

Inaugural address  
of  
William Slade  
As it appears in the  
Journal  
of the  
House of Representatives  
October Session

1844

Friday, October 11, 1844

*Fellow Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:*

We are assembled in the character of Representatives of the people, to consult upon their interests, and to execute their will. It becomes us, on entering upon our duties, first of all to carry our minds up to the Author of our being; to acknowledge Him as the rightful source of our authority, and to make his will the measure and the motive of our duty. If, in all our ways, we should acknowledge Him, we should especially do so, upon becoming invested with powers, whose appropriate exercise requires, eminently, the wisdom that comes from above. Our responsibility is, immediately, to the people whose servants we are, but ultimately, to Him who will judge both the people and us.

We come together under circumstances of peculiar favor. The season has been crowned with blessing. Our fields have yielded an abundant harvest, and our people have been exempted from wasting disease. Labor has been protected and rewarded; and peace reigns within our borders. We are blessed with the steady and impartial administration of justice, and continue to enjoy the invaluable privilege of selecting, by our free suffrages, those who shall make and execute our laws.

Among the first duties you will be called to perform, is that of selecting men to fill the judicial and executive offices of the government, which the constitution has wisely committed to your hands. From among such a people as this, there can be no difficulty in selecting men of upright minds, of pure morals, of tried integrity and of sound intelligence, to fill the various within your gist. The power of office, and the power of personal example and influence, can never be separated; and he bears the sword of justice in vain, who counteracts by the one, what he endeavors to enforce by the other.

But your principal labor lies in the broad field of legislation. We are selected and sent here, from among the people; with whose wishes and interests we ought to be thoroughly acquainted, and whose welfare should be the end and aim of our legislation. The government which, by their suffrages, has been committed to us, is their government—"instituted," in the language of our bill of rights, "for the common benefit, protection and security of the people, and not for the particular emolument or advantage of any single man, family, or set of men." The highest good of the people, and of all the people, therefore, it is our great business to secure.

The establishment of justice, in the perfect protection of rights, is the primary end of government, and, in its broad and comprehensive bearings, embraces a very large portion of all appropriate legislation. But there is a field beyond this. The beneficent action of government may, and ought to be felt in the promotion of virtue, in the suppression of vice, in the diffusion of intelligence, in the development of mind, in the encouragement of industry, and in the drawing forth from the earth, which God has given for our temporary habitation, its teeming riches, to make them subservient to the purposes of their gift, in the wisdom and goodness of their great Author. In short, it is the duty of government to perfect by wise, discreet and timely action, the great purposes of the social organization.

In surveying the field of our duties, there would seem to be no subject claiming higher attention than that of Education. This subject has been repeatedly brought to the notice of the Legislature by my predecessors, and several legislative reports have been made upon it. The result of a report made in the year 1841, was, the appointment by the Governor, of a committee, who presented to the legislature, at the following session, an elaborate and able report, containing facts and suggestions of great importance. I commend that report to your consideration.

Improvement is the great law of our individual and social existence.—The means of it are furnished, in a greater or less degree, to all; and all, whether individuals or communities, are accountable for the right improvement of them. This accountability rests, with peculiar weight upon us, in connexion with the subject of education—vitaly connected, as it is, not only with our individual well being, but with the preservation and perpetuity of the institutions we are permitted to enjoy, and required to transmit to our children. These

institutions will, inevitably, take the character of the people, whatever that character may be. The best constitutions of government can interpose but a feeble barrier to the corrupting influences of ignorance and moral debasement. Their beautiful and solid structures will sink and crumble, when they shall cease to rest on the foundations of public and private virtue and universal intelligence.

This obvious truth is full of instruction to those upon whom rests the responsibility of making laws. Their duty is but half performed when they have made laws to *govern* the people. It is a higher and more difficult duty to adopt a system of legislation which shall have the effect of making the people a law, and a good and safe law, to themselves. The most efficient laws are those which govern, not by the power of the sword, but by the silent influence of virtuous and enlightened principle. To educate a people, then, becomes an indispensable part of legislation—an appropriate and necessary instrument for executing the laws—an instrument far more efficient than the strongest military force; while at the same time, it gives to a State high-minded, virtuous, intelligent men, to become its strength, its defense, and its glory.

But what *is* education? It is not merely the learning which lumbers the brain. It is the discipline of the mind and the heart—developing their capacities, strengthening their powers, and training them to practical usefulness. Our children should be learned to think—to discriminate—to feel the conscious power of cultivated intellect, and the purifying, and elevating influence of Christian principle. And this education should be universal, reaching the humble hovel as well as the spacious mansion, and thus bringing out the children of the poor and the rich, to drink together at the enlarged fountains of knowledge which we should open for all.

To accomplish the purpose of educating this whole people, in a manner suited to sustain our free institutions, we obviously need a more elevated standard of common school instruction. There is too wide a chasm between a liberal and a common education. The higher should not be brought down, but the lower raised. Great political responsibilities rest on our people, involving the necessity of a high state of general intelligence. They are to judge not only of the personal qualifications of candidates for office, but of the character and tendency of measures, and the force and bearing of great principles. They must be able to correct errors of fact, detect false reasoning, and put demagogues to silence.

And the road to distinction should be made broader. We want in high public stations more men who have been trained to maturity amid the scenes of ordinary life. Industry, patience, perseverance, common sense, sympathy for the laboring classes, contempt for the mere distinction of office, and a love of the noble objects it gives the power to accomplish—these are among the fruits of an intellectual and moral training amidst the labors and trials of common life. The mass of mind, as it comes up to maturity, may, by a proper system of education, be disciplined to a vigor, and furnished with an amount of knowledge, fitting for almost any station, not involving the necessity of professional skill for its success.

