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THE CONSTITUTION—THE UNION—AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAWS.

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DISUNION CONVENTIONS.

As indicated by the resolutions quoted above from the Philadelphia platform of June 16th, 1861, the machinery by which this scheme was to be carried out, was that of conventions, either State or National. The party therefore commenced to agitate for conventions. The experience of the South had shown how easy it was under skillful manipulation, with such instruments, to carry State after State into open and armed opposition to the central authority. A national convention might reconstruct the Union on a Southern basis at one blow, or a series of State conventions could accomplish the same result piecemeal, while crippling fatally the Government in its struggle with rebellion. The machinery of the party, therefore, was forthwith set to work.

As early as July 15th, 1861, the project was broached by the Hon. Benjamin Wood in the following resolution offered in the House of Representatives, which received the vote of every Democratic member:

Resolved, That this Congress recommend the Governors of the several States to convene their Legislatures for the purpose of calling an election to select two delegates from each Congressional District, to meet in general Convention at Louisville in Kentucky on the first Monday in September next; the purpose of the said Convention to be to devise measures for the restoration of peace to our country.

The revolutionary project was allowed to sleep for a year, when the disasters of the Peninsula campaign encouraged an attempt to revive it.

Mr. William B. Reed came forward to feel the way. In August, 1862, he published his "Vindication," in which he affected to believe that a restoration of the Union was impossible, and that all that remained for us was to decide upon the new leagues which should be formed. To accomplish this, he preferred separate State action.

"If the choice be between a continuance of the war, with its attendant sufferings and demoralization, certain miseries and uncertain results, and a recognition of the Southern Confederacy, I am in favor of recognition, of course making the Abolition Party responsible for this dread necessity."

"If the inquiry be further pressed as to how I would arrange the terms of pacification and recognition.... I do not hesitate to say that, I would rather see it a ruin than what it is now."

In November, Mr. Reed returned to the charge, and openly suggested the raising of the standard of revolt by the Middle States.

"Yet should, in the providence of God, the spirit of topical fanaticism which has brought all this misery upon us still maintain its sway it may be the destiny of these great Middle States to speak, and if so, to act, in self defence, in maintenance of all that is left of Constitutional Liberty in the fragmentary and shattered Union which yet survives. They may act together, or they may act separately. Within each of them is the perfect machinery of Government, and all that is wanting is an animating and practical spirit of local loyalty.... It may be that one man can supply that spirit; and it is the hope that these fugitive words of earnest suggestion rather than of counsel, may find an answer in the heart of the people, that they are given to the public."

These utterances are valuable as affording us a key to the conferences between Lord Lyons, the English Minister, and the leading Democrats of New York, in November, 1862. The party had been elated with its success in carrying the State of New York a few days before, and had been both depressed and irritated by the dismissal of McClellan. Lord Lyons' official dispatch states:

"Several of the leaders of the Democratic Party sought interviews with, both before and after the arrival of the intelligence of General McClellan's dismissal. The subject uppermost in their minds while they were speaking to me was naturally that of foreign mediation between the North and the South. Many of them appeared to think that this mediation must come at last, but they appeared to be very much afraid of its coming too soon.... I gave no opinion on the subject. I did not say whether or not I myself thought foreign intervention probable or advisable; but I listened with attention to the account given me of the plans and hopes of the Conservative party. At the bottom, I thought I perceived a desire to put an end to the war, even at the risk of losing the South. There were some faint hopes that it was not thought prudent to give this desire. Indeed, some hints of it dropped before the elections were so ill-received, that a stronger decision in a contrary sense was deemed necessary by the Democratic leaders."

"They maintain that the object of the military operations should be to place the North in a position to demand an armistice with honor and effect. The armistice should, they hold, be followed by a Convention, in which such changes in the Constitution should be proposed as would give the South absolute security in its slave property, and would enable the North and the South to re-unite and to live together in peace and harmony. The Conservatives profess to think that the South might be induced to take part in such a Convention, and that a restoration of the Union would be the result. The most sagacious members of the party must, however, look upon the proposal of a Convention merely as a last experiment to test the possibility of reunion. They are, no doubt, well aware that the more probable consequence of an armistice would be the establishment of Southern independence, but they perceive that if the South is so utterly alienated that no possible concessions will induce it to return voluntarily to the Union, it is wiser to agree to separation than to prosecute a cruel and hopeless war."

