

SOUTHERN CITIZEN.

WHAT DO WE LIVE FOR, BUT TO IMPROVE OURSELVES AND BE USEFUL TO ONE ANOTHER?

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REMARKS OF MR. CALHOUN.

Of South Carolina, on the engrossment of the bill for graduating the price of the

PUBLIC LANDS.

Mr. CALHOUN said: I have no desire, Mr. President, to retard in the smallest degree, the final action of the Senate on this bill; and in order to avoid unnecessary consumption of time, I intend to state as concisely as possible my views of the proper policy to be pursued in reference to the public lands lying within the limits of the new States; and my reasons for voting against the engrossment of this bill.

I shall begin with premising that I am under strong conviction, both from observation and reflection, that we have arrived at the period when an entire revolution of our land system, as far as it is applicable to these States, is unavoidable. They have, in fact, outgrown the system. Since its first adoption, they have come into existence, have passed through a state of infancy, and have now arrived at manhood. The system which was wise and just at first, is neither wise nor just applied to them in their changed condition.

We have heard much, Mr. President, in the present discussion, about the growth of the new States; but, if I may judge from the various measures proposed on this present occasion, we have neither realized its rapidity, nor the unavoidable changes in our land system which must follow in its train. Their wonderful growth is, indeed, one of those realities almost beyond the grasp of imagination. When I go back twenty-seven years, to the period when I first became a member of the other house and compare what the new States then were, to what they now are, I am lost in wonder and amazement. There is nothing like it in history. At that time there was but a single new State.

(Ohio.) I exclude Kentucky, Tennessee, and Maine, all of which have been admitted since the adoption of the Constitution, and limit my remarks to those which have since sprung up on the public domain.

Ohio had then but one representative in the other house, Jeremiah Morrow, an honest and sensible man, who was at that time at the head of the committee on public lands, and had the confidence of the house so completely that his voice was the law on all subjects connected with them. So little interest did they, at that time, excite. There were then thirty-two Senators in all, of which Ohio had, of course, two; that is, the one-sixteenth of the whole. In the electoral college she had three votes, which made her weight about the one-fifteenth of that body—a weight scarcely felt or estimated in the political movements of the day.

Such, at that time, was the infant and feeble condition of the new States. Since then, in a period but little exceeding that allotted to a single generation,

to pass over the stage of life, how wonderful the change! Instead of one, as then, there are now nine new States; and in the place of two Senators in thirty-two, we now have eighteen in fifty-two; making, instead of one-sixteenth, more than a third of the whole; and already three Territories, Florida, Wisconsin, and Iowa, are struggling for admission. When admitted, which must be shortly, there will then be 12 new States, with twenty-four Senators in fifty-six, which will increase their relative weight in this body to three-sevenths of the whole.

But as wonderful as has been the increase in this body, it will be still more so, after the next census, in the other. It will be taken next year, and a new apportionment of the members will be made under the Constitution; when, instead of a single member, being less than one in a hundred, as was the case twenty-seven years ago, the representation of the new States will then stand to the old, at least, as forty to sixty, or two-fifths of the whole, as calculated by a friend familiar with the subject, and in whose accuracy I have entire confidence. The new States, having, as they will then, three-sevenths in this, and two-fifths in the other house, will, of course, have a relative weight in the electoral college, or the same thing in the choice of a President, compounded of the two, that is, five-twelfths of the whole. So much for the past.

Now if we turn to the future, we shall find the cause of this amazing growth so far from being exhausted or weakened, is acting with increased force and urging forward the growth of those States with accelerated, instead of decreasing, velocity; so much so, that the past changes in the last twenty-seven years will appear as nothing, compared with what will take place in the next twenty-seven, unless some unforeseen occurrence should intervene to retard their progress. If my memory serves me, our population, twenty-seven years ago, was about seven million; and our annual increase then, that is, the excess of births over deaths, including emigration, about two hundred thousand, estimating our growth at three per cent. compound. Since then, our population has increased not less than nine millions, making the present probably about sixteen; which, on the same data, will make our annual increase at this time but little short of half a million; the greater part of which will find their homes in the new States.

I will not enter into a minute calculation as to the effects of this great increase on the relative weight of the new and old States at the next succeeding census, in 1850. It is sufficient to say, that it will give a decided majority to the former, both in the house of representatives in the electoral college, and, of course, in the Government; and this, in the short space of one generation and a half, the centre of political power as between the old and new States, will have passed from the former to the latter.

Now, with these unquestionable results before us, I ask, not whether it would be wise to continue the old system; no, sir! a far bolder question, *will it be practicable?* And if not practicable, *would it be wise to struggle to continue it, till overthrown by the force of unavoidable and irresistible causes?* I ask, what would be the effects of such a struggle? Would it not be to excite, in the first instance, animosity and discord between the old and new States, and, in the end, to overthrow the entire land system, with the certain loss, ultimately, of the public domain? I shall not on this occasion, attempt a formal discussion of these points. I propose in order to illustrate, simply to show how vain and dangerous would be the attempt to hold on to the present system, under these great and growing changes, by tracing its operation under a single aspect, its bearing on the Presidential question.

