Patriot Union.

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WASHINGTON, D. C., 1862.

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jy31-dly

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The Patriot & Union.

MONDAY MORNING, MARCH 30 1863.

THE POSITION AND POLICY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

LETTER

FROM

CHIEF JUSTICE CATON,

OF ILLINOIS, TO

GOV. HORATIO SEYMOUR,

OF NEW YORK.

Hon. Horatio Seymour:

DEAR SIR: As you requested, I will pencil down some suggestions which I made to you orally a few days since, in reference to Western sentiment on the present condition of the country, with some reflections upon the late elections.

You are undoubtedly correct that the Northwest will never consent to a separation of the Union, leaving the lower Mississippi in a foreign jurisdiction. Our interests are agricultural, and upon a market for our products depends our well-being—I might almost say our existence. Before the war we supplied the plantations of the South with their horses and mules, their corn and their bacon. This plantation market consumed most of the products of the counties bordering upon the Mississippi and its tributaries, and any surplus found its way to the Atlantic cities and foreign countries through that great river. By the war we have lost this market and this outlet, and our products, which formerly went south, have been thrown upon the northern transports and northern markets, overloading the former and glutting the latter. As an inevitable consequence, while money has depreciated nearly one-third, the prices of our great staples in the hands of our farmers have remained stationary, or have receded in some instances more than half. At the last Presidential election, on the Ohio river mules were worth from one hundred and twenty-five to two hundred and twenty-five dollars per head. Now our graziers cannot realize more than sixty-five to eighty dollars per head, notwithstanding the great consumption by the army; and horses have depreciated in nearly the same ratio. If other portions of the country have found means to make money by the war, to the Western agriculturalist it has proved an unmitigated burden, which can only be relieved by a restoration of peace and of the Union. The former without the latter would render permanent that which we now look upon as but temporary. Hence has the West fought and so will she fight, not for the desolation of the South and the final destruction of her plantations, but for the restoration of the Union. Hence has Illinois furnished more than ten thousand troops above her quota. If a draft has been necessary in any portion of the West, it has not been where the influence of this plantation market has been directly felt. I repeat, we can never consent that the lower Mississippi shall pass into a foreign jurisdiction.

I also agree with you that the radical Abolitionists prefer a separation to a restoration of the Union as it was with all the rights of the States as they exist under the Constitution, including slavery; and just so soon as they are convinced that a majority of the people of the North and of Congress are determined to admit a peace upon the old basis, they will labor for a separation. They seem determined to invent and practice every provocative possible towards the South, in order to produce and continue a degree of alienation which shall prevent them from embracing the tender which the conservative North is ready to offer them, to return and enjoy the protection of the Constitution unimpaired. These provocations, in connection with the known state of feeling pervading the whole community South, render any hope that they will embrace the Democratic offer to return and resume the *status quo ante bellum*, entirely futile at the present moment. They will, with bitter contempt, spurn this offer now, let it come from whom it may. Such is the present state of feeling in the Southwest as well as in the Southeast. Victories must be won before they will listen to reason from any party and accept reunion on any terms. Were the Democrats in power today, they must win victories before they could save the Union. If these victories are won while the Abolitionists rule, may not the South accept peace from us when we attain the control, quite as readily as if won under Democratic auspices?

What shall be done in this contingency? The answer of ninety-nine in the hundred of those who voted the Democratic ticket at the October and November elections is and will be—The war must be prosecuted earnestly and to the last—not to crush and conquer the South, but to crush and conquer the rebellion. If a ten years' war is necessary, rather than give up the Union, they accept it, sorrowfully, it is true, but earnestly. We hope and believe that whatever the fortunes of war may be this winter, and especially if success shall attend our arms, and if Mr. Lincoln can be brought under Democratic influences, or even if the South can be brought to believe that conservative principles have acquired such an ascendency in the North as to admit a peace on the old basis and protect them in their fair constitutional rights, then peace is possible after the fourth of March, when the new Congress will come into being. To render this possible—to excite a reasonable hope that the South will return to the Union on the old basis—it is indispensable that they should be disabused of the opinion that the Democratic party is a peace party on the basis of separation. Whatever this or that Democrat may think or feel about the prosecution of the war, certain it is that a vast majority of the old Democratic party—that is to say, the Douglas portion of it, all of those who have formerly voted with the Republicans, but at the late elections voted with us, at least in the West, and no doubt the same is true in the East—are fixed in the determination that the war must be prosecuted till the rebellion is put down, or till those in revolt will submit to the government of the Constitution. Indeed, this follows, as a necessary consequence upon the determination not to submit to a dismemberment of the Union—which, as before stated, must be looked upon as a settled question, at least in the west.