"If their own party were in power, or virtually controlled the Administration, they would rather, if possible, obtain an armistice without the aid of foreign governments; but they would be disposed to accept an offer of mediation, if it appeared to be the only means of putting a stop to hostilities."

These humiliating negotiations with the agent of a foreign and unfriendly power show that Mr. Reed had only been the mouth-piece of the secret councils of his party. He, too, had urged an armistice as a necessary preliminary to the contemplated surrender.

"I would begin with a cessation of hostilities and an armistice for a fixed period, not too short.... If arms were laid down for a time, there would be a repugnance to take them up again, which, of itself, would be favorable to satisfactory adjustment."

This was inaugurated the policy of a "cessation of hostilities" and a Convention, to which the Democratic party steadily adhered. At Chicago, two years later, it formed the basis of the platform, and in November, 1864, it was indignantly rejected by the people. During those two years it was constantly put forward that the people might become accustomed to it, and no longer dread the fearful anarchy which would be almost necessary result.

Thus, at the formal inauguration of the Democratic Central Club, of Philadelphia, with which the party celebrated the 8th of January, 1863, the orator of the day, Mr. Charles Ingersoll, made the proposed Convention the subject of his discourse, and was prepared to adopt the most revolutionary means of attaining the object.

"There is but one way of arriving at a solution of the question as to whether we are to have a speedy peace and Union, and that is by a convention of the people. To effect this is not easy of accomplishment. There are many states in possession of the Republics. Under these circumstances, we should do what has frequently been resorted to in England—*we should refuse the supplies*. The speaker advocated this measure as long as a means of instituting a State Convention. This would be followed by Conventions throughout the Northern States. We should then be in a position to offer our terms and settle with the South this great question. Mr. Ingersoll concluded amid prolonged applause."

In March, Mr. Ingersoll again urged the subject in an address delivered before the same body, and on the 28th of the same month, Mr. Reed also recurred to it on a similar occasion. His remarks, though somewhat obscure, are fearfully suggestive.

"The path which I desire to pursue to take me out of the miseries and oppressions upon us is one which the Constitution prescribes—a popular Convention—National, if it can be, if not National a State Convention. But I look upon a Convention as an end, not as a means; for, as a means, it is to slow. We shall proceed to death before a Convention can be instituted. Still, it is a good ultimate result. Such conventions emanating from and directly representing the people, would have adequate power. They would be as the Convention that made the Constitution. They would change, modify, abrogate."

We are thus prepared to understand the authorized exposition of Democratic policy, as published to the world at Chicago, and can appreciate what was meant by the second resolution of the platform, where the war was explicitly declared to have been a failure.

Resolved, That this Convention does explicitly declare, as the sense of the American people, that after four years of failure to restore the Union by the experiment of war, justice, humanity, liberty, and the public welfare demand that immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities, with a view to an ultimate Convention of all the States, or other peaceable means to the end that at the earliest practicable moment peace may be restored on the basis of the Federal Union of the States.

It is no wonder that the rebels, in their terrible straits, hailed the "ray of light from Chicago." There is a wonderful similarity between the words of Alexander H. Stephens, when treating of such a Convention in his letter of Oct. 16, 1864, and those which we have already quoted from Mr. Reed's "Vindication."

"All questions of boundaries, confederations and union or unions would naturally and easily adjust themselves, according to the interests of parties and the exigencies of the times. Herein lies the true law of the balance of power and the harmony of States."

