

BALTIMORE PLATFORMS—SLAVERY QUESTION.

SPEECH OF HON. JOSHUA R. GIDDINGS, OF OHIO,

In the House of Representatives, June 23, 1852.

The House being in the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union on the Deficiency Bill—

Mr. GIDDINGS said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN. The two great political parties of the nation have held their Conventions. From all parts of these United States delegates have assembled, deliberated upon their platform of principles, avowed their doctrines, nominated their candidates for President and Vice President, and now have entered upon the Presidential campaign. Preparatory to this state of things many speeches were made here, to which the Free Democrats, the advocates of Liberty, listened with commendable attention. And now, Mr. Chairman, I rise to occupy a brief hour in vindicating the position of the party to which I am attached. Often, during the last six months, the question has been propounded to me, whether we should vote for the candidates of the Whig or the Democratic party? This question, so far as I am concerned, will probably be answered satisfactorily before I take my seat.

It is not my purpose to examine very critically the principles of those parties. It may be sufficient for me to remark that they agree as to the policy which ought to control our Government. The Democrats first avowed their doctrines. Their confession of political faith having been two weeks before the public, and being read and duly considered before the assembling of the Whig Convention, that body took issue upon none of the doctrines avowed, nor upon the policy maintained by the Democrats.

I notice in some papers much is said in relation to "internal improvements." The Democrats say "the Constitution does not confer upon the General Government power to commence and carry on a system of internal improvements." Do the Whigs take issue on this general and unmeaning assertion? Not at all. They answer, "the Constitution vests in Congress power to open and improve harbors, remove obstructions in navigable rivers, &c., said improvements being in every instance national and general in their character." Now, sir, no Democrat ever did or ever will deny this doctrine. So, too, the Democrats make assertions

about "fostering one branch of industry to the detriment of another;" and the Whigs refuse the issue thus tendered, but, in answer, assert doctrines which no Democrat denies. The Democrats attempt to galvanize into existence the obsolete idea of a National Bank, to which the Whigs make no reply, admitting by their silence the Democratic faith. Neither advances a principle which is denied by the other: they stand on the record in perfect harmony. And no other contest exists than a strife for office, for place and power; for the spoils, the loaves and fishes.

This is the first time, for many years, that these parties have each put forth an avowal of their doctrines. In the change of times, and the ordinary course of events, they now find themselves in perfect harmony with each other. The day of their contention and disagreement has passed away. The issues which once really existed between them have become obsolete, or have been given up. Their usefulness is at an end, and their history will soon be written. The increase of intelligence, the improvements of the age, demand new organizations and new parties. For years, the old parties have intermingled constantly, and no influence has been able to keep them separate. Here, and throughout the country, some Whigs act with the Democratic party, and some Democrats act with the Whig party. For the last four years there has been no matter of legislation before this body, on which the members have arrayed themselves according to their party character. On every question, a portion of Whigs have acted with the Democrats, and a portion of Democrats have acted with the Whigs. Indeed, say those who have watched the proceedings here for the past few years, could not fail to see that slavery constitutes the only question of interest before us.

Notwithstanding the Whigs and Democrats are acting in perfect harmony with each other, they have united in tendering to the friends of Liberty important issues. One of those issues is so extraordinary, that it demands my first attention. The proposition is to stifle all further examination of chattel slavery, and is expressed by the Democrats in the following language:

"Resolved, That the Democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing, in Congress or out of it, the agitation of the slavery question, under whatever shape or color the attempt may be made."

The Whigs resolved—

"That * * * we will discountenance all efforts to continue or renew such agitation, whenever, wherever, and however made."

We, sir, the Free Democracy, will agitate the subject of slavery and its correlative freedom. Here, sir, is an issue formed between us. I, sir, am about to agitate this question. I intend to speak plainly of slavery, of its most revolting features. I will endeavor to use no offensive language, but I will talk of the practice followed by men in this District, of purchasing slave women, and then selling their own children into bondage. Now, when I do this, the Democrats are bound to resist, and the Whigs to discountenance, my efforts. In order that we may start with a perfect understanding of this conflict. I desire to understand the manner in which the Democrats will manifest their resistance? I am now agitating this subject, and what will you do about it?

Now, I hope gentlemen will not feel any particular delicacy in showing their resistance. Don't be alarmed, gentlemen; just stand up here and now before the country; show your resistance. Be not afraid, gentlemen—I am less than the stripling of Israel, who went forth to meet Goliath. You stand pledged to resist God's truth—to silence the tongues of freemen. I meet you, and hurl defiance at you, and your infamous attempts to stifle the freedom of speech. And now, who speaks for the carrying out of this resolution?

Mr. Chairman, we may "call spirits from the vasty deep," but they will not come.

I repeat to the Democrats: I want to know what you are going to do? You are bound to resist.

