The Dividing Line Between Federal and Local Authority.

POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY IN TERRITORIES.

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Under our complex system of government it is the first duty of American statesmen to mark distinctly the dividing line between federal and local authority. To do this with accuracy, involves an inquiry, not only into the powers and duties of the federal government under the Constitution, but also into the rights, privileges and immunities of the people of the Territories, as well as of the States composing the Union. The relative powers and functions of the federal and State governments have become well understood and clearly defined by their practical operation and harmonious action for a long series of years; while the disputed question—involving the right of the people of the territories to govern themselves in respect to their local affairs and internal polity—remains a fruitful source of partisan strife and sectional controversy. The political organization which was formed in 1854, and has assumed the name of Republican party, is based on the theory that African slavery, as it exists in this country, is an evil of such magnitude—social, moral and political—as to justify and require the exertion of the entire power and influence of the federal government to the full extent that the Constitutional compact, according to their interpretation, will permit, for its ultimate extinction. In the platform of principles, adopted at Philadelphia, by the Republican National Convention in 1856, it is affirmed:

"That the Constitution confers upon Congress sovereign powers over the Territories of the United States for their government, and that in the exercise of this power it is both the right and the duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism, polygamy and slavery."

According to the theory of the Republican party there is an irrepressible conflict between freedom and slavery, free labor and slave labor, the free States and the slave States, which is irreconcilable, and must continue to rage with increasing fury until the one shall become universal by the annihilation of the other. In the language of the most eminent and authoritative expounder of their political faith:

"It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces; and it means that the United States must, and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a cotton-picking, rice-growing, or entirely a free-labor nation. Either the cotton and rice fields of South Carolina, and the sugar plantations of Louisiana, will ultimately be tilled by free labor, and Charleston and New Orleans become busy hives of industry, as much as Boston or New York; or else the free labor of Massachusetts will become the tasks and burdens of slavery. The farmers throughout all the Northern States will be compelled to compete with the slave labor of Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, or else the slaves of Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri will be compelled to compete with the free labor of Massachusetts, Ohio, and Illinois. Free labor must become slave labor, or slave labor must become free labor. The one or the other it must be. The battle between the two systems of labor has been fought for years in the Territories, and will be fought there for years to come. It is a battle between the two civilizations, the two forms of society, the two types of humanity, the two ideas upon which the foundations of society are to be laid in the Territories, and throughout the entire Union. It is the battle between the two great principles of human society, which have been in antagonism since the commencement of the world, and which will be in antagonism until the one or the other shall triumph. In this country we have two great political parties, representing the two opposing principles, which are marshalled in battle array, the one against the other, ready for the conflict, and which will continue in that attitude until the one or the other shall triumph. The battle between the two parties will be fought in the Territories, in the halls of Congress, and at the polls of the people, until the question shall be settled, and settled it must be, by the universal adoption of the principle of freedom in the Territories of the United States, or by its universal exclusion from the Territories of the United States. I do not pretend to know which of these two principles is right, or which will ultimately triumph. I have my own opinions of right and wrong, of course, and I have no doubt that it is the duty of the public mind shall rest in the belief that one or the other of these principles is the right one, and that the other is the wrong one. Both cannot be right, and both cannot exist in the Territories of the United States, and be recognized by the laws of Congress.