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TERMS.

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COL. McLEOD'S SPEECH.

Delivered at the Dinner given to him in Lenoir county, on the 17th September, 1853.

After making suitable remarks by way of thankful returns for the honor done him in the sentiment and complimentary occasion of their being together—Col. McLeod proceeded: I have long been an earnest observer of the practices and policy of our Federal Government, and I did once suppose that its basis and its principles were so fixed in the interest, so engrained in the love and virtue of the American people, that its permanency was secured as long as they should continue to venerate the principles of self-government. But the events of late years have been so frequently marked with a ruling disposition in high functionaries to step over the line laid down by the Constitution as the boundary of their authority, and the ease with which the great body of the people are led to believe that every stretch of power by the President is but an exercise made in behalf of their best interest, is so alarmingly manifested, that the reflections which they naturally excite have brought my mind, with a reluctant reluctance, to conclude, that less the people can be waked up to an understanding of the critical condition which they have reached in the affairs of Government, and unless they all immediately repair the breaches of abuses made in their constitution, turning out of power all who have an agency in bringing them to this point, our boasted Republic will no longer be but a vain and fallacious name for the overruling power and dominion of him who is highest in office. Yes, my fellow-citizens, I say it in grief, and often do I brood over it in sorrow—that, unless a check be immediately given by the great body of the people to those who claim a power over us, a power over-reaching in its extent, that of a British King—the days of this government, so beautiful as it is in its principles and constructions, are already numbered. Without this check, our availing lamentations may go forth the world, for having lived to see glory of this fair country reach its zenith, and the disgraceful fact will be undeniable, that from our days will rise the rise and progress of every vicious principle calculated to divide, destroy, and to enslave us!

Dear in mind, sir, that every treaty on Constitutional rule, as well as violent measures of a public deception, can only be supported and sustained by an increase of the power that commits them. And something of the condition of the novice in law, the commission of every new piece is but a stepping stone to a higher dignity in guilt. So with every deliberate violation of a Constitution under a republican form of government; the people do not approve of such, and they trespass does but begot another to sustain its forerunner, until at last their regard is paid to the conditions of the constitution than may be necessary to blind the populace with a glance of freedom.

As the most useful and impressive lessons are always taken from that book of experience—the history of other times and nations, and which have been beautifully called, "philosophy teaching by example," and as in lessons, nations, as well as men, learn how to make the great vortex of time and life secure from the rocks and shoals that so easily obstruct the progress of the fearless and inexperienced—let us at this moment cast our thoughts into a great chart for an example before our condition as a nation; and if we can benefit by its warning admonition. We will find the example strikingly marked in the history of the Roman republic—Sylla, a Roman military chieftain, of historic fame for his achievements in the days of that republic—after he had subdued and overcome all who opposed his march to civil, as well as to military power, (for he also was greatly beloved by the people,) and after he had grasped power in his own hand, and established his will as the rule of command, still he permitted the people to elect their consuls and tribunes, and the Senate to assemble to deliberate on laws—but he took special care, that none should be elected to any of those distinctions but as were his known friends. Thus, by placing the people a seeming enjoyment of their constitutional rights, he secretly employed the might of his authority and power to accomplish every object of his desire.

Can we, sir, avoid seeing the "fac simile" here presented, of our present condition? If we do, it is because we are determined to be blind.

Sylla's encroachments and usurpations of power, as with us, were hailed by his friends and followers as all being done in the name and for the good and benefit of the people. Nor do I know, sir, of a single instance in historic legend of a usurpation of power by a high officer, but that it was said in the same sweet sounds, to be done for the good and benefit of the people; and thousands in all times have been ready to shout loud applause of all such claims in a popular ruler.

All who are conversant with this period of that great and mighty republic, whose conquests about the time alluded to extended over a great part of Europe, Asia, and Africa, under the wisdom of her free institutions; must be forcibly struck with the remarkable resemblance between it, and the times and occurrences around us. Let us bring the parallels a little closer. The Roman General was always more ambitious of power than desirous of true glory. Is this not also the case with the military man at the head of our civil affairs? Again—The Roman General was always more eager to make innovations in the administration of the constitution, than willing to follow the rules and precepts laid down by his great predecessors and the decisions of the highest tribunals of the government.—This similarity is more forcible still, with the new construction of the constitution and powers discovered as belonging to the office of the President in this country within the last few years. But again.—The Roman General was willing for the continuance of the Senate; but the minds of its members must be formed and ruled to his way of thinking. Can any North Carolina avoid feeling deeply the force of this similitude, when he looks into the transactions of the authorities of this land for the last year or two? When we behold one of our own brightest sons hunted down, traduced and vilified by a corrupt faction and a hireling press because he dared to express his opinion as one of your Senators in Congress—representing who?—the State Legislature?—No, sir, representing the majesty and sovereignty of the people of the whole. Sa e.

