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## SPEECH

### PRESIDENT JOHNSON.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 22.

After the adjournment of the meeting at Grover's Theatre, the assemblage visited the White House to serenade President Johnson. The chairman of the meeting at the theatre announced to the multitude that Mr. Johnson had consented to address them. Mr. Tendam said:

Fellow-citizens, I am one of the committee which, on behalf of the people of the District of Columbia, has just waited on the President of the United States to present to him the resolutions adopted by the meeting held to-day. The committee requested the President to present himself to you to give expression to his sentiments, and he has accordingly come out to do so.

The President, as he appeared, was received with enthusiasm and long continued applause. When it had subsided, he spoke as follows:

#### THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH.

Fellow citizens, for I presume I have a right to address you as such, I come to tender to you my sincere thanks for the approbation expressed by your Committee in their personal address and in the resolutions submitted by them as having been adopted by the meeting which has been held in this city to-day. These resolutions, as I understand them, are complimentary to the policy which has been adopted by the Administration, and has been steadily pursued since it came into power. I am free to say to you it is extremely gratifying to me to know that on this occasion so large a portion of my fellow citizens approve and endorse the policy which has been adopted and which it is my intention shall be carried out. (Great applause.) That policy is one which is intended to restore all the States to their original relations to the Federal Government of the United States. (Renewed applause.)

#### APPROPRIATENESS OF THE DAY.

This seems to be a day peculiarly appropriate for such a manifestation. It is the day that gave birth to that man who, more perhaps than any other, founded this Government. It is the day that gave birth to the Father of his country. It is the day that gave birth to him who presided over that body which formed the Constitution under which all the States entered into this glorious Confederacy.—Such a day is peculiarly appropriate for the endorsement of a policy whose object is the restoration of the Union of the States as it was designed by the Father of his country. (Applause.)

Washington, whose name this city bears is embalm in the hearts of all who love free Government. Washington, in the language of his eulogist, was first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen. No people can claim him—no nation can appropriate him. His reputation is commensurate with the civilized world, and his name is the common property of all those who love free government.

#### THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT.

To-day I had the pleasure of visiting an association who have been devoting their efforts to the completion of the monument which is being erected to his name. I was proud to meet them, and so far as I could, to give them my influence and countenance in aid of the work they have undertaken. That monument which is being erected to him who, I may say, founded the Government, is almost within the throw of a stone of the spot from which I now address you. Let it be completed. (Applause.) Let those various blocks which the States, and individuals, and associations, and corporations have put in that monument as pledges of their love for this Union, be preserved, and let the work be accomplished.

#### TENNESSEE.

In this connection let me refer to the block from my own State, God bless her, (applause) which has struggled for the preservation of this Union in the field and in the councils of the nation, and which is now struggling to renew her relations with this Government, that were interrupted by a fearful Rebellion. She is now struggling to renew those relations, and to take her stand where she had ever stood since 1796 until this Rebellion broke out. (Great applause.) Let me repeat the sentiment that that State has inscribed upon the stone which she has deposited in that monument of freedom which is being raised in commemoration of Washington. She is struggling to get back into the Union, and to stand by the sentiment which is there inscribed, and she is willing to sustain it.—What is it? It is the sentiment which was enunciated by her distinguished son, the immortal, the illustrious Jackson:—"The Federal Union—it must be preserved!" (Great applause.) If it were possible for that old man, whose statue is now before me, and whose portrait is behind me in the Executive Mansion, and whose sentiment is thus preserved in that monument in your vicinity, to be called forth from the grave, or if it were possible to

communicate with the spirit of the illustrious dead, and make him understand the progress of faction and rebellion and treason, he would turn over in his coffin, and he would rise, and shaking off the habiliments of the tomb, would again stand erect, and extend forth his long arm and finger, and reiterate that sentiment, once expressed by him on a memorable occasion: "The Federal Union—it must be preserved." (Great applause.)

#### HISTORIC REMINISCENCES.

We have witnessed what has transpired since his day. In 1833, when treason and treachery and infidelity to the Government and Constitution of the United States stalked forth in the land, it was his power and influence that crushed the serpent in its incipency. It was then stopt but only for a time. The same spirit of disaffection continues. There were men disaffected to the Government, both in the North and in the South.

#### SLAVERY.

There was, in a portion of the Union, a peculiar institution, of which some complained, and to which others were attached. One portion of our countrymen in the South advocated that institution, while another portion in the North opposed it.