When the rebellion was inaugurated its promoters professed to believe, and no doubt most of them did believe, that they would not only meet with sympathy, but with material support, from the Democratic party of the North; and but for this belief it is doubtful if they could have deluded their people to such an extent as to have secured their acquiescence in the revolt. All now see how fatal was that delusion. They should be told in time that the hope that the late elections are an expression of sympathy for secession is a delusion equally great, and must prove equally fatal. The Northern Democracy stands now where it has ever stood. It will support at all hazards the integrity of the Union, while it will guarantee to every portion of it all the rights and privileges stipulated in the Constitution. To this extent and for these purposes the Democratic party must be considered a war party, and in its support and prosecution it will vindicate its ancient renown for steadiness of purpose—for pursuing its object with a calm and determined energy which evinces its faith in its principles, and which ever has and ever will, in the end, secure its triumph. While we must prosecute the war to the end proposed, we will do it without malice and without vindictiveness, and upon those humane and Christian principles which should illustrate the civilization of this great Republic, and especially when warring with our own brethren for the sole purpose that we may hereafter live with them in peace and amity. The taunt of those fanatics who are blinded by rage and the imaginary wrongs of the negro, that we would conduct the war "with kid gloves" and "so as not to hurt the enemy," shall not drive us back to the barbarism of the dark ages, or compel us to a war of extermination instead of reconciliation. Every act of kindness and mercy opens a new avenue to reconciliation and peace; every act of brutality and barbarity closes a door leading to these results. Acts of brotherly love beget fraternal feeling; acts of cruelty and oppression and injustice lead to alienation, retaliation and revenge. While we will firmly hold the sword in one hand, and use it, too, with determination and resolution, the other must always be open with the proffer of peace and friendship so soon as they will return to their allegiance to the Constitution. It is due to the South—it is due to the North—it is due to the world—that the matured and fixed determination of the Democratic party should be known and thoroughly understood on this subject. It is due to the South, that they may not cherish the deluseive hope that the late elections mean that they may go in peace and destroy this government. It is due to the North, that those who have come to our help for the purpose of bringing the government back within the restraints of the Constitution, may know that they have not been contributing to the success of the rebellion and the destruction of the government and the Constitution. It is due to the world, to know that our late triumphs are not an invitation to intervention, or an evidence of division among our people upon the propriety of the prosecution of the war for the restoration of the Union.

The readings or explainations of the late Democratic successes have been various and opposite. By the Republicans it is said that by these elections the people have condemned the *tender* mode in which the war has been prosecuted, although this is directly opposed to their position before the election. In Europe they were a condemnation of the war and a vote for separation—adopting the Republican theory during the canvass. The South is silent on the subject, awaiting events. Now, the true mode of understanding the meaning of these elections is to read their antecedents. Not what the Republicans or Abolitionists said of us, for that would sustain the foreign explanation. But what did our friends say? What did our papers and our speakers say? What did the party proclaim as its principles, to the support of which it invited and claimed the suffrages of the people? These were sustained by the popular vote, and these tell with unerring certainty what these elections mean. Did any representative speaker, or did any standard paper, advocate a dissolution of the Union or a peace upon the basis of separation? Our enemies said this of us; but we denied it vehemently, East and West, and everywhere. They knew and we knew that a conviction of these charges was a certain defeat. All know now, all knew then, that no anti-war party could succeed with the people—that the popular vote could only be secured upon the war platform, and the only difference which we admitted or recognized was the principles and purposes for which the war should be prosecuted. We all insisted—papers, orators and conventions—and proved, too, that our enemies were prosecuting the war for unconstitutional purposes and by unconstitutional means—that the emancipation proclamation was unconstitutional, and that arbitrary arrests and the suspension, or rather *suppression* of the writ of *habeas corpus*, by the Executive and his subordinates was equally a violation of that instrument. It was upon these measures we took issue with our opponents, and not upon a prosecution of the war, and upon these issues the popular verdict has been rendered. Both parties went to the country admitting and advocating the propriety and the necessity of prosecuting the war. The whole country then—both parties—were for the war. There were individual exceptions no doubt on both sides, but they entertained their opinions in silence and voted for that party which approached nearest their views. There were no doubt some few who voted with us who have ever been disgusted with the war, who have ever sympathized with the rebellion, and think the South has a right to separate and go in peace, but they are very few. There are many more Abolitionists who feel that the South can never be conquered but by extermination, which the history of the world shows is impossible, and that a prolongation of the war will insure Democratic ascendency, and result in a restoration of the Union as it was under the Constitution as it is, and hence they are for a separation and a peace, at once, which they deem preferable to the old Union. Neither party countenanced these extreme views, and to have done so would insured certain defeat.