So, too, the Hon. W. W. Boyce, of South Carolina, in a letter to Jefferson Davis, Sept. 29, 1864—

"I think our only hope of a satisfactory peace, one consistent with the preservation of free institutions, is in the supremacy of this (the Democratic) party, at some time or other. Our policy, therefore, is to give this party all the capital we can. You should therefore, at once in my opinion, give this party all the encouragement possible, by declaring your willingness to an armistice and a Convention of all the States, in their sovereign capacity, to enter upon the subject of peace."

A Congress of the States in their sovereign capacity is the highest acknowledgment of the principle of State Rights."

Mr. Stephens was suspected of being weak in the knees, and on Nov. 14, 1864, when a frank exposition of his views could no longer injure the prospects of McClellan, he communicated to the press another letter, dated Nov. 5, 1864, in which he gave his reasons for desiring the Convention, as proposed at Chicago. A paragraph in this remarkable document shows in the clearest light the results expected, North and South, from the co-operation of the States Rights Democracy with rebellion, and the fearful abyss which we escaped by the reelection of Mr. Lincoln.

"There is no prospect of such proposition a Convention of the States) being tendered, unless McClellan should be elected. He cannot be elected without carrying a sufficient number of the States, which, if united with those of the Confederacy, would make a majority of the States. In such a Convention, then, so formed, I have no strong reasons to hope and expect that a resolution could be passed denying the constitutional power of the Government, under the compact of 1787, to coerce a State. The Chicago platform virtually does this already. Would not such a Convention probably reaffirm the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions of 1788 and 1797? Are these not strong reasons, at least, to induce us to hope and believe that they might? If even that could be done, it would end the war. It would recognize as the fundamental principle of American institutions the ultimate absolute sovereignty of the several States. This fully covers our independence—as fully as I ever wish to see it covered. I wish no other kind of recognition, which ever it comes, than that of George III. of England, viz: the recognition of the sovereignty and independence of each State separately and by name."

The same ground was taken by the Hon. H. W. Hilliard, of Georgia.

"It seems to me plain that we should accept the form indicated by the Chicago Convention, as the appropriate one for the settlement of our troubles. The very proposal to refer the settlement of the great quarrel to the arbitration of a convention, composed of delegates from all the States, is the most emphatic recognition of sovereignty of the States."

Thus, by the mere fact of their assembling, the Union would be resolved into a mass of independent jarring nationalities, and they would then proceed, as Mr. Reed told us, to "change, modify, ABROGATE."

SYMPATHY WITH THE SOUTH.

Entertaining these views, and cherishing these schemes, it was natural that Democracy should look upon the Southern leaders with sympathy and respect, and should endeavor to divert the antipathy of the people from them to the Administration. Thus the following, from the Philadelphia *Age* of Sept. 23, 1864, palates the rebellion and its chief by establishing a parallel with the Revolution and George Washington.

"They (the Yankees) have lately acted to their collection the Bible of Mary Washington, the mother of a certain slave holder named George, who made himself notorious some years back in a little rebellion which was got up in this country. Mary's Bible was very properly stolen from Arlington and carried to New England, for if she had read it in the spirit of the enlightened thief, whose library it now decorates, she would have taught George better than to hold slaves and lead rebellions."

So the same journal of Dec. 7, 1863, in commenting on General Meigs' account of the battle of Lookout Mountain, observes—

"It was shining—this fall moon of the Tennessee mountains—on other contracts. It shines, as General Meigs is quite aware, on the great joker at Washington and his traitor War Minister—and it shines, too, on the stern, attenuated and resolved rebel at Richmond, whom General Meigs, of all men in the world, would be the most sorry to encounter, and who, when the name of Meigs and others and mentions, must thrill sadly on this world's ingratitude."

This comparison of the national with the rebel authorities, to the disadvantage of the former, has been a favorite with the Democracy. Thus the same journal, the *Age*, of Feb. 6, 1864, inquires:

"Is it any worse to fire at our flag than it is to fire into our Constitution? ... And now we take upon ourselves to say, that while the rebels, at Sumpter, fired at the flag, Mr.

Lincoln, in his sphere, has fired into the Constitution, and has literally attempted its destruction. If the rebels, for firing at the flag, deserve to be devastated by war, what punishment should be visited upon the President for firing into the Constitution?"

