

The Democratic

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George J. Chase, Publisher,

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Political Articles.

SPEECH
Delivered by EX-GOVERNOR BIGLER,
at Stamford and Hartford, Conn.

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF CONNECTICUT:

This is my first visit to the New England States, and I should do injustice to my feelings were I not to express to you the gratification excited by the frank hospitality of the people, and by the evidences of general prosperity and comfort which I have met at every point. Your country, naturally rugged, has yielded to the influences of industry and art, and its exterior is beautiful and its productions abundant. Your manufacturing establishments, in great variety, and the school-houses, the church, and the asylum, emblems of intelligence, religion, and charity.

I must beg you to believe that I have come amongst you in no spirit of vanity. I do not believe I can tell you anything which you have not heard before, or tell it better. My presence is rather to manifest the deep solicitude which the democracy of the old Keystone feel for the fate of their brethren in Connecticut, just now engaged in a terrible struggle with the common enemy. I would add the democracy if I had the power. I would earnestly persuade you to join that party and maintain its principles.

I am, besides, persuaded that intercourse of this kind, between the people of the several States, seldom fails to exercise a most salutary influence upon our social and political relations. Its certain tendency is to remove error and prejudice, and to unite in bonds of brotherly fraternity. Why should it be otherwise? The imaginary lines dividing the States do not mark the limits of a people's sympathies to each other; nor are they high walls or deep chasms, that they may not be passed. We are mainly the descendants of the same parents; heirs to a common inheritance, actuated by similar motives and impulses, and protected by the same general laws.

I am gratified to find so many of the democrats of Connecticut in council on this occasion. It is the right of freedom. It is a cherished feature of our republican system that has made such counselling together proper and necessary. The elective franchise, the medium of self-government, makes each citizen a component part of the government, vested with privileges and prerogatives, and clothed with responsibilities. It is not only your privilege to vote, but it is your duty to do so, and to understand, as far as practicable, the consequences of the suffrage you are about to cast.

As an advocate of the democratic party, I set out with the general proposition, that the best interests of the nation require the ascendency of its principles and policy, and the entire prostration of the democracy's opposition. The democratic party is not only the oldest, but it is the purest and the most patriotic political organization that has ever existed in the country. It is the only party now in existence, maintaining principles and a policy applicable to all parts of the Union.

The scene before us is a beautiful illustration of this occasion. One of your guests on this occasion, Col. Orr, is from South Carolina, an original State on the southern boundary. Another, Senator Veller, is from California, the youngest member of the family, on the shores of the Pacific, distant three thousand miles or more; and myself, from the Keystone of the Arch, where the Declaration of Independence was adopted, and the Constitution framed; and yet, our principles and doctrines are in perfect harmony on every topic, and have been enthusiastically embraced by the democracy of New England. In the past struggles, though occasionally suffering defeat, in the end its policy has been sustained by experience and popular will. The opposing party, by whatever name known, has been as uniformly wrong. Whatever they did in power had to be undone; whatever they objected to has proved to be wise and proper for the country. Now we common sense people think that these reasons alone the democratic party is entitled to the confidence and patronage of the people. We never employ the mechanic or artist the second time, who has ruined the business the first; and the rule is just as good when applied to the science of government. These gentlemen have always failed. They did so in my State, and in your State, and in the whole nation; and now they have the boldness to ask another opportunity. The lessons of experience are not to be trifled with in this way.

But for the evidence of some of these assertions, Thomas Jefferson was the author of our faith, and our first leader. He had a great struggle with Alexander Hamilton, the able leader of the Federal party, at the time the government was first shaped. The latter was the advocate of a system assimilating to a limited monarchy; he wanted a President for life, and senators for life, and other features consistent with a powerful central system. He maintained that the British Government is the best model the world had ever seen; but the views of Jefferson prevailed, and hence our present representative system. Party lines were not clearly drawn, however, until Adams became President. His election was a triumph of the enemies of Jeffersonian democracy. The distinguishing acts of his administration were the alien and sedition laws. Under the former, it required fourteen years probation to become a citizen of the United States, and under the latter, a citizen was liable to be imprisoned, or banished from the country, for words spoken against the President and other officers of the government. Under this feature citizens from Berkshire county, now the Gibraltar of democracy in Pennsylvania, were punished. But when Mr. Jefferson came into the Presidential chair, these laws were repealed. Were they in existence at this time, some of the present enemies of the democratic party would be hoarse in danger of the penalty.