I do not undervalue the higher seminaries. They must be sustained—established upon solid foundations—placed beyond the reach of embarrassment and want. No adequate system of education can be sustained without them. They are important, not only to train instructors, and fit men for the learned professions, but to maintain a high standard of education in a community. They are like the sun shining in his strength, and communicating light and heat to the bodies by which he is surrounded. But if we would sustain them, let us elevate the standard of common education, for in proportion as that is done, will the higher institutions be more valued, and more liberally patronized and endowed; while there will be, throughout the community, a greatly increasing thirst for the water that comes from these deeper and purer fountains.

The great desideratum in regard to common education is, *improved modes of teaching*,—modes by which the hitherto great waste of time may be avoided—the mind stimulated to activity—trained to habits of self-relying effort, and learned to “go alone,” as it shall be thrown upon its own resources, amid the labors and responsibilities of practical life. Time waits not the sluggish and inefficient movements of false methods of teaching. It bears our children rapidly onward to manhood, prepared or unprepared for the great duties of life. But as we double the power of human energy by new processes in agriculture and the mechanic arts, so may we double the value of the allotted time for education. We are eager to avail ourselves of the augmented power to gain wealth through the wonderful improvements and discoveries of this age. Rail roads augment the value of every thing they touch or approach, and we are, therefore, awake to their importance; but are there not more

wonderful developments to be made of intellectual wealth by improved modes of education? Shall other improvements go on, while this stands still? Are the mind and heart of a people of less importance than the materials of wealth in the earth they inhabit? Shall we carefully improve the reeds of our animals while we neglect the improvement of man? If he is esteemed a public benefactor who makes two blades of grass grow there one grew before, is not he a greater, who devises means for doubling the productive power of the mind of a people?

And now is presented the great inquiry—by what means shall the needed reforms be effected in the management and instruction of our common schools? This is, practically, a difficult question. The first thing to be done evidently is, to ascertain the present condition of our schools in regard to the precise defects in the modes of instruction, the character of the books used and the general standard of qualification of teachers.

Though we have doubtless many good teachers, there is, in general a manifest deficiency in this respect. Nor should this surprise us. It would rather be surprising if, under our present system—if system it can be called—the standard of qualification did not fall far below what it should be. Teaching is, generally, but a temporary resort, either to obtain the means of an education, or of embarking in other pursuits. It should be a *profession*, as honorable as it is responsible. There will be good teachers when we shall mature a common school system which shall create a demand for, and furnish the means of rewarding them.

There should be, furthermore, an examination into the condition of the school houses, in reference to their size, seating, ventilation, warmth, location, and the grounds connected with them.

Information on all these points should be embodied and brought out, in order to awaken the public attention to the necessity of vigorous and systematic efforts for reform. And this must be done under the legislative authority, by persons competent to an inspection, and to the making of its results intelligible and useful, as a basis of future action. Such investigations have been the first step in the prosecution of educational improvement in the States of Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York, producing, within a few years, great and beneficial results in these States. Will Vermont longer hesitate to follow their example? On you rests the responsibility of dicing this question, I would not urge to hasty and headlong efforts at improvement. Gradual progress is the law of advance to sound and vigorous maturity in every thing. But there can be no advance without a beginning.

How shall this beginning be made? is a question for immediate consideration. The exploration suggested, to be of any avail, must be uniform, universal and thorough. To make it such, compensation is obviously indispensable. We have once tried it without, and failed; and without it, we shall fail again. There must be an efficiency which the responsibility of accepting a trust with compensation, can alone secure. By what agencies the work shall be done, it will be for your wisdom to determine. It will be

worthy of consideration whether they may not be such, in part, as shall be needed for the general supervision necessary to carry forward and perfect a system of educational improvement; such, for example, as a board of commissioners as in Connecticut, or of Education as in Massachusetts, or a general Superintendent of common schools with County Superintendents, as in New York. There may be advantages worthy of consideration in the direct and undivided responsibility of a single general Superintendency, while the County Superintendents may well be supposed, from the range given for their selection, to be fully competent to exercise the rigid supervision, and make the suggestions of improvement indispensable to progress in the reform.

This corresponds somewhat with the Prussian system of superintendency, as described by the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education in the late report of his visit to Europe, for purposes connected with education. The kingdom, it appears from the report, is divided into circles or districts, in each of which there is “one or more school commissioners or inspectors, selected from the most talented and education men in the community—such as would be appointed presidents or professors in colleges, or judges of the higher courts. The whole “Prussian system” says the author of the report, “impressed me with a deep sense of the vast difference in the amount of general attainment and talent devoted to the cause of popular education in that country, as compared with any other country or state I had ever seen.” Over all the other functionaries entrusted

with the execution of their system, is the Minister of Public Justice, who is a member of the King's Cabinet. "Such has also been the case in France since the late organization of their system of public instruction."

Under the New York system, it is the duty of the County Superintendents to visit the schools in their respective counties, consult with the teachers, and town superintendents, deliver lectures on education, and endeavor to awaken an increased interest on the subject of common school education. These latter requisitions form a very important part of that system; as it is obviously vain to attempt a reform unless the people can be brought to take a deep interest in it. There must be a co-operation of an enlightened public sentiment, or nothing will be done. We may legislate, and must legislate; but after all, little can be effected merely by the high pressure of legislation. It must be adapted to awaken, and concentrate, and give effect to the energies of the community. And what cannot Vermont accomplish in this matter if she shall undertake? and what motives to undertake, and to persevere, can be compared with those which are connected with the vast results of the mental and moral training of her children?