And Mr. William B. Reed, in a letter to the Hon. E. F. Chambers, of Maryland, published in the *Age*, Nov. 7, 1864, draws a picture of the time when, in case Mr. Lincoln should be re-elected,

"Lee and Beauregard, Johnson and Longstreet, and Breckenridge and Ewell and Early are killed, or captured, or dead to the victors, or gone, like the unfortunate but gallant Jacobites, like Berwick and Sarafed, into foreign service, while the work of conquest, or even subjugation, if that be the wretched word, is entrusted to the unstarred Molochs whom three years of bloody, fruitless warfare have not subdued."

So the Philadelphia *Evening Journal* of Jan. 20, 1868, commences an elaborate article devoted to the praise of Jefferson Davis, as follows:

"The third annual message of Jefferson Davis to the Confederate Congress and Abraham Lincoln's last message to the United States Congress, provoke a comparison quite damaging to the intellectual capacity of the Federal President."

At the great ratification meeting of the Chicago nominations, held in Philadelphia Sept. 17, 1864, the Hon. Emerson Bheridge made speech, in which he said, as officially reported in the *Age*:

"There is not an honest man in my State, there is not a man with an honest reputation who will vote for Abraham Lincoln. [Laughter and cheers.] They think the unlawful despotism of Jefferson Davis is no more unconstitutional and dangerous than the arbitrary usurpations of Abraham Lincoln. [That's so, and applause.] Before the war, no Southern man ever made war upon liberties until Northern aggressions converted them from our friends to our foes, and to-day, Abraham Lincoln stands, according to his own confession, as much opposed to the restoration of the Union as Jefferson Davis. Lincoln says they cannot come back unless under an unconstitutional condition, while Jefferson Davis says he will not come back unless he can have his own way. Now who is the war traitor, Jefferson Davis or Abraham Lincoln? [Cries of "Lincoln," and cheers.]"

Even the Hon. S. S. Cox, of Ohio, who was the leader in Congress of what was called the War Democracy, while professing opposition to the rebels, in his Chicago speech denounced the Administration with equal or greater bitterness.

"For less offences than Mr. Lincoln had been guilty of, the English people had chipped off the head of the first Charles. In his opinion, Lincoln and Davis ought to be brought to the same block together. The other day, they arrested a friend of his, a member of Congress from Missouri, for saying, in private conversation, that Lincoln was no better than Jeff. Davis. He was ready to say the same here now in Chicago. Let the minions of the Administration object, if they dare."

At a Democratic celebration in New York, April 13, 1865 just after Lee's surrender, and the day before the assassination of Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Edward Ingersoll, of Philadelphia, made a speech, reported in full in the *New York News*, in which he said:

"I yield to no man in sympathy for the people of the South—a gallant people struggling nobly for their liberty against a sordid and vile a tyranny as ever proposed the degradation of our race. Nay, I go further, and with Jefferson Madison, and Livingston, I fully embrace the doctrine of secession as an American doctrine, without the element of which American institutions cannot permanently live."

Thus in the beginning, the Democracy invited secession, and, to the end, it encouraged rebellion with sympathy and prospects of ultimate success. Let us now turn to the relations held by the party to the Government which was fighting the desperate battle for national life.

II.—OPPOSITION.

Every measure adopted by the Administration to suppress the rebellion was honored by the hearty opposition of the Democracy, which spared no effort to influence the people against those to whom was entrusted the safety of the nation during its hour of trial. The war itself received their heartiest condemnation.

THE DEMOCRACY A PEACE PARTY.

It is true there was a wing of the party known as "War Democrats," but they were powerless, and such as attempted independence of action were promptly read out of the party. The peace men controlled the organization and policy of the party, and the war men never failed to support them at the polls. Practically, the party was a unit in favor of peace; and in this it was consistent from first to last.