Under Jefferson's administration the great contest was in reference to the acquisition of the Territory of Louisiana. The opposition denounced the purchase as a prodigious waste of the public money, and a reckless extension of the limits of our government. The press teemed with trash of this kind; and the notes, and even the pulpits, echoed the notes of alarm. But the purchase was made, and who can count the value of this single facture of democratic policy. Had the doctrine of the opposition prevailed, the Mississippi river would now be in the possession of France or England. The States of Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, and the Territories of Nebraska, Kansas, and Minnesota, would not be ours, but compose a part of a jealous, if not a hostile power. Their inhabitants would not enjoy the blessings of a free government; and who, at this day, will dare to say that this measure of the democracy was unwise, or who would seek to have so many flourishing States driven out of the Union.

During the administration of Mr. Madison the great issue was one of war with England. When that insidious power claimed the right to search American vessels on the high seas, and press American citizens into the ranks of her servile army, the great heart of the nation recoiled in indignity. The enemies of the democratic party, in the main, were against the declaration of war. Some of whom went so far as to meet in your own State, at Hartford, to plot resistance, if not treason. But war came and went, and who will say now that it was not the true policy of this nation to have it? In its progress and consequences it honored our flag, elevated our character as a nation, fixed more firmly the position of a nation, and settled great fields of national intercourse and comity, which are now respected by all.

The periods of the administration of Mr. Monroe and the younger Adams were not so remarkable for partisan issues and great results. Under the former, the Territory of Florida, now a State, was acquired. General Jackson was the next President, and during his term the question of a national bank was the great issue. The opposition held that such an institution was indispensable to the business of the country—that we must have a great regulator of the currency, of exchange, and of values. But when the Bank attempted to regulate the politics of the country, Jackson determined to regulate it; and when its appliances had secured the passage of a re-charter through Congress, that man of iron will put his heel on it. The sensation produced by this act was regarded as more wonderful than his achievements on the field of battle. But now the banks rest on an obsolete idea; its former advocates concede the wisdom of the policy that terminated its existence. Many other great things were done by Jackson. When the French hesitated to pay, Jackson said "by the Eternal and the money cause. When a sovereign State, dissatisfied with the reason of a nation, threatened resistance, the same potent voice produced peace. Under the administration of Mr. Van Buren, the subservience was a leading issue. The purse and sword were notes of alarm. But this issue has been settled in our favor. The institution has worked well, and the sword has been orderly.

In 1840 our opponents attained power once more. Coming through a kind of political purgatory they had a long programme on hand. What did they do? Contrary to their pledges they attempted to fasten another bank upon the country. They did pass a bankrupt act, which in the short space of one year wiped out hundreds of millions of honest debts, and was then repealed, in accordance with the indignation voice of the nation. The issues on the question of the tariff, so prominent at that time, have all been settled in accordance with democratic policy. The next great issue was the re-annexation of Texas. The measure was supported by the democracy, and resisted by most of the opposition. But who, among them, how will say that Texas ought not to be ours? Who regrets her admission into the Union, save only a few fanatics? The opposition said war with Mexico would follow, and it did follow. This was the only thing they had made for a long time. They did not do it, but they did do it, and what was the result? The opposition press again teemed with denunciations against the President and his party. The war was denounced as unjust and aggressive on our part. The rostrum and the pulpit again echoed the alarm, and joined in denouncing the government. Even members of Congress went so far as to say that American soldiers in Mexico should be welcomed with bloody hands to hospital graves. But the great heart of the nation pulsed in unison with the government, and State after State, company after company, and man after man, cheered their services to President. The spectacle was a proud one, and astounded Great Britain and other jealous powers. The war was a brief and a brilliant one, and peace was made on our terms. Had the policy of the opposition prevailed, Texas, long ere this, would have been forced into an alliance with England or France, and California, the richest State in the Union, so wonderful in her past growth, and promised for the future, would still be an integral part of the degraded republic of Mexico, and be inhabited only by an ignorant and imbecile people. Had the democracy no other claim to the favor of the people, this achievement alone should secure them many years of ascendancy and rule. But all the old issues have been settled in favor of the democracy. Indeed, had it been the avowed purpose of the opposition to be uniformly wrong on every question, whether of foreign relations or domestic concern, of peace or war, they could not have succeeded so well. Of all the measures they ever proposed there is not now a vestige of one to be found in the policy of the country. One by one, in turn, their hobbies have fallen at the hand of time; and discarded by the people, are abandoned by their authors. It will be so with those now pending. Not only are their hobbies gone, but some of the old parties are gone also.