The carrying out, and perfecting, of an adequate system of educational improvement will, of course, involve ultimately, a considerable expenditure; but as the necessity for it shall arise, will the gradually unfolding benefits of the system make the contributions to sustain it, easy, and their burden light. The expenditure on the part of the State, necessary to commence the system, through the agency of a State Superintendent, and county Superintendents, need not be great—not much greater, in the language of the report of the committee to which I have referred, than "the people of Vermont have paid annually for killing foxes."

Vermont has an enviable name abroad. Let her maintain it. Let her emulate the efforts of New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts. She ought, indeed, to go beyond them. No State in the Union has such a material to work upon,—none that can be wrought into more beautiful and durable monuments of public beneficence and liberality.

In respect to the ultimate expenditure that may be needed for the purchase of district school libraries, and chemical and philosophical apparatus and globes,—for making provision in the colleges and academies, or in separate institutions, for the teaching of instructors, and for aid in the repairs and construction of school houses—we may hope that we shall, at no distant day, possess ample means, in our distributory share of the proceeds of the sales of the public lands. It would be an appropriation worthy the noble inheritance of freedom which, with a large portion of those lands, was bequeathed to us by our revolutionary fathers. It was, indeed, a benevolent and fitting arrangement, in the order of Providence, that the same severance from the parent country which gave us independence, gave us, also, a great domain, capable of dispensing so widely the blessings of education, and of rendering this nation a model of virtue, intelligence, and good government for the world.

I have dwelt longer on the subject of education than may, perhaps, be deemed appropriate for an executive message; but its very great importance must be my apology. It is, in my judgment, of more importance than any other subject that can possibly engage the attention of the legislature.

A consideration of the means of developing the mind of the State naturally suggests the idea of developing the riches of its minerals and its soils. My predecessors have frequently recommended a geological survey of the State, in which I fully concur; and invite to the subject your special attention. If we would develop mind, and apply it to its great purposes, we study and analyze it, that we may understand its capacities and powers. Thus should we do with the soil we inhabit. Here we are, in its daily cultivation, drawing from it our support; and shall we remain ignorant of its properties, its defects and the means of supplying them, only as tardy experience shall disclose them to us? We want a scientific, thorough, universal examination of the various soils of the state, involving complete analysis and classification of the whole, and such an exploration as shall reach, if possible, all the fertilizing substances which can be made available for the amelioration of our soils, and then stimulating them to their highest practicable power of production. There are localities where the discovery of a bed of limestone would be more valuable than a mine of gold. The same may be said of marl, gypsum, peat and other substance, appropriate, either singly or in combination, to supply deficient elements in unproductive soils.

It is hardly necessary to speak of the probable development of mineral resources, of which we have an earnest in our iron, copper, manganese, and other mineral treasures.

It is needless to say that such results will not be brought out, except under examinations effected by legislative authority, and at public expense. Such examinations have been made by other States; and the results are before the world. I mean the immediate results; for the great practical results are yet to come forth in a mingled mass of benefits, spreading themselves over the surface of our country, while there is a soil to yield its fruits to the labors of man.

By enquiries made two years ago, I learned, that, at that time, geological surveys had been authorized in ever State in the Union, excepting Vermont, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Illinois. The lone position of Vermont in his classification, is somewhat striking. It is for you to say whether we shall remain in this position any longer.

This subject derives great additional importance from a consideration of the emigration which has, at some periods, rapidly, and still does, to a considerable extent, drain the population of our State. If we would retain our people at home, let us show them what Vermont is, and what it is capable of becoming, as an agricultural State.

If the people could fully perceive the importance of a geological survey, I doubt not, they would esteem it a privilege to be taxed at once, to an amount sufficient to complete the work. The whole expense of completing, and publishing a survey, would not, probably, involve a burden exceeding three cents upon each individual in the State; which might be spread over two or more years should it be deemed expedient.

This subject is invested with still further importance from the fact, that rail roads are approaching our State—at no distant day, we may hope, to pass through it—which will greatly enhance the value of our agricultural, as well as our mineral productions. Let us prepare to throw into these improved channels of communication with the great markets of the world, the productions of a soil, quickened by the application of agricultural science, to a doubling of its present power, and cultivated with the augmented energy which these facilities cannot fail to excite.

In the exercise of that care which regards the interests of all, you may not deem it inappropriate or unnecessary, to consider, whether additional legislation is not required for protection against the exactions of unlawful interest. Our law relating to this subject declares, that interest shall be limited to the rate of six per centum per annum; and provides for the recovering back, in an action for money had and received or goods sold and delivered, of any amount paid above that rate. It is worthy of consideration whether the remedy ought not to be extended, so as to authorize a recovery of the amount thus paid, by a proceeding in chancery.

The law has, in effect, declared the taking of interest above six per cent, to be wrong; but it has provided no adequate remedy for it. The remedy, by the process provided in the statute, is practically no remedy at all, for in no cases can it be made available, excepting those in which accident shall enable a borrower, whose necessities have compelled him to submit to the illegal exaction, to prove by common law evidence, what so much pains are always taken by the lender to conceal, and which the borrower, in the agony of his necessity, is willing should be concealed.—Does not consistency of legislation suggest the propriety of either repealing the law in question, or authorizing its enforcement by a process suited to the case, and indispensable to give the law effect? To do this by the process suggested, would seem to be liable to no valid objection.

