

TN DAVIS Speech on Secession May 1860
(~~to~~ typed copy)

Mr Chrman _____:-

I am called upon, to represent in part, the neg. side of this question; it is an aspect of it which coincides with my faith, aside from the mere accident of appointment.

I am aware of the wrongs of the South by the North; of the many years she has stood under the lash of injustice and oppression wielded by men of both parties for political purposes [^]the spoils of office.

I do profess to be a true son of what one of the W has styled "The Chivalrous South" and if there has gone out from the North wrong against us of the S., it is not from the hearts of the people, but only from aspiring politicians who have so misrepresented and inflamed their minds against our institutions, until they have raised up ^{an} avowed sectional party, whose doctrines if carried out would be inimical to the happy, peaceful and beneficial existence of domestic slavery--sirs this party is the direct result of placing in the honored seats of a Webster, an Everett, a Choate such men as Wilson, Sumner and Burlinghame and the indirect result of keeping such men in power as the ingenious trickster Ste. A Douglas of Ill. Under these circumstances it is natural that the people of the S. and especially the young men, should respond to the startling cry of "Disunion" when the final act of B. Republicanism is perpetrated, and mark me when I say "final act," for I do believe and will attempt to show (as a _____ who of the S. who holds all the elements of the union of these states, should not secede from that union) that the triumph of B. Rism, in 1860 will be their last.

I am aware that you are liable to be orthodox on the subject of disunion, keeping in view the many interferences with our interests; the trampling upon our feelings as men; -- our political rights; -- the violation and annulment of our laws of protection respecting the masters and slaves and last, _____ representative minority. But Mr. C. _____ let us look for a moment at the ground root of the question.

25 yrs. ago the holders of anti-slavery opinions at the North were "few and far between"; they were looked upon as a set men common to all communities who will not run smoothly with the ^{main} tide of life, but attempt to clog its flow with their excentricities--at a later period

they were taken up by selfish unsuccessful politicians, who in a short time, as their number increased made them party principles. A state of things like this was prophesied by Pres. Jackson in his farewell address when he said: -- "Mutual suspicions and reproaches may in time, create mutual hostility, and artful and designing men will be always found who are ready to forment these fatal divisions and to inflame the natural jealousies of different sections of the country." Now it is a little curious that the very men who caused these mutual suspicions and reproaches are now the disunion shriekers--but more of them anon.

This hybrid party increased in strength and fanaticism by inflaming the minds of the Northern people against the institution of slavery and the South till in or about 1850 they became so violent in their demands and so denunciatory of the South as to place the union in jeopardy.. but the genius of Clay though in his decline, was as towering as ever and Webster "Still _____". They bared their breasts to the storm and the elements were still.

The South conceded to the Mo. Com. for the sake of peace, and whether "constitutional or unconstitutional, was wise, patriotic and just in all its purposes and results; it placed the slavery question upon a basis so rational and firm as to defy all the affronts of sectional agitations to rouse the people into another excitement." Both sections were satisfied; it covered all the grounds of dispute and left no point or flaw on which the Hotspurs of the South or the seditionists of the N. could quibble and it would be well, if, in this, the hour of our shame and necessity some "_____ of the West" could rise up and pour oil upon the troubled waters and hurl the money changers from the temple.

But sirs this com. was virtually repealed by the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which result was brought about by S.A. Douglas and which left bare all the ground of contention that had before agitated the public mind.

In this com. the S. had conceded some of her rights for the sake of union harmony and having done so it was her duty to resist all attempts to repeal it; never-the-less it was repealed and that same party which it had been the means of putting down, again rose up and came within a few electoral votes of carrying the Pres. Elec. of 1856 and now they

stand marshalled, with unbroken ranks for the election of 60--this is the why and wherefore of the question for today in a nutshell.