Under the administration of Mr. Polk, the great party would exist in history only, and we have the verification of his prediction. Now fellow-citizens, what I wish to impress upon your minds is this: That in this long history, covering many an important epoch, there never was a time when the democratic party occupied a nobler position than just now. There never was a time when its ascendancy was more essential to the peace and progress of the nation; and

an quite sure I have never seen the day fully of interfering without a proper right to do so. But suppose no constitutional obstacle intervened, or that the South should agree to emancipate the slaves at a certain period, provided they were taken away or maintained? What could be done? Who would employ a cloth, and feed these helpless beings? How many would Massachusetts take? How many would Ohio take? How many would Pennsylvania and Connecticut take? Not one! But if they could be brought North, in what particular will their condition be improved? Will they live better? Will they have better ideas of civilization and Christianity? Will they be elevated in the scale of moral being? The answer to all these questions is, to a certain extent, furnished in the pitiable condition of the free blacks. True, there are those who would be willing to give the negro equal social, and political condition with the Anglo-Saxon; but I am not one of those, and have no patience here to discuss this offensive idea. What then should these abolitionists do? Why, mind their own business. That is generally profitable. Many get rich in this way. The Union is not to be broken up for the wrongs of slavery. Nor should the people of New England forget that they had an agency in propagating the institution. Their delegates in the convention that made the present constitution, consented to the continuance of the slave trade. Prior to that time, this disgraceful traffic had been legislated against by the States of Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina. All the New England States voted for the clause continuing the trade up to 1808, while Virginia and Delaware voted against it. It was this trade that first propagated the institution and regulated its growth. For the increase during that long period, the New England States are largely responsible, and this fact should at least constrain them to a charitable view of this vexed question. This extent of the institution is not to be measured by the volume of slaves in bondage. Were I a citizen of Kansas, I should vote against slavery; but in doing so, I would not feel that I was lessening the number of slaves, or doing them a special kindness. Nor would I regret the restoration of the southern slaves to the condition of their ancestors in Africa better their condition. The change would be a relief to the southern States, and the act would be an outrage upon humanity. But my object is only to suggest these ideas, not to elaborate them. I have no doctrine to present in this point of the subject. I only wish those who are constantly exercising the question, to point out the remedy to tell us what can be done. Nor would a dissolution of the Union be the result of the slave trade.

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Those who claim against the law with so much vehemence, should remember that it is the creature of the constitution, and whilst it may not be perfect, it is not probable that it will do more than return all the fugitives were it to do less, it would be what the constitution intended. The law of 1793, though very similar to that now in existence, met with little resistance at the time. It passed 35 out of 55 votes in the House of Representatives; Massachusetts cast 6 votes for it, and one against it. But now other councils prevail, and every man who says this part of the constitution must be carried out, is denounced as a "negro-driver."

But let us look at this question separately, and inquire what good thing could we do for the country. And we should not neglect to notice that they are the two parties against which Washington, with wonderful foresight, admonished the people in his farewell address. For one is a social enemy, and the other is a political partisan end, and the other is a clearly geographical in its organization. Read the address for yourselves, and see how striking the application. First, then comes the Republican or abolition party. It is certainly much older, if not much better than its compeer. Its movements are associated with its earliest recollections of political affairs. It has been diligent in its temptations over the evils of slavery; and has been the unhappy condition and the colored race in this country for a long time; but has long failed to present, for the consideration of the people, either a legal or practical remedy. When pressed to answer the question, the most fanatical will admit that as citizens of a free State, they have no legal right to interfere with the institution; that it is the clear constitutional right of each State to have at its disposal, and to claim that the States have failed to exercise this right. When the Constitution was adopted, all the States, save one, embraced slavery. Now we have fifteen slave and six free States. Connecticut and Pennsylvania have abolished it. Virginia and Maryland have retained it. The people of the latter States have no proper right to complain against the action of those of the former, and vice versa. Nor will it do to say that constant and bitter denunciations by the people of one State against the institutions of another is no interference; barren as it is of practical result, it is still fruitful of ill feeling. The certain tendency of which is to alienate the feelings of the people of the several States. At the same time, defeat the end in view. Were the people of Pennsylvania to indulge in unkind criticisms on your institutions, I am sure the only tendency would be to force you to cherish them the more closely. Such has been the only effect of the denunciations of the southern people with Clay at their head, started the Colonization Society, what did the abolitionists do? Did they second the movement? By no means. Nothing would satisfy them but immediate and unconditional emancipation. Their lectures commenced to harangue the people, and their colleagues were sent into all parts of the Union with inflammatory documents, to accomplish this end. The consequence was, that the southern people became alarmed and needed from the position they had taken. The opportunities of the slaves were restricted, their education neglected, and the southern people constrained to adhere to their constitutional right to have the institution