#### TWO EXTREME PARTIES.

The result was the formation of extreme parties, one especially in the South, which reached a point at which it was proposed to dissolve the Union of the States for the purpose, as was said, of securing and preserving that peculiar institution. There was another portion of our countrymen who were opposed to that institution, and who went to such an extreme that they were willing to break up the Government in order to get clear of that peculiar institution of the South.

I say these things because I desire to talk plainly and in familiar phraseology. I assume nothing here to-day beyond the position of a citizen; one who has been pleading for his country and the preservation of the Constitution. (Immense cheering.) These two parties, I say, were arrayed against each other, and I stand here before you for the Union to-day, as I stood in the Senate of the United States in 1850 and 1861.

#### BOTH WERE TRAITORS.

I met there those who were making war upon the Constitution, those who wanted to dissolve the Government, and I denounced them in my place then and there, and exposed their true character. I said that those who were engaged in the work of breaking up the Government were traitors. I have never ceased, on all proper occasions, to repeat that sentiment, and as far as my effort could go, I have endeavored to carry it out. (Great applause.) I have just remarked that there were two parties, one of which was for destroying the Government and separating the Union, in order to preserve slavery, and the other for breaking up the Government in order to destroy slavery. True, the objects which they sought to accomplish were different, so far as slavery was concerned, but they agreed in the desire to break up the Government, the precise thing to which I have always been opposed, and whether disunionists come from the South or from the North, I stand now as I stood then, vindicating the Union of these States and the Constitution of my country. (Tremendous applause.)

#### SECESSION.

Rebellion and treason manifested themselves in the South. I stood by the Government. I said then that I was for the Union with slavery—I was for the Union without slavery. In either alternative I was for my Government and its Constitution. The Government has stretched forth its strong arm, and with its physical power has put down treason in the field. The section of the country which then arrayed itself against the Government has been put down by the strong arm. What did we say when this treason originated? We said, "No compromise; you yourselves in the South can settle this question in eight or forty hours. I said again and again, and I repeat it now, "Disband your armies in the South, acknowledge the supremacy of the Constitution of the United States, acknowledge the duty of obedience to the laws, and the whole question is settled." (Applause.) What has been done since?

#### THE REBELLION CRUSHED.

Their armies have been disbanded, and they come forward now in a proper spirit and say, "We were mistaken. We made an effort to carry out the doctrine of Secession and to dissolve this Union.—In that we have failed. We have traced this doctrine to its logical and physical results, and we find that we were mistaken. We acknowledge the flag of our country, and are willing to obey the Constitution and yield to the supremacy of the laws." (Great applause.) Coming in that spirit, I say to them, "When you have complied with the requirements of the Constitution, when you have yielded to the law, when you have acknowledged your allegiance to the Constitution, I will, so far as I can, open the door of the Union to those who had erred and strayed from the fold of their fathers for a time. (Great applause.) Who has suffered more by the Rebellion than I have? I shall

not repeat the story of wrongs and sufferings inflicted upon me; but the spirit of revenge is not the spirit in which to deal with a wronged people. I know there has been a great deal said about the exercise of the pardoning power, so far as your Executive is concerned.

#### THE LEADING TRAITORS.

There is no one who has labored with more earnestness than myself to have the principal intelligent and conscious traitors brought to justice, the law vindicated, and the great fact judicially established that treason is a crime, (applause) but while conscious, leading and intelligent traitors are to be punished, should whole communities and States and people be made to submit to the penalty of death? No, no!

I have perhaps as much asperity and as much resentment as men ought to have, but we must reason in great matters of government about man as he is; we must conform our actions and conduct to the example of Him who founded our holy religion, not that I would make such a comparison on this occasion in any personal aspect.

#### BEGINNING OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

I came into this place 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. Was I to yield to the spirit of revenge and resentment, and declare that they should all be annihilated and destroyed? How different would this have been from the example set by the Holy Founder of our religion, the extremities of whose divine arch rest upon the horizon, and whose span embraces the universe! He who founded this great scheme came into the world and found man condemned under the law, and his sentence was death.—What was His example? Instead of putting the world, or even a nation to death, He died upon the cross, attesting, by His wounds and his blood, that He died that mankind might live. (Great applause.)

#### MASSSES OF THE SOUTH.

Let those who have erred repent, let them acknowledge their allegiance, let them become loyal, willing supporters and defenders of our glorious Stars and Stripes and of the Constitution of our country.—Let the leaders, the conscious intelligent traitors, who have sinned against the law, and who have been forced into this Rebellion in many instances, and in others have been misled, I say clemency, kindness, trust and confidence. (Great applause.)

#### THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION.

My countrymen, when I look back over the history of the Rebellion, I am not vain when I ask you if I have not given as much evidence of my devotion to the Union as some who croak a great deal about it; when I look back over the battle fields of the Rebellion I think of the many brave-men in whose company I was; I cannot but recollect that I was sometimes in places where the contest was difficult and the result most doubtful; but almost before the smoke has passed away, almost before the blood that has been shed has done reeking, before the bodies of the slain have passed through the stages of decomposition, what do we now find?

#### PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS.

The rebellion has been put down by the strong arm of the Government in the field, but is that the only way in which you can have rebellion? Our struggle was against an attempt to dissolve the Union, but almost before the smoke of the battle-field has passed away, before our brave men have all returned to their homes and renewed the ties of affection and love to their wives and their children, we find almost another rebellion inaugurated. We put down the former rebellion in order to prevent the separation of the States, to prevent them from flying off, and thereby changing the character of our government and weakening its power, but when that struggle on our part has been successful, and that attempt has been put down, we find now an effort to concentrate all power in the hands of a few at the Federal head, and thereby bring about a consolidation of the Government, which is equally objectionable with a separation. (Vociferous applause.)

#### WHAT WE NOW FIND.

We find that powers are assumed, and attempted to be exercised, of a most extraordinary character. It seems that Governments may be revolutionized. Governments, at least, may be changed without going through the strife of battle. I believe it is a fact attested in history that sometimes revolutions most disastrous to a people are effected without the shedding of blood. The substance of your Government may be taken away, while the form and the shadow remain to you. What is now being proposed?

#### CENTRAL DIRECTORY USURPATION.

We find that in point of fact nearly all the powers of the Government are assumed by an irresponsible central directory, which does not even consult the legislative or the Executive Departments of the Government; by resolutions reported from a committee, in whom it seems that practically the legislative power of the Gov-

ernment is now vested; that great principle of the Constitution which authorizes and empowers each branch of the Legislative Department of the Senate and the House of Representatives to judge for itself of the election returns and qualifications of its own members has been virtually taken away from the two branches of the Legislative Department of the Government, and conferred upon a committee who must report before either House can act under the Constitution as to accepting the members who are to take their seats as component parts of the respective bodies.

By this rule it is assumed that there must be laws passed recognizing a State as in the Union, or its practical relations to the Union as restored, before the respective houses, under the Constitution, can judge of the election returns and qualifications of their own members. What a position is that? You struggled for four years to put down a rebellion; you denied in the beginning of the struggle that any State could go out of the Union; you said that it had neither the right, nor the power to do so. The issue was made, and it has been settled that the State had neither the right nor the power to go out of the Union; with what consistency, after it has been settled by the military arm of the Government, and by the public judgment, that the States had no right to go out of the Union, can any one now turn round and assume that they are out, that they shall not come in. I am free to say to you, as your Executive, that I am not prepared to take any such position.—(Great applause.) I said in the Senate, in the very inception of this Rebellion, that the States had no right to go out; I asserted that that they had no power to go out; that question has been settled, and it being settled I cannot turn around now and give the lie direct to all that I have professed, and all I have done for the last five years. When those who rebelled comply with the Constitution; when they yield obedience to the law that you and I acknowledge obedience to, I say extend them the right hand of fellowship, and let peace and union be restored. (Tremendous applause.)

#### THE SOUTHERN TRAITORS.

I fought traitors and treason in the South. I opposed the Davises, the Sillers, the Forges, and a long list of other repeating the names. Now, when I turn round and at the other end of the line find men, I care not by what name you call them, who still stand opposed to the restoration of the Union of these States, I am free to say to you that I am still in the field. (Great applause.) I am still for the preservation of the Union. I am still in favor of this great Government of ours going on and on, and filling out its destiny. (Great applause.) Voices—give us three names at the other end.

#### THE NORTHERN TRAITORS.

I am called upon to name three at the other end of the line. I am talking to my friends and fellow-citizens, who are interested with me in this Government, and I presume I am free to mention to you the names of those to whom I look upon as being opposed to the fundamental principles of this Government, and who are laboring to pervert and destroy it. (Voices, "Name them!" "Who are they?") The President—You ask me who they are. I say Thaddeus Stevens, of Pennsylvania, is one; I say Mr. Sumner, of the Senate, is another; and Wendell Phillips is another. (Long continued applause.) (Voices, "Give it to Forney!") The President—In reply to that, I will simply say I do not waste my ammunition upon dead ducks. (Great laughter and applause.) I stand for my country; I stand for the Constitution. There I have always placed my feet from my advent to public life. They may mislead, they may slander, they may vilipend me, but let me say to you, all this has no influence upon me. (Great applause.)