Where, then, did we get our votes? There were not enough old Democrats to give us the victory. We must get, and did get, accessions from the Republicans—from those who voted for Mr. Lincoln—who helped to place the present administration, including the Congress, in power. How did we get these votes? Why did they leave the Republicans and come to us? It was because the Republican party—the administration—ceased to represent their views. They disapproved, it is true, but still tolerated arbitrary and illegal arrests, perhaps, because the Confederate Government did the same thing in a most arbitrary manner, with the Union men in the south. But it was the proclamation which produced the revolution in the North—a peaceful and a constitutional revolution. The process of reasoning which brought to our ranks such accessions of patriotic men, and will bring to us many times more in the future, was not uniform among those who deserted the opposite party and came to us; while all were influenced by substantially the same causes. As the human mind differs in different men, so will men reason differently from the same facts while arriving at the same result.

As for some, if not by far the greatest proportion of our accessions during the late elections, they saw that in his inaugural address Mr. Lincoln had proclaimed that he would maintain the Constitution, and not violate it; that he had approved most cordially the Crittenden resolutions passed at the special session in July, 1861; that he had, in fact, disapproved of the confiscation law and finally signed it with great reluctance and virtually under protest. All approved of his Greeley letter as showing that he was prosecuting the war only for the restoration of the Union. He had revoked the Fremont and Hunter orders professing to free the slaves in their respective departments, and had removed both those generals from their commands, and finally in his answer to the Chicago clerical committee, he had again publicly committed himself to a conservative and constitutional course, and had, by most unanswerable arguments and illustrations, pointed out the danger and the folly of the course which they urged upon him. Many of these old Lincoln men—the old conservative Webster and Clay Whigs, who constituted the conservative element of the Republican party—believed, and still believe, that Mr. Lincoln had been honest and truthful in these professions, and faithfully represented his own real convictions, and the principles upon which he desired to conduct his administration and to prosecute the war. These men saw with surprise and consternation his proclamation of the 22d of September, only ten days after his answer to the Chicago committee, before whom he had so nobly vindicated himself. How was this to be accounted for? They believed still in his truth and proverbial honesty. They did not believe that he had been merely acting a part falsely, that he might the more securely adopt the radical measures of the wild fanatics who had been howling around him and embarrassing and abusing him from the very commencement of his administration. But they thought that his firmness of purpose had given away. He yielded to a pressure which a Jackson would have defied, but which he could not resist. Of this pressure he had often complained, sometimes publicly, oftener in private. To the Border State delegation particularly had he complained of this pressure, and intimated that it was backed by the threat of defection and desertion by those whose support he could not spare. They saw—the whole world saw—whence this pressure came. All the Northern States were in the control of one party. Not one Democratic Governor, not one Democratic Legislature to which he could look for support and relief. All were Republican, and most of them of a radical and violent character. Many of them were bold bad men who would scruple at nothing to attain their ends, even to the overturning of the Government and a daring usurpation.—They saw that upon such men he was entirely dependent for his army, if not for his treasury.

At the commencement of the war, he consented to the plan of raising the volunteer forces through the State Executives, and allowing them to appoint all the regimental and company officers. At this juncture there were three hundred thousand volunteers assembled and organized in these States, held and controlled by the State Governors and commanded by officers appointed by them, and still subject to their military orders as their superior officers. Nearly, if not quite, all of these Governors were clamorous for radical measures—for the proclamation—a measure which they professed to believe would crush the rebellion and end the war directly, and that without it there was no hope of success.