At the great Democratic meeting of January 10, 1861, at Philadelphia, the ninth resolution adopted declared,

"We are therefore utterly opposed to any such compulsion as is demanded by a portion of the Republican Party; and the Democratic Party of the North will, by the use of all constitutional means, and with its moral and political influence, oppose any such extreme policy, or a fratricidal war thus to be inaugurated."

And a month later, at the Democratic State Convention, held at Harrisburg, February 22, 1861, the following resolution "was received with the most rapturous applause, nearly all the members of the Convention rising, cheering, and waving their hats."

"Resolved, That we will, by all proper and legitimate means, oppose, discountenance and prevent any attempt on the part of the Republicans in power to make any armed aggression upon the Southern States, especially so long as laws contravening their rights shall remain unrevoked on the statute books of the Southern States, and so long as the just demands of the South shall continue to be unrecognized by the republican majorities in these States, and unsecured by proper amercatory explanations of the Constitution."

It was in precisely the same spirit that Benjamin G. Harris, a Democratic member of Congress from Maryland, on April 9, 1864, had the effrontery to declare in the House of Representatives:

"The South asked you to let them go in peace. But no; you said you would bring them into subjugation. That is not done yet, and God Almighty grant that it never may be. I hope that you will never subjugate the South."

This being good Democratic doctrine, it is not surprising that, with one exception, the Democratic members voted "in a solid body against Mr. Harris' expulsion, nor that, when he was sent as a delegate to the Chicago Convention, he was received there as a member of the party, in full communion and good standing."

At Chicago, indeed, Mr. Harris found himself among congenial spirits. There the Rev. C. Chauncey Barr, of New Jersey, publicly declared,

"You cannot have the face to ask the South to come back into the Union until you withdraw your marauding army. Is there a man in this audience that wants to have one-half of the States conquered and subjected?" [No.] When this is done you have ended the Government. After three years of war, who are conquered, you or the South? I say you are conquered. You cannot conquer the South, and I pray God you may."

James S. Rollins, of Missouri:

"I love our Southern friends; they are a noble, a brave, and a chivalrous people [cheers], although they are trying to break up the Government; and however much we may hate them, we must remember that they are our countrymen, and cannot be subdued so long as we insist upon depriving them of their rights."

John J. Van Allen, of New York:

"War is disunion. War would never produce peace. It was impossible to subjugate eight millions of people, and it ought not to be done, if it could be done."

In fact, the Chicago Convention was a peace convention, of which the ruling spirit was Vallandigham. He framed the second resolution of the platform, which, as we have seen, was regarded at the South as tantamount to recognition of their independence. In his Chicago letter of October 23, 1864, he boasted that, in the Committee on Platform, it received fifteen votes out of eighteen; and in his speech at Sydney, Ohio, he stated that an amendment, suggesting the alternative of war, in case of the failure of "peaceable means," was unanimously rejected. So well was he satisfied with the result, that, while yet fresh from Chicago, in his Dayton Speech, of September 6, he exultingly exclaimed:

"That convention has met every expectation of mine. The promises have all been realized. The convention was emphatically not only a peaceable but a peace convention. It was a peace convention; and, speaking in the name of more than twenty millions of freemen, it demanded peace after the failure of the experiment of war. No man among the earnest advocates of peace, from the beginning of the war till this very hour, has in any formal public declaration demanded more than that convention has declared. It meant peace, and it said so. It meant, and it means now, that there shall be no more civil war in this land."

Mr. Vallandigham was justified in this assertion, not only by the platform, but by the temper of the Convention, as shown by the speeches of its members and hangers on. Thus Mr. G. C. Sanderson exclaimed,

"Is it not time that this infernal war should stop? [Cries of yes.] Has there not been enough blood shed? Has there not been enough property destroyed? Have we not all been bound, hand and foot, to the abolition car that is rolling over our necks like another Juggernaut. We must have peace. Peace is our motive; nothing but peace. If the Southern Confederacy, by any possibility, be subjugated by the abolition administration, the next thing they would turn their bayonets on the freedom of the North, and trample you in the dust."