This is a subject of much general importance. The manifest tendency of the practice of exacting unlawful interest is, in the first place, to beget a contempt of the law, and sharpen ingenuity for its evasion, the general tendency of which is extremely pernicious,—but, in the second place, and mainly, to increase existing inequalities in the condition of the people,—to make the rich richer, and the poor poorer,—to leave the necessitous to become the victims to the temptation to borrow on long credit, upon an interest which seldom fails to complete their ruin. Notwithstanding the facilities for bank accommodations—a mode of borrowing which begets habits of promptness, and cherishes a sense of honor highly useful to the community—it is believed that the practice of loaning upon unlawful interest, prevails to an extent, and produces results, which may well claim the earnest consideration of the legislature.

The subject of licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors, has come to occupy so much of the public attention, and involves a question of such deep interest to the community, that I cannot deem my duty discharged without inviting your attention to it.

It is a principle fundamental in our government, that it is instituted “for the common benefit, protection and security of the people.” The correctness of this principle, asserted in our bill of rights, will, of course, be conceded by all. In regard, therefore, to the act of the government in licensing the traffic in intoxicating liquors, the great question would seem to be, whether such traffic is for the “common benefit.” This question is, at present, in effect, submitted to the decision of the courts in the several counties, through whom alone, licenses can be granted. There seems, however, to be a prevailing sentiment that the power of license should not remain in the courts, but that it should, in some way, be brought nearer to the people. In this sentiment I concur. The people are the source of power. They know whether the traffic in question is for their benefit, and are fully competent to decide the question for themselves, without the intervention of the judicial tribunals. It is submitted to you, therefore, whether it be not practicable to make some satisfactory provision by law, for sending the question of licenses directly to them, and thus relieve the courts and the legislature from further trouble on the subject. Whether any, and what provision shall be made, your wisdom will determine. If we would avail ourselves of the benefits of experience, which it is always useful to consult, we have an example in Massachusetts, which it may be wise to consider. The experiment of committing the whole subject to Commissioners, appointed by the people in the several counties, with authority to grant licenses to such extent as they may deem the public good to require, seems to have given general satisfaction in that state. Should this be deemed an appropriate mode of giving effect to the people’s wishes, it would aid the important purpose of removing the elections of Commissioners in the several counties as far as possible from the disturbing influence of party politics, to have them holden on a day devoted solely to that object, and as far removed, in point of time, from every other election, as the question itself ought to be separated from, and elevated above, the party contests of the day.

There is another question connected with this subject, which seems to demand attention. It has been decided by the Supreme Court that justices of the peace have not jurisdiction of offences against the license laws. County courts have, therefore, exclusive jurisdiction; and the result is, that, in practice, prosecutions for such offenses are instituted but once in each year—grand juries being usually no oftener summoned, and States attorneys, I believe, seldom, if ever, in such cases, filing information. The obvious difficulty of reaching, by such an annual process, all the violations of the license laws, connected with the fact that the maximum of the penalty is but ten dollars, would seem to suggest the propriety of either giving the jurisdiction to justices of the peace, or of making provision that they may bind over offenders with the witnesses, to the county courts, as often as the offenses shall be committed. If we are to have laws on this subject they should be enforced. Every good citizen must desire this, whatever may be his opinions on the question of temperance. Better, far better, to have no laws, than to permit them to stand on the statute book unexecuted, sincere there is thus added to the prohibited, and yet permitted evil, that other great evil of a practical denial of the rightful supremacy of law.

I have been furnished in advance, with copies of the eighth annual reports of the Trustees and Superintendent of the Vermont Asylum for the Insane. From these reports it appears, that during the past year, 232 patients have enjoyed the benefits of the Asylum; that 96 have been admitted to it, and 74 discharged; and that 158 remain. Of the discharges who had been insane, not exceeding six months, 89 per cent have recovered; while of those whose insanity had been of longer duration, the proportion of the restored has been but 34 per cent.—showing, what should be universally known, the great importance of early efforts to secure for the insane the benefits of the institution. The reports show that inveterate cases, supposed to be beyond the reach of perfect cure, may be very greatly ameliorated. Several touching examples of these are given in the report of the Trustees, in which persons have, after a derangement of from 12 to 60 years, been taken, in conditions of horrible wretchedness, from cages and cells, their chains knocked off, and within a few weeks from their entrance into the Asylum, have been persuaded to enjoy the luxury of comfortable beds, and with safety admitted to receive their food with knives and forks at a common table.

I am happy to learn that since the last report, additions to the buildings have been completed, so as, in the opinion of the Trustees, to furnish accommodations fully adequate to the wants of the State. It appears also, that

a reduction has been made in the terms of admission, by reason of the means which additional buildings have furnished for the accommodation of a greater number of patients, without the necessity of increasing the number of officers of the Asylum.

It is an exceedingly fitting and important arrangement in the institution, that facilities are furnished for the employment of the inmates in the occupations to which they have been accustomed—the influence of which, with appropriate amusement, upon their health, and as a means of restoration to mental soundness is apparent.

It appears that the income, during the past year, has been \$581.14 more than the expenditures; leaving, as a general result, after allowing for bad debts, a small balance in favor of the institution.