The Whigs, in their Convention, also resolved that they "will discountenance all efforts to continue or renew such agitation, whenever, wherever, and however the attempt made be made." The language of this resolution differs from that of the Democracy, but its spirit and object are the same. They intend to suppress the freedom of speech here and among the people. On this point the two great parties of the nation have cordially united. A coalition for a more odious purpose could not have been formed. Duty to myself, to this body, and the country, demands an exposure of this conspiracy against the Constitution, against the rights of members here, against the people.

Mr. Chairman, is it contemplated to silence the popular voice in this Hall? If that be not the case, these resolutions mean nothing. They are mere "*brutum fulmen*," made for show, to frighten men of weak nerves. They may do very well among doughfaces; but when those parties attempt to frighten Free-Soilers, they should better understand their opponents.

The Constitution has provided "that Congress shall pass no law abridging the freedom of speech." That Constitution we have sworn to support, and by the blood of our ancestors we will maintain it. Slaveholders and doughfaces, Whigs and Democrats, may combine to trample that sacred instrument under their feet, by suppressing the free-

dom of speech; but, sir, they have not the moral power to effect that object.

Agitation or discussion is not only to be put down here, but among the people; they are to have no more Anti-Slavery meetings; no more Free Soil Conventions; no more sermons in favor of God's law; no more prayers to Heaven for the oppressed of our land; the Declaration of Independence is to be burned; our printing establishment broken up, and our social circles are to speak no more of the rights of all men to enjoy life and liberty. A new political police is to be established, and the American people placed under slaveholding surveillance. Our literary writers are to be driven into exile. But I am paying undeserved attention to these base, these puerile attempts to stifle discussion on the subject of humanity. I hold these resolutions in unutterable contempt. I trample them under my feet.

And here I will leave this ridiculous attempt to ape the despotisms of Europe, by stifling discussion upon the absorbing question of Liberty.

I will now proceed to examine the reasons why these resolutions were adopted.

Why should these parties in their National Conventions take Congress, the Constitution, and people, under their control, and command universal silence upon certain measures? Evidently because investigation and discussion would endanger the future success of their organizations. The very proposition shows that they have no confidence in the people. The man or party who strives to silence discussion, to shut out truth, admits that he is in error. No man, or party, who feels that he is right, hesitates to let the whole truth be known. He feels that he will be vindicated by the development of truth, and his honor will be sustained.

But why should the Whigs and Democrats unite to keep the truth from the public eye, in regard to the Compromise measures? Why, sir, the first of those measures was that establishing Territorial Government in Utah, admitting slavery and the slave trade to be established there, on soil consecrated to freedom by Mexican laws. I well know the people were told that slavery could not go there, as it was excluded by the laws of God. Well, sir, official documents now show that assertion to have been a gigantic falsehood. The census returns show that slavery exists there; that man is there held in bondage, lashed into subjection by his fellow-man; women are sold like swine in the market, and children made subjects of barter. Now, sir, we Free Democrats insist that slavery and the slave trade should be excluded from that Territory. The motto of our party is, "*No slave territory*." We do not believe it right thus to deal in God's image. But this law which permits these outrages, the Whigs and Democrats say, is a final settlement; that these practices may continue in all coming time. But they dare not go before the people admitting this truth; nor dare they deny these facts. To avoid this unpleasant question, they resolve to resist every attempt to speak or write upon it. Their only way of escaping from popular odium is to keep truth from the people. Now, sir, does any Democrat or any Whig believe that Free-Soilers

will vote for any candidate pledged to sustain those revolting practices? If any one who ever held a place in the Free Democracy shall cast such a vote, it will be some other man than myself.

Again, Mr. Chairman, the last Congress provided, by the law aforesaid, that one or more States may be admitted from said Territory, with or without slavery. They were unwilling that the members of the next or any future Congress should judge for themselves, whenever Utah shall ask admission into the Union; and they have made this foolish attempt to dictate the action of this body in future ages. Well, the provision is, that an indefinite number of slave States may be admitted. Of course, their political power, under the Constitution, will be in proportion to their slaves. The man in Utah, who buys a slave woman, and raises four bastard children, and holds them as *property*, adds as much to the political power of that State as four of those educated and intelligent Democrats who sit before me add to the political influence of a free State. Now, sir, we, the Free Democracy, are unqualifiedly opposed to this insult to Northern dignity. We do not believe that the man who thus sets at defiance God's law, and tramples upon decency, is any better than an educated, intelligent Northern freeman. But, sir, Whigs and Democrats say that this disgraceful inequality shall be allowed to the people of Utah and maintained. They know that public indignation would be kindled against every man who would thus degrade the people of the North. Our freemen would hurl from place and power such men, if the facts were known to them. They therefore seek to smother the truth; to keep the people in ignorance; and resolve to *resist* agitation, to *discountenance* discussion. They pledge their candidates to carry out this disgraceful combination against liberty and the rights and honor of the free States, and then turn round and ask honest men, those who possess self-respect, to vote for their own disgrace. Sir, Free-Soilers, men of intelligence, will not thus stultify themselves.