Just here let us ask who are this mighty party who shriek disunion so lustily--sirs, they are the present dominant party of the South, whose motto is, and has ever been 'to the victor belong the spoils and whose aim is to rule or ruin the country. I claim that they by the repeal of the Mo. Com., by making slavery the test of every pres. elec. that they in conjunction with the Greelys Giddings and Garrisons of the North have by "mutual suspicions and reproaches" of each other caused the present sectional state of affairs. Sirs they are the spirits who have stirred up the storm--not as they who, in the language of Toombs and Wilson have made this gov. the corruptest on earth and now when they see that in the _____ they will be done unto as they have done unto others; be despoiled of the spoils--dis-franchised and dependent upon another's bounty ^{they cry dissolution} it is the operation of their own physic which brings forth the hour of disunion with _____ hand they would hurl into nothingness the social fabric and desecrate the acts and advice of _____ who indignantly frowned upon the first dawns of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or enfeeble the sacred ties that link together the various parts.' I charge them with being the indirect cause of the J Brown raid--while I detest the so-called Helper book and its infamous author to give the devil his due--it does seem strange to me how a certain party can so belabor this book's 68 representative endorsers while they endorse a certain execution of the mother of states and statesmen who signed a well known pamphlet which to say the least of is a dishonor to S. soil--noq sirs it is curious that from the Senate investigating committee it is shown that the _____ outrage was never seriously thought of until after a certain election there appeared to be a large anti-slavery population and feeling in this state. I have been compelled to mention these shortcomings of this party that we should beware how we dissolve this union--a dissolution out of which no possible benefits would accrue to the S. but only to this party. Sirs both these parties by "unwise and inequitable" legislation vampire like have sucked the life blood from this union--I am not one to deny that the S. has had ~~first~~ just

cause for the dissolution of the union of these states. As I remarked before the repeal of the Mo. Com.--repealed by the votes of her own representatives--(Sirs, by "unwise and inequitable" legislation)--the repeated violations of the "_____ " all are just causes for diss and were as many as 6 yrs ago. Now I do maintain in spite of all charges of affiliation with the B.R. that it is inconsistent and unpatriotic on the part of the South and her most inexpedient policy to dissolve the union in the event of the triumph _____ here _____recollect that I am treating of this question of diss. as an issue between the two gvt parties now before the country.

Inconsistent and why? Because in the event of the Black R. attempting to carry out their unconstitutional measures it would not be the first time the S. has had wrong and injustice done her; not the first time she has had (as you well know,) just cause for diss. and when the G. or the party who pretends to represent her, cry out secession, it does seem that there is something mercenary connected with it -- that it is not the patriotic spirit which animated the fathers--why Sirs is it not the fundamental principle of our gov. that the maj. rule? Sirs if you must dissolve it why take upon yourselves the inconsistency of doing so without giving this maj. a fair trial? Why did you not dissolve the union on the 1st violation of the F.S. Law, when they started their 1st train on the U.R.R.--when John Brown invaded the state of Va--this same BR party was then in being--was then existing as an insult to the South--therefore from these facts I do maintain that it is the duty of the S. to give this party a _____ trial.

Unpatriotic why? Suppose in the event ___ the S. should determine to secede--to found a republic homogeneous in climate and population--the 1st thing she would do would be to take possession of the federal capital--the public buildings--the treasury--the navy within her jurisdiction,--for man cona entertain with any show of reason that the public property would or could be divided according to representation, or that the N. would not dispute the right of the S. to this property or even if some settlement or line could be drawn, the two sections would in a few years be pitted against each other for the same cause which

now tends to dissolve the union would exist then viz: the institution of slavery--therefore I say if the S. must fight let her have law and right on her side; to do this, her best policy would be as respects patriotism, principle and result--keeping in view that we had our fathers of the Rev.,--that we have as grt an interest in the country and constitution which they erected as the N. that as many revolutionary remembrances and relics cluster around Southern soil as that of the N.; that she gave birth to a _____ who started the revolutionary ball whcih was rolled in triumph from Bos. to Y. by another son of hers greater than them all, and who signed that cons. which we now so serve;-I say keeping in view all these past recollections the inheritance given us by our fathers not for us alone, but to hand down to another generation, it would be the most wise, patriotic and expedient policy for the S. in the _____ to stay in the union--to go on peacefully and calmly and if these higher law makers should trample upon the constitution--her rights or in any manner attempt to carry out their aggressive measures, then is the time for the S. Y. to turn their plough shares into battle axes and rally to the defense of their nation land. But the G. has objected to this plan, as detrimental in the last degree to the interests of the S., he said in substance judging from the past she would act wisely for the present by an immediate secession and not wait till she was bound hand and foot by the N. Now I deny that the S. in waiting for a consistent and constitutional reason for diss. would be in any more danger than she is now. I know, nor can hear of anything in the machinery of our gov. which would give the B.R. more power to harm ___ than they have now--provided the gov is administered _____ and it is the duty of the south to prepare herself for diss only in the event that it is not so administered.

