

Clearfield



Republican

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ANDREW JOHNSON.

HIS SPEECH AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WORDS OF WISDOM.

HIS PRESENT POSITION AND FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION.

THE CONSTITUTION HIS GUIDE.

Present State Of Affairs.

WHO ARE THE TRAITORS TO-DAY?

Sec. Sec. Sec.

The following words of wisdom, which should be carefully read and garnered in the store house of the mind by every man, woman and child in this land, were uttered by President Johnson, on the 22d ult., in response to a delegation of white citizens who waited upon him at the Presidential mansion, for the purpose of presenting a series of resolutions endorsing the policy adopted by him:

Fellow Citizens:—I was about to tender my thanks to the committee who waited upon me and presented me with the resolutions adopted on this occasion—resolutions, as I understand, complimentary to the policy pursued by the Administration.

I am free to say to you, on this occasion, that it is extremely gratifying to me to know that so large a portion of my fellow citizens approve and endorse the policy that has been adopted, and is intended to be carried out. (Applause.) That policy has been one which was intended to restore the glorious Union of these States to their original relations to the government of the United States. (Prolonged applause.) This seems to be a day peculiarly appropriate for such a manifestation—the day that gave birth to him who founded this government, the Father of his country, of him who stood at that period at the head of the government, when all these States entered into this Union.

This day, I say, is peculiarly appropriate to endorse the restoration of the Union of these States, founded by the Father of his Country, Washington, whose name this city bears, embalm in the hearts of all who love free government. (A voice—"So is Andrew Johnson.") Washington, who, in the language of his eulogists, was "first in peace, first in war, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." No people can claim him, no nation can appropriate him. His reputation and life are the common inheritance of all who love free government. I to-day had the pleasure of attending the Washington National Monument Association, which is directing its efforts to complete the monument erected to his memory.

I was glad to meet them, and, so far as I could, to give my humble influence to a monument being erected to him who founded the government, almost within a stone's throw of the spot from which I address you. Let it be completed. (Cheers.) Let the pledges which all the States, associations and corporations have placed in that monument of their faith and love for this Union be preserved. Let me refer to the motto upon the stone cut from my own State, God bless her—(A voice—"And bless you!")—a State which has struggled for the preservation of the Union in the field and in the councils of the nation, and is now struggling, in consequence of the interruption that has taken place with the Federal government growing out of the rebellion, but is struggling to recover her relations with the government, and to take her stand where she has stood since 1796. Inscribed upon the stone sent here to be placed in that monument of freedom, and in commemoration of Washington, is a sentiment by which I stand, and by which Tennessee will stand. It was the sentiment enunciated by the immortal Andrew Jackson. "The Federal Union—it must be preserved." (Wild shouts of applause.) "The Federal Union—it must be preserved." (Renewed applause.) Were it possible to have the old man whose statue is now before me, and whose portrait is behind me in the Capitol, and whose sentiment is inscribed on the stone deposited in the monument—were it possible to communicate with the illustrious dead, and could he be informed or made to understand the working and progress of faction, rebellion and treason, the bones of the old man would stir in their coffin, and he would rise and shake off the habiliments of the tomb; he would extend that long arm and finger of his, and he would reiterate that glorious sentiment, "The

Federal Union must be preserved."— [Applause.]

But we see and witness what has transpired since his day; we remember what he did in 1833, when treason, treachery and infidelity to the country and the Constitution of the United States then stalked forth. It was his power and influence that then crushed the treason in its infancy. It was then stopped, but only for a time. The spirit continued; there were men disaffected to the government, both North and South. We had peculiar institutions, of which some complained, and to which others were attached.

One portion of our countrymen advocated that institution in the South, and another opposed it in the North, and it resulted in creating two extremes. One in the South reached the point at which they were prepared to dissolve the government of the United States to secure and preserve their peculiar institution; and in what I may say on this occasion I want to be understood. There was another portion of our countrymen who were opposed to this peculiar institution in the North, and who went to the extreme of being willing to break up the government to get clear of it. [Applause.]

