

Saturday, August 12, 1876.

CHAS. R. JONES, FREDWARD McDOWELL, Editors & Proprietors.

"Free from the dotting scruples that fetter our free-born reason."

INFLEXIBLE RULES.

We cannot notice anonymous communications... We cannot notice communications...

SPEECH.

HON. LUCIUS Q. C. LAMAR,

OF MISSISSIPPI, IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Wednesday, August 2, 1876.

The House being in committee of the whole on the bill (No. 2592) to transfer the conduct of Indian affairs from the Interior Department to the War Department.

Mr. Lamar said: Mr. Chairman: I listened early in the session with great pleasure to an interesting and suggestive speech delivered by the gentleman from Massachusetts upon the proposition to amend the Constitution so as to make the President of the United States ineligible to a second term of office.

Now what is the influence which this sweeping mass of a free and virtuous people into a course of direct and indirect conviction and their most earnest purposes. More than a quarter of a century ago one of the greatest of the great statesmen of America, Daniel Webster, declared that the power of the Executive of our National Government had increased until it had become dangerous to liberty.

In the predictions of these two great statesmen we see developed the powerful agency which now nullifies the sentiment of a free people and prevents the application to the machinery of this Government of that great social force in all free governments, public opinion.

An intermediate and irresponsible body known as the party has interposed itself between the people and their Government; a body unknown to the Constitution, having no part in the civil apparatus of society, yet tyrannizing with selfish and relentless energy over both people and Government.

But a short time since a convention of the republican party of Massachusetts was called in Boston. The president of that convention, upon taking the chair, uttered the following significant remarks.

ing dissatisfaction with the management of national affairs. Have you any longer a doubt as to the causes which have wrought this change in our fortunes? Surely we have not adjusted our creed. Our distinctive policy and aims were never clearly affirmed, our traditions and the names of our great leaders never more reverently held.

Observe with me for a moment, gentlemen, the forces of opinion and sentiment that indicate the drift and demand of the hour. Note first the anxious looking for relief from the long unmitigated depression that has visited the material interests of the country and the feeling that some change, some new dispensation, is essential to such relief.

It will be perceived that this gentleman here arraigns the vices and practices of the national administration, the lawless usurpations, the corruption which revels in its high places, the trifling with the important interests of finance and currency, the prostitution of public office to personal gain, in language which, if uttered upon this floor by a democrat, would be regarded as the exaggerations of partisan animosity.

Another great statesman, from another extreme of the Union, belonging to a different school of politics, and yet his peer in intellect and patriotism, Mr. Garret, declared that the patronage of this Government at that time—and it was nearly half a century ago—in the hands of the President was too great a power for the Chief Magistrate of a free people; that it was imperial in its character, giving him absolutely to the extent of that power more control than the autocrat of Russia, and he predicted, when the corps of office-holders under this Government should reach one hundred thousand the people might almost as well surrender their liberty, the contest would be too unequal; for the party thus entrenched in power could show a vast superiority over the two-thirds of a popular majority scattered over the country unorganized and acting upon different grounds of opposition.

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the same control over its vast machinery, and addicted, as they charge, in the past periods of its power, to the same use of the patronage in its hands. Sir, whether this apprehension be well founded or not, there is one consideration touching this subject which should not be overlooked. It practically gives up the demand of the people for a reform in their Government. It is a virtual abandonment of the struggle. For though it may be possible or probable that the change of party may not insure this reform, it is unquestionably certain that no change at all will end all hope of reform.

If this be so, if the controlling spirits of a party organization be those who represent its worst tendency, if they are the men of action and resolution, aggressive and dominant, while those who represent the other element are passive and inactive, acquiescent and submissive, it is utterly impossible that such an organization should reform itself by its own inherent and self-evoking energy; as impossible as it is for an insane mind to restore its own reason by its own will.