_____ X _____
 _____ X _____

Aside from these considerations the S. can force the No. into proper measures without the _____ of the sword. As I remarked in the outset she holds all the elements necessary to the Union of these states and they are: the productions of negro slavery--one of them the negro himself; or in another form the S. can, the moment she chooses, reduce the North to anarchy _____ --silence the music of her machinery--make the grass to grow up in the streets of her cities and

level their marble palaces with the dust--sirs she could literally starve the operatives of the North to such a degree that the S. armies would march to the N. to prevent the white slaves from cutting their master's throats. All these things she could effect by the carrying out in all its forms that simple word--NON-INTERCOURSE.

Sirs if the S. should refuse to furnish the N. with cotton, in less than a month, soc. would be worse than that of Mex. at the present time--all the forms of human depravity would be developed and thrown on its surface by a starving populace--all law would be disregarded and trampled upon, for what effect would an appeal have upon men phrensied by famine. or the same state of things would occur if the South should withhold her reception of the manufactures of the N. should refuse to clothe her people with the articles the N. produced out of the raw cotton -- to buy the shoes in which trade alone 50,000 of the population of Mass are engaged and whose productions are almost all bought at the S. Sirs, this is not a picture of the imagination, but the living truth which is at this moment developing itself, for it was but a week since a dispatch was received here stating that the shoemakers of Lynn and many of the towns of Mass, had resolved on account of the falling off of the S. trade, to do no more work until they receive an increase of wages, and that the military had been brought into requisition to protect the capitalists from the fury of the mob. Now what does this spirit show and portend? Sirs, it shows that the U. is in the power of the S. and portends that if that power is weiled, it will have the salutary effect of reducing the N. to measures and make her see her nearest interest, viz: the constitutional union of these states.

I think I have shown you that the spresnt agitated and unsettled state of the slavery question was brought about by the mutual suspiscions and reproaches, of both sections through their representative parties; that the S. to maintain her consistency and integrity untarnished must dissolve the union now and if she does not do it now, that she must in the event _____ give them a fair and constitutional trial;-- Sirs that it is more patriotic to drive the northern Greeks out rather thn let them drive us out of the union; that aside from all this, it is in the power of the S. to reduce the N. to terms by Non-Intercourse.

In conclusion--if it is the desire of the S. to have only justice done her she must do her duty towards re-writing this confederacy-- she must curb the rashness of her Harry Percys--she must trample upon the fanaticism of her fire-eaters and to commence early in the cause, she must put down this I. Conference scheme. As I remarked before--if there has gone out wrong from the N. against us that it is not from the hearts of the people, I believe that there is a conservative element there--I do not agree with the G. when he says that the Union meetings of the N. are fraught with insult and mockery to the S. I do not believe that such men as Cushing, Everett, Hunt, O'Connor and a host of others are hypocritical in their expressions of fraternity th the S. and loyalty to the Union.

Let us hope that no sectional party of either section will triumph but that a grt conservative party will be raised in this hour of need, which will embrace all sections, and who will elect a man that will "uphold the union, the constitution and the enforcement of the laws." Let us hope that we may pass through this dark spot on our National Existence unscathed--that the union erected by the Fathers will be upheld and added to by the children--that this grt sun of liberty will not go down behind the darkened west, but like the morning star, melt away into the brightness of heaven--

Delivered May 1960

On December 18th 1860 compared the argument on page 9 with a late editorial of the Richmond Whig (agree)

Also several other arguments are developing themselves as truths.