Yes, sir, because he dared to express an opinion contrary to the will and desire of the President, on a constitutional question, a question which he was solemnly sworn to support and decide according to the great charter of our liberties, and the only issue in which lay between his conscience and his God,—because he did this, as your free and independent representative, what is the consequence? Why, sir, orders are given out from head quarters to destroy him—to put him out of the way—to "us him up" as the saying is, that some obedient, supple jack may be put in his place! And hence, my fellow-citizens, you see the motives of the time-consuming resolutions of the last assembly, to instruct Mr. Mangum out of place, not in place, as they improperly purported. For, sir, if it be said that the object of those resolutions was to make Mr. Mangum retract the opinion which he gave on his oath—those who supported them are principals in a high moral crime—that of attempting to procure a pecuniary. But, sir, our distinguished Senator knows too well the free principles of this government and the obligations of his high station, to suffer a disturbance of this breach of right and duty, and his State will proudly sustain him. Every North Carolinian must feel and see the force of likeness between this transaction and those of the Roman General. Sylla's governing motto was that which seems to be in action and high favour in this country by our ruler. "Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas," being translated—Thus I wish and order—my will stands in the way of reason.

Unhappily for the Roman people, the passions, rather than the reasons, of her distinguished General, always prevailed in the pursuit of distinction; and in all instances where the latter noble gift of Divinity is made to yield to the baser passions of the heart, men will be driven beyond the line of duty. Are not the condition of the Roman people of that day and ours of the present strikingly alike?

Those were the latter days of the purely Roman republic, which were soon followed by the accession of a long line of Caesars to the control and government of that mighty people, whom they soon afterwards degraded, enslaved, and rendered willing to bury every trace and remembrance of their once boasted freedom, by becoming the most obedient people to the will of a Dictator. Whether Caesars are born for us now or not, will greatly depend upon the turn given to the principles now agitating this country. But such is the force of the resemblance between the period of that ancient and great republic and the course of things with us, that the future historian, handing down to posterity the political events of our day, may do it so far by a copy of the Roman history in the days of Sylla with a proper substitution of

names. We cannot, my fellow-citizens, if we would, avoid this forcible similarity between that period of ancient history and the present period of our own; and we must disregard all the experienced lessons of men and nations if we do not believe that we are on the eve of a great catastrophe in national affairs. For, sir, believe me, there cannot be a rule in the practices of men more certain in the philosophic and moral world, more self-evident, than that like causes have never failed to produce like effects.

So that he who consoles himself under a belief that our country is yet free from the impending ruin believed to be hanging over her, must also believe in a total reversion of the laws and order of men and nature. Are the American people so incredulous? A trembling belief is abroad that they are—and hence arises the great and weighty obligation which a love of country imposes upon every citizen thus beholding the approaching destruction of this fair citadel of liberty, to be ceaseless in his efforts and untiring in his zeal, to bring home to the view and comprehension of every man in the country, the open, as well as lurking, principle of destruction avowed and retained by those to whom the constitution has entrusted the administration of the government.

—Bring deeply impressed with these considerations, and believing that our people would correct, as soon as they became aware of a threatening evil, and having many assurances that there was no probability of any other person offering his services to bring the present alarming state of our country before the people of this District for their serious consideration, than your humble servant, I did, at a late period of the season, after the Spring Courts were over in all the counties in the District, consent to be myself a candidate in opposition to the former incumbent, who had been recently converted to the quieting doctrine of submission to the rules and dictates of the Van Buren caucus. The manner in which I maintained and defended the grounds and principles of the American Whigs against the contrivances of the Tories of this day, has not been so satisfactory to myself as your kind and indulgent approbation, so flatteringly manifested in the sentiment just expressed by you, as well as by the generous spirit which prompted this festivity, encourages me to hope that it is to you. But I can truly say that any failure on my part was in defect of greater ability, not for want of good will to serve my country.

My deep regret was, that the selection had not fallen upon some one more likely to unite, and with a commanding ability to sustain, the principles by which we are governed in our opposition to the New Tory doctrines of the caucus party. But I am heartily consoled by the convincing evidence given to the world by our District, as well as by the earnest I have this day, in every countenance in this vast assemblage, that the Newborn District will never again sustain a man who holds to the administration of the Constitution as the President and his underlings may choose to understand it.

It has always been a tenet in my political creed, that the great body of the people are honest, and mean well in the discharge of those trusts which freedom and the constitution have given to their control; and that, as a whole, they are moved and governed by what they believe to be motives tending to the public good.

Still, there has always been great difficulty in a community like ours, in understanding and comprehending important fundamental principles; and I can truly say to you, that that difficulty is greatly increasing, when it ought to be vastly lessened as we advance in education and mental improvement. As it is of no little importance to inquire why and how it is, that the difficulty increases under such a state of things, I must be permitted to make a few remarks on what is certainly the cause.

In all our observations upon men and things, we may be said to have daily proofs of the perversion of what may be called real benefits of civil society. Witness the improper uses daily made of many of our greatest blessings, either by indelicate and corrupt tastes, or by the false fashion of the age. There is a corrupting cause some where, and one of our most urgent duties is to shun and avoid its baneful influence, to eradicate, if possible, its power of doing further evil. The public press and newspapers are intended, in a government like ours, to be a great political blessing, and such they surely are when conducted free from the influence of corrupting rewards. But this is not their condition with us in this country, and especially of late. The newspaper press, therefore, which ought to stand high in our estimation as the source of truth, in relation to the real condition of our own concerns—has increased, and is still increasing, the difficulty of a fair and honest understanding of public events by the people. And why is this? Purely because some of its conductors are bought up by offices of reward, cor-

ruptly given by those high in the powers of the government. I mean of course those editors that are purchased by and actually belong to those in power. And as soon, sir, as these unprincipled men obtain these offices and rewards, or even the promise of them, from some of the minions or understrappers of power, they immediately begin their slavish duty, by praising every act and measure of their masters, and deceiving their fellow-citizens for mercenary purposes.

This base method of deluding the people of this country is a part of the New York system—the political Pandora of America, which teaches, in words a little different, but the same in substance—that the giving of public money, or what is the same thing, public office, by way of reward to corrupt the press, is a right that belongs to those in power, and that they will use it so as to increase that power.

Under such a state of things, my fellow-citizens, it is not difficult to understand how it is that there is an increasing ignorance through the country on the real and true condition of public matters. To check the constant growth of this alarming evil, is a consideration of no little importance to this country. For my own part I have no hesitation in saying, that to cut up this evil by the root is one of the only means of preserving the government and the constitution, and to accomplish so necessary and desirable an object, Congress ought to cut off entirely all the editors and conductors of newspapers from being eligible to receive any appointment, office, gift or reward, directly or indirectly, within the control of any officer in or under the government; or in other words, to take this patronage, this public pap, out of the mouths of editors, to see if truth would not the more readily come forth therefrom.

Until this, or something of the kind, is done, my friends, the public body will never be in a healthy condition, nor will the value and freedom of the press, the once boasted palladium of our liberty, ever arise in character and reputation from the filthy prostration into which it is now cast. But, sir, when think you can this be done? Under this administration? No, sir—the veto is too heavily on laws of expediency to allow Congress to do any such thing. Then do you think, sir, that it could be done under the administration of him (if the country should be so unfortunate) who has promised to carry into perfection the "great measures just begun"? Yes, sir, just begun, are his words? Never! never!—Mr. Van Buren has too long studied his system of "improvement of the public press," to regulate and discipline party to his own advantage, to ever expect any such beneficial regulations under him. What, sir, Van Buren to give up his control and influence over the public press, as a high officer of this government? Sooner, sir, expect him to hate and despise power in his own hands. Sooner expect him to exchange his natural propensity to cunning and intrigue for an open and undisguised heart, than to see him consent to abandon the strong hold of office on this mighty lever of public opinion.

Yet the true interests of the country require it. But all such considerations are as chaff with "the party"—the party that has abusively taken to themselves the name of the "Democratic Party," and whose governing principle is less their country's welfare and interest than the establishment of such measures as will most securely keep them and their friends in offices of high pay, little trouble, and great influence. I repeat then, that until the newspaper editors shall all be put upon an equality as regards their enjoyment of official favor, there will be no such thing as for the great body of this country to rightly and honestly understand the manner and management of their public affairs.

If, sir, the people of this district could have known the designs of power and of all the office-holders and office-seekers, their schemes to deprive the people of a fair and free exercise of their elective privileges, by their caucuses and bought-up newspapers, yes, sir, and bought-up max too, would they have voted as they did, even in our late election?—No, sir, all they require is correct information on this matter. The great body of the people are slow to believe, and slow to act in all such things; and perhaps in a government like this, it is best they should be so. But when they once see and understand the motives of the Tories of this country, in their desire to centre in the office of the President all power and sway over Congress and the freedom of election, then, I say, sir, they will be found in their proper places,—on their own side,—and decidedly hostile to the dangerous and degrading doctrine now so successfully carried into effect, that the will and desire of one man should be paramount to the will of the people, the laws and the Constitution.

This fair government, and this people, once proud and jealous of their rights and privileges, seem to be upon

the brink of ruin, in a period of peace and prosperity.

Threatening dangers appear to point from various quarters, but although the causes may seem different and various, they are all the bitter fruit of one great tree of evil, which has its root and rapid growth in an open and permissive violation of the Constitution and laws by the highest officer in the government, sustained and tacitly approved and encouraged by the culpable apathy of the great body of the people.

When this is the case, my fellow-men, in a government whose foundation was based upon the virtue and intelligence of the people, as was this of ours, there arises, from the very minds of the people themselves, a kind of a slow, secret, and silent disregard of rule and order—the mental atmosphere is poisoned and infected by political miasma that engenders a ruthless and ungovernable distemper in the public mind.

From this undeniable representation of facts may be seen the urgent need of keeping every act of the leading men in our government within the line of the Constitution. For, sir, if they be indulged and supported by the people in such violations, every reflecting man must see that a Constitution, how perfect so ever, is but a poor security against aspiring and ambitious men. Nor is this all those who weakly despair of ever bringing a Constitution, thus broken and violated, to its pristine purity and value, see with less reluctance the inevitable introduction of confusion and disorder, from a patriotic, but mistaken hope, that out of those jarring elements may possibly arise a more purifying principle, which may promote the general good. This is the last hope of despatching patriotism, and should never be indulged but in the last extremity of a sinking country. Thank Heaven, my fellow-citizens, we are not yet reduced to this extremity.

Our principles are, to cling to the Constitution as long as there is the least possibility of saving our country from ruin and our government from despotism. Should our exertions prove vain and futile, against the force and influence of power, what shall we do?—Faintly submit to see the appalling spectacle of a ruthless despotism scourging this fair land with her iron rod, and calmly and quietly submit as her obedient subjects? No, sir, we will still cling to the tree of liberty, and beneath its sheltering foliage, find either the blessing of independence or a grave for freedom.

No country ever required more the hand of reform and change of men than ours does at this time. The anxiety of all the lovers of constitutional government throughout the four quarters of the world is intensely engaged in the issue of the growing difficulties now agitating the very foundation of our institutions. The crisis is pregnant with the future destiny of republics, and we of this age will merit and receive either the benedictions or imprecations of all the friends to the rights of man.

We should bear in mind, my countrymen, that all lovers of free and independent governments throughout the civilized world, have assigned to us of these United States the special care and guardianship of civil freedom. And, sir, we have solemnly assumed the weighty and important charge, and have given our bond to mankind, with our sacred honour as our pledge, that the trust shall be inviolably executed. Do we not set too high a value upon our chivalry if we permit our sacred pledge to suffer the least indignity? If we do permit this, we deserve not the name of Englishmen and Americans. We are a liberal upon American Freedom to say of them, as has been of late said, that they are already becoming careless, apathetic, and indifferent about the preservation of their freedom.

In the course of the coming year all eyes will be turned upon us to see if proud and free Americans will obey the command, and answer to the call of those who desire to see them give up to the direction and control of one man.

Caucusing and every cunning contrivance within the ingenuity and practices of interested office holders, have been put in operation to thwart a choice of the next President by the free and unbiased votes of the people, and to establish such a rule and practice in matters of election as will render elections but a mere mockery to the honest yeomanry of the country. Orders are therefore given out that Martin Van Buren must be elected the next President of the U. States, and that he who dares vote against him, may have his head in readiness to sink under the withering wrath and indignation of this mighty man. Will free men submit to this?—Shall we sacrifice our country and our constitution, with a free and manly exercise of our rights and privileges under it, rather than displease Gen. Jackson? Whigs cannot hesitate a moment which to prefer. The Whigs of Lenoir, and of the Newborn District will never so debase the principle, that "men are fit and able to govern themselves" in all elections, without the interference of cau-

causes and office holders, by bowing obedience to the will of any man who wishes to elevate another to high power, especially when that other is Martin Van Buren.

The principles of the Whig party of the United States are as plainly marked by their opposition to an undue exercise of power by the President, as the noble spirits of the same name, through the revolution, were marked by their denials to the British Crown; and those principles will never suffer them to vote for any man who is thus attempted to be forced upon the nation both by caucus and command; and under no circumstances will they vote for Van Buren, who stands condemned by the highest record of this nation,—the journals of the Senate of the United States—as unworthy the under trust of representing this country at the Court of a foreign King. But the Senate are of late denounced as factious and disobedient by the Tories, and the President is considered by them as being the head and fount of all purity and power, and they charge the Senate as being irresponsible, no independent and unyielding. And for what sir?

Because they have, in disregard of their constitutional right, as well as a duty, to check the downward course of our liberties, and to save their country from pollution.

Who can believe, that there is, this day, a party in this country desirous and willing to see the Senate overthrown and destroyed?—To see that only independent and conservative feature of our Government, which represents and defends the sovereignty of the States, either destroyed or prostrated, or made to yield to the wishes and control of the President, of whose complete power and dominion they alone stand in the way? Will our honest farmers believe that there is, at this very time, such a Tory party among them?—they scarcely will—Let them be admonished to be observant, and they will not be long deceived.—Let them find out now, if they can, any difference between there being no Senate at all, and one like Sylla's, at the command and dictation of the President, or even a Congress at the beck and call of that high officer. Why a Senate at all sir? If they dare not exercise the check which the constitution has placed in their hands to arrest his misrule and abuses of power, for fear of being proscribed and abused, as in the case of one of our own Senators, by those corrupt dependants of office and power, who have degraded the public press to licentiousness. A majority of this august assemblage of statesmen are peculiarly odious to Mr. Van Buren, because they had the pride and honour of their country too much at heart to allow him to stay as a Minister at the British Court, after the disgraceful directions he had given to his predecessor there while he was Secretary of State. In those directions he urges upon the Minister to press the claims of the party now in power in this country upon the kind consideration of the British King and Ministry, at the sacrifice of what he so unbecomingly and so un-Americanly calls the "past pretensions of this Government." He condemns the claims of this country as demanded by his immediate predecessor, and also by every administration of this government, from the days of Washington to the present "party," and as obtained and allowed, too sir, by that British nation, at all times of unrestricted commerce. He calls the demand a "pretension," a mere fetch of dishonesty in his own country, which never had received the approval of his party, now in power here, but on the contrary, they had always condemned it as unjust in as, and were upon the side of the British in the dispute. And pray what was the subject of the dispute, in which he was thus against his country? It was the right claimed by us as an independent nation to participate, in times of peace, in the British West India colonial trade, upon a footing of just reciprocity, as she allowed all other nations having colonies, and to which we were justly entitled on this ground as a right, and not as a boon. Yes, my fellow-citizens, this man has thus attempted to bring down the lofty honour of his country, in her prosecution of a right belonging to her upon every principle of the existing national connexion, for the purpose of making favor for himself and the leaders of his party, with a foreign power, for ends best known to himself and them. For this offence he received the just rebuke of the Senate of your nation, by their calling him home from the station and taking his commission from him, or rather not allowing it to be given to him. Yet, sir, this is the man for whom the people are now ordered to vote as the President of this nation, and if they do not, Gen. Jackson will be "mad." The "word now is" sir, that any man of consequence who dares vote against him, or speak against him, must never receive the favour of the party,—the office-holding party, in any thing,—but on the contrary, he must be broken down forthwith, by opening upon him the fire and fury of the foul-mouthed Editors in pay and keeping for the purpose.