On the other hand, if this great republican party with its imposing achievements of the past is hurled from power by the American people on account of the abuses of its civil service, on account of the practice of using the patronage of the Government for the purpose of consolidating party strength and controlling elections, such a defeat for such a cause will of itself inflict an incurable, it not a mortal, wound upon this pernicious system. It will of itself give to the successors in power a practical warning of a like fate if they pursue alike policy. They will come in holding their newly acquired power under a cloud of infamy which must insure their predecessors.

I do not overlook or undervalue the declarations of the republican candidate for the Presidency. I believe they are sincere. I applaud the sentiments and honor the author. But their significance must be measured, not by what he is willing to promise as a candidate, but by what he will be permitted to do as President. We rarely in history have seen the man who has the courage and resolution to put down the exacting tyranny of his own party, to impose upon it the imperious will of his own will, to infuse into it a higher life, and say to the selfish and ambitious politicians who had chosen him as their tool, "Behold your master."

The character and fixed policy of the party of which he has consented to be the representative, the influences which are now combined in his support, are in direct opposition to those declarations. While these promises of the candidate are held out to the ear, the Administration which supports him is in every moment of its existence breaking them to the hope.

But there is an avenue of reform, available and effective, which a change of parties will not open. One of the greatest evils of the abuse of patronage, and the corruption of the administration, is to be found in the enormous revenues and expenditures of Government, making necessary this extravagant number of officers and agents to collect this revenue and disburse these expenditures. A system of retrenchment, a reduction of the number of revenues and expenditures to the most economical needs of the Government, would at once deprive the Executive of a large percentage of this patronage.

But, sir, there are other influences all more controlling which obstruct the reform of the people to change their administration of Government. One of them is the apprehension of a large class of voters that the presidential election involves not merely questions of administrative reform, but political principles of vital importance to the country. They believe that the transformation of a political transformation in the South which has recently taken place from the war of secession should be guaranteed a successful and peaceful

working undisturbed by adverse influences. And they fear in the advent of the democratic party to power an influence unfavorable and dangerous to their stability and permanence. These misgivings are upon their minds, and the past career and purposes of the democratic party, are strengthened by the fact to which they point, that the people of the South are united against the party which established the new order of things and in support of the party which opposed it, thus threatening the re-establishment of that southern sectional domination so repugnant to the sentiments and purposes of the northern people. They therefore are not prepared, for the sake of correcting the disorders of administration, to peril the newly established condition of things by placing it in the hands of those who were originally inimical to its institution.

Without questioning the sincere acquiescence of the democratic party in the amendments which they do not regard that party as sufficiently identified in its views and purposes with the objects of those amendments to guard them against the dangers of reactionary movements. They consider the supervision and intervention of the Federal authority as necessary to the exercise and protection of the rights which these amendments guarantee to the newly enfranchised race of the South, and that should the democratic party succeed, this necessary supervision will be withdrawn.

I have attempted, Mr. Chairman, to state these views fully in order that the southern people, the people whom I in part represent here, shall be fully apprised of the precise character and intent of the measure which is now before their present condition and their future destiny. I shall endeavor as a representative of the South to appreciate the value of these grave apprehensions. In doing so I shall speak as one who feels that he represents in part a people who even in their desolation are an important element in the national life; who have accepted with manly sincerity the changes which the war has brought; who know that they have the confidence of the country to regain, but who are assured that, with a fuller and truer knowledge of their condition, their motives, and their purposes, to which it is our duty there to contribute their efforts, and have interposed a bond in the unity of the spirit and in the bonds of peace—that peace which in these days of miserable discord is most precious to the understanding.

I believe the apprehension growing out of the united southern support of the democratic party is wholly unfounded and should not stand in the way of the aspirations of a great people for progress and reform in their government. The idea that the South under any combination of parties will ever again obtain the control of this great Republic and wield its destinies against the will of its mighty people is of all ideas the most visionary and baseless.

