

MESSAGE

President of the United States.

Fellow Citizens of the Senate

Upon the reassembling of Congress, it again becomes my duty to call your attention to the state of the Union, and to the various laws which have been passed under the subject of reconstruction.

It may be fairly assumed, as an axiom in the government of States, that the greatest wrongs inflicted upon a people are caused by unjust and arbitrary legislation, or by the unrelenting decrees of despotic rulers, and that the timely revocation of injurious and oppressive measures is the greatest good that can be conferred upon a nation.

The legislative or ruler who has the wisdom and magnanimity to revoke such laws, when continued of error, will sooner or later be rewarded with the respect and gratitude of an intelligent and patriotic people.

Our own history, although embracing a period less than a century, affords abundant proof that most, if not all, of our national troubles are directly traceable to violations of the organic law and excessive legislation. The most striking illustrations of this fact are furnished by the enactments of the past three years upon the question of reconstruction.

After a fair trial, they have substantially failed and proved pernicious in their results, and there seems to be no good reason why they should longer remain upon the statute book. States to which the Constitution guarantees a republican form of government, have been reduced to military dependencies, in each of which the people have been made subject to the arbitrary will of the commanding general.

Although the Constitution requires that each State shall be represented in Congress, Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas, are yet excluded, and, contrary to the express provisions of that instrument, were denied participation in the recent election for a President and Vice President of the United States. The attempt to place the white population under the domination of persons of color in the South has imposed, if not destroyed, the kindly relations that had previously existed between them; and mutual distrust has engendered a feeling of animosity, which, leading in some instances to collisions and bloodshed, has retarded the recovery of the country.

The Federal Constitution the magna charta of American rights, under whose wise and salutary provisions we have successfully conducted all our domestic and foreign affairs, sustained our liberties in peace and in war, and secured the growth and progress of our country. It must be so strictly and justly administered, that the national life, and throughout the whole country, a healthy reaction in public sentiment had taken place. By the application of the simple yet effective provisions of the Constitution, the Executive Department, with the voluntary aid of the States, had brought the work of restoration as near completion as was within the scope of its authority, and the Union was reconstituted by the adjustment of all its difficulties.

Under the influence of party passion, and the influence of a few unscrupulous agitators, Congress has already been made familiar with its views respecting the "tenure of office bill." Experience has proved that its repeal is demanded by the best interests of the country, and that while it remains in force the President cannot enjoy that right accountability of public officers, an essential condition of efficient execution of the laws. Its revocation would enable the Executive Department to exercise the power of appointment and removal in accordance with the original design of the Federal Constitution.

The act of March 2, 1867, making appropriations for the support of the army for the year ending June 30, 1868, and other purposes, contains provisions which, in conformity with the President's constitutional functions as commander-in-chief of the army, and deny to States of the Union the right to protect themselves by means of their own militia. These provisions should be at once annulled; for while the emergency, seriously embarrass the Executive in efforts to employ and direct the common strength of the nation for its protection and preservation, the object is contrary to the express declaration of the Constitution, that a "well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

It is believed that the repeal of all such laws would be accepted by the American people, and that the principles of the Government, and an indignation that heretofore the Constitution has made the nation's standard-bearing guide. They can be productive of no permanent benefit to the country, and should not be permitted to stand as so many monuments of the defective wisdom which has characterized our recent legislation.

Government had reached the amount of \$2,273,992,999. The Secretary of the Treasury shows that on the first day of November, 1867, this amount had been reduced to \$2,491,504,430; but at the same time his report exhibits an increase during the past year of \$35,027,102.

By comparing the public disbursements of 1869, as estimated with those of 1791, it will be seen that the increase of expenditure since the beginning of the Government has been eight thousand six hundred and eighteen per centum, while the increase of the population for the same period was only one hundred and sixty-eight per centum.

As in the expenses of the Government from 1791, the year of peace immediately preceding the war, were only sixty-three millions; while in 1869, the year of peace three years after the war, it is estimated that the year 1869 will be three hundred and seventy-two million and six hundred and four thousand six hundred and forty-nine dollars. These statistics further show that in 1791 the annual national expenses, compared with the population, were little more than one dollar per capita, and in 1869 they were two dollars per capita, which is an increase of one hundred and ninety per cent.

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