I am talking to you to-day in common phrases, and assume to be nothing but a citizen, and one who has been fighting for the Constitution and to preserve the government. These two parties have been arrayed against each other, and I stand before you to-day as I did in the Senate in 1860, in the presence of those who were making war on the Constitution, and who wanted to disrupt the Government, to denounce, as I did men in my place, those who were so engaged, as traitors. I have never ceased to repeat, and as far as efforts could go to carry out the sentiments I then uttered. [Cheers.]

I have already remarked that there were two parties, one for destroying the Government to preserve slavery, and the other for breaking up the Government to destroy slavery. The objects to be accomplished were different, it is true, so far as slavery is concerned; but they agreed in one thing, and that was the breaking up of the Government. They agreed in the destruction of the Government, the precise thing which I have always stood up to oppose, whether the disunionist comes from the South or from the North.

I stand now where I did then, to vindicate the Union of these States and the Constitution of the country. [Applause.] When rebellion or treason manifested itself in the South I stood by the Government. I said I was for the Union, with slavery or without it—for either alternative. I was for my Government and the Constitution. [Applause.] The Government has stretched forth its strong arm, and with its physical power has put down treason in the field. Yes, the section of country which has arrayed itself against the Government has been put down by the Government itself.

Now what do these people say? We said no compromise. We can settle this question with the South in eight and forty hours. How? Disband your armies, acknowledge the Constitution of the United States, obey the law, and the whole question is settled. Well, their armies have been disbanded, and they come forward now in a spirit of magnanimity and say, "We were mistaken; we made an effort to carry out the doctrine of secession and dissolve this Union; we have failed, and having traced this through to its logical and physical consequences and results, we now again come forward and acknowledge the flag of our country, obedience to the Constitution, and the supremacy of the laws."

I say that when you have yielded to the law, and when you acknowledge your allegiance to the Government, I am ready to open the doors of the Union, and restore you to your old relations—the Government of our fathers. [Applause.] Who, I ask, has suffered more for the Union than I have? I shall not now repeat the wrongs or sufferings inflicted upon me; that is not the way to deal with a whole people in the spirit of revenge. I know much has been said about the exercise of the pardoning power. So far as the Executive is concerned, there is no one who has labored harder than I have to have the principal conscious and intelligent traitors brought to justice; to have the law vindicated and the great fact vindicated that treason is a crime. Yet, while conscious and intelligent traitors are to be punished, should whole States, communities and people be made to submit to and bear the penalty of death? I have, perhaps, as much hostility

and as much resentment as a man ought to have, but we should conform our action and our conduct to the example of Him who founded our holy religion; not that I would liken Him to it, or bring any comparison, for I am not going to detain you long. But, gentlemen, I came into power under the Constitution of the country and by the approbation of the people, and what did I find? I found eight millions of people who were, in fact, condemned under the law, and the penalty was death; under the idea of revenge and resentment, they were to be annihilated and destroyed.

O, how different this from the example set by the holy founder of our religion, whose divine arm touches the horizon and embraces the whole earth—yes, He who founded this great scheme came into the world and found our race condemned under the law, and the sentence was death. What was His example? Instead of putting the world or a nation to death, He went forth with grace, and attested by his blood and his wounds that He would die and let the nation live. Let them repent and let them acknowledge their allegiance. Let them become loyal and willing supporters and defenders of our glorious stripes and stars and the Constitution of our country. Let their leaders, the conscious, intelligent traitors, suffer the penalty of the law, but for the great mass who have been forced into the rebellion and misled by their leaders, I say leniency, kindness, trust and confidence.

But, my countrymen, after having passed through the rebellion and given such evidence as I have, though men creak a great deal about it now; when I look through the battle fields and see so many of these brave men in whose company I was in parts of the rebellion, where it was most difficult and doubtful to be found, before the smoke of battle has scarcely passed away, before the blood shed has scarcely congealed, what do we find?

