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From the Legislative Record.

SPEECH OF

HON. B. F. MEYERS, OF BEDFORD COUNTY,

Delivered in the House of Representatives, March 25, 1864, on the bill to provide compensation for losses sustained from rebel raids, &c.

The legal views which I hold, in connection, as I believe, with this side of the House, in regard to the resolution offered by the gentleman from Washington, which it is sought to incorporate in the bill now before the House, were so clearly and fully expressed the other evening, by my friend from Luzerne, (Mr. Hakes), that it would be a work of supererogation for me to re-state them at this juncture of this discussion. But, sir, it may not be altogether improper, or unimportant, to add a few thoughts to the able and elaborate argument of the gentleman to whom I have just referred.

The resolution of the gentleman from Washington speaks of the rebel invasion, which occurred last summer, as having been superinduced by "connivance and encouragement" on the part of citizens of this Commonwealth. Now, I submit, Mr. Speaker, whether such "connivance and encouragement" as is alluded to in this resolution does mean "aid and comfort" to the enemy? And if it does not mean "aid and comfort" to the enemy, does it not mean "treason"? And if it means "treason," why do not the gentlemen who say that they have knowledge, or that they are induced to believe, that this rebel invasion was superinduced by the "connivance and encouragement" of citizens of Pennsylvania, make information before the proper authorities, and have those persons whom they say they believe to be thus guilty, prosecuted for treason according to the laws of the country?

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Luzerne omitted, in his discussion of this question, one thing which ought to have been referred to. I have reference to that clause of the Constitution of the State of Pennsylvania, which declares "that no person shall be attainted of treason or felony by the Legislature." Now this resolution proposes to erect a board of appraisers, and to confer upon them the power of trying persons for "disloyalty," which, if it means anything, when applied to our form of government, must mean "treason." It is proposed, then, by this resolution, to confer upon this board of appraisers the power of trying treason and attainting of treason—a power expressly prohibited by the Constitution of Pennsylvania from exercise by the Legislature of the State. It is attempted to invest a creature of the Legislature with a power which is denied to the Legislature itself. Hence, Mr. Speaker, I take it that this resolution is clearly in violation of the Constitution—that it is in derogation of the fundamental law of the State, and that we, the members of this House, having taken a solemn oath to support the Constitution of Pennsylvania, will violate that oath by voting for the resolution of the gentleman from Washington.

I do not intend, sir, as I said before, to argue this question from a legal point of view. The impolicy of adopting this resolution at this time, should weigh as heavily against it as its unconstitutionality. If you pass it as it stands, you say to the world that the people of Pennsylvania are what you call "disloyal," you say that there are persons here in sympathy with the rebellion; you say to the British Parliament—you say to the Corps Legislatif of France—that there are people here who, by their "connivance and encouragement" of the rebellion, superinduced the invasion of Pennsylvania by the rebel army. My friend from Chester (Mr. Smith) spoke of casting odium upon the State, when we undertook, some weeks ago, to investigate the condition of the military camps about this city. It was said by my honorable friend that Pennsylvania would be disgraced if it were to be acknowledged that our soldiers had been neglected by the military authorities of the Commonwealth. Now I submit to the gentlemen on the other side of the House who took that position then, whether it would not be better now to think about this matter of "casting odium upon the State of Pennsylvania."

But, I suppose, Mr. Speaker, that it is not expected that I should make an argument upon this resolution, or upon the bill before the House. That does not seem to be the order of these discussions. General Politics seems to be in command whenever we assemble to consider this resolution. It has been said that this debate has taken a very wide scope—has been of a very rambling character. There is no doubt about it. It has gone into the very deepest slough of political depravity—if I may use the expression.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is the meaning of the term "loyalty"? Webster accepts the definition of Cicero, who says that it is "fidelity to a prince or sovereign, a husband or lover." Our friends on the other side of the House have no doubt looked at this definition of the word, and they imagine that the President of the United States, to whom they say we must be "loyal," is the Prince of darkness, or the King of Dahomey, because of the peculiar tendency of his measures towards a certain color.

Then, as to "fidelity to a husband," although I do not know that Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States, has married this nation, yet the other side of the House, by the tenor of their argument, would have us believe that he has. I have no doubt, that after a while, when the present President of the United States comes to "shuffle off this mortal coil," it will be a test of "loyalty" as to whether the people of this nation will sacrifice themselves upon his tomb, as the Hindoo widow is required to imitate herself upon the funeral pyre of her husband. [Laughter.]

Then, again, as to "fidelity to a lover," there is hardly a member upon this floor who will say that the President of the United States is a lover of this nation. Some of the gentlemen on the other side might say so, but hardly in good faith.

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they might say it by way of a joke, in imitation of their great chief at Washington. But, to look at this matter seriously, the gentleman from Washington undertakes to define the word "loyalty." He says: "While I am on the floor, I will say that my ideas of loyalty are these: that a man shall support and defend the Constitution of the Union at all costs and at all sacrifices."

Now I would just ask the gentlemen on the other side of the House, whether they are willing to defend this Union at all hazards and all sacrifices? I have no doubt they will answer in the affirmative. But, let me ask them whether in a certain event, they would be willing to lay aside their prejudices to support this Union? Suppose that the people of the Southern States now in revolt against this Government, would signify their willingness to throw down their arms and return to their allegiance to the government, subject only to such penalties as may be inflicted upon them by Congress under the Constitution, would the gentlemen on the other side of the House be willing to receive them? [Cries of "yes," "yes."] Would you be willing to receive them without making any qualification or bargain in regard to the institution of slavery? [No! No!] That is the point Mr. Speaker, they are not willing to give up their peculiar notions in regard to the institution of slavery, to save this Union. I am willing, for my part, to yield every prejudice, every feeling I have upon that subject, in order to save this glorious Government of our fathers. But, the presses, the orators and the leaders of the Republican party, in Congress and out of Congress, have declared, over and over again, that the Union shall not be restored as it was—with slavery protected under it. Therefore, they are not "unconditional Union men." They are only "conditional Union men." We are the unconditional Union men—we, who ask nothing but this—that the people in revolt against this Government shall throw down their arms and return to their allegiance. But the gentlemen on the other side of the House are unwilling to receive the Southern people back into this Union unless the institution of slavery be blotted out.

Now, I say, Mr. Speaker, that the true unconditional Union man is he who is willing and anxious that the people in revolt shall return to their allegiance to the Federal Government, and who will use every effort in his power to bring about such a result. He is a man who will impose upon them no conditions as to any of their State institutions not in conflict with the Constitution of the United States. He who acts upon any other principle—who, for example, will permit their return to the Union only on condition that they yield up their negro slaves, abjure their State institutions and take oaths to support all the proclamations and vagaries of the President of the United States, past, present and to come—is plainly not an unconditional, but a conditional Union man. Such a man may shout himself hoarse in glorification of the war, he may sing unending hosannas to the President of the United States, he may bow down at the shrine of shoddy and worship the ebony idol of Abolitionism; nay, Mr. Speaker, he may even be an apostle of the new gospel of "Miscegenation," but, sir, he is no friend of the Union—he is rather its insidious and implacable enemy. A satirist of the present day portrays the character of such a Union man very graphically and aptly:

"'Union' a man may cry at every word, With much less patriotism than other people; A crow's not reckoned a religious bird, Because it keeps a cawing from the steeple."

So it is with our friends of the other side. They are always cawing "Union!" "Union!" and yet they will not permit the Union to be restored, except upon their own peculiar theory. Mr. Speaker, I shall not undertake to follow the devious windings of this debate; but certain references have been made not only to the Democratic party, of which I claim to be an humble member, but to the Democratic party of my own locality; and it becomes my duty to make some response to some of the aspersions of the gentleman on the other side upon my party and some of my own personal friends. Sir, this discussion could not proceed without maligning even individuals—private citizens who have nothing to do with this bill and can have no claims under it. This debate could not proceed without dragging in the fair fame of some of the best men in the Commonwealth—without traducing men who are the peers in honesty, in honor and in patriotism of the gentlemen on the other side who slander them. I desire, sir, to make a simple statement in regard to the references made by the gentleman from Dauphin (Mr. Alleman) to the "disloyalty" (as he expresses it) of my county. It seems that because two young men from Bedford county were captured by the rebel forces at McConnellsburg, and carried away by them, the whole county of Bedford is what the gentleman calls "disloyal." Now, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you a plain, unvarnished tale; I will tell you the whole truth, "nothing extenuating, nor setting down aught in malice."

Some time in June of last year, two boys from the town of Bedford, went to the town of McConnellsburg to visit some of their relatives. It so happened that the day after they arrived in McConnellsburg, the rebel forces (under Imboden, I believe) came to that place. At that time General Milroy was encamped near Bedford. The commander of the rebel forces at McConnellsburg at once supposed that these boys were spies, sent into his camp by General Milroy. Acting upon this suspicion, he arrested the boys and put them under guard. They attempted to escape. This made the matter so much the worse for them. They were put under still closer guard. When the rebel forces moved from McConnellsburg towards Mercersburg, these boys were carried away with them. One of the boys was put on horseback, and was left with the rebel forces near Mercersburg to guard a train of wagons. The Union forces, if they had seen them, for I believe the

gentleman from Dauphin is guilty of imprisonment of treason, and ought to be fined and imprisoned, according to the laws of the Commonwealth. Mr. ALLEMAN. Will the gentleman from Bedford allow me to explain? Mr. MEYERS. Certainly. Mr. ALLEMAN. I preferred charges to Major-Gen. Schenck, and sent him to Schenck, and he imprisoned him in Fort M'Henry [Applause on the Republican side.] Mr. MEYERS. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman preferred charges against him to Gen. Schenck, and Gen. Schenck regarded the charges and the proofs so much that he liberated the man against whom the charges were preferred, without any trial at all. [Applause on the Democratic side.]

The injustice that has been done to Henry J. Stahl, the editor of the Gettysburg Compiler, amounts to a perfect outrage. Sir, that man, instead of giving aid and comfort to the enemy by pointing out the places of concealment of Union soldiers, as charged by the gentleman from Dauphin, had secreted in his house, at the time of the rebel occupation of Gettysburg, a sick colonel of the Union army—and the only time that he went out of his house, whilst the rebel forces occupied or were near the town, (as these affidavits on file to prove, and the gentleman from Dauphin can see them if he will go to Gen. Couch or to Gen. Schenck)—was when he went in search of a surgeon for that sick Union officer, and that, too, whilst the iron hail from the enemy's batteries swept the street along which he was compelled to pass. There are, also, on file affidavits showing that this patriotic Democratic editor, who is so harshly accused by the gentleman from Dauphin, was when he passed the house in which it is alleged the Union soldiers were concealed, entirely alone. This ill accords with the allegation of the gentleman from Dauphin, that Mr. Stahl pointed out to a rebel officer the places of concealment of these Union soldiers. But the best vindication of the innocence of this injured man, is that he was discharged without even a hearing, and is at home to-day, in the town of Gettysburg, publishing true "loyalty" to the Constitution and the Union.

to the madness of the hour, it was well worth our while to pause and ask, "Whither are we tending?" The gentleman from Chester, for whom I have very great respect as a member of this House, when speaking of Turks (Gen. Butler, I believe, was called a Turk in a poem which the gentleman read, said that he would like to have just such Turks in Pennsylvania. Well, now, I would just remind the gentleman that there is an old saying, and I believe a true one, that "One renegade is worse than ten Turks;" and, therefore I think that Chester county could supply the whole State. [Laughter.] But, Mr. Speaker, if that would not suffice, then I recommend to the gentleman a certain Brigadier Gen. Gantt, late of the rebel army, but later still of the army of Abolition stump orators.

Mr. SCHOFIELD. We have had him here. Mr. MEYERS. My friend suggests that we had him here. We had him here upon the motion of Republican members of this House I did not know, when I voted to give him the hall, that he was still a rebel against the Constitution, as I found out after his speech, or I would not have voted as I did. Now, Mr. Speaker, if there is any difficulty about getting a Turk to do the business of that particular breed of persons in this State, I will just recommend to the gentleman from Chester, Gen. Gantt, who said, in a speech down South:

"I can tell you how we did a whining Yankee out in Arkansas a few days ago. He got to making too free use of incendiary language. Our boys took him in hand. They carried him where a convenient and friendly limb protruded from the body of a sturdy oak. They fastened one end of the rope to the limb, and the other around his neck and executed him."

I think that Gen. Gantt would do very well for a Turk. Mr. Speaker, I desire to say a few words more in regard to this question of loyalty. I believe there is another test of loyalty to which I have not referred, that is the one-tenth principle, lately announced by the great philosopher of the White House. It is to be, I have no doubt, a test of loyalty. One-tenth of the people who were lately in rebellion against this Government, are to have as much power, under this new principle about to be established by the President of the United States, as ten-tenths of the people in the loyal States that have never been in rebellion against the Government.