Here was a pressure. Here was a visible, tangible power, sufficient to overturn the government and hurl Mr. Lincoln from the Presidential chair—a measure which we have every reason to believe was actually contemplated, at least by a portion of these State Executives, and who shall say that it would not have been actually accomplished had the President not finally yielded? Then there would have been no peaceful October and November elections. The conservatives would then have had a double task to perform, and would have achieved a double victory. True, he resisted and complained till the meeting of the Governors at Altoona was about to assemble and give shape and unity to this mighty force, and then who shall say for himself that he would not have yielded? No doubt there are men who would not have given way to this threatening, crushing pressure, but they are the men who would never have allowed this combination against the government and the Constitution to have assumed such vast proportions.

Here were facts which have already become history, and these are the constructions given to them by at least a portion of the conservative Republicans who, with Mr. Lincoln himself, had been devout followers of Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, and who believed that Mr. Lincoln told the truth when he said that at heart he was opposed to the violent doctrines of the proclamation, and they firmly believed that he only yielded his own judgment and deserted his own cherished policy under this almost resistless pressure. They believed that the Abolitionists had, with violent hand, seized him and demanded of him the proclamation and a change of policy on pain of deposition. They saw there was no way of wresting him from this violent grasp—of disenthralling him from the meshes in which they had entangled him, that he might conduct the government and prosecute the war upon constitutional principles and for constitutional ends but in the success of the Democratic party.

Thus reasoned a portion but not all of those who had become disgusted and alarmed at the new policy so suddenly inaugurated at Washington. Others, and there are no doubt many of them, who believed that Mr. Lincoln had at heart been in deep sympathy with the most radical from the beginning, and had only affected moderation as a matter of policy. When they looked back and remembered all he had said and done they could see this radicalism cropping out on many occasions, as when he caressed and countenanced Wendell Phillips, and many other indications equally suggestive, and upon a review of his writings and sayings designed to create an impression of a conservative purpose, they found certain reservations and qualifications indicating a predetermination to adopt the radical policy as soon as he could do so safely. They now believed that while he had "held the word of promise to the ear," he designed "to break it to the hope." This class of men left him in disgust, for they had lost all faith in his integrity.

Again, there were others whose attention was arrested principally by the imbecility of the administration. While it was obstinate it was weak. It was incapable of comprehending the magnitude of the rebellion and the resources and the endurance of the South, and was utterly unable effectually to use the vast resources placed in its hands so as to produce any adequate results. They believed that the President was not a judge of men nor of things. That he could neither conduct the war himself nor comprehend the capacity of others to conduct it. That the whole history of the administration was a combination of obstinacy and vacillation. The proclamation as a war measure completed their distrust and destroyed their last hope in the ability of the administration to prosecute the war to a successful issue. It was was mere child's play on a grander scale than was ever before exhibited in the history of the world. They felt that the interests, nay the life, of the nation were wickedly trifled with; and that the time had come, if the country was to be saved at all, for the great mass of the people—whose servants our rulers are—whose interests are committed to their hands—whose country and whose government it is that is to be saved or lost—to band together under some form, some organization, and form such a party as, by its numbers and its influence, would make itself heard and heeded at the seat of government. The only way to do this was for all the conservative men of the nation to rally around the Democratic party.

It is not my purpose to express an opinion as to which was nearest right; but by whichever of these various motives or considerations the Republicans who came to our support were influenced, all agreed in the last conclusion.—All saw that the Democrats were as earnestly engaged in the prosecution of the war as was Mr. Lincoln himself. They saw that no party in the history of this, or any other country, had ever shown more disinterested patriotism than had been exhibited by the Democrats since the breaking out of the rebellion. Before the smoke of the political battle of 1860, by which Mr. Lincoln was placed in power, had cleared away, a civil war was inaugurated, which had been provoked and induced, though certainly not justified, by the wild fanaticism of the very leaders of the party which had placed Mr. Lincoln in power, and Democrats were called upon to go and shed their blood and expend their substance in a war which they believed might have been avoided by a proper conciliatory course, which they had recommended, but had been treated with contumely by those in power. But notwithstanding all this the Democrats had shut their eyes to all that had gone before, and hushed the involuntary murmurings that the war was needlessly provoked by that wild fanaticism which had just defeated them at the polls, and they had rushed to the ranks under Mr. Lincoln, only remembering that their country and its Constitution were in danger. These conservative Republicans had witnessed all this and they appreciated it.—They saw that the Democrats had come up to the support of the country even more cheerfully and earnestly than had their political opponents, in whose hands was all the patronage of both the civil and the military administration. All could see that the Democrats had boldly fought and freely bled from no sordid motives—to maintain no party ascendency, but solely to maintain the Union and the Constitution.