#### HE IS NOT TO BE BULLIED.

Let me say further, that I do not intend to be overawed by real or pretended friends, nor do I mean to be bullied by my enemies. (Tremendous applause.)

#### HE WILL STAND BY THE PEOPLE.

Honest conviction is my courage, the Constitution is my guide. I know, my countrymen, that it has been insinuated, so, not insinuated, that it has been said directly in high places, that if such a usurpation of power as I am charged with had been exercised some two hundred years ago in a particular reign, it would have cost an individual his head. (Great laughter.) Of what usurpation has Andrew Johnson been guilty? None. None.

Is it a usurpation to stand between the people and the encroachments of power, because in a conversation with a fellow citizen who happened to be a Senator, I said that I thought amendments to the Constitution ought not to be frequently made; that if it was continually tinkered with it would lose all its prestige and dignity, and the old instrument would be lost sight of altogether in a short time, and because, in the same conversation I happened to say that if it were amended at all, such and such an amendment ought to be adopted, it was charged that I was

guilty of usurpation of power that would have cost a king his head, in a certain period of English history. (Great laughter.) From the same source the exclamation has gone forth that they were in the midst of earthquakes; that they were trembling and could not yield. (Laughter.)

#### THERE IS AN EARTHQUAKE.

Yes, fellow citizens, there is an earthquake coming; there is a ground swelling of popular judgment and indignation. (Great applause.) The American people will speak, and, by their instinct if not otherwise, they will know who are their enemies. I have endeavored to be true to the people in all the positions which I have occupied, and there is hardly a position in this Government which I have not at some time filled, I suppose it will be said that this is vanity (laughter), but I may say that I have been in all of them. I have been in both branches of the State Legislature. (A voice: "You commenced a tailor.")

#### NO PATCH WORK.

The President—A gentleman behind me says that I began a tailor. Yes, I did begin a tailor (applause) and that suggestion does not discomfit me in the least, for when I was a tailor I had the reputation of being a good one, and of making close fits (laughter), and I was always punctual to my customers, and did good work. (Applause.)

#### VOICES—We will patch up the Union yet.

The President—No, I do not want any patch work of it; I want the original article restored. (Great applause.) But enough of this facetiousness. I know it may be said, "You are President, and you must not talk about these things;" but, my fellow citizens, I intend to talk the truth, and when principle is involved, when the existence of my country is in peril, I hold it to be my duty to speak what I think and what I feel, as I have always done on former occasions. (Great applause.)

I have said, it has been declared elsewhere that I was guilty of usurpation which would have cost a king his head, and in another place I have been denounced for whitewashing. When and where did I ever whitewash anything or anybody? I have been an alderman of a town, I have been in both branches of the legislature of my State, I have been in both Houses of the National Congress, I have been at the head of the Executive Vice President of the United States; and I am now in the position which I occupy before you, and during all this career where is the man and what portion of the people is there who can say that Andrew Johnson ever made a pledge which he did not redeem, or that he ever made a promise which he violated? None. Now point me to the man who can say that Andrew Johnson ever acted with infidelity to the great mass of the people. (Applause.)

#### THREATS OF ASSASSINATION.

Men may talk about beheading and about usurpation, but when I am beheaded I want the American people to be the witnesses. I do not want it, by innuendoes and indirect remarks in high places, to be suggested to men who have assassination brooding in their bosom, there is a fit subject. Others have exclaimed that the Presidential obstacle must be gotten out of the way. What is that but a make-use of a strong word inciting to assassination? No doubt, I say, the intention was to incite assassination, so the obstacle which the people had placed here could be got out of the way. Are the opponents of this Government not yet satisfied; are those who want to destroy our institutions and to change the character of the Government, not satisfied with the quantity of blood that has been shed? Are they not satisfied with one martyr in this place? Does not the blood of Lincoln appease their vengeance? Is their thirst still unslaked? Do they still want more blood? Have they not honor and courage enough to seek to obtain the end otherwise than through and by the hand of an assassin. I am not afraid of an assassin attacking me where one brave and courageous man will attack another. I only dread him when in disguise and where his footsteps are noiseless.

If they want blood let them have the courage to strike like men. I know they are willing to wound but afraid to strike. If my blood is to be shed because I vindicate the Union, and insist on the preservation of this Government in its original purity, let it be shed; but let an altar to the Union be first 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 the last libation, as a tribute to the Union of these States. (Great applause.) But let the opponents of this Government remember when it is poured out, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. This Union will grow, and it will continue to increase in strength and power, though it may be cemented and cleansed in blood. I have already spoken to you longer than I intended when I came out. (Go on.)

#### CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.

I merely intended to make my acknowledgments for the honor you have done me; but before I close allow me to say a word in regard to the question of amendments to the Constitution of the United States. Shortly after I reached Washington, for the purpose of being inaugurated as Vice President of the United States, I had a conversation with Mr. Lincoln in regard to the condition of affairs. We talked particularly in reference to matters in my own State. I told him that we had called a Convention, that we had amended the Constitution, and that we had abolished slavery in that State, which was not included in his Emancipation Proclamation.

All these things met his approbation, and he gave me words of encouragement. We talked then about affairs generally, and upon the subject of amendments to the Constitution of the United States; he said to me "When the amendment of the Constitution now proposed is adopted by three fourths of the States, I am pretty near done or indeed quite done in favor of amending the Constitution if there was one other adopted."

I asked him, "What is that, Mr. President?" He said "I have labored to preserve this Union. I have toiled during four years; I have been subjected to calumny and misrepresentation. My great and sole desire has been to preserve these States intact under the Constitution as they were before." I asked him again, "Mr. President, what amendment is that which you would propose?" "Why," said he "it is that there should be an amendment added to the Constitution which would compel the States to send their Senators and Representatives to the Congress of the United States. (Great applause.) The idea was in his mind that as a part of the doctrine of Secession one of the means to break up this Government was that the States, if they saw proper, might withdraw their Senators and Representatives, or refuse to elect them. He wanted even to remove that difficulty by a constitutional amendment, compelling the States to send Senators and Representatives to Congress.

#### THE CONSTITUTION VIOLATED.

But what do we now find? The Constitution of the country, even that portion of it which allows amendments to the organic law, expressly provides that no State, without its consent, shall be deprived of its equal suffrage in the Senate, and it also provides that each State shall have at least one Representative in the House of Representatives; but yet the position is taken that certain States shall not be represented.

#### TICKS TO THE SOUTH.

We impose taxes upon them; we send our tax gatherers into every region and portion of the States.

These people are fit subjects of Government for the collection of taxes, but when they ask to participate in the legislation of the country, they are met at the door and told no, you must pay taxes, you must bear burdens of Government, but you cannot participate in its legislation which is to affect you through all time to come; is this justice, is it fair? (No, no.)

#### THE UNION—TRUE LOYALTY—THE SOUTH SHOULD BE ALLOWED REPRESENTATION.

I repeat I am for the Union, I am for preserving all the States. I am for admitting into the Councils of the nation all the representatives who are unmistakably and unquestionably loyal. A man who acknowledges allegiance to the Government, and who swears to support the Constitution, must necessarily be loyal.

A man cannot take that oath in good faith unless he is loyal.

#### TEST OATHS ARE USELESS.

A mere amplification of the oath, makes no difference as to the principle. Whatever test is thought proper as evidence and as proof of loyalty, is a mere matter of detail, about which I care nothing; but let a man be unmistakably and unquestionably loyal, let him acknowledge allegiance to the Constitution of the United States, and be willing to support the Government in its hour of peril and its hour of need, and I am willing to trust him.—(Applause.)

#### A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE.

I know that some do not attach as much importance to this point as I do, but I regard it as a fundamental one.—The principle that carried us through the revolution was that there should be no taxation without representation. I hold to that principle, which was laid down as fundamental by our fathers. If it was good then it is good now. If it was worth standing by then, it is worth standing by now. It is fundamental and should be observed as long as free government lasts.

#### THE CONSTITUTION AGAIN THE LAW.

I am aware that in the midst of the Rebellion it was said by some that the Constitution had been rolled up as a piece of parchment and laid away; that in time of war and rebellion there was no Constitution. We know that sometimes, in great necessity, under great emergency, unconstitutional things must sometimes necessarily be done; in order to preserve the Constitution itself; but if, while the Rebellion was going on, the Constitution was rolled up and laid away; if it was violated in some particulars in order to save the government, which may be excused and justified, because in saving the Government you really saved the Constitu-