The report of the Trustees bears strong testimony to the judicious management of the Superintendent; to whose exertions the state is evidently very greatly indebted for the success of this valuable institution, in accomplishing the humane purpose of its establishment.

The appeal at the close of the report of the Trustees, in behalf of the insane poor of the state, is worthy of consideration. There is no conceivable claim upon Christian charity so strong as that which comes from those who are destitute alike of reason, and of appropriate means for its restoration. That claim, it is feared, will not adequately be met by towns chargeable with the support and maintenance of such poor—the furnishing them the means of restoration to mental soundness, or even of ameliorating their insanity in cases where it is supposed to be incurable, constituting, under existing laws, no part of the legal duty of the towns. Whether, if such duty is imposed on them, it would result in securing the needed relief, or securing it as promptly and effectually as it should be, may perhaps admit of a question. I submit whether further provision should not be made by law, for securing the benefits of the asylum to all the insane poor within the State.

The term of one of the Senators of this State in the Congress of the United States will expire on the third of March next. It will, therefore, become your duty to elect a person to represent this State in the Senate of the United States for six years from and after that time.

I have received from my predecessor sundry resolutions of other States of the Union, communicated to him with requests that they should be laid before the Legislature of this State. I shall make them the subject of a future communication.

Thus far I have called your attention to subjects immediately connected with our domestic policy, and falling, exclusively, within the range of our State legislation. But we constitute a part of another government, whose action vitally affects us, as a community, and as a member of the confederacy. It is proper, therefore, that I should devote some attention in this communication, to the questions connected with the administration of that government, which now agitate the country and demand attention of us all.

The question of protection to American labor and capital, in their competition with the labor and capital of foreign countries, is one which comes home to the business and interest of the whole community. The vast variety of the soil and climate of our country, and of the genius and inclinations of its people, plainly indicates that diversity of employment and pursuit is essential to the full development of its capacities for improvement. It was a sense of this, impressed by the practical workings of foreign competition, that formed a leading motive to the adoption of the constitution. The “more perfect union” of which that constitution was the bond, was scarcely, in any respect, more important than in the means which uniform regulations of commerce furnished for the counteraction of the foreign policy which sought to establish our workshops abroad, and make our people tributary to the cheap labor and abundant capital of other countries. This purpose of the constitution was carried out in the first revenue law passed under it, whose framers were careful expressly to declare, in its memorable preamble, that the duties it imposed, were laid “for the *encouragement* and *protection* of manufactures.” And if there is any policy which, more than any other, has marked our history, it is the policy, of which that preamble was the earnest and the pledge. It is under its creative power that manufacturing establishments have sprung up in almost every part of the country, sending the pulsations of vigorous health through all departments of its industry. We have, indeed, suffered under occasional partial suspensions of that policy, but they have served to show us, what uninterrupted prosperity under it might not have done—its indispensable importance to secure adequate encouragement and reward to labor, a full development of the



nation's faculties for improvement, and a realization of the benefits derivable from the compact which made us "one people."

In all the vicissitudes of the protective policy, it has never, perhaps, passed through greater peril than it is now encountering. The tariff of 1842 saved the protected interest from prostration. Its benefits have been felt in a revival of business, a restoration of confidence, an adequate revenue, and a general and healthful impulse to the labor of the country. But in the midst of these successes, it is suddenly brought into peril.—Twelve years ago the system of protection was put in similar peril, by the coincident action of nullification on the one hand, and betrayal by its professed friends on the other. That is the character of the present danger. Nullification it is true, has lost much of its power; but false principles, deceptive reasoning, and disguised enmity are as strong, perhaps stronger than ever. This is illustrated in the success of efforts to confound all just distinctions in regard to protection, and lead the unsuspecting to an incautious committal of the protective system to the hands of its enemies.

Thus we have the doctrine of protection misstated and perverted, by declarations, that it consists in "*discrimination* for the purpose if *revenue only*; " with protection incident to such discrimination; and again, that "the *true limit* of the right and claim to protection, is that rate of duty *upon any given article* which will *yield the largest amount of revenue*."—Beyond this, it is asserted, the Constitution gives no power to impose duties. The hinge on which the whole protective system turns, is, the *purpose* for which discriminations are made in the adjustment of a scale of duties. It "revenue only" is the purpose, every one familiar with the subject can see that it may not afford adequate protection to any interest, since it is obvious that a duty on a give article, falling far short of just protection to its rival of American production, may be the duty which will yield the greatest amount of revenue from that article, by reason of its greater importation under the lower duty. To subject the protected interest to the operation of such a rule, is to commit them to mere chance. If this is the "*true limit* of the right and claim to protection," it is a limit within which every protected interest in the country may be crushed. The true doctrine is, not discrimination for *revenue*, with incidental protection, but a tariff for revenue with discrimination for *protection*. The revenue purpose is to govern, when we are considering the amount of revenue to be raised upon the whole of the importations. No more revenue, in the aggregate, may be raised, than shall be necessary to supply the wants of the government—making a tariff, in this sense, a revenue tariff. But while this great revenue purpose is to be kept in view, and its limit never exceeded, another purpose is, also, to be kept in view, namely—that of so discriminating between different classes of articles, and between one article and another, of the same class, that while, in the aggregate, we raise only the required amount, we may, by the discrimination, impose high duties on articles needing strong protection—moderate duties on those needing less protection, and no duties on such as need no protection. This is discrimination for protection—the genuine doctrine, of which discrimination for revenue, with incidental protection, is the counterfeit.

