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Position Paper for 8th U.S. Congress

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Topic 1 : Barbary Wars

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Barbary corsairs — pirates sanctioned by the North African city-states of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli — wreaked havoc on European shipping and commerce in the Mediterranean. European states could avoid this by either paying regular tribute to the Barbary states, or by attempting to guard their trade fleets and sending warships to fight the pirates.

As a Jeffersonian Democratic-Republican, Robert Wright supports the President's belligerent course of action against the Barbary pirates, believing that war is a better course of action than paying tribute. Paying the Barbary states to keep shipping safe is only a temporary solution, both expensive and ineffective, as corsairs frequently disregard treaties with their home cities. Only a military expedition to force the Barbary states into submission and dissuade them from further piracy will prove to be a permanent solution. Although it may be costly, in the long run its benefits will far outweigh its immediate costs.

Any naval expedition to the Mediterranean with the purpose of intimidating the corsairs of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli must take into account several considerations. The largest challenge facing any mission will be supplying the fleet; previous British expeditions in the 1620s failed because of this (Tinniswood, 118). Securing a base in France, Spain, Italy, or Naples, where supplies and weapons can be procured will be necessary. Further, the harbours of the pirate cities are well protected against bombardment with shore batteries and large moles (protective barricades). Fireships — explosive vessels filled with flammable materials — have proven ineffective against the pirate harbours, but mortars — artillery capable of shooting large projectiles at long range — have repeatedly proven extremely effective in the French assaults on Algiers in 1682 and 1688 (Tinniswood, 241-43). Even a few ships, known as bomb-ketches, equipped with mortars will be capable of forcing the Barbary states to end their disruption of American trade in the Mediterranean through intimidation, encouraging them to sign articles of peace rather than risk the destruction of their cities.

Topic 2 : Federal Judiciary System

In 1803, Supreme Court Justice John Marshall's court ruled that it was unconstitutional for the court to issue a *writ of mandamus* (compelling someone to perform or abstain from performing an action). In limiting his own court's power in this respect Justice Marshall actually extended its influence by setting a precedent for the court finding something unconstitutional, and thus striking it out from law. A conflict arises over whether the Supreme Court is in fact justified in doing this.

As a Democratic-Republican, Robert Wright stands strongly on the side of the states rejecting overarching federal powers directing them. That a court of officials appointed, rather than elected, to their positions exercise power equal and greater to a body of elected officials stands against the ideals of the United States. Thus, the influence of the Supreme Court must be restricted.

In order to restrict the power of the Supreme Court, it is necessary to eliminate the Judiciary Act of 1801, which allows Federal circuit courts to officiate over any cases relating to the Constitution, and increases the number of Justices serving on circuit courts. This not only allows the Federal judiciary to interfere with individual states' cases, it makes it far easier for the political factions in power to have an unduly long influence on the nation by appointing Supreme Court Justices who would not only oversee cases, but also influence policy and viewpoints for decades to come. Thus, it is necessary to restrict the responsibilities of the Supreme Court to deliberating the cases that reach it, not extending its sway into lower courts properly under the jurisdiction of individual states. Further, the Supreme Court must be stripped of its privilege of declaring acts and laws 'unconstitutional', a power essentially making it the equal of any legislative body (Smentkowski, 2016). The Supreme Court's power to undermine the decisions of the people's government will also create divisions between the courts, government, and the people of America. Justice Marshall himself admitted that '... the intention of the instrument must prevail; that this intention must be ... understood in that sense in which [it is] generally used by those for whom the instrument was intended ...' (Currie, 154). Laws, and by extrapolation the Constitution itself, must be viewed in the light of their times to achieve their intended objectives. They can best be interpreted by officials elected by the people the laws are written for, not appointed judges. Thus, the power to interpret the Constitution, to declare acts and laws constitutional or not so, these must be accorded to Congress and to the states, not to the Supreme Court.

Topic 3 : Louisiana Purchase

Napoléon, the French Emperor, is considering selling the French territory of Louisiana to the United States. An immense and diverse territory with significant economic potential, it would not only nearly double the territory of the United States, it would also open our borders to far greater expansion in the future.

Robert Wright supports the purchase of the Louisiana territory from France, the only other nation in the world supporting the ideals of the American revolution. Seizing the territory by force would bring American into conflict with the largest military power in the world, whereas purchasing Louisiana would allow for closer relations with France. Further, buying the territory would allow for a myriad of expansion routes, including further south into Spanish territory, as well as further west.

In effect, the Louisiana territory must be procured diplomatically, even at great cost; a single expense will prove far more affordable than a drawn-out conflict with France. Taking into account a cost of \$0.05 per acre — far less than (four percent of) the price offered to potential settlers since 1800 (National Archives, 2016) — and an area of approximately 512 000 000 acres offered (Kuepper, 2016) we must be prepared to offer the French up to \$25 million for the expanse of territory. Purchasing the Louisiana territory would signal to the other colonial powers both the power of American diplomats and our ambitions to unite North America. Once purchased, the territory can be divided along the lines of culture and religion of the new settlers into states, in order to more easily incorporate the new lands into the United States. Considering the economic power of New Orleans as a slave-trading centre, it would be economically unwise to destroy the value of this port by outlawing slavery in the lands we will purchase. Thus, slavery must continue in the new states created from the Louisiana territory. However, we must at all costs refrain from extending slavery to native Americans, as this could fatally disrupt the fur trade that provides a vast portion of the economic activity in Louisiana. In implementing these guidelines we can procure a vast and prosperous territory with immense benefit for America in the future.

Works Cited

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