. Experience and observation have shown that slavery is dependent upon conditions of soil and climate, and lies beyond the reach of political combinations. These will not force slavery into regions where it is not profitable; nor will they exclude it from regions where it is profitable. At this moment no one will question the correctness of the statement that there is not a foot of the territory of the United States, the condition of which in reference to slavery is not already fixed, and there is no place within the Federal domain, upon which the abstract theories of the extremists of either section, in regard to the exclusion of slavery from the Territories or its introduction into them, can be practically applied. The whole question of slavery in the Territories, as now presented, is an abstraction pure and simple, incapable of practical application, and prolific of serious mischief. It has already produced sectional alienation, and now menaces the integrity of the Union.

REPUBLICANS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS AGITATION.

To create and maintain this unhappy agitation, North and South, Democrats and Republicans—we need not stop to inquire in what proportions—have both contributed in times past; but at this moment, the Republican party are mainly responsible for its continuance. The great object which they proposed to accomplish was the admission of Kansas as a free State. This was the excuse and justification for the formation of a purely sectional organization. This element gave them their great strength in 1856. It was for this that many moderate and conservative men in the northern and middle States gave them their votes at that time. But that object is now accomplished. No one doubts that Kansas is to be admitted as a free State. The Democrats have lost the stake for which they played so desperate a game. What need then is there for the further continuance of sectional agitation, and for keeping it up by a mischievous sectional organization. What immediate end do they propose to accomplish? What tangible object have they in view? They have not now that moral element which gave them strength in 1856. They can now take no higher attitude than that of a combination of ambitious aspirants and greedy office-seekers, who, having tasted the sweets of power, and its substantial rewards, in many of the States, are panting for the more splendid prizes of a national victory, and for that purpose are diligently fanning the fires of sectional hate, which every true patriot should wish to have extinguished.

QUALIFICATIONS OF MR. LINCOLN.

So far as the claims and qualifications of candidates are concerned, we surely need not shrink from comparison with the Republican party. For the first time in the history of the country, a great party has nominated for the Presidency a man unknown, even by name, to a majority of the people. Mr. Lincoln, we admit, is a respectable man, a respectable lawyer, and as a popular speaker, of probably more than average ability; but what a meagre catalogue is this of claims for the highest office! Nothing whatever is known of his executive or administrative capacity—nothing of his views as to the great questions of foreign and domestic policy which are likely to arise in the conduct of the Government—nothing as to his knowledge of the great interests and relations of the country. He served but a single term in the House of Representatives, and there earned no conspicuous distinction. His nomination was extorted from the Chicago Convention by the force of local pressure, and presents the most glaring example of the pitiful doctrine of availability that the political annals of this country have ever shown. His claims for the office of President of the United States rest upon the fact that, in a popular contest before the people of Illinois with Mr. Douglas, he sustained himself with energy and fair ability. Nor need we do more than advert to the fact, which is another illustration of the sectional character of the Republican organization, that their candidate for the Presidency is taken from the extreme Northwest, and their candidate for the Vice Presidency is taken from the extreme Northeast. What means can they have for knowing or ascertaining the qualifications of persons to fill the Federal offices in the Southern States!

MR. BELL AND MR. EVERETT.

The candidates presented by the Constitutional Union party have every possible claim upon the confidence and support of the American people. There is little need of setting forth these claims in detail and by particulars, for to suppose any one ignorant of the merits and services of John Bell and Edward Everett, is to suppose him ignorant of the history of the country during the last thirty years. Both have been distinguished and influential members of both branches of Congress. Mr. Bell has been Speaker of the House of Representatives and Secretary of War. Mr. Everett has been Governor of Massachusetts, Minister to Great Britain, and Secretary of State. Both are men of great political experience, and both have proved their fitness for the highest trusts. Both are animated by the spirit of a generous and comprehensive patriotism. Of all southern statesmen, none is more popular at the North than Mr. Bell; of all northern statesmen, none is more endeared to the people of the South than Mr. Everett. So commanding, indeed, is the merit of both our candidates, that it is fully and freely conceded by all our opponents. Republicans, supporters of Mr. Douglas, and supporters of Mr. Breckinridge, all admit that, while they prefer others, the interests of the country would be entirely safe in the hands of Mr. Bell and Mr. Everett. All would acquiesce in the election of our candidates. Indeed, the argument most generally and most persistently pressed against them is, that they cannot be elected. We need not say how grave a charge against the intelligence and integrity of our people is involved in this declaration, and that every man who resolves to vote for them, be the result what it may, does something to lessen the weight of this objection. Let us have the vote of every man in the country who sincerely believes that ours is the best ticket, and we ask no more.

DUTIES OF THE PEOPLE.

Such, fellow-citizens, are a few of the most obvious arguments in behalf of the candidates of the Constitutional Union party. We cannot disguise it from you that we look forward to the future with grave anxiety. This is natural when we consider the excitability of the American people, and the inflammatory character of the political issues which now divide them. Surely, great dangers lie in the path on which we are moving. Our appeal is to the patriotism, the reason, and the conscience of the country to leave these perilous edges of sectional strife, and thus avoid these dangers. We would fain recall the American people to a fresh sense of the affectionate and fraternal wisdom which breathes through the Farewell Address of the Father of his Country. There are men now living who, when this address first appeared, were of an age to comprehend its spirit, and to be touched by its counsels; what a change have they lived to witness in the sentiments entertained towards each other by the alienated sections of our once united country. And how do our altered hearts and averted countenances vindicate the prophetic sagacity of Washington? We readily admit that there have been grave faults on both sides; let us not employ ourselves in the ungracious office of comparing offences and weighing provocations, but let us open wide the arms of reconciliation, and cease to use the language of reproach. The blessing promised to the peace-makers shall rest upon all who address themselves to this beneficent work. We wish to preserve the Union, and transmit it to our children; and a Union animated by the life-blood of a paternal spirit, without which it is a shadow, and not a substance.

Let us revive in the hearts of our countrymen the prophetic declaration of the patriot Clay, in his memorable speech before the Kentucky Legislature, when he was called, in 1850, to breathe out his life in the last grand effort to give peace to a distracted country:


"I may be asked as I have been asked when I would consent to a dissolution of the Union. I answer, Never! Never! NEVER! * * * If the agitation in regard to the fugitive slave law should continue and increase, and become alarming, it will lead to the formation of two new parties, one for the Union, and the other against the Union; * * * and the platform of that Union party will be THE UNION, THE CONSTITUTION, AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAWS. And if it should be necessary to form such a party, and it should be accordingly formed, I announce myself in this place a member of that party, whatever may be its component elements."

The time so eloquently and graphically predicted has arrived. That Union party is now organized. It appeals to the countrymen of Washington and Clay for their support. It entreats them to gather in serried phalanx around the Union and the Constitution, and defend them from the fierce assaults of sectionalism whencesoever they may come; and by the election of our national and patriotic candidates, to preserve for our sons the glorious heritage bequeathed us by our sires, so that it shall remain the boast of American citizens that they have "one country, one Constitution, and one destiny."

In behalf of the Committee:

ALEX. R. BOTELER, *Chairman.*

L. A. WHITELEY, *Secretary.*

 **Please circulate.**

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