It was this false doctrine which formed the leading feature in the report of the committee of Ways and Means, at the late session of Congress; and the bill reported by that Committee, and which stands upon the calendar of the House for its action at the next session, was the legitimate result of that doctrine.

As perpetual vigilance is the price of liberty, so is it emphatically the price of protection to our industry. We can well resist the attacks of the open enemies of the protective policy, but may find ourselves baffled and foiled by the deceptive warfare of its pretended friends. The investigations of this year, aided by the obvious benefits of the existing tariff, well it may be hoped, result in firmly establishing correct principles on this subject, and giving permanency to the tariff, of which they form the basis.

There is another subject of great importance which demands our attention; and the more so because it is a question in which or rights as a State, are directly involved. I refer to the debated policy of distributing to the States the proceeds of the sales of the public lands.

The leading objection to distribution—aside from its alledged corrupting influence upon the States, which is not worth considering—is, that, b taking the amount of the land sales from the treasury, we increase the taxes for the support of government, and thereby, in effect, tax the people for the purpose of distribution,—in other words, that we corrupt the people with their own money. The argument rests upon erroneous views of the effect of a tariff. It is well known that an increase of duty does not, necessarily, produce an increase of price. If the

proceeds of the lands are taken away from the treasury for distribution, a necessity will of course be thereby created for raising an additional sum, equal to that amount, by duties on imports. But, it is well known, in the first place, that an augmented duty, if it has the effect of increasing the domestic supply of rival articles, is in effect, divided between the foreign producer and the consumer; and, in effect, divided between the foreign producer and the consumer; and, in the next place, that so far as the consumers pay the additional duty, their ability generally, to do so, is increased by the tariff itself, in its influence on the industry of the country. This is shown, among other ways, by augmented revenue, under a decidedly protective tariff, as illustrated in the operation of the tariff of 1842. An increased consumption, generally, though not always, proves an increased ability to purchase dutiable commodities; and this corresponds with the great tariff theory, that protection gives the impulse of increased reward, and steadiness of employment, to all branches of domestic industry.

All that part of the public domain which lies within the original limits of the United States, is holden by them strictly in trust for the benefit of the several states. Distribution, so far as regards this portion of the public lands, would be but a simple execution of the trust created in the deeds of cession to the United States—a trust which, if the parties were subject to chancery jurisdiction, might be enforced, upon the common principles applicable to trust estates. And although the claim for a distribution of the proceeds of the lands since acquired, rests upon grounds of expediency only, and not of strict right, yet that expediency is not less clear than is the right under the trust referred to.

Distribution is expedient, in the first place, because of its effect upon protection—preventing, as it will, the income from the public lands from a pernicious interference with the protective policy, by leaving the whole of the needed revenue to be drawn exclusively from impost duties. And this constitutes another striking ground of difference between the genuine and spurious friends of protection.

Distribution is expedient, also, because the proceeds of the national domain are thereby brought nearer to the people, who can, through their immediate representatives in the State legislatures, more wisely and beneficially appropriate them to purposes of needed improvement. Since the arresting of the policy of internal improvement, by the national government, effected by the Maysville veto, distribution has become the only means by which the avails of the public lands can be made to accomplish that important purpose. And if the fund can be thus appropriated, through distribution to the States, the arresting of the policy, by the veto referred to, may not, perhaps, be a subject of regret, since the object can, probably, be better accomplished through State, than National administration. But to stop the national appropriation of the fund, for purposes of improvement, and at the same time, withhold it from the States, is to abandon the object altogether, and thus forego the great national advantages which this fund, from its permanent character, as well as from its large amount, is peculiarly adapted to secure.

This fund may, moreover, under the state administration, be made to reach one object of improvement, which it would, probably, never reach in the hands of the general government;—I mean, the object of education—an object of more importance to this nation than all other objects combined, to which the fund can possibly be appropriated. It is thus that the great domain may be made to reach, and purify the fountains of thought and feeling among the masses, upon whom rest, and must always rest, whilst our institutions are republican, the government of this nation; and whose oral and intellectual character *will* shape its destinies, “rough hew them as we will,” by the most carefully matured schemes of national policy.

If we would make this a truly great nation, we must give activity and vigor to the elements of greatness in the hearts and minds of its people. These elements must be brought out—their capacities fully developed, and their energies rightly directed. And here are the means of doing it, furnished our hands. Let the nation either use them, or place them where they may be used, for this great purpose, and thus render the beneficial effects of the appropriation of the national domain, as solid and enduring as the domain itself. It is thus, in the right use of the means for national improvement which God has given us, that he will bless us—will make us a great and good nation, and enable us to accomplish the ends of His Providence in giving us a national existence.

There is another question of great and overwhelming interest which recent events have forced upon our attention. By a sudden and unexpected turn of party policy, we are called on to decide the momentous question, whether a foreign nation shall be annexed to, and become part of the confederacy. As this is a

question in which the States, as members of the Union, have a special interest, and upon which they may, and ought, immediately, to express their opinions, through their respective legislatures, it will not be deemed, in any sense, foreign to my duty, to bring the subject to your notice, and urge it upon your special attention.

Vermont came into a union whose bond was a written constitution, granting to its government certain specified powers. No question in regard to the powers conferred by that constitution, can be of greater importance than that which relates to the membership of the confederacy. The extent to which new members may be admitted, involves a question far beyond a question of mere administration of the government. It strikes at the existence of the government itself. An unauthorized admission of a new state, is nothing less than an attempt to make a new confederacy. This cannot, of course, be done, without a destruction of the old—without an exercise of power by the existing government, equivalent to suicide.