And the Hon. James H. Reed, of Indiana:

"The will of the people is declared for peace, and in this declaration there is nothing tending to folly, in as much as in the coming election they intend to oust the incumbeants of office, and to inaugurate a rule which will bring peace and prosperity once more to this land."

So the Rev. J. A. McMaster, of New York:

"Let us demand a cessation of the sacrifice until the people shall pronounce their great and emphatic verdict for peace, and let the tyrant understand the demand comes from earnest men and must be respected. We are often called the 'Unfriendly.' I trust you are. I hope that your nerves may be of steel, for there is a day of trial coming and you must meet it."

It is hardly worth while to multiply examples of this seditious peace spirit in the convention, and we will content ourselves with a few indications of the mode in which the party elsewhere endorsed it.

Thus at the McClellan Ratification Meeting, held in New York, August 29, 1864, every speaker declared in favor of peace, denounced the draft, and congratulated the party that it had finally and definitely accepted the peace policy. Mr. James Brooks exclaimed, "No more fighting; fighting will never restore the Union; fighting and cuffing make no friends."—Judge Daly "thought there was a possibility of a peace and a preservation of the Union through a compromise." Mr. Nelson Smith told the crowd of admiring Democrats:

"The question now is, whether after four years of war this Union can be saved without any further prosecution of the war.... After four years of war, we must now resort to some other means than that war, by which our troubles can be settled and peace restored—that peace if received as the duty of the incoming administration, a cessation of hostilities, and a convention of the two worlds or parts country, to see if they cannot settle this matter."

Mr. Conrad Swackhammer assured his applauding auditors that,

"George B. McClellan will be the next president, and within twenty four hours after that election peace will be declared. We are tired and sick of calls for 200,000 more men by those who have had no thought but for slavery. I hope in November you will all go forth, not with a musket to take your brother's life, but to cast a little white ballot for McClellan and Pendleton, and thus this war will be stopped. This war will be ended by diplomacy."

Mr. Robert C. Hutchins declared that,

"The people demand some other means of restoring the Union than that of war, and believe that a restoration can be reached by peaceable means, and not by massacre. War and only war can never restore the Union; an armistice may, but a million of men cannot; it has been proved that an armed force cannot."

Mr. William G. Gover said:

"I am in favor of an armistice, and believe that we can settle our difficulties better by diplomacy than we can by the bayonet and the sword."

Mr. John L. Overfield exhorted his hearers:

"Now, gentlemen, you see but to look this matter in the face and say whether you will pay these high prices, and be drafted and torn from the bosoms of your families. [Cries, No, no.] Will you be torn from these, or will you stay at home and train your children up; that, gentlemen, it is to be decided next November."

And the great peace organ, the *New York News*, rejoiced over the authoritative exposition of its favorite principles, as follows:

"We accept the platform of the Convention as a great triumph of the peace party. The proposition for an armistice and a convention of all the States, as suggested several months ago by *The News*, has received the sanction of the Democracy through their delegates, and the peace men may rest assured that that proposition, carried into effect, will bring about an enduring peace between the sections. The nominee of the Chicago Convention for the presidency is not the candidate of our preference, but, standing upon the platform upon which he has been nominated and.... being assured that with the election of General McClellan the war will end, we will support the nominations made at Chicago, from this hour until the close of the polls in November."

"The nominee for the Vice Presidency is the man of all men, whom, had the choice been ours, we would have selected. In the nomination of George H. Pendleton, a tribute has been worthily offered to the peace sentiment, of which he has been a consistent champion."

It is true that General McClellan made a feeble attempt to justify the War Democrats in their support of him by some generalities in his letter of acceptance, but he was speedily given to understand that, as James Buchanan said, he was a platform and not a man. Thus Fernando Wood in a meeting held September 17, in New York, assured his hearers:

"Besides, if elected, I am satisfied he will entertain the views, and execute the principles of the great party he will represent, without regard to those he may himself possess. He will thus be our agent, the creature of our voice, and as such cannot if he would, and would not if he could, do otherwise than execute the public voice of the country."

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PROPERTY OF THE JUNIATA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY