

Hillsborough Recorder

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS—THE GUARDIANS OF OUR LIBERTY

Vol. XLV.

HILLSBOROUGH, N. C., NOVEMBER 26, 1864.

No. 2269.

Mr. Boyce and his Constituents—He makes a Speech.

A meeting was held in Columbia last Monday night which was addressed by a number of secessionists and army officers, and which passed resolutions denouncing the recent able, and as some think patriotic letter of Mr. Boyce and calling on him to resign. Mr. Boyce, being in the city was invited to appear before the meeting and vindicate his letter if he desired so to do, which he did; and his speech on the occasion is thus reported in the proceedings:

SPEECH OF HON. W. W. BOYCE.

I thank you for affording me the privilege of defending myself on this occasion. That permission has not taken me by surprise, for I knew that there dwelt in the hearts of South Carolinians magnanimity and generous emotions, and that it would be impossible within the limits of this State to assemble so large an audience and then refuse a man, who was put on trial for his political life, an opportunity of speaking in his own behalf.

It is impracticable, my fellow-citizens, to discuss a question so grave as this, and involving as it does, so many and complicated relations under the present circumstances. I shall, therefore, take occasion hereafter, in some more convenient mode, to fully set forth my ideas on this subject. What I shall say to you now will be but a brief vindication of my position, for I recognize the right of my constituents to express their opinion as to my course. I am your political servant, you are the sovereigns. I would add, also, that I have no doubt that those by whom this movement was commenced, are actuated by a sense of public duty in the course they have taken; but in my judgment, they have too hastily hurried to their conclusions. I do not think they have read my letter with due care.

Fellow-citizens, before this great contest commenced, I, as your representative, surveyed the scene, and endeavored then to determine what policy was proper in view of the great resolution evidently approaching. I was greatly impressed with the idea that it was our interest to divide the North—that, being a weaker power, it was prudence on our part so to direct our public course as to induce dissensions and division in the North, and create a party there which should sympathize with us. Before secession took place, therefore, I adopted a policy which surprised many. I observed that the ground on which the Republican party was advancing, referred wholly to the extension of slavery in the territories, and believing that to be a barren issue, I so declared my sentiments. I stated that nature herself, with her vast mountains and broad plains, interposed an obstacle to the extension of slavery in the North-west, and thus the question was one about which we, practically, need have given ourselves no concern. While I was condemned for this view, you did not hold a public meeting for the purpose, but in one of the papers of Columbia a different policy was announced, and six highly respectable gentlemen were nominated as representatives from my district. I said that our policy at that time was moderation; but one of the gentlemen present wrote in his journal a humorous article, in which he declared that our policy was action, action, action. I looked ahead, and was not so full of the illusions of a sanguine temperament as some men in the South. I appreciated the power of the North, and I did not wish to force you into the contest with two great odds against you. I wanted to take all the chances. I will not now define what was that policy of moderation; but the idea involved was to give to the North-west new strength, so that, should war take place, we should have a party in that section whose interest it would be to cry out for peace. Well, fellow-citizens, the struggle commenced. That policy which I had advised was not, in my opinion, carried out. The party with which we ought to have had most intimate relations, and which was especially strong in the North-west, was broken up by the Charleston Convention. I thought

it wrong; I believed that the question of slavery in the territories was, as I have said before, but a barren issue. I stand to-night with, perhaps, but few sympathizers around me, but I appeal from the verdict of the present to that of the great future, which has in its womb that which is known only to God. One, two, or three years hence, look back to the present hour, and ask whether I have given bad advice in the letter which has been condemned.

After the war broke out, I still surveyed the scene. It yet appeared that we must look to a division of the North. I saw a great nation in the North-west, settled principally by Southern men; with a great river running through its immense territory, and forming as it were a bond of common interest between that section and the South. I was further aware that the party which acted with us had its chief seat of power in the North-west. I looked about, therefore, for a mode to accomplish the great end in view. The first opportunity I saw was after the first battle of Manassas, when, conferring with the President of the Confederate States, I proposed to him a policy which looked to that end. In other words, I suggested that he should propose a treaty of peace to Mr. Lincoln, the conditions of which should be reciprocal free trade with the North-west, and a free navigation of the Mississippi river secured by treaty compact. My idea was that we should suggest to the North-west in the most imposing form such terms as would reconcile the protection of their most material interest with a dissolution of the Union. That idea was not adopted.

After the defeat of Gen. McClellan in front of Richmond, I wrote to Mr. Benjamin, the Secretary of State, again urging the same policy, but still it was not adopted. I thought such to be our true policy, because it was requiring our soldiers in the field to carry an unnecessary burden, when a proper performance of duty by the Government would have diminished the enemies with whom they had to contend.

Soon afterwards this great peace party of the North-west showed evidences of its immense power. I hoped then, that some response would be made to that party; but, fellow-citizens, what was the result? Nothing. The Richmond press, in a large degree, and especially an organ which had the reputation of being an official organ, denounced that peace party. Referring to its leaders, "Vallandigham and others," it said, "we respect those Abolitionists who are led away by their fanaticism; for instance, such men as Wendell Phillips, Lincoln, and others; but we have contempt and scorn for you who pretend to represent the peace men of the North. You may crawl upon your bellies, but we will spit upon you!" Why thus repel those who are seeking peace?

As an evidence of that policy of the Richmond press and other newspapers in the South, the Hon. Mr. Soule, of Louisiana, told me that he was in the city of New York, when an election took place, and that placarded upon the political banners and in other places were the remarks of the Richmond press, concerning these peace Democrats of the North, accompanied with the observation, "see what your Southern friends say of you." Mr. Soule assured me that those articles from the Richmond *Enquirer*, which was then known as the official organ of our Government, had produced the most injurious effects. I will state further, that General Atkins, of Texas, a member of Congress, told me that he was with Mr. Vallandigham nearly a week, and that the latter said to him if it had not been for the course of your Southern press in reference to the peace party, Mr. Lincoln never could have undertaken the campaign against Vicksburg. "Your press has cost you the death of many of your noblest men." I protested against that policy, and asked, in God's name, why is this done? Have we no pity for our noble soldiers, who are dying daily? Shall we try to consolidate the North against us? Shall we break down the peace party, and hurl scorn and insult in the faces of those who are our friends?

Well, fellow-citizens, time rolled on, and at the last session of Congress, several Senators and members thought we ought to try the use of diplomacy, and, to some extent, do what we could to divide the North, and to weaken the power of Mr. Lincoln. We met together, considered the question and agreed upon this programme, viz: that we would introduce resolutions into Congress, that in the event we should defeat the enemy at the two points where he had concentrated, the President should be requested to tender to Mr. Lincoln propositions for the meeting of commissioners to negotiate upon the subject of peace. We did not expect that Mr. Lincoln would agree to this proposition, because we know he is pledged never to cease war while he can raise a man or a dollar; but we wanted to build up a party behind him. Even those resolutions, moderate as they were, failed to meet the approval of those in power. The session ended, I came home. The subject still occupied my thoughts; and when I thought of soldiers daily exposed and daily dying; and when I thought of a Government that did not exercise a policy best calculated to defeat the North, by building up a peace party in that section, I was at a loss what to do. In the midst of these reflections, there suddenly appeared the Chicago platform. It was in opposition to the principles of Mr. Lincoln. My heart beat with renewed anxiety. Again and again, I revolved the subject in my mind, until the conviction irresistibly forced itself upon me that it was my duty to address a letter to the President of the Confederate States. I felt that no matter what the consequences might be—hear me with infamy, spurn me, perish my memory—perish my name, I must endeavor to render this service to my country. I was willing to encounter risk of life, and I am told there is a man in this crowd who has said that he would kill me to-night; that he has shot Yankees and will shoot a man who is no better than a Yankee.

I thank the gentlemen who originated this meeting for one thing that has been said in their resolutions—namely, that they do not doubt my sincerity. I feel grateful. Take from me everything—take from me the office I have so long held—but do justice to my motives, and do justice to the honest purpose with which I am endeavoring to serve you. If I were merely desirous of promoting ambitious ends of my own, or prompted by a selfish interest, I should not have supported a policy so likely to meet with contempt and opposition as that which has been advocated in the letter under consideration. It was under the influence of these feelings that I penned my letter to the President. I intended, besides, to appeal to public opinion, and see if I could not move the mind of the South on this great subject. I felt that the great path to safety for us was to divide the North. I thought that was our true policy, and, therefore, I put forth certain views, calculated as I hoped to enlist public opinion in its behalf. Now, fellow-citizens, I ask you to examine that letter. In writing it, I had to do what? First, to address the President respectfully, because every emotion of my heart prompts me to do that. When I consider that noble man struggling under adversity and standing up in the heat of this contest, with so much nobility and fortitude of soul, I feel irresistibly drawn towards him, and would not, except as a matter of duty, do anything to disturb his equanimity. All honor, then, to him; although I cannot concede that he has been sufficiently alive to the importance of strengthening our friends at the North. Of heroic nature, competent to die in the last ditch, and to cover your history with honor, it seems to me he has not looked over the wide field of duty and exercised that policy and diplomacy best calculated to accomplish the purpose in view. I had also to address myself to you, and to impress upon your minds the necessity of this policy of diplomacy; the necessity of being willing to meet the people of the North in negotiation, with an anxious desire for peace, and ready to concede much

—not your independence; but, for instance, the navigation of the Mississippi, reciprocal free trade, and other matters of that kind. In order to impress your minds thus, I had to say to you that, if war be indefinitely continued, the inevitable tendency of things is to fasten a military despotism on the country and destroy our beautiful organization of States. I had to tell you that, because I was forced to appeal to the strongest motives in your minds. I had also to address the people of the North. My policy was to strike Lincoln, and to represent that if he were removed blood would cease to flow. I also sought to enforce upon the peace party the fact that if they could carry the election, they would take a great step towards the termination of hostilities. Therefore, I said nothing about separate independence and nationality, as I might have done. Writing for a specific object, I had to write as a diplomatist, and the letter itself was diplomatic. I know, fellow-citizens, there are many, very many, persons who contend—and I believe the gentleman who acts as the Secretary of this meeting, the editor of the *Carolinian*, is among them—that it is our policy to have Lincoln re-elected. My God! fellow-citizens, what can prompt a man to desire that? Is there a man in the United States who more fully represents the fanaticism and war fury of the North? Is there a man whom we can fear more or from whom we can hope less? Why gentlemen desire that that man continue in power, is passing strange to me. I have said it is our interest to have McClellan elected. Well, suppose Lincoln be defeated, what then? Why, then you have a condemnation of the war policy which Lincoln represents—a condemnation of that fanaticism which has carried on the war on so gigantic a scale, and so nearly plunged the country into ruin. Lincoln represents a conflict of ideas. He represents the anti-slavery feeling. He represents all that is gross and vile in the Northern political character. He represents the energy and the fierceness with which the struggle has been conducted; and you have, therefore, no reason to believe that the defeat of Lincoln will not prove equally a defeat of the war policy that has been carried out under his administration.

A word now with reference to the Chicago platform, by which the successor of Mr. Lincoln, if elected, will be guided when in power. What does that platform say? It says "negotiate," "negotiate;" and though it does not give up the Union, you cannot expect it to do more. That platform has been carefully prepared, and the sentiments of the men who support it are known to us. It is true, that McClellan has indicated that he cannot consent to peace unless based upon the idea of reconstruction; but doubtless McClellan was playing for votes. When the election has taken place and his success has been achieved, the peace party will then dictate his policy. He himself declares that he will exhaust all the expedients of diplomacy, before he resorts to war. If, therefore, that party succeeds to power, we may expect an armistice and temporary peace. They will come to you and say, we propose a cessation of hostilities; that the sword shall be sheathed. An armistice proposed by them to us, is an acknowledgment that the war is a failure; that they have tried it for four years, spent four thousand millions of dollars, and lost immense numbers of lives, and at last they have come to that which they at first refused to entertain, peace and a talk. The moral triumph of that proposition will be greater than a victory gained by our army and purchased by our blood. They have said we will meet you in convocation of the States; I do not mean a convention of States, under the Constitution of the United States, but a convention of States as independent sovereigns, each one to go there and see if they can make peace. Why, fellow-citizens, what more could you ask? Are you so infatuated with the horrors of war and death, that you would repulse a proposition of this kind? If so, I am surprised. In that convocation of the States, although