Such an idea has any effect whatever with the North, no such hallucination inflames the imagination of the South. The southern people are a prostrate people. They have been defeated in war, and they have been made to know and feel that the sacrifices, the humiliation and helplessness of defeat are theirs; while the North have reaped the rich results of a victorious war, and have interposed them into the very elements of the national life and constitution. Their institutions, political and social, have been destroyed as completely as if an earthquake had overwhelmed them; their fertile soil sterilized by an all devouring taxation; their educational institutions impoverished and so inferior in numbers as to place them in every department of the government in such a hopeless minority that, so far from ruling the interests of other sections, they are impotent to protect a single interest or right of their own.

Sir, even if such a dream were in their mind, the occasion for it is gone. The officers in the conduct of affairs in the Southern States, and that such a suspension of that supervision and intervention will involve great peril to the enjoyment of the newly acquired rights of the race recently enfranchised in the South; and that the republican party, with all its misconduct and misgovernment, is still an evil necessary to be endured until another presidential term in order to secure these rights and the conditions upon which they are based.

Sir, I ask a patient, charitable consideration of the reply which it is my duty as a southern Representative to make on this subject. I think, sir, if the gentleman will accompany me into an examination of the causes which produced the present condition of things in the South, they will find that it does not grow out of any natural or necessary conflict of race or any desire to abridge the rights, political or personal, of any class of American citizens.

responsibilities of the common government, according to the measure of her resources and population. Equally unfounded, I think, sir, is the apprehension that the results of the war as embodied in the constitution are unsafe in the hands of the democratic party. Whatever may be the future administration of this country, freedom, citizenship and suffrage are established institutions, embodied in the fundamental law, recognized in all statutes, Federal and State, enforced by courts, accepted as a condition of the peace. To say that these conditions will be periled by trusting them to the party which opposed their original establishment, is to contradict the philosophy of history; and if acted upon would in every free government keep the administration of its affairs always in the hands of one single party. There has not been a single great measure in the evolution of the history of England, or a single great reform which after its establishment by one party was not in the course of time, and a very short period placed in the hands of the party originally opposed to it. Repeated instances might be given; indeed no instance to the contrary can be found.

The repeal of the corn laws, the great measures for law reform, the more recent measures of parliamentary reform, which brought England to the verge of revolution and came near sweeping from the English constitution the House of Lords, where the tory party had its greatest strength, have by the suffrages of the English people over and over again been placed in the hands of that tory party with perfect confidence of security. Indeed it is considered the very highest policy, after the evolution of the Constitution, which forced that party into opposition, makes them now the safest custodians of those very innovations which by the vote of the people have become established parts of the Constitution itself.

Now, sir, is there anything in the relation of the democratic party, to this subject, or its creed, or its past conduct which would justify any such apprehension? Its relation to the measure referred to has simply been a little later than that of the republican party. Its advocacy of slavery and all its incidents, its pledges to the exercise of the powers of government for its protection where it existed, was simply maintained for a short period after its republican opponents changed their policy.

Even if we go back upon this subject and both parties have been more or less the subjects of prodigious revolutions of sentiment. It was but a short time since, in 1861, that a republican House of Representatives by a large majority adopted resolutions in favor of the enforcement of the fugitive-slave provision of the Constitution and called upon the States to enforce the law, regarding all fugitive slaves to their condition of servitude. It was but a few days prior to the publication of the proclamation of emancipation that the illustrious author of that historical document declared in a public letter that he would be in favor of establishing slavery if he doing so would save the Union. It was but a few days prior to the adoption of these great amendments into our Constitution that State after State in the North by overwhelming popular majorities recorded what seemed to be an inflexible hostility to granting to this newly emancipated race any of the rights of citizenship. As late as 1865 the most distinguished war governor of the North was unequivocally opposed to the policy of incorporating the four millions of emancipated slaves into the political system of the country and investing them with citizenship and the right of voting.

I will next address myself to the objection that the accession to power of the democratic party will suspend the habitual supervision by national authority over the conduct of affairs in the Southern States, and that such a suspension of that supervision and intervention will involve great peril to the enjoyment of the newly acquired rights of the race recently enfranchised in the South; and that the republican party, with all its misconduct and misgovernment, is still an evil necessary to be endured until another presidential term in order to secure these rights and the conditions upon which they are based.