To have a clear conception of this, we must bear in mind, that after the next census the new States will have five-twelfths of the electoral college; and, of course, compared to either of the other sections, a controlling voice in the election of a President. He who keeps this in mind, and understands the workings of the human heart and of our

system, must see that in the Presidential contest, (for such it must ever be,) the great point, hereafter, will be to secure their favor—and that this can best be done by favoring their peculiar views and policy in reference to the public lands. Now, one of two things must follow: either all the candidates will enter into this competition, in which case the struggle will be who shall go farthest, and its consequence to give the vote to him who may bid highest. It is easy to see how this would end. The public domain the noble inheritance of the people of this Union, would be squandered, or rather gambled away, in the contest; and would thus be made, at the same time, the means of plunder and corruption, and of elevating to power the most profligate and audacious.

But if, instead of all the candidates seeking the favor of the new States, a part should court their interests, and the others but of the old States, the train of events would, indeed, be varied, but the ultimate result would be the same. On this supposition each of the candidates would resort to means best calculated to secure the section on whose support he might rely. Those looking to the new States would push to the extreme the favorite policy of those States in reference to the public lands; while the others would take the opposite extreme in favor of the old States. Now, when we refer to that the new and the old States must necessarily, from the different position and relation to the public lands, entertain very different views of the policy that ought to be pursued in relation to them, in almost every point—so much so, that the one shall consider that but as the demands of justice which the other shall regard as nothing short of open plunder, as we have witnessed in this discussion—we may form some conception of the violence of the conflict which must ensue in the case supposed. We have had, even in this early stage, and on this very question, some indications of what we may expect. The most violent animosity and hatred would follow, and every man, be his motives ever so pure and patriotic, would be regarded the friend or the enemy of the new or the old States, as his opinions favored the policy of the one or the other. The final termination of the conflict would not be doubtful. Whatever turns of fortune might occur, in its progress, the new States must, in the end, prevail.—Their relative increase is far more rapid than the old; so much so, that after 1850—that is, after the third Presidential election from the next—they would be left, as I have shown, in undisputed possession of the field. In the mean time, while the struggle is going on, the animosity would daily increase on both sides. The longer it continued the more bitter it would become, and the more certainly and completely would the present system be overthrown, if indeed, the Union itself should be strong enough to withstand the shock. Such must inevitably be the fate of the present system, should we have the folly, I might say the madness, to attempt to continue it as it is, so far as the new States are concerned, regardless of the great changes which have already taken place, and the still more mighty in progress.

Having now pointed out the danger, I turn next to the deeply important question of remedy, which demands the most prompt and solemn consideration, both of the Government and the community. The question is, what means shall we adopt to avert the mischief which I have shown to be so rapidly approaching, and which must inevitably soon arrive, if not prevented by some speedy and efficient measure? Already one has been proposed, originally brought forward to relieve a distended treasury of its burden, but which its author (the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. Clay) has renewed on the present occasion, doubtless with the view, in part, at least, to meet the growing disorders of the system. His proposition is to divide the proceeds of the public lands among the States, with the double view, I suppose, to a more equal participation in the advantages of the public domain by the members of the Union, and to preserve the present system by a more vigilant guardianship of the States. I do not now intend to discuss the merits of this measure. My object is simply

to state, in general terms, my opinion in relation to it, without entering into the reasons on which it is grounded.

There appears, then, to me, to be great and decisive objections to the measure. The right to adopt it may, in the first place, be fairly questioned. We hold the public domain as a common property or fund, belonging to the States of the Union in their confederated, and not in their individual character. They were acquired either by purchase, out of common funds belonging to the Union, or by cession from the States to the Union, to be held as a fund in common; and I am at a loss to conceive what right we have to make that which belongs to the whole Union as a common fund; the separate fund of each State. It seems to me that it cannot be done without a manifest breach of trust and a violation of the Constitution. This is no new opinion, formed for the occasion. It was, on the contrary, formed when its author first introduced the measure, and when he and myself thought alike as to the necessity of relieving the Treasury of its surplus, in order to avoid the difficulties and the dangers which have since followed. Believing, then, that it would be effectual for that purpose, and more easily adopted than any other, I examined it with an inclination to embrace it as a temporary measure of relief against a pressing evil; but it was impossible for me to bring my mind to assent to the right of adopting it.