Such is the proposition for the annexation of Texas to this Union—involving a question of much more importance than whether the territory to be added shall form one or five states, or equally divided between these opposite and irreconcilable elements of power. It is a question whether, by an act of *arbitrary power*, Vermont shall be forced, without her consent, into a federal union with a state or states, not admissible by the compact into which she has entered. It is as though a majority of the members of an ordinary partnership were to attempt to force a member into the concern without the common consent—compelling the dissatisfied member or members to subject the whole business and destiny of the establishment to the hazard of a connexion with a new partner—it may be, bankrupt in fortune and character, or trained to habits of business, or possessing infirmities of constitution, rendering the connexion valueless, or worse than valueless. An ordinary violation of the constitution—such, for example, as an alleged unauthorized regulation of commerce for purposes of protection, might be submitted to, until the action of the appropriate judicial tribunal could reach and remedy the evil. But this is a case which no judicial power can reach. The foreign state one admitted, and the mischief is done, irrevocably; and resistance on the part of the injured states becomes the only remedy, though it may involve the hazard of forever quenching the watch-fires of our liberty and union in blood.

The right to annex is claimed to rest on the grant of power in the constitution to admit new states into the union. If there had been no territory within our original limits upon which this power could operate, the right to admit state from beyond them would seem necessarily to have been embraced in the general grant of power. But such territory existed, large and ample. The advocates of annexation would seem, therefore, to be thrown upon the necessity of furnishing evidence of intention, quite beyond any thing that can be found in the general language—“New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union,”—which, if allowed the latitude contended for, would leave no limit to the exercise of the power, short of the entire habitable globe. That the framers of the constitution had in their contemplation a provision admitting such a latitude, is incredible, and it is equally so that if they had such intention, they should have failed to express it, in language suited to the grant of a power of such fearful magnitude as that of effecting, by a simple act of Congress, an essential change in the relations of the constituent members of the confederacy;—and thus, too, while Congress is invested with no power to change even a line of the constitution—which can only be done by the solemn act of three fourths of the states of this union.

Ardent minds may have glowing visions of greatness, and glory and good to man, in prospect of the boundless exercise of the claimed power; but it is for the sober and thoughtful, and wise and truly benevolent, to check such anticipations, and chasten such desires, by submitting them to the restraints of rigid justice to the existing members of the confederacy. No fancied benefits can ever compensate for the perpetration of wrong—the infliction of injustice, under any circumstances whatever.

But it is attempted to obviate the constitutional difficulty, by claiming title to Texas as part of the Louisiana purchase, and calling the proposed measure *re-annexation*. In reference to this it is sufficient to say that by the Treaty of 1819 with Spain, after a protracted negotiation with regard to the Southern boundary of Louisiana, it was agreed to fix it on the Sabine; that the yielding of our disputed claim to Texas entered into the consideration of the cession to us of Florida; and that the line thus established was subsequently confirmed by our Treaty of limits with Mexico. The claim to *re-annexation*, then, is as though, upon the possible independence of Canada, and a treaty with her confirming the boundary, established by the treaty of Washington, we should afterwards claim as our own, the territory ceded by us in that arrangement, because it was embraced within our formerly

claimed limits. Who would be willing to hazard the peace or the honor of the country, upon such a claim as this? And yet, such is the claim for *re*-annexation.

But there is another insurmountable constitutional objection. It is found in the *purpose* of annexation. That purpose is to establish and perpetuate slavery—any attempt to do which by the General Government is, of itself, a manifest violation of the national compact. For where is to be found among the powers granted in the constitution, the semblance of a power to establish or perpetuate slavery, any where? With the exception of the provisions for delivering up fugitives, and the suppression of insurrection, and the three fifths slave representation in one branch of Congress, the constitution confers on slavery no privilege; and imposes no duty, and confers no power on Congress, looking, in the remotest degree, to its support. It was a state institution before the constitution was formed, and, so far as that constitution is concerned, it remains so still—free to live, if it can, but certain to die without unconstitutional aid for its support. That aid it is the purpose of annexation to afford.

The onward progress of freedom, under its high impulses, is rapidly changing the balance of power, and leaving slavery to perish; and now the nation is suddenly called on to come to its rescue – to save it from sinking—to infuse into it fresh life and vigor, and to prolong and perpetuate its power. And this at the expiration of more than half a century from the formation of the constitution, when the entire nation entertained the belief that slavery could not survive the first quarter of a century of our national existence.

It is said, indeed, that annexation will not have the effect of enlarging and sustaining the power of slavery. But whoever considers the relation between demand and supply in the commerce of the world, will be at no loss to perceive the connection between the consumption of human energy and human life in the enlarged cultivation of Texas annexed, and the increased production in our slave breeding States for the supply of the demand thus created. Such was the effect of the acquisition of Louisiana. That slavery is destined, with annexation, to recede gradually to the South, until it melts away and becomes lost in a mixture of races somewhere between the line of Mason & Dixon, and the isthmus of Darien, is a vision of fancy as baseless as the fabric of a dream. Nothing in the past will justify us in believing it can ever become a reality.

To attempt for any purpose, a transformation of the present, into the new union which annexation would create, would be an insufferable invasion of our rights; but to attempt it for the purpose of sustaining slavery, and subjecting the tenants of these mountains to its prolonged power, is to be thought of with no dream of submission to it for an hour. Upon the consummation of the threatened measure, I do not hesitate to say that it would be the duty of Vermont to declare her unalterable determination to have no connexion with the new union, thus formed without her consent, and against her will. To carry out this determination would not be to dissolve the union, but to refuse to submit to its dissolution,—not to nullify, but to resist nullification.