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The first to which I would call attention is the sudden incorporation into the political system of the South of an element, not only incongruous with the political character of our people and to the established conditions of their old society, but impossible except through time and education to be raised to that level of ordinary citizenship to which a century's training of freedom has elevated the white citizen of the country. The magnitude alone of this new element, 4,000,000 of people made such in the twinkling of an eye, was of itself sufficient to shock and shatter the political order of any community on earth.

The gentleman's ground, as I understood, was that a body of that sort composed of people speaking the Spanish language (not because they spoke that language, but because they were not read or write the English) was as a body unfit and disqualified, to discharge the duties of American citizenship, and therefore a community should not be admitted into our Federal system.

Sir, but the other day a distinguished Senator from the Pacific coast made a most striking protest against the further immigration of Chinese into the community there, and still more recently both parties seemed to be vying with each other as to which should go furthest in preventing this admixture of the Mongolian race with ours. To illustrate the disturbing force of this measure, let us suppose that in the six New England States and the States of New York and New Jersey, whose population corresponds most nearly to that of our Southern States in one night 4,000,000 of unaccustomed, incongruous population, such as Mexicans and Chinese, should be incorporated into the political system of those Commonwealths, and by some paramount power outside of those States should be so compacted together as to gain control of all the departments of their government, of all the offices, all the institutions, State and municipal—in a word, invested with the entire sovereignty of their body-politic, I ask you would not the repose of society be disturbed? would not all assurance of law, of healthful industry, of business arrangements and investments—would not all confidence give way to dismay and perplexity, to restless fears, wild passions, and bloody wars? Why, sir, the more advanced their political civilization, the more complex their system of laws, and the more perfectly adjusted their social and economic forces, and the higher the moral tone of their society, the more hideous would be the ruin and the more refined the agony of the people subject to such a catastrophe.

But the case as supposed is not as strong as the case which actually occurred in the Southern States. The 4,000,000 of people who by a scratch of the pen were made citizens and crushed into our political system, the 800,000 voters and office-holders and legislators and magistrates, had just emerged from the immemorial condition of slaves.

This fearful experiment was regarded by thinking men all over the world with the profoundest concern and misgiving. It was viewed with disfavor by a large majority even of the republican party. Its most able and its most extreme leaders looked upon it as committing society to the sway of ignorance, servility, corruption, and tyranny; and such was their sentiment until the conflict of the republican party with President Johnson and one other cause, which I shall notice before I close, seemed to sweep away every consideration of reason and justice. In 1865, the year in which there was in the South certain legislation which has been the subject of much denunciation and excuse for the oppressive and humiliating methods which have been applied to her people, I say in that year Mr. O. P. Morton, in a message to the Legislature of Indiana used the following language:

It is a fact so manifest that it should not be called in question by any that a people who are just emerging from the barbarism of slavery are not qualified to become a part of the political system and take part only in the government of themselves and their neighbors, but of the whole United States.

For far from believing that negro suffrage is a remedy for all our national ills, I doubt whether it is a remedy for any, and rather believe that its enforcement by Congress would be more likely to perpetuate slavery in a merciless persecution than to confer upon him any substantial benefit.

By some it is thought that suffrage is already cheap enough in this country; and the immediate transfer of more than half a million men from the bonds of slavery, with all the ignorance and the degradation upon them which the slavery of generations upon southern fields has produced, would be a degradation to the world that the exercise of American suffrage involves no intellectual or moral qualifications, and that there is no difference between an American freeman and a negro, and that the latter should not be removed by a mere act of Congress.

The Chairman. If there is no objection, the gentleman's time will be extended. There was no objection. Mr. Lamar. Now, sir, in a speech which this gentleman made in Indiana before these people became invested with any political rights here is his language:

I believe that in the case of four million slaves just freed from bondage there should be a period of probation and preparation before they are brought to the exercise of political power. What is their condition? Perhaps not one in five hundred—perhaps not one in a thousand—can read or perhaps not one in five hundred is worth \$5 in property of any kind.

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