The same law, or a law with similar provisions, was enacted in relation to New Mexico. The people of that Territory may, if they please, enter into this speculation in human flesh. They may curse that land with human bondage. Whigs and Democrats say that this law shall be a *final* settlement of that subject; that slavery and the slave trade shall not be excluded; and the Democrats are to *resist*, and the Whigs are to *discountenance* all discussion in relation to it.

One or more slave States are to be admitted from New Mexico, upon the same terms of degrading inequality to the free States as those from Utah, and Northern men are to submit without discussion. Agitation would, in the words of the Whig resolution, endanger the peace of the Whig party. They say they therefore deprecate agitation. Well, sir, the proper meaning of the verb "to deprecate" is to "pray against;" and the Whigs will therefore pray against agitation, as it will endanger their peace. Such prayers would simply be "*an abomination*;" they would do no other hurt. And as for the peace of the Whig

party, I should far rather see it endangered than to see one child sold from its parents, or one woman flogged, or one man degraded.

The motto of Free-Soilers is, "NO MORE SLAVE STATES." This is our unyielding, determined position. We wage an exterminating warfare against every man and every party who would extend the curse of human servitude, or increase the slave power in any degree. The Democratic party and the Whig party unite in the extension of slavery and of the slave power, and then ask the friends of Liberty to vote with them! *I shall not do it.*

Another measure of the last Congress was a law entitled "An act to abolish the slave trade in the District of Columbia." A flagrant falsehood was sent to the people in this title; for the law itself does not profess to abolish the slave trade in this District, and only excludes from this market the slave-breeders of Maryland and Virginia, leaving the sale of men, women, and children, to continue here. And this commerce in the image of God is to go on and continue forever. The Whigs say it shall not be disturbed, and the Democrats say they too will protect it. These parties have taken position between us and the slave-dealers, and say we shall not discuss the morality of their vocation; indeed, they assert that we shall not agitate the cause of freedom.

You, sir, lately saw an advertisement in the leading Whig paper of this District, in these words: "*For sale, a handsome and accomplished lady's maid, aged just sixteen years.*" Except in this city and New Zealand, I do not think any Government within the bounds of civilization would have permitted such an outrage upon decency. I speak of New Zealand without intending any disrespect to the people of that island by comparing their habits with ours. They buy men and women for food only. The object is far more honorable and Christian-like than that for which the young women of this city are advertised and sold.

Mr. Chairman, Gen. Scott and Gen. Pierce are both pledged to maintain this traffic in the bodies of women, and the advocates of Liberty are asked to aid in electing them. Sir, let those parties revel in such moral and political wickedness; let them pledge themselves and their candidates to perpetrate crimes revolting to humanity; but I beseech them not to insult honest men, philanthropists, and Christians, by asking them to participate in such transcendent iniquity.

Another of the Compromise measures is the Fugitive Slave Law. Of the character of this law I have spoken on former occasions. Of its unconstitutionality, I think no unprejudiced mind can doubt, who listened to the speech of the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. RANTOUL.] Of the crimes committed under this law; of the enormities of sending free men into slavery, under color of this law; of the barbarous and savage character of the agents selected by this Administration to carry it out, I have no time to speak. I noticed in the address of a clergyman, lately delivered before the Home Missionary Society, a statement that the reverend speaker was in the central parts of Russia during last summer; that an intelligent nobleman taunted him with the

character of this Fugitive Law, saying: "You can find nothing in the legal code of Russia, nor in the decrees of her Emperors, equal to that barbarous law." No, sir; I do not believe that any despot of Russia, or of Austria, was ever guilty of putting forth so barbarous a law; yet the Democratic party and the Whig party tell us that this law shall remain as a final settlement of this subject. The Whig party, it is true, reserve to themselves the right of making it more barbarous. But it is to remain a law and continue in force while time shall last. Yes, when the "archangel shall descend from heaven with a rainbow upon his head, and placing one foot upon the earth and the other upon the sea, shall swear by Him who liveth forever and ever, that TIME SHALL BE NO LONGER," the dread summons shall find the people of Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, upon the "qui vive," hunting for slave mothers, who have fled from all else they hold dear in life, in order to enjoy liberty. There, Whigs and Democrats will be found supporting this law; and when they shall close their eyes upon terrestrial objects, they will be listening to the baying of bloodhounds, the clanking of chains, and shrieks of slaves, the roar of muskets, the dying groans of slave-catchers, and their wounded associates, the bloodhounds; the last death-sighs of murdered fugitives will all rise from this earth, and mingle with the archangel's voice, as he shall summon us all to the bar of final retribution. I would speak of the future with solemnity; but if men are to carry with them into the coming world their leading traits of character, as some hold, it would seem that their residence in the spirit land will be made vocal with the sighs, and groans, and shrieks, of associated beings.

But both parties and their candidates are pledged to maintain this infamous law. And they will "resist" and "discountenance" all agitation in regard to it, "in Congress or out of it." The policy of silencing discussion upon it must be apparent to every man. The slaveholders demanded the passage of this law, Northern doughfaces submitted; some voted for it; others fled the Hall. They then knew it would be death to the measure, and political obliteration to themselves, to discuss it; and therefore voted against its discussion, against all agitation, and a minority of this body actually passed it under the previous question; and now Whigs and Democrats say it never shall be discussed. That, when our people of the North see a fellow-being seized, chained, dragged into slavery, and sold and flogged, they shall say nothing about it, here or elsewhere. That they shall look upon the murdered corpses of fugitives shot down by the agents of Government, and may moan over their barbarity, but they must not discuss, they must not agitate the repeal of this law. Well, sir, I assure them the people will discuss these things.

But it is said, through the Whig press, that we cannot repeal this law. I saw this morning an article, in some respects an able article, denouncing this law, in a Whig paper, professedly Anti-Slavery. The editor, however, admitted that the law would not be repealed, perhaps, for twenty years. Sir, the admission shows the author to be unconscious of the people's power.

It is this miserable, cowardly submission to the slave interest, which has degraded Northern men. Let the people send to this body forty members, whose hearts are devoted to freedom, who have confidence in the power of truth, and this law will be repealed in six weeks. It will be swept from our statute book, and curses deep and loud will rest upon its authors.

The editor to whom I alluded proposes that we shall contribute from the National funds to pay for fugitives. I could have forgiven the editor for almost any other political offence. What, sir? Are the descendants of the Pilgrims, of those who bled at Bunker's Hill, and on every battle field of the Revolution, rather than pay a paltry tax on tea and on stamped paper, are we supinely to become tributary to Southern task-masters? When the barbarians of Algiers seized and enslaved our people, we sent an armed force there and slew them, holding them unworthy of a place upon God's footstool. No, sir; by all the hallowed associations which cluster around the memory of English and American patriots, I avow that I would sooner see every slaveholder of the nation hanged, than to witness the subjugation of Northern freemen to such a humiliating condition. No, sir; when it comes to that, I, for one, shall be prepared for the *dernier* resort—an appeal to the God of battles. I am a man of peace, but am no non-resistant, and I would sooner the ashes of my hearth-stone should be slaked in my own blood, and the blood of my children, than submit to such degradation. And here I will take occasion to say, that if this law remains in force, civil war is inevitable. The people will not submit to it. Why, sir, civil war already exists. At Christiana, civil war, with all its circumstance of force, under color of law—resistance in defence of natural right—bloodshed and death took place. In my own State a similar transaction occurred; and I assure gentlemen that other instances will occur, if attempts be made to enforce that law. In my own district are many fugitives who have informed their masters where they may be found. These men have become desperate. They desire to see the slave-catchers. They pant for an opportunity to make their oppressors "bite the dust." Sir, send on your commissioners and deputy marshals and bloodhounds, and I assure you that a civil war will soon be in active progress.

Gentlemen talk of enforcing this law. *It cannot be done.* The people have already passed sentence upon it and upon its authors; and that sentence will be speedily executed. Nor can you stop agitation in regard to it.

Agitation, discussion, and examination, are the agents—the instruments—for carrying forward all reforms. The Saviour of man spoke truths boldly. They fell harshly upon the ears of scribes, pharisees, and hypocrites. They denounced him as an agitator; seized, tried, condemned, and crucified him as an agitator. From that day to the present, every man who has boldly avowed truths unwelcome to the ears of despots, tyrants, and the oppressors of our race, have been denounced as agitators. Jefferson, in the Declaration of American Independence; Samuel Adams, in the Continental Congress; Washing-

ton, on the battle-field, were "*distinguished agitators*;" John Quincy Adams, while in this Hall, for years maintained and defended with inimitable powers the right of petition, and was denounced throughout the country as an agitator. He was arraigned at the bar of this House, and tried as an agitator. Every member of this body who defends the rights of the people, is denounced as an agitator. To me these epithets have lost their terrors.

For hundreds and for thousands of years the instruction and elevation of mankind has been carried forward by agitation. By means of it, tyrants and despots have been driven from power, and popular rights have been extorted from barbarous rulers. Without agitation, no people ever gained their rights, or retained them after they had been extorted from their oppressors. Now, suddenly, to prevent the progress of Liberty, Whigs and Democrats unite to suppress this element in all reforms. They declare that discussion shall cease, and the slave trade and slavery shall continue forever, and the Fugitive Law shall be rendered perpetual.

Mr. Chairman, well do I recollect the evening after these laws had been passed. I then viewed them in all their horrors. I saw the degradation to which the people of the free States were subjected—the crimes which we had authorized. My heart sunk within me, as I contemplated the public men who had aimed this blow at Liberty.

But, sir, on yonder avenue I heard the songs of drunken revelry and the insane shout; bonfires lighted up the heavens, and the thunder of cannon told the immoderate joy of slaveholders, slave-breeders, doughfaces, and dealers in human flesh. Their gratitude naturally flowed out to those most instrumental in the passage of these laws to which I have alluded, called the Compromise and Fugitive Law. In the fullness of their hearts and stomachs they repaired to the dwelling of the Secretary of State, and called on him for a speech. He readily complied, commencing his congratulations, by saying: "Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer." He then informed the motley crew around him, that this question of slavery was settled, and that they were no more to be troubled with agitation.

Sir, from that day up to the close of the Baltimore Convention, he wrote letters and made speeches declaring and avowing that agitation had ceased; assuring the country in substance that the slave trade in this District and in our Territories would go on undisturbed. That oppression here and in the Territories now had nothing to fear. The whole energies of the Government were put forth to enforce the Fugitive Law; but they generally proved abortive. Every possible exertion was made in Boston and Philadelphia to convict those charged with obstructing its execution; but all failed. The blood of Gorsuch, a piratical slave-catcher, who fell at Christiana, is unavenged, in spite of the public treasure and Executive influence put forth to obtain a conviction of those who righteously slew him. The patriots who assisted Shadrach to escape the fangs of the Boston bloodhounds, yet laugh to scorn your infamous law. At Syracuse,

at Rochester, and a hundred other places, the friends of Liberty rejoice at the impotency of this law, although it has thus far been backed up by Executive power. These defeats of the Executive, and of this enactment libellously called a *law*, have resulted from *agitation*; and well may slave-catchers and doughfaces now seek to stifle discussion, to silence the people.

Sir, while these things were going forward, the Secretary of State was looking for and expecting a return for the services he had rendered the slave power. The Presidential chair and White House was looked to as the reward for his treason to God and humanity. But there again agitation had done its work: All reflecting men knew that he could receive in the whole Union scarcely twenty electoral votes. And when the Baltimore Convention passed upon his claims, not a Southern vote was cast for him. Chagrined, mortified, and discontented, he will soon retire, and history will record the *truth* concerning him and us. But, sir, I will not aggravate the chills of political death, nor call up to mind the sins which must "sit heavy on his soul," when a darker night shall close around him.

Agitation has brought to the scaffold another conspicuous victim. The President of these United States lent his whole influence to the promotion of those Compromise measures to which I have alluded. His devotion to the slave power has been openly and boldly avowed. Steadily and basely has he prostituted the influence and power of his office, to the purpose of supporting slavery, oppression, and crime. At the Baltimore Convention, the slaveholders, I believe, were unanimously in his favor. But Northern delegates dared not support him. Agitation had informed the people of his having deserted their cause, and gone over to the enemies of Freedom. The popular voice of the North had pronounced his doom; he was cast aside; the political grave yawns for him; and on the 3d of March he will be laid in it. Were I to write the epitaphs of these men, I would inscribe upon their tombs, "KILLED BY AGITATION." Think you not that these men and their party have cause for their hostility to discussion—to the dissemination of truth?

The Democrats, also, have cause for opposing agitation. Their ablest, their most experienced statesmen have fallen victims to it. Gen. Cass, the man who of all their candidates I deemed best qualified for the Presidency, in an evil hour signed a letter pledging himself to these Compromise measures. It proved his political death-warrant, when, too late, he found that the people of the North would sustain no man who had thus pledged his influence of office to measures which the popular voice has condemned as *barbarous*, as disgraceful to our nation. At the Baltimore Convention his friends bore him to his political grave; and

"Not a drum was heard, nor a funeral note," as they quietly deposited his remains in their final resting-place. Such, too, was the fate of Pennsylvania's favorite statesman. He had long been anxious to serve the slave interest. He pledged himself in the most unqualified manner to maintain these laws as a perpetual settlement of the

slave question. But he, too, was cast aside at an advanced age, when he can look for no further preferment. *These men all died of "eating Southern dirt."*

Circumstances appear to render it indelicate for me to speak of other candidates of the Democratic party. Yet I would remind them all of the fate which must await those public men who prove false to liberty and humanity.* I assure them and the country that agitation will continue and increase until the people of the free States shall be relieved from all participation in the disgrace and crimes of slavery.

But this opposition to freedom, so dominant in the Whig and Democratic parties, led to the organization of the friends of Liberty into a separate political party in 1848. The extraordinary circumstances which then surrounded the advocates of freedom called together a mighty host. On the memorable ninth of August, of that year, fifty thousand freemen met in solemn convocation. There were men of distinction, men of intellect, statesmen, and philanthropists. They were conscious of the responsibility resting upon them. In framing a confession of their political faith, they laid its foundations upon the enduring, eternal principles of justice. The equal right of all men to enjoy life, liberty, and happiness, constitutes the basis of our creed; and the next article asserts "That Governments are constituted among men to *secure these rights.*" All our action under the Constitution should be to protect the life and liberty of every human being within our exclusive jurisdiction. That our legislative powers in this District, on the high seas, in our Territories, should be exerted to secure every being who bears God's image, in his right to life and liberty, instead of establishing and sustaining oppression and slavery. Here, sir, at this point, an issue between us and the other parties, deep and broad, is presented. And from this position the friends of humanity will never depart.

It is an important fact, that neither the Whig nor the Democratic party profess to pay any respect or attention to moral principles in their legislation. By their practice they deny the responsibility of human action, so far as politics are concerned. They hold that members of this body may pass laws which deprive our fellow-men of life or liberty, and that those who enact such laws are not morally guilty of enslaving or murdering their fellow-men. We, sir, hold that those who enacted the Fugitive Slave Law are as guilty in the sight of God and good men as they would be were they themselves to seize a white man, place irons upon his limbs, and send him to slavery without law. In such crimes, we, the advocates of freedom, will not participate. One of our resolutions adopted at Buffalo was in these words:

"Resolved, That it is the duty of the Federal Government to relieve itself from all responsibility for the existence or continuance of slavery, wherever it possesses constitutional authority to legislate on that subject."

This resolution is in direct and unqualified conflict with the entire policy of the Whig and Democratic parties relative to slavery. It is in

* Senators Houston and Douglas, who had been candidates for nomination, were present, listening to this speech.

conflict with the platforms of those parties, to which I have called attention. Basing our whole political action upon the plainest principles of justice, liberty, and humanity, we challenge examination, discussion, *agitation.* We seek to cover up nothing, to keep nothing from the popular ear. The more you examine and discuss our doctrines and policy, the better are we pleased.

We, sir, would drive the slave question from discussion in this Hall. It never had a constitutional existence here. Separate this Government from all interference with slavery; let the Federal power wash its hands of that institution; let us purify ourselves from its contagion; leave it with the States, who alone have the power to sustain it—then, sir, will agitation cease in regard to it here; then we shall have nothing to do with it, our time will no more be occupied with it; and, like a band of freemen, a band of brothers, we could meet here, legislate for the prosperity, the improvement of mankind, for the elevation of our race.

Mr. Chairman, I have served in this Hall some fifteen years. During that period, I think at least two-thirds of the time of this body has been occupied by the subject of slavery, and other matters connected with that institution. For the last three years we can scarcely be said to have done anything else but discuss and legislate for slavery. This, sir, is all wrong. Slavery is a local institution, existing only in a portion of the States. The attempt to nationalize it is unwarranted and unconstitutional. To do this is now the object of both the Whig and Democratic parties. Against these attempts, we, the Free Democracy, wage unceasing, undying, unyielding hostility. This war we shall never give up. We shall never lay aside our arms until victory shall crown our efforts—until this Government shall be redeemed and disenthralled from the foul stain of chattel slavery. Against oppression, in all its forms and in all places, we have sworn eternal hostility. Our sympathy for suffering humanity is broad as creation, reaching to all climes, and embracing all who bear the image of our Creator. To persecuted Hungary we tender the assurance that "we feel for those in bonds as bound with them." On this subject the Democrats have spoken oracularly.

The Whigs talk about "entangling alliances and standing on foreign soil;" but they dare not take distinct issue on the propriety of exerting our moral power, our political influence, to maintain the law of nations. Substantially, both Whigs and Democrats are opposed to us on this subject. They would permit Russia or Austria to swallow up Hungary, without any protest or expression of our disapprobation. We sympathize with the oppressed of all nations; and we, the Free Democracy, literally constitute the party of progress. At Buffalo we adopted the policy of "*cheap postage for the people;*" and inscribed it upon our banner, and unfurled it to the breeze. We foresaw the advantages of increasing the facilities of communication among the masses, and determined to confer upon our country these benefits, while Whigs and Democrats were too timid to take a position either for or against it.

I am aware that we are often charged with

being men of one idea—indeed, we are sometimes called the *party* of one idea—and I refer to these facts to vindicate ourselves from that charge. We dared go where neither of those parties were willing to follow us, nor to oppose us; and in less than three years the correctness of our position has been acknowledged before the country.

“Lands for the poor, homes for the destitute,” free of expense to all who will immigrate to the West, was another article in our political creed. To this policy, neither the Whig nor Democratic party dared express their consent; nor dared they oppose it. At this session, a bill, carrying out our views on this subject, passed this body by a vote of nearly two to one. The Senate will doubtless comply with the popular will of the nation, by passing this measure of benevolence, which will cause thousands of hearts to swell with gratitude and joy. Sir, the Free Democracy believe that Governments were constituted to protect, elevate, and render our race, our whole race, more happy. That it is our duty as statesmen, as philanthropists, as Christians, so far as we have constitutional power, “to raise up the bowed down,” “to exalt the humble,” “to inform the ignorant,” “to comfort the distressed,” and increase the prosperity and happiness of all who come within the sphere of our political, our moral, or our religious influence. Of course, we are hostile to those Compromise measures which the Whigs and Democrats are pledged to sustain.

In 1848, nearly three hundred thousand free-men cast their votes for our Presidential candidate. Since that period, our moral and political power has greatly increased. Probably one-third of the members on this floor are indebted to men who sympathize with us for their seats, and many were elected solely and entirely upon our principles. Three members of the Senate were elected as Free Democrats, while others are partially indebted to the votes of the Free Democracy. In several State Legislatures we hold the balance of power; but this is but little evidence of the rapidity with which our principles are extending. Our progress is marked by the change of feeling towards our doctrines in both the other parties; their hostility is diminishing daily; they are becoming acquainted with our views, and, of course, respect our motives. In all elections now, throughout most of the free States, candidates are selected whose doctrines and principles are not obnoxious to us. The cloud which, in 1848, was like unto a man's hand in size, has now overspread the whole North, and will soon extend over the nation, and finally over the world. But it is said that those friends in the State of New York, who came from the Democratic party, have returned to it. I deeply feel and deplore this fact. I loved and honored them—I still respect them; but I must say that, in my judgment, they have erred in departing from us. I, however, will not judge them—to their own masters they stand or fall. Had they continued with us, there is, in my opinion, no doubt that we should, in November next, have effected the election of a President favorable to our views. That they are friends of Liberty, I know; that they will sustain the doctrines laid down in the Democratic confession of faith, or

vote for Pierce and King under the circumstances attending their nomination, I do not believe. The members of our party, generally, entered upon an organization with a deep feeling and conviction that such an organization was necessary. Time and experience has confirmed us in that opinion. I have stated the basis of our doctrines; they are permanent, *eternal* as God himself. While standing on those principles, we *cannot be wrong*. The political and moral regeneration of our country, the entire reformation of this Government from its practice of sustaining oppression, slavery, and crime, is our object. To effect this great and holy purpose, must require time and perseverance. In what I have said and done on these questions, I have but reflected the sentiments and feelings of those I represent—indeed, among them are many, very many, “older and *better* soldiers” than myself. That people, sir, will stand firmly, steadfast, and immovable, upon the doctrines and the organization which they have adopted.

I am aware of the arguments so often used to persuade Free-Soilers to vote for this or that man, for this or that party, in order to gain some supposed temporary advantage. But, sir, we organized for the maintenance of doctrines important not merely to the people of a township, a county, or a State, but to *man* wherever he is found—important not merely to-day, at this election, or next year, but *in all coming time*. Can we leave such a position, to unite with either of the other parties, in order to elect this or that man to office, while he stands pledged to maintain slavery and the slave trade in this District and in our Territories—to continue the infamous Fugitive Law—to uphold and support all these measures as a *final* settlement of the subjects to which they refer, and to discountenance all examination, discussion, or agitation, as to the propriety of these measures? Sir, were we to unite with either party to elect a President thus pledged, we should lose our own self-respect—we should lose the respect and confidence of the world. Politically, sir, we are “a city set upon an hill, which cannot be hid.” Throughout the country our influence is felt. In this Hall we wield a moral power far beyond our numbers. Let no man charge me with indelicacy when I assert that the Free-Soilers of this body exert all the influence to which their numbers entitle them. Whigs and Democrats have confidence that we shall in all cases be guided by judgment, by reason, and justice, and not by the paltry considerations of *party*.

The effect has been most salutary. Ten years since, no man here dared separate from his party. No matter what was the subject or his own judgment, every member was compelled to fall into line and vote with his party leaders. Free-Soilers have set an example here of independence. The commencement of our trials on this subject was severe. We were frowned upon, vilified, and denounced; but thank God we had the firmness to bide our time, and now for years many Whigs and Democrats have followed our example, and dared to vote as their judgments and consciences dictate. In short, sir, here party lines upon most subjects of legislation have become obliterated. This of itself constitutes a great reform.

At Baltimore, a portion of the Whig party con-
 ceded manfully against committing themselves to
 the outrages and crimes of the Fugitive Law and
 Compromise measures. In that respect they did
 more than the Democrats. My sympathies and the
 sympathies of our party and of all good men were
 with them.

And had the Anti-Slavery Whigs in this House
 and the Senate promptly and energetically met
 the supercilious pretensions of the slave power
 with decision and firmness, I have little doubt
 they would have inspired a feeling at Baltimore
 which would have repudiated a platform that has
 stamped indelible disgrace upon their party. In
 this Hall, the Democrats have sustained the con-
 stitutional rights of the free States more ably and
 faithfully than the Whigs have during the pres-
 ent session.

But I am aware that a strong effort is making
 to induce our Free Democracy to sustain the
 Whig candidate at the coming election. With
 the gentleman nominated I have long been ac-
 quainted. To him nor to the Democratic nominee
 have I any personal objection; but if elected, he
 is pledged to maintain the outrages, the revolting
 crimes, pertaining to the Compromise measures
 and Fugitive Slave Law, to which I have called
 attention—to render them perpetual, so far as he
 may be able—to prevent all discussion relating to
 them. To vote for him is to vote for this policy—
 to identify ourselves in favor of the avowed doc-
 trines which he is pledged to support—to give
 proof by our votes that we approve the platform
 on which he stands. But, sir, why vote for Scott
 in preference to Pierce?

The doctrines of the Whig party, as I have
 shown, pledge them and their candidate to main-
 tain slavery; the breeding of slaves for market;
 the sale of women in this District and in the Ter-
 ritories; to uphold the Fugitive Law in all com-
 ing time; to admit as many slave States as shall
 apply from New Mexico and Utah, and to silence
 discussion on all these subjects. This is as far, I
 think, as human depravity can go. If the Demo-
 cratic party has dived deeper into moral and po-
 litical putridity, some archangel fallen must have
 penned their confession of faith. If there be
 such a distinction, it can only be discovered by a
 refinement of casuistry too intricate for honest
 minds to exert. Sir, suppose there were a shade
 of distinction in the depths of depravity to which
 these parties have descended, does it become
*men—free men—men of moral principle, of politi-
 cal integrity—to be straining their visions and
 using intellectual microscopes to discover that
 shade of moral darkness? No, sir; let every man
 who feels that he has a country to save, a charac-
 ter to sustain—that he owes a duty to mankind
 and to God—come forward at once, and wage a
 bold and exterminating war against these doc-
 trines, so abhorrent to freedom and humanity.*

But it is said that the Democratic party, if de-
 feated again by the Anti-Slavery sentiment as
 they were in 1848, will disband, and the masses
 will then unite with us in support of justice,
 truth, and liberty. The defeat of the Democratic
 party might disband them, and it might not.
 There is no certainty on that point. If we were

to unite with the Whigs, we might or we might
 not defeat the Democrats. If we were to try the
 experiment and fail, Whigs and Democrats would
 despise us. We should despise ourselves. If we
 should succeed, we should become identified with
 the Whig party, and swallowed up by it. In
 every aspect in which I can view such a policy,
 we must lose the moral power which we possess.
 Standing upon elevated principles—professing,
 avowing, and proclaiming, the political gospel
 which we present to the people—we cannot de-
 scend to mingle in such a contest without a sacri-
 fice of that moral and political influence which
 now commands the respect of all honest men, and
 of our own consciences.

Mr. Chairman, I know not the course which
 the people whom I represent will pursue. From
 the past only can I judge of their future action.
 A residence of half a century among them has
 given me some knowledge of their character.
 Their past action on this subject is "known and
 read of all men."

The people do their own thinking and their
 own voting. They know their rights, and will
 maintain them so far as moral and political action
 on their part will do it. They are at all times
 prepared to discharge their duty. Sir, in 1848,
 there was more political effort made to induce our
 friends there to vote for the present Executive,
 than was ever put forth on any other occasion.
 Distinguished gentlemen from other States, of
 great ability, and of Anti-Slavery sentiments,
 were imported, to show the propriety of voting
 for men who feared to speak in favor of free prin-
 ciples. But those efforts failed, and few men can
 now be found who will admit that they ever cast
 a vote for the present Executive—a man who has
 prostituted the power of his office to the support
 of slavery and crime. Now they are to be called
 on to vote for men openly pledged and committed
 to the work of eternizing slavery and the slave
 trade, and the Fugitive Law. I will leave the
 Free Democracy of the Reserve to speak for
 themselves. They have always done that.

Sir, we are in the midst of a revolution. The
 two great parties are striving to convert this free
 Government into a slaveholding, a slave-breeding
 Republic. Those powers which were delegated
 to secure liberty are now exerted to overthrow
 freedom and the Constitution. It becomes every
 patriot, every lover of freedom, every Christian,
 every man, to stand forth in defence of popular
 rights, in defence of the rights of the free States,
 of the institutions under which we live, in defence
 of our national character.

Sir, I am getting old—the infirmities of age are
 coming upon me. I must soon leave the scenes
 with which I am surrounded. It is uncertain
 whether I shall again address this body; but one
 thing I ask, that friends and foes, here and else-
 where, in this and in coming time, shall under-
 stand, that whether in public or in private life,
 by the wayside or the fireside, in life or in death,
 I oppose, denounce, and repudiate, the efforts now
 put forth to involve the people of the free States
 in the support of slavery, of the slave trade, and
 their attendant crimes.