The rebellion is put down by the strong arm of the government in the field; but is that the only way in which we can have rebellion? They struggled for the breaking up of your government, but before they are scarcely out of the battle-field and before our brave men have scarcely returned to their homes to renew the ties of affection and love we find ourselves almost in the midst of another rebellion. [Applause.]

The war to suppress the rebellion was to prevent the separation of the States, and thereby change the character of the government and the weakening of its powers. Now, what is the struggle? There is an attempt to concentrate the power of the government in the hands of the few, and thereby bring about a consolidation, which is equally dangerous and objectionable with separation. We find that powers are assumed and attempted to be exercised of a most extraordinary character. What are they? We find the government can be revolutionized; can be changed without going into the battle-field. Sometimes revolutions most dangerous to the people are effected without shedding blood. The substance of our government may be taken away, leaving only the form and shadow.

Now, what are these attempts? What is being proposed? We find that, in fact, by an irresponsible central directory nearly all the powers of the government are assumed, without even consulting the legislative or executive departments of the government. Yes, and by a resolution reported by a committee upon whom all the legislative powers of the government has been conferred, that principle in the Constitution which authorizes and empowers each branch of the legislative department—the Senate and the House of Representatives—to be the judge of the election and qualifications of its own members, has been virtually taken away from those departments of the government and conferred upon a committee who must report before they can act under the Constitution and allow members duly elected to take their seats.

By this rule they assume that there must be laws passed, that there must be recognition in respect to a State in the Union, with all its practical relations restored, before the respective Houses of Congress, under the Constitution, shall judge of the election and qualification of its own members. What a position is that? You have been struggling for four years to put down the rebellion. You denied in the beginning of the struggle that any State had the right to go out. You said that they had neither right nor power. The issue has been made, and it has been settled that a State has neither the right nor the power to go out of the Union; and when you have settled that by the executive and military power of the government,

and by the public judgment, you turn round and assume that they are out and shall not come in. [Laughter and cheers.] I am free to say to you, as your Executive, that I am not prepared to take any such position. I said in the Senate, in the very inception of the rebellion, that States had no right to go out, and that they had no power to go out. That question has been settled, and I cannot turn round now and give the direct lie to all I profess to have done in the last five years. I can do no such thing.

I say that when they comply with the Constitution, when they have given sufficient evidence of their loyalty and that they can be trusted, when they yield obedience to law, I say, extend to them the right hand of fellowship and let peace and Union be restored.

But then, gentlemen, we swing around the circle. I have fought traitors and treason in the South. I opposed the Davises and the Toombses, the Slidells and a long list of others whose names I will not repeat, and now when I turn round at the other end of the line I find men—I care not by what name you call them—a voice, "Call them traitors," who stand opposed to the restoration of the Union of these States, and I am free to say to you that I am still for the preservation of this compact; I am still for the restoration of this Union; I am still in favor of this great government of ours going on and following out its destiny. (A voice, "Give us their names.") A gentleman calls for their names. Well, suppose I should give them. (A voice, "We know them.") I look upon them—I repeat it as President or citizen—as much opposed to the fundamental principles of this government, and they are as much laboring to destroy them as were the men who fought against us. (A voice, "What are their names?") I say Thaddeus Stevens, of Pennsylvania (Tremendous applause.) I say Charles Sumner, I say Wendell Phillips, and others of the same stripe are amongst them. (A voice, "Give it to Forney!") Some gentleman in the crowd says give it to Forney. I have only to say that I do not waste my time upon dead ducks. (Laughter.) I stand for the Constitution where I placed my feet from my entrance into public life. They may traduce me, they may slander me, they may vituperate me; but let me say to you that it has no effect upon me; and let me say in addition that I do not intend to be bullied by my enemies. (Cries of "The people will sustain you!")

I know, my countrymen, that it has been insinuated, and not only insinuated, but said directly—the intimation has been given in high places—that if such a usurpation of power had been exercised two hundred years ago, in a peculiar reign, it would have cost a certain individual his head. What usurpation has Andrew Johnson been guilty of? The usurpation I have been guilty of has always been standing between the people and the encroachments of power; and because I dared to say, in a conversation with a fellow-citizen, and a Senator, too, that I thought amendments to the Constitution ought not to be so frequent; that their effect would be that it would lose all its dignity; that the instrument would be lost sight of in a short time—because I happened to say, in a conversation, that if it was amended, such and such amendments should be adopted—we are told that it was usurpation of power that would have lost a king his head at a certain time. And in connection with this subject it was explained by the same gentleman that we were in the midst of earthquakes; that he trembled, and would not yield. Yes, there is a ground swell coming of popular judgment and indignation. The American people will speak by their instincts, and they will know who are their friends and who are their enemies.

What position have I occupied? I have occupied all positions under this government, beginning with an alderman and running through all branches of the Legislature. (A voice—"From a tailor up.") Some gentleman says I have been a tailor. Now that did not discomfit me in the least, for when I used to be a tailor I had the reputation of being a good one, and of making close fits; always punctual with my customers, and always did good work. (A voice—"No patch-work.") No, I do not want any patch-work. I want a whole suit. But we will pass by this facetiousness. My friends may say, "You are President, and you must not talk about such things." When principles are involved, my countrymen—when the existence of my country even is imperiled, I will act as I have on former occasions, and speak what I think. I was saying that I had held nearly all positions,

from alderman, through both branches of Congress, to that which I now occupy, and who is there that will say Andrew Johnson ever made a pledge that he did not redeem, or made a promise that he did not fulfill. Who will say that he has ever acted otherwise than in fidelity to the great mass of people? They may talk about beheading and usurpation, but when I am beheaded I want the American people to be the witnesses. I do not want, by innuendo, by indirect remarks in high places, to see the man who has assassination brooding in his bosom, exclaim; "The presidential obstacle must be gotten out of the way." I make use of a very strong expression when I say, that I have no doubt the intention was to incite assassination, and to get out of the way the obstacle from place and power. Whether by assassination or not, there are individuals in this government, I doubt not, who want to destroy our institutions and change the character of the government.

Are they not satisfied with the blood which has been shed? Does not the murder of Lincoln appose the vengeance and wrath of the opponents of this government? Are they still unslaked? Do they still want more blood? Have they not honor and courage enough to attain their objects otherwise than by the hands of the assassins attacking me where a brave and courageous man would attack another. I only dread him when he would go in disguise, his footsteps noiseless. If it is blood they want, let them have courage enough to strike like men. I know they are willing to wound, but they are afraid to strike. If blood is to be shed because I vindicate the Union and the preservation of the government in its original purity of character, let it be shed, but when it is shed, let an altar to the Union be erected, and then, if necessary, take me and lay me upon it, and the blood that now warms and animates my existence shall be poured out as a libation to the Union of these States. But let the opponents of this government remember that when it is poured out, that the blood of the martyrs will be the seed of the church.

Gentlemen, this Union will grow. It will continue to increase in strength and power, though it may be cemented and cleansed with blood. I have talked now longer than I intended. Let me thank you for the honor you have done me. So far as this government is concerned, let me say one other word in reference to the amendments to the Constitution of the United States.

When I reached Washington for the purpose of being inaugurated as Vice President of the United States, I had a conversation with Mr. Lincoln. We were talking about the condition of affairs, and in reference to matters in my own State. I said that we had called a convention, had amended our constitution by abolishing slavery in the State—a State not embraced in his proclamation. All this met his approbation, and gave him encouragement, and in talking upon the amendment to the Constitution, he said: "When the amendment to the Constitution is adopted by three-fourths of the States we shall have all, or pretty nearly all. I am in favor of at least one other amendment being adopted." Said I, "What is that, Mr. President?" Said he, "I have labored to preserve this Union. I have toiled four years. I have been subjected to calumny and misrepresentation. Yet my great desire has been to preserve the Union of the States intact under the Constitution as they were before."

"But," said I, "Mr. President, what amendment do you refer to?" He said, "he thought there should be an amendment added to the Constitution which would compel all the States to send their Senators and Representatives to the Congress of the United States." Yes, compel them. The idea was in his mind that is a part of the doctrine of secession to break up the government by States withdrawing their Senators from Congress, and, therefore, he desired a constitutional amendment to compel them to be sent.

How now does the matter stand for the Constitution of the country? Even that portion of it which provides for the amendment to the organic law says that no State without its consent shall be deprived of its representation in the Senate. And now what do we find? We find the position taken that the States shall not be represented, that we may impose taxes, that we may send our tax collectors to every region and portion of a State, that the people are to be oppressed with taxes; but when they come here to participate in the legislation of the country they are met at the door and told no; you must pay your taxes, but you must not participate in the legislation of the country

which is to affect you for a time. Let us admit into the councils of the nation those who are unmistakably and unquestionably loyal—those men who acknowledged their allegiance to the government, and men to support the Constitution. It is all embraced in that. The amplification of an oath makes no difference if a man is not loyal. But you may adopt whatever test oath you choose to prove their loyalty.

That is a matter of detail for which I care nothing. Let them be unquestionably loyal in their allegiance to the government, and willing to support it in its hour of peril and of need, and I am willing to trust them. I know that some do not attach so much importance to these principles as I do, but one principle there should be no taxation without representation. I hold to that principle laid down as fundamental by our fathers.

If it was good then, it is good now. If it was a rule to stand by then, it is a rule to stand by now. It is a fundamental principle that should be adhered to as long as free government lasts. I know it was said by some during the rebellion that our Constitution had been rolled up as a piece of parchment and laid away, and that in time of war and rebellion there was no Constitution. Well, we know that sometimes, from the very great necessity of the case, from a great emergency, we must do unconstitutional things in order to preserve the Constitution itself.

But if while the rebellion was going on the Constitution was rolled up as a parchment, if it was violated in some particulars to save the government, there may have been some excuse to justify it; but now that peace has come, now the war is over, we want a better Constitution, and I say the time has come to take the Constitution down, to unroll it, re-read it, and to understand its provisions. Now if you saved the government by violating the Constitution in war, you can only save it in peace by preserving the Constitution, and the only way to preserve it is by a strict adherence to the Constitution of our fathers as is now unfolded.

It must now be read and understood by the American people. I come here to-day, as far as I can in making these remarks, to vindicate the Constitution, and to save it, for it does seem to me that encroachment after encroachment is proposed. I stand to-day prepared, so far as I can to resist these encroachments upon the Constitution and the government. Now that we have peace, let us enforce the Constitution. Let it be published, let it be printed in blazing characters, as if it were in the heavens, punctuated with stars, that all may read and understand. Let us consult that instrument; let us digest its provisions and understand them, and understanding, abide by them.

I tell the opponents of this government, I care not from what quarter they come, whether from the east, west, north or south, you who are engaged in the work of breaking up the government by amendments to the Constitution, that the principles of free government are deeply rooted in the American heart. All the powers combined, I care not of what character they are, cannot destroy the great instrument—that great charter of freedom. They may seem to succeed for a time, but their attempt will be futile. They might as well undertake to lock up the winds or chain the waves of the ocean, and confine them to limits. They may think now it can be done by concurrent resolutions, but when it is submitted to the popular will, they will find that they might as well introduce a resolution to repeal the law of gravity as to keep this Union from being restored.

It's just about as feasible to resist the great law of gravity which binds all to a common centre, as that great law of gravity which will bring back these States and replace them in their relations. All these conspiracies and machinations north and south cannot prevent it. All that is wanted is time, until the American people can get to know what is going on. I would the whole American people could be assembled here to-day as you are. I wish we had an amphitheatre capacious enough to hold these 30,000,000 of people, that they could be here to witness the struggle that is going on to preserve the Constitution of their fathers. They would settle this question; they could see who it is, and how it is, and what kind of spirit is manifested in breaking up the government. Yes, when they come to see the struggle, and to understand who is against them, if you would make them perform the part of gladiators in the first tilt, you would find the enemies of the country crushed and helpless. I have detained you longer than I