I do not undervalue the Union. I greatly value, and would preserve it. But it is the union of which the present constitution is the bond. If the question were properly submitted to Vermont whether she would come into a new union, we would deliberate upon it; but the question whether we will submit to be forced into it, under pretence of a power to do so which does not exist, is not to be debated for a moment, any more than we would debate the question of submission to a foreign yoke.

But why, after all, should annexation be desired by any body? What conceivable motive is there for it, having reference to the good of the whole country? How is it to benefit the Union? Who can assure us, indeed, of the capacity of our Union to resist the strong tendencies to dissolution, of such an acquisition? What wise and prudent statesman will be willing to hazard, such an experiment upon this Union? Wiser and better is it to endeavor to strengthen and consolidate it upon its present basis—to get rid, as soon as can be properly and rightfully done, of every thing that will endanger it, and especially of that greatest of all sources of danger, the institution of slavery—and thus, having laid aside every weight, to run the race of freedom and philanthropy and solid glory which is set before us.

The relation of Slavery to the confederacy, the evident danger from the existence of such an element in our Union, and the increasing excitement in regard to it, suggest a few additional remarks upon that subject.

The question of slavery is among the greatest that can occupy the mind of the nation. The true position in which it was left by the Constitution—the expectation of the country in regard to its then future condition—the history of its subsequent encroachments, and its irreconcilable hostility to freedom, are matters which must and will occupy the public attention. The *world* is moving on the subject; and the progress which has been made within the last quarter of a century, in the work of human emancipation, has materially changed the aspect of the whole question. To attempt to put down abolition is vain. The statesmen of this nation must look the question in the face. It is not one of mere philanthropy, but has other bearings. Slavery is an element of political power; and how long, and to what extent, it shall be suffered to control the policy and mould the destiny of this nation, is a question whose consideration cannot be postponed indefinitely.

What direction shall be given to the strong and growing feeling on this subject, is among the most important questions than can occupy the minds of our Statesmen. There are evidently great dangers to be encountered. If the purpose of the Fathers had been carried out, and slavery had gradually yielded and given place to the institutions of freedom, this crisis would not have been thrown upon the country. But the contrary policy has prevailed. Slavery has planted itself in new fields—has struggled for ascendancy, and maintained it; and has finally come to take the ground that it must be fostered, and cherished, and extended, so as to be able to maintain its balance, as an element of power in the Union. What is to be the character and issue of the conflict which the growing spirit of freedom is to have with slavery, thus struggling to maintain its ascendancy is a question of fearful interest. The pretensions and encroachments of the slave power, and especially the attempt to strengthen it by the annexation of Texas, have contributed to give a character of deep and desperate earnestness to abolition movements, threatening to draw every other question of morals and politics within their vortex.

The true ground is not upon either of these extremes. But neither is it the ground of indifference. That will work no deliverance either from the evils of slavery, or of an over heated and headlong zeal for its abolition. No attempt should be made to suppress the mighty impulses of this age towards universal emancipation. None will be successful. Rather should it be our effort to guide them rightly and safely.

Cold apathy and bitter zeal should alike give place to a calm, steady, patient, persevering effort to reach the seat of the evil,—to overcome in the South the fear of change, the force of habit, the reluctance to labor, the love of dominion, and the tenacity of supposed, but mistaken interest, while truth shall be made to exert its appropriate power in quickening the conscience to a just sense of the wrongs of slavery. And along with all this there must, and will, of necessity be political action in some form, gradually changing the character of state and national legislation, while no great interest of the country shall be left forgotten, uncared for, or neglected. The position of the North, and the natural jealousy of its efforts in this cause, impose on it the duty of moderation and forbearance; while the claims of humanity, and a just respect for its own rights demand that it steadily resist the encroachments, expose the wrongs, and labor, in all appropriate ways to rid the country of the evils, of slavery.

Suffer me, in closing this communication again to advert to our domestic concerns, and to express the hope that we may come to the consideration of them, with a feeling of devotion to the interest of our State, which shall make us forget all party distinction in an ardent desire to benefit and bless her. Let the lines which divide us on questions of national policy be obliterated, when we come to consider the matters which concern exclusively our own people; and let the strife of party zeal be lost in a generous emulation to devise the best means of advancing the interest of this Commonwealth. And what a field does she present for our labors. Almost the whole of her surface may be converted into a garden, rank with luxuriance, and teeming with riches for the benefit of man. A wise domestic policy may, within no very distant period, have the effect of doubling the amount of our present productions—retaining our population at home—giving to all, the means of comfortable subsistence, and the added means of universal education, upon a scale commensurate with the great purpose of educating a people to govern themselves. We are, and must, of course, continue to be, a small state; but necessarily small, only in territorial extent. In all that constitutes true greatness we may become the largest State in the Union—in the world; great in the development of the capacities of our soil, but far greater in the mighty energies of the men that shall live upon it.

Here then is a large field for our efforts. Let us survey it, fully, and address ourselves to its labors with a determination to do what our hands find to do, with our might. To all this we are urged by motives which come up in the recollections of the past, and stand out in the visions of the future. How can we help feeling an honest state pride, when we think of our origin—of our history—of our strength at home—of our character abroad, and of our position of influence and power for good, upