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BY DAVID OVER.

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SPEECH

HON. JOHN HICKMAN, AT A REPUBLICAN MASS MEETING IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

My subject, to-night, fellow-citizens, is political issues and Presidential candidates. The intelligent voter will shape his actions as to make it conduce to the success of principle rather than the elevation of a man. He will feel this to be more incumbent upon him at such a time as the present, when the tendencies of parties are more distinctly marked than in any previous campaign. It will be my object, this evening, to endeavor to exhibit, in a distinct light, the dividing line between the political parties of the day, and to ascertain, if possible, what, in all probability, would be the effect upon the country of the election of the respective candidates for the Presidency.

If this were a strife merely between individual men, it would possess but trifling importance, and I should not trouble you with either remark or suggestion. But as I regard the contest, the determination will soon be made not alone as to our value in the Confederacy, but as to the destiny of the nation itself. The policy of our Government is, in many respects, undefined. The more serious questions affecting us have but recently become topics of careful consideration. Our fathers were unable to foresee, during the formation of the Constitution, the greater embarrassment to which the future of the country was to be subjected, and consequently no provision was made against them. Subjects which distracted and divided them, in their deliberations, have lost much of their former consequence, and we seem to be more anxious to ascertain what they should have said further, than what they actually did say. Even the controversies in which we ourselves have been engaged within the last decade, have been settled or lost sight of, and we are now about to enter into that conflict which is to define many of the most important powers of the Government, and to fix the character of the dominant institutions of the country. The propriety of eligibility to office, the exact relations between Federal and local authority, the constitutionality of banks and internal improvements, the regulation of the currency, and the distribution of the proceeds of the public lands, are no longer agitated; and discussions upon them are only to be found in our past history, and in the fossil remains of extinct parties. It may in truth be said that old things have passed away and all things have become new.

There was a time, not very far back in the past, when slavery was universally admitted to be a wrong in *se*, unwise in practice, detrimental to both individuals and communities, and against the spirit and genius of our free system. Now, however, it is declared to be divine in its origin, the highest type of human civilization, and indispensable to the maintenance of a Democratic republic. Formerly it was regarded as a condition to be constantly reduced and finally to be extinguished. Now, on the contrary, the demand is urged that it shall be extended, and made controlling. Here I find the cause or source of the great political issue of the present. Shall slavery become a national institution and a governing power in the country, or shall it remain as the Constitution left it? This is not an inquiry propounded by us of the North, but forced upon us by our brethren of the South. They require an answer at our hands and we cannot avoid response if we would. Silence upon our part, under the circumstances, would not be construed otherwise than as an affirmation of their claims. I make the distinct avowal that slavery seeks the acquisition of all our new States; for two objects: first, to secure the value of slaves, and, second, to direct the powers of the Federal Government.

"The irrepressible conflict," so frequently commented on and denounced by the South, is constantly admitted and acted on by them. They are too astute as observers and sagacious as politicians not to know there is a necessary and unending antagonism between liberty and slavery. If they thought differently there would be more peace and harmony between the sections. It is there full appreciation of the struggle for the mastery which arms them for the victory. There is no more evident fact than this: the advocates of slavery seek its extension so as to limit the influence of the sentiment of freedom. We hate tyranny, and would prevent such a consummation. They ask that all who shall be held as property—be regarded, in the chaste language of an eloquent Senator, as "mudsills." We believe that God created all men free, and imposed labor upon them for their advantage. Which hypothesis shall be proven true? We shall see hereafter! But knowing that the principles of justice are uniform and eternal, I presume to believe that those principles will prevail, and human rights be maintained. I am not ignorant of the fact that those who suppose they might rightfully make merchandise of mothers and their children seem to think they can shape the designs of Providence and rewrite the history of humanity, everything our fathers thought, and for the maintenance of which they perilled life and honor. I must be pardoned for disagreeing with them, and protesting against such conclusions.

The extension of negro slavery into the Territories of the United States has become a settled policy of the Democratic party. This reality cannot be disguised, and ought not to be denied. It is accounted for. Unity of interest and unity of desire will always produce a perfect concentration of strength. The fortunes of the South have become completely identified with their peculiar domestic relations. By their Harmony they have been enabled to govern the Democratic party, and, thus far, to govern the country through the agency of that

party. The vital force of that organization being in the South, and slavery propagandism regarded there as a necessity, it cannot be considered strange that the influence of the party should be so directed as to fortify doctrines most congenial to the supposed welfare of those who direct the machinery. To many it has seemed unaccountable that executive action and legislative and judicial proceedings should be shaped, from year to year, as to mass of our people. Let it no longer be regarded as a marvel or a mystery; the responsibility of it rests with those Northern men who we have reposed our confidence, and clothed with the garments of authority. Examine the record of votes in your National Congress, and there learn why it is that Northern capital and labor are constantly born down by the enormous weight of Southern taxation. When your reasonable requests are denied, I tell you, with earnestness and emphasis, it is because eight millions of men control eighteen millions, through our representatives elected by a party pledged to interests adverse to ours. Slavery educates its statesmen in a high school, under able professors. It teaches that Northern men are cowardly, and that their ambition is linked with avarice; and, unfortunately for us, its arguments to fortify its faith. In half a century it may not be credited that less than a dozen men, trained under these circumstances, so alarmed a Pennsylvania President as to induce him to recant a message, violate the pledged faith upon which he was elected, disgrace his native State, and degrade the high office to which he had been but recently elected. And yet not only this has been done almost within our presence, but the Representatives of free constituencies have been induced to lend their aid to force servile labor into competition with that of white men, and a slave State into the sisterhood of independence to throw the balance of power against their own people. Some of these are not only respectable members of the Douglas church, but missionaries among the unbelieved and outside barbarians. I have some of them very distinctly in my recollection, and would be quite refreshing to hear their remarks of laudation of popular sovereignty, such as they denied to Kansas, and in denunciation of Southern demands, to which they succumbed as reluctantly as a three-sided daisy to her lover. I believe it was Mirabeau who said "the presents of despotism are always dangerous;" he should have included in his remark, the threat of the tyrant as well as his reward.

The allegation that Southern combinations are formed for the purpose of countervailing opposition extremists, is sheer false pretence, resorted to as a blind and cheat. No fears ever sprung from such parentage. Slavery does not exist by legal enactment anywhere; it is the child of force, and as the sentiment of the world is against it, it cannot live without the sustaining hand of power. Surrounded by an atmosphere of freedom, it is necessarily unsafe, and defences become necessary. Vassalage and subjection never impress themselves, without violence, upon the natural man, whilst, on the contrary, the sentiments of freedom must forever disturb the subjects of a despotism.—The South, to be safe, must, therefore, extend, through and beyond all the countervailing influences to which I have referred, and consequently our frontier possessions must be captured. But as the inherent weakness of the South is not equal to this task, craft is resorted to supply the needed assistance. Upon whom can this be more advantageously brought to bear than a President without courage, a judge without candor, or a legislator without integrity? We are sold or betrayed hourly, and if we had not more forbearance than discretion we would terrify traitors. Millions of acres of fertile lands, every now and then, are flooded from our industrial classes, who require them for the support and education of their families, to be turned into barren wastes by those who have already blasted more than one-half of our soil as with an avalanche of fire. Factories and workshops are tottering in ruins, and families and neighborhoods left straving and in rags, because fostered industry is not required in that region where the laboring man has no rights which the owner of men is bound to respect. And ships rot at our wharves, and storehouses become but a rendezvous for idlers and vagrants, for the reason that unoccupied chattel sinews yield fruits more cheaply than compensated skill, and require no shield against the pauper products of Europe. If a change of tariff laws were required by the South instead of the North, they not could fail of its accomplishment. In that case the President would advocate it with ardor, if not with sincerity, and our Senators would again illustrate the fact of their trucking subjection to those who secretly abhor their baseness and infidelity. Our earnest wishes are not only constantly degraded, but our prosperity is remorselessly paralyzed by our servants, without an audible murmur on our part; and we are not much worse off, as we have often proven, than conferring new leases of offices upon such as decide us, to afford them further opportunities for mischief. Does this seem unaccountable? I suggest you, in view of the truth I have just stated, that the party softening them has its heart and brain in the South, and its obeying members merely in the North. The remedy for this shameful evil is as easy as it is simple. We need but imitate the example set us by those who have caused this condition of things. Concord and inflexibility of purpose will accomplish all we ask. Nothing else ever can or ever will. We might as well expect a divided and discordant army, marshalled under opposing generals, to capture the powerful and thoroughly disciplined and guarded city, as for Northern rights and Northern honor to be sustained by men in the pay and keeping of those who would weaken and

reduce us. In the ordinary business of life we never trust the faithless and dishonest; I can imagine no reason for engaging such as sentinels over our entire fortresses. Just so long as our custom houses, post offices, navy yards, and mints shall be stocked with thousands selected virtually by those who are branded opposition to us, and whose principal business, we are instructed to believe, is compounding politics with perfidy, it will be impossible to render our condition better than it is. These leprosy-yards must be cleansed. Their occupants lead the air with a contagious corruption. Throughout their bodies and their souls they bear the marks of the distemper with which the aristocratic pollutionists has touched them. I risk but little in saying that at this very hour, this mighty phalanx, scattered throughout the eighteen Northern States, having a common and powerful bond of union, are devising measures to dispoil our industrial classes, by confining them in densely-crowded fields of labor, or forcing them to enter into competition and companionship with ignorant and brutalized bondmen. They all, yes, all, have been brought to believe that the doctrines of the Declaration of Independence are but stereotyped lies; that founders of the nation had but a sorry conception of inalienable rights; that the Constitution which they framed was intended as an instrument of cruelty and crime; and that the fairest feature of free republicanism is a union of States peopled with the lowest grade of slaves! Am I right? What is the trouble against which we have to contend? Is it not the steady influence of what may with propriety be called political conspiracies to mislead the public mind, and taint the public heart? Is it not an Administration blackened with treachery, and crooked and tottering under the weight of its depravity, using all the patronage office, and all the fascinations of position to utterly destroy us, by making the Territories of the country but garbages for the enemies of freedom, and the labor of white men degrading and fruitless beyond the limits of the present States? If I am in error, what is the correct interpretation of the political disorders of the last six years?