When they saw all this, the conviction was forced upon them that to the Democratic party alone must they look for the salvation of the country and the restoration of peace and the Union. They found only in the Democratic party those principles for the conduct of the war which Mr. Lincoln had always maintained, or professed to maintain, until he was forced to abandon them, as some of them believed, against his own settled convictions of right and policy. Thus alone could he be enabled to return or be forced back to his old conservative policy, which afforded the only hope of an honorable termination of the war, or a restoration of the Union and a vindication of the Constitution.

Seeing all this, they could not hesitate to abandon their old political associates, who had already abandoned the principles upon which the war had hitherto professedly been conducted, if not the President of their choice, and ally themselves with the Democrats.

This is the true explanation where the votes came from, and why they came, which gave us the victory—which produced this great political revolution.

It is undoubtedly true that but a small portion of the conservative Republicans who are opposed to this wild and destructive radicalism of their Abolition leaders, which now reigns supreme in the Cabinet and in Congress, abandoned them and came to us during the late canvass. Indeed, only the most reflective and sagacious of them were prepared to do so, as it were, on the spur of the moment. Were the election to be repeated to-morrow, ten would vote with us now where one did in November, The persistent and envenomed abuse of Democratic loyalty by the political papers and orators which alone they were in the habit of reading and hearing, induced many to actually doubt whether the Democratic party, if once in power, would sustain the government in the prosecution of the war to restore the Union and vindicate the Constitution; while others had not sufficiently analyzed their own feelings, in view of the altered and peculiar state of things, to enable them to break away from old names and old associations, and to overcome old prejudices so far as to allow them to vote the Democratic ticket. But, thanks to the enlightenment of the American people, enough saw the truth and acted upon it to overthrow those dangerous men whose manifest and even declared object is to overthrow the Constitution of their country, and who will, in history, stand side by side with the leaders of this rebellion. Posterity will be divided upon the question as to which are the wickedest and which the greatest traitors.

The true course of the Democratic party in the future is manifest. We must walk in the light of the past. If we would maintain the ascendency already attained, and augment our ranks by the accession of those Republicans who are disgusted and alarmed by the radical policy of the Abolition leaders, and who desire to prosecute the war by constitutional means and for constitutional ends, we must pursue a course alike dictated by patriotism and by policy. We must heartily and cordially live up to our professions during the canvas. We must show no lukewarmness, or hesitancy in sustaining and prosecuting a war which, if abandoned by the people, must result in a dismemberment of the Union, the destruction of the Constitution and a disgrace to this people which must attach to them and their posterity through all time. A dissolution of the Union, once admitted—a destruction of the Constitution once effected, then this community of States will be resolved into its original element, and who can foretell where will be the end? There never was a clearer light shining before public men than that which illuminates the way in which we should walk. We may pursue a course now which will draw to our party all the reflective, substantial conservatism of the nation, by the aid and support of which we shall be enabled to wrest Abraham Lincoln from the desperate hands of those who are bent on the destruction of the Constitution and the government, and to take the lead of public affairs, and finally restore the country to peace, unity and happiness. Or we may by another course repel from us those who have now come to our help and given us the victory, as well as the great mass of the Democrats themselves, and leave the party literally annihilated, and with it the last hope of the country blasted.

Yours truly, J. D. CATON,

OTTOWA, Ill., Dec. 1862.

"MURDER WILL OUT."—On the 20th of October, 1858, an unknown man was found lying on the railroad track at Altoona, with life entirely extinct. There were no marks or bruises about him, other than a fracture of the skull, which had evidently been inflicted by a slung shot or some other round or blunt instrument. Some $39 in money, and a ticket from Chicago to New York were found in his possession. His name was supposed to be D. T. Bernier. On Tuesday morning last, Nicholas Ehringer, propietor of the Eagle Hotel, Altoona, was arrested, on oath of Martin Harman charged with the murder of the man above referred to. Harman made oath that he saw Ehringer put the man on the track the night previous to the morning on which he was found; that he told Harman that he had killed him, and that he gave, or promised to give, Harman money to say nothing about it. The case will undergo a full investigation at the next term of court.