Now, I have no doubt that gentlemen on the other side think me a very coppery "Copperhead" for talking in this style; but I will just beg leave to refer them to the opinion of some of the leading men of their own party. Henry Winter Davis, who is a very prominent man in the Abolition organization, and who is a candidate for the Vice Presidency at the next election of the Abolition party in my town, speaks of this project in language which I will read.—"The question upon which Mr. Davis spoke arose the other day in Congress, in regard to the admission of a member of that body, elected from the State of Arkansas. Mr. Davis, on that occasion, used this language:—'I wish the House to understand that they do not merely pass upon the question, whether the gentleman who is the claimant has received so many votes, or whether somebody else has received so many votes; but they pass upon the question whether a small proportion of the small population of Arkansas shall send here a representative to help control the residue of the nation—whether they shall be entitled to send Senators to the other House of Congress—whether they shall be entitled to send electors for President and Vice President, possibly to turn the balance of the Presidential election.'—Let the gentlemen on the other side lay that flatteringunction to their souls. Then Mr. Davis spoke further, as follows:—'Let me refer to the proclamation of Gen. Banks. I refer to it because dangerous doctrines are gaining a hold upon the public mind—in my judgment, touching the foundations of the Republic. No man has a greater regard for Gen. Banks than I have; but I shudder when I find that proclamation summoning the people of Louisiana under a declaration that martial law is the fundamental law of the State of Louisiana.'—Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the one-tenth principle, delineated by one of the leaders of the Republican party. It is proposed (and we cannot be loyal, according to the argument of gentlemen on the other side, unless we agree to this doctrine)—it is proposed that one-tenth of those men who were lately in rebellion, shall have a voice in the election of the next President of the United States, equal to ten-tenths of the people of Pennsylvania. Now, will the gentlemen on the other side make us take an oath that we will support this proclamation of the President of the United States? Will they require, that, before we can claim any damages under this bill, we shall swear to support such a proclamation as this? If the other tests of loyalty which they have spoken of are to be applied, I have no doubt this can also be applied with equal force and equal propriety.

Again, we must not only be loyal in our politics, but we must not be "disloyal" in our religion. I was amazed, the other day on taking up a newspaper and finding the following orders: WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON, November 30, 1863. "To the generals commanding the departments of the Missouri, the Tennessee and the Gulf, and all generals and officers commanding armies, detachments and corps and posts and all officers in the service of the United States in the above mentioned departments:—'You are hereby directed to place at the disposal of Rev. Bishop Ames, all houses of worship belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church South in which a loyal minister, who has been appointed by a loyal bishop of said church, does not officiate.'"

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that Christian ministers should, by example and precept, support and foster the loyal sentiment of the people. Bishop Ames enjoys the entire confidence of this department, and no doubt is entertained that all ministers who may be appointed by him will be entirely loyal. You are expected to give him all the aid and countenance and support practicable, in the execution of his important mission. "You are also authorized and directed to furnish Bishop Ames and his clerk with transportation and subsistence when it can be done without prejudice to the service, and will afford them courtesy, assistance and protection. "By order of the Secretary of War. "E. D. TOWNSEND, Assistant Adjutant General." Then here is another: "PULPIT ORDER. HEADQUARTERS, NORFOLK AND PORTSMOUTH, NORFOLK, Va., Feb. 11, 1864. GENERAL ORDERS, No. 3. All places of public worship in Norfolk and Portsmouth, are hereby placed under the control of the Provost Marshal of Norfolk and Portsmouth, respectively, who shall see the pulpits properly filled, by displacing, when necessary, the present incumbents and substituting men of known loyalty and the same sectarian denomination, either military or civil, subject to the approval of the commanding General. They shall see that the churches are open freely to all officers and soldiers, white or colored, at the usual hour of worship, and at other times, if desired, and they shall see that no insult or indignity be offered to them either by word, look or gesture, on the part of the congregation. The necessary expenses will be levied as far as possible in accordance with the previous usages or regulations of each congregation respectively. No property shall be removed, either public or private, without permission from these headquarters. By command of Brigadier General, E. A. WILD." Comment is unnecessary. Those orders speak for themselves. They constitute the suppression, the complete wiping out of freedom of conscience, freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own hearts.

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of New York city, Brooklyn and the ten eastern Democratic districts of New York, that could justly be required of them. After the riots were subdued, Gov. Seymour sent a commission to Washington representing this state of facts to the Administration. A commission was then appointed by the Administration, consisting of the following named gentlemen: Judge Allen, of New York, Mr. Love, of Indiana, and Mr. Smith, of Massachusetts. These gentlemen have but lately concluded their labors, and they have found that in the ten Democratic districts of the State of New York, including the city of New York and the city of Brooklyn, 14,000 men were assigned as the quota (than could justly be demanded in proportion to the quotas of other districts. In their report these commissioners make use of the following language:—"The commissioners, after a full investigation, and in view of the facts elicited, are unanimously of the opinion that the enrollment of the State of New York is imperfect and erroneous, excessive in some districts and possibly too small in others, and certainly excessive in the cities of New York and Brooklyn, especially as compared with other States, and cannot be relied upon as a just and equitable basis for the assignment for the quota of the city of New York, or among the several districts thereof."

Now, sir, this was the secret of those riots. The people there knew that a gigantic fraud was about to be perpetrated upon them. This knowledge compelled them to speak out for their rights, and if public discussion of this wrong about to be perpetrated upon the people of New York produced those riots, it was the fault of the Administration, and not of the Democracy of that city.

Now, sir, I shall draw to a conclusion. The gentleman on the other side charges us with disloyalty. The other day they disclaimed any charge of disloyalty against the Democratic party as a mass; but said that there were individuals in that party who were disloyal. The gentleman from Philadelphia (Mr. Watson) said this evening that the Democratic party had been guilty of disloyal practices. They are changing their tactics. There is evidently something wrong on the other side of the House in regard to the subject under discussion. Now, I ask no favors on this question of "loyalty" of the gentlemen on the other side. If they choose, they may call me "disloyal."

"What's in a name? A rose by any other name Would smell as sweet." I feel, sir, that I love my country—that I respect and cherish this government, and that I would sacrifice just as much as any other gentleman in this House to sustain and perpetuate it. For that reason I care not if gentlemen do call me "disloyal." But I propose to pay them back in their own coin. I propose to take their definition of the word "disloyal," and I propose to arraign them on charges of disloyalty to the Constitution (and therefore) to the Government.

I arraign the party in power at the bar of public opinion, for that they have subverted freedom of conscience, by appointing "trustees, superiors and other agents for the churches," prescribing certain tests of politico-religious orthodoxy. I arraign them, for that they have abridged the freedom of the press, by the seizure and imprisonment of editors, as they have confessed in this discussion, without warrant of law, and by the destruction of printing offices by mob violence. I arraign them, for that they have attempted to suppress freedom of speech by the arrest and punishment of citizens, without the preferment of charges against them, and without trial according to law. I arraign them, for that they have rendered insecure the freedom of the person by the suspension of the habeas corpus in States not in revolt against the Government. I arraign them, for that they have superseded trial by jury, in many instances, by the establishment of military tribunals in its stead, in districts where the courts are unimpeded in the administration of justice. I arraign them, in the language of the Declaration of Independence, for that they have "affected to render the military independent of, and superior to, the civil power." I arraign them, for that they have established test-oaths, foreign to our form of government and unknown to any of our laws. I arraign them, for that they have interfered with the freedom of the ballot, by armed violence at the polls; for that they have attempted to destroy the equality of the States, by giving the same power in the Government to one-tenth of the people of certain States as is possessed by ten-tenths of the people in other States; for that they have caused the depreciation of the currency, erected a multitude of new offices, and sent among us swarms of officers to harass our people and eat out our substances; and for that they have wasted the public resources, spent billions of money, and sacrificed many armies, without re-establishing the authority of the Government over the revolted States, restoring peace, or giving us any assurance of an early termination of the present unhappily and debilitating war.

These charges, sir, I prefer against the party in power, and I challenge their denial. There is not one word of them that is not true to the letter. Impartial history will so record it, and the judgment of the civilized world will pronounce the record just. Passion, prejudice and selfish interest may to-day blind the discernment of the masses, but the time is fast approaching when the people and their destroyers shall see each other eye to eye; and when the Makhannah of political Abolitionism shall be unveiled and exposed in all his native hideousness and deformity.

An anecdote is related of a young preacher at a city church, who had for his text a verse from the parable of the ten virgins, and in the course of his sermon explained:—"That in old times it was customary when the bridegroom and the bride were coming, for ten virgins to go out to greet their home—five of these virgins being males and five females."

Table with 4 columns: Rate, Duration, Price. Rows include One Square (3 months, 6 months, 1 year), Two Squares, Three Squares, 1 Column, 2 Columns, 3 Columns, 4 Columns, 5 Columns, 6 Columns, 7 Columns, 8 Columns, 9 Columns, 10 Columns, 11 Columns, 12 Columns, 13 Columns, 14 Columns, 15 Columns, 16 Columns, 17 Columns, 18 Columns, 19 Columns, 20 Columns.