I anticipate fully that my suggested mode of redress for existing abuses will be denounced as sectional, to which I answer if it be so, the antidote to a bane may be a bane itself, *ultima sanitas curatur*. But its liability to the charge is denied. The real sectionalism is arrayed against us; I do but counsel systematic and persistent resistance.—In studies of the fundamental doctrines of our common charter, and the dispositions of the various organs of Government, we should never know a North, a South, an East or a West. My complaint is that others act as if they thought differently. I trust we shall always be able to command the exercise of such a patriotism and loyalty as to forever preclude us from aggression upon a section inferior to ours in every element of material strength and greatness. It can never be otherwise than dastardly to press upon the weak and sickly. It will be noticed that I have spoken of the Democratic party without reservation, and with distinction. My reason for so doing is found in the opinion I entertain that these dissensions do not affect issues—neither branch indicates a disposition to meet, fairly and openly, the great political problem of the times. In casting the votes we should be accurately informed as to the effect upon the policy we desire to see established. We should not be made instruments in the hands of any ambitious man, or the hands of any combination of reckless and unscrupulous men, to force an unnatural growth of slavery in the Territories, and to the hopes of our own people, contrary to what has heretofore been the understanding of the Constitution of the United States, and in palpable violation of what has been regarded as a settled national policy. It should be a matter of stinging regret to us, if from our own inaction, the present condition we could be fairly charged hereafter with a violation of the principles we have long professed to cherish, or with having imposed any, the slightest impediment in the pathway of a national, well-grounded, and progressive liberty.

The all-absorbing question now presented to the American citizen, and which will prove to be the ultimate decision, I have watched narrowly as it has descended into importance from year to year, and I think I know the opinions of the several Presidential candidates respecting it.

I am not aware that the supporters of Mr. Breckinridge attempt any concealment as to his designs in case of his success. If they should desire to resort to prevarication, they have placed it entirely without their power, by the frankness and boldness, and I had almost said the recklessness of their declarations. He has been brought forth prominently, alike in the anti-slavery, as the Achilles of the armies of the South, and as the determined foe of free soil, free speech and free men. He stands upon no single Democratic sentiment, unless, indeed, what were regarded by all statesmen within the last fifteen years as the pretensions hereof of John C. Calhoun can be so regarded. He so reads the teachings of the ages of the past and their primary law, as to make it fruitless to attempt an exclusion of his peculiar and favorite institution from the organized Territories, and so as to make it indispensable that Congress, Courts and President should exercise all their ingenuity, and all their powers, to fortify and sustain it there. Legislative action is to be invoked, judicial decrees and executive fiat pronounced, navies equipped and armies marshalled, to exclude forever every settler therefrom who will not bow down before the black god of his idolatrous worship.

I appeal to you, brethren, to know whether this is the Democracy of Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and Jackson. I appeal to you to know whether you have ever found anything in the annals of parties so insidious to the understanding, and within the lifetime of the youth who has not yet reached his majority. I appeal to you to know whether the honesty, intelligence, and unimpaired blood of the offspring of Northern mothers can ever accept an excuse for those who would endeavor to fasten such a ruler upon us. But we may congratulate ourselves that even official life can preserve a chance for Mr. Breckinridge's election. If there had ever been any, the recent stamp speech of Mr. Buchanan would have effectually disposed of it.—An amount of popularity would be able to stand against the encomium of such an advocate. His midnight appeal can only be accounted for by supposing the "old public functionary" was unable to tolerate his antipathies toward the young gentlemen of Kentucky, and that his well known craft suggested a speech as the readiest and least offensive means of destruction. Such suggestions are the more reasonable as it is not to be imagined that the great tyant of the White House should for a moment believe, after the investigations which have been had, and the exposures which have been made, such testimony as he volunteered could be otherwise than ruinous to any cause.—The daring evinced by him on the occasion, was only equalled by his lack of self-respect, and his

utter disregard of the circumstances by which he was surrounded and which should have restrained him.

Whatever conclusions may be drawn as to my estimate of Mr. Breckinridge's character as a politician, I can only say that my esteem for him is profound when brought into comparison with that which I entertain for his Democratic competitor.—There are few, if any, living men concerning whom more has been said, and less really known, than Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois. There are thousands, by far too many thousands, now sustaining him under the mistaken and delusive idea that he is directing his efforts to counteract the plans of the Southern Democracy. This is a frightful hallucination, but a natural one, when we take into consideration the humiliating fact that all that devotion could do has been done, by those surrounding him under the mistaken and delusive idea that he is directing his efforts to counteract the plans of the Southern Democracy. 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