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But let us look at this question separately, and inquire what good thing could we do for the country. And we should not neglect to notice that they are the two parties against which Washington, with wonderful foresight, admonished the people in his farewell address. For one is a social enemy, and the other is a political partisan end, and the other is a clearly geographical in its organization. Read the address for yourselves, and see how striking the application. First, then comes the Republican or abolition party. It is certainly much older, if not much better than its compeer. Its movements are associated with its earliest recollections of political affairs. It has been diligent in its temptations over the evils of slavery; and has been the unhappy condition and the colored race in this country for a long time; but has long failed to present, for the consideration of the people, either a legal or practical remedy. When pressed to answer the question, the most fanatical will admit that as citizens of a free State, they have no legal right to interfere with the institution; that it is the clear constitutional right of each State to have at its disposal, and to claim that the States have failed to exercise this right. When the Constitution was adopted, all the States, save one, embraced slavery. Now we have fifteen slave and six free States. Connecticut and Pennsylvania have abolished it. Virginia and Maryland have retained it. The people of the latter States have no proper right to complain against the action of those of the former, and vice versa. Nor will it do to say that constant and bitter denunciations by the people of one State against the institutions of another is no interference; barren as it is of practical result, it is still fruitful of ill feeling. The certain tendency of which is to alienate the feelings of the people of the several States. At the same time, defeat the end in view. Were the people of Pennsylvania to indulge in unkind criticisms on your institutions, I am sure the only tendency would be to force you to cherish them the more closely. Such has been the only effect of the denunciations of the southern people with Clay at their head, started the Colonization Society, what did the abolitionists do? Did they second the movement? By no means. Nothing would satisfy them but immediate and unconditional emancipation. Their lectures commenced to harangue the people, and their colleagues were sent into all parts of the Union with inflammatory documents, to accomplish this end. The consequence was, that the southern people became alarmed and needed from the position they had taken. The opportunities of the slaves were restricted, their education neglected, and the southern people constrained to adhere to their constitutional right to have the institution

with increased tenacity. So much for the folly of interfering without a proper right to do so. But suppose no constitutional obstacle intervened, or that the South should agree to emancipate the slaves at a certain period, provided they were taken away or maintained? What could be done? Who would employ a cloth, and feed these helpless beings? How many would Massachusetts take? How many would Ohio take? How many would Pennsylvania and Connecticut take? Not one! But if they could be brought North, in what particular will their condition be improved? Will they live better? Will they have better ideas of civilization and Christianity? Will they be elevated in the scale of moral being? The answer to all these questions is, to a certain extent, furnished in the pitiable condition of the free blacks. True, there are those who would be willing to give the negro equal social, and political condition with the Anglo-Saxon; but I am not one of those, and have no patience here to discuss this offensive idea. What then should these abolitionists do? Why, mind their own business. That is generally profitable. Many get rich in this way. The Union is not to be broken up for the wrongs of slavery. Nor should the people of New England forget that they had an agency in propagating the institution. Their delegates in the convention that made the present constitution, consented to the continuance of the slave trade. Prior to that time, this disgraceful traffic had been legislated against by the States of Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina. All the New England States voted for the clause continuing the trade up to 1808, while Virginia and Delaware voted against it. It was this trade that first propagated the institution and regulated its growth. For the increase during that long period, the New England States are largely responsible, and this fact should at least constrain them to a charitable view of this vexed question. This extent of the institution is not to be measured by the volume of slaves in bondage. Were I a citizen of Kansas, I should vote against slavery; but in doing so, I would not feel that I was lessening the number of slaves, or doing them a special kindness. Nor would I regret the restoration of the southern slaves to the condition of their ancestors in Africa better their condition. The change would be a relief to the southern States, and the act would be an outrage upon humanity. But my object is only to suggest these ideas, not to elaborate them. I have no doctrine to present in this point of the subject. I only wish those who are constantly exercising the question, to point out the remedy to tell us what can be done. Nor would a dissolution of the Union be the result of the slave trade.

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