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Is Emancipation the object of the present War, or is it to sustain the Constitution as it is, and restore the Union as it was?

SPEECH

HON. HIESTER CLYMER, OF BERKS COUNTY.

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA, MARCH 11, 1862.

The Senate of Pennsylvania having under consideration the resolutions asserting that it is the unquestionable right and manifest duty of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia...

Deeply impressed with the magnitude and importance of this object, I, as one of the humble members of this body, approach the consideration of this question, which so directly and sensibly affects that great object, with feelings of deep distrust as to my own ability to thoroughly investigate it, and of fear, lest I should fall short of the expectations of this Senate and the people of this Commonwealth.

Look, sir, at the position of the great Commonwealth which we represent! The Almighty for some good and wise purpose, has made her the very heart and center of the Republic. Her western borders skirt the object of the grant to Congress was to make the District of Columbia the Seat of Government of the United States.

This powerful, thus great, we stand here before the eyes of the world, as the opposing elements of ruin to our country—between the blind, fanatical and mistaken sympathy (at this time I will use no stronger term) of the North, and the outrageous and damnable heresy of the South.

We are the natural bulwark between those contending forces, which threaten the very existence of Government, and I implore you Senators to act at this hour on this question as become the representatives of such a State, with such a position, with such a destiny, and with such mighty interests committed to her charge.

The immediate question for the consideration of the Senate, is the first resolution, which is, "That it is the unquestionable right and manifest duty of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia."

The SPEAKER. The Senator will permit the Chair to remind him that the question is on the amendment offered by himself, to insert after the words "requested" the words "and of the people of said District."

Mr. CLYMER. I am well aware, sir, what question is immediately before the Senate, and if the Speaker and the Senate choose to confine me to the amendment offered by myself, I shall submit to the decision.

But, after the amendment which was previously offered to the original resolution, the discussion took so wide a scope that I feel constrained to ask the privilege accorded to those who have preceded me, that I may, in addressing the Senate at this time, embrace within my remarks all I have to say, both upon the main proposition, and upon the amendment offered by myself.

The SPEAKER. Does the Senate so give its consent?

The question was unanimously answered in the affirmative.

The SPEAKER. The Senator from Berks will proceed.

and 1700 the States of Maryland and Virginia, in a spirit of kindness, and with the intention to promote the general convenience of the government, ceded ten miles square to Congress for the seat of the national capital.

By whom was the cession made? By the legislatures of the States of Virginia and Maryland. Having been made to the Congress of the United States for the purpose of a national capital, it cannot be supposed that the State Legislatures of Virginia and Maryland could have ceded to that national legislature other, greater or higher powers than they themselves possessed.

Then, sir, if those legislatures had not the right to abolish slavery within that territory, how can they have the right to cede to that national legislature other, greater or higher powers than they themselves possessed?

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ties interested, at the time the grant was made, I say that we have no right to extend within this hour of national peril—when fear, dismay and terror pervade the land—and when danger lurks in and around the very capital itself, and in every square mile of territory in its vicinity—we have no right to extend within the shadow of that capital, powder magazine (if you please) for the destruction of the very State which generously granted that territory to the use of the nation.

By whom was the cession made? By the legislatures of the States of Virginia and Maryland. Having been made to the Congress of the United States for the purpose of a national capital, it cannot be supposed that the State Legislatures of Virginia and Maryland could have ceded to that national legislature other, greater or higher powers than they themselves possessed.

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authority of the President of the United States, who called upon Congress to assist in paying for emancipated slave property. It is properly, recognized by law and endorsed by the President himself; and yet, if we do not take it for a public use, although we are bound to do so, we must demand its emancipation, why should not its owners be paid the full, ample, outside price for the commodity?

Mr. Speaker, I have hitherto endeavored to confine myself strictly to the resolutions before the Senate. I have attempted to show, first, that there is at least room for the reasonable doubt whether it is the unquestionable right of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.

That was the delivery of the petition to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. As to the other prayer of the petition—the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia—he deemed it his duty to say that he would not support it.

Mr. CLYMER. The Senator from Allegheny stated in his remarks "it is the ulterior effects which the adoption of the measure before Congress will have upon the slave system in other portions of the country."

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