But suppose this difficulty surmounted, there are others, which I regard as insurmountable. Among them the fiscal objection is very formidable. The revenue from the lands cannot be spared at present, and if distributed, as proposed by the measure, would necessarily throw the whole expenses of the Government on a single source—the duties on imports—and which must be followed by their increase. This would neither be fair, nor equal; and to which I, representing in part, a portion of the Union, on which the increased burden would mainly fall, cannot assent.

But as formidable as is this, there are others far more so. I would meet, or avert the approaching danger. I would still leave the public lands in the new States, under the operation of the present system, and the object of violent conflict between them, and the old States, with all the calamitous consequences to which I have adverted. Instead of preventing the danger, it would, in fact, hasten and aggravate it. It may be laid down as a maxim, that no measure can avert it, which is not adopted with the approbation and consent of the new States; for the simple reason that they must soon become the predominant power; when that which was established against their consent would be certainly overthrown. Such would be the case with the measure under consideration. If adopted, it must not only be without the consent of those States, but with their strenuous opposition, of which we have the most conclusive evidence on the present occasion. When moved by its author, as an amendment to this bill, it was violently opposed at the threshold from that quarter, and received but a single vote from the new States. It is not necessary to inquire whether this opposition on their part is reasonable, or not; whether it is the result of mere prejudice, or of deliberate conviction that it is hostile to their interests. The fact itself, that there is an almost universal and determined resistance to the measure on their part, right or wrong, is, of itself, sufficient proof that it cannot be relied on to avert the threatening danger. On the contrary, its necessary effect must be to accelerate and aggravate it. Its adoption would, at once, bring the old and new States into violent conflict, in which the former would be arrayed almost to a man, in determined effort to overthrow the arrangement, or some more hostile measure. Add to this that the Presidential contest would not fail to run into the controversy, and thus redouble the excitement and animosity, with all the fatal consequences which I have shown must follow from blending the two.

Assuming, then, that the scheme is both objectionable and inefficient, the question again occurs, what ought to be done? My mind is made up, after the most serious and deliberate reflection, that there is, and can be, but one remedy:

to cede—not that is not the constitutional word—to dispose of the public lands to the States within the limits of which they respectively lie, on such terms and under such conditions as shall, at the same time, be just and liberal to the new States and safe to the old. We must, in a word, part with the ownership and administration of the lands lying within the States, leaving those in the Territories, and beyond, under the operation of the present system.—The evil lies in ownership and administration, and without parting with them no permanent or effectual remedy can be applied.

But what shall be the terms—what portion of the proceeds of the sales of those lands shall be left to the States, to remunerate them for the expense, trouble, and responsibility of their administration, and what portion shall be paid over to the Government annually as a compensation for the land? I am not prepared to answer this question. Its decision must depend on a careful and minute examination of all the facts and circumstances of the case. But I am decidedly of the opinion that the portion to be left to the new States ought not only to be ample to cover the trouble, expense, and responsibility of management, but very considerably beyond, so as to unite their interests with ours, in order to give stability to the arrangement and insure care and fidelity in management. Resting my estimate of the compensation on these principles, I have supposed that the new States might pay over annually one-half of the gross proceeds of sales to the Government, and have an ample sum left for their compensation. But this is only an estimate, without sufficient data, and of course, liable to be increased or diminished after a careful calculation founded on facts.

With these suggestions as to the terms, I next proceed to the conditions on which the lands ought to be disposed of. I propose to suggest only the most prominent, without pretending to a full enumeration.

In order to give stability to the arrangement, it will be indispensable that the whole transaction should assume the form of a compact; and for this purpose, that Congress should pass an act containing the terms and conditions of the transfer; and that each of the new States should pass one, on their part, to be irrevocable, assenting to the same, before it is made. The act of Congress should, of course, determine what part of the proceeds is to be paid annually to the Government, and the time and manner of payment; and also to provide for keeping regular books of accounts, to be open to the inspection of the Government, so that the exact state of the account between it and the States, may, at all times, be ascertained by the former.

The act of Congress should also contain all the prospective provisions which may become necessary in the future administration of the lands under the arrangement; and should then provide that the land laws, as modified by the act, and as far as they are applicable to the new state of things, shall remain unchanged, without the consent of Congress. A provision of this kind would be not less essential to the States, than to the Government. Without it there could be no stability nor uniformity.—Without it the States would, in a short time, enter into a competition to turn the current of immigration, each towards itself, which would commence by a reduction of price, and end by a loss of the lands. But with the provision proposed, the system would retain its uniformity, and become more stable than at present.

To enforce the faithful execution of the compact the act should also contain a provision that, in the event of the violation of the conditions of cession, all grants thereafter made by the State should be null and void. This would place the compact under the protection of the courts of the Union, and make it the interest of the State and its citizens to observe it. In this connection, the liberal allowance proposed to be made to the States, in order to unite their interests with ours, would be important. The revenue which they would derive from the land would be applied to roads, canals, or other improvements, that would create a powerful interest in fa-