

Political.

The Power of Congress to Legislate on Slavery.

The Legislation for the Territory of Oregon furnishes several instances of a conclusive nature relative to the views of Congress on the question of constitutional power.

As there can be no doubt but that those Senators who voted in the negative were in favor of Legislation, but of a different kind—the Wilcox Provision—the vote may be regarded as an expression of the entire Senate in favor of the right of Congress to Legislate on Slavery in the Territories.

These acts, more than any since the government, evince the full confidence of all parties and all sections in the existence of the power which they assert. It was well understood that Slavery could not establish itself in Oregon, and therefore its prohibition was valuable only as a declaration of an abstract right.

It must not be forgotten in this connection, that Mr. Buchanan, who had voted for the Missouri Compromise when applied to Texas, was at that period laboring in concert with Southern men to extend that line to the Pacific.

These examples of legislation indicate the policy of the government in regard to slavery, and if precedent is worth anything on controverted points, they place the constitutionality of such legislation beyond a reasonable doubt.

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itself in any of those Territories, the abstract right of exclusion was waived. The Compromise measures of 1850, permitting the people of the acquired Territories to regulate their own institutions, never could have become a law, had they not received the support of Clay and Webster, and their support would never have been given had they supposed the result would be to spread the limits of slavery.

When the two million bill came up for consideration in the Senate, 10th August, 1846, about half an hour before the time fixed for adjournment, a motion was made to strike out the Wilcox Provision, which had been attached in the House. Mr. Davis, of Massachusetts, took the floor, and spoke against the motion till within a few minutes of adjournment, and the bill was lost for want of time.

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Mr. Jefferson considered slavery as a "blot on our country, a great political and moral evil," and inquired, "can the liberty of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath?—Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever!"

Mr. Madison said, in the Convention which framed the Constitution, "I object to the word 'slave' appearing in the Constitution, which I trust is to be the charter of freedom to unborn millions, nor would I willingly perpetuate the memory of the fact that slavery ever existed in our country. It is a great evil, and, under the Providence of God, I look forward to some scheme of emancipation which shall free us from it. Do not, therefore, let us appear as if we regarded it perpetual by using, in our free Constitution, an odious word opposed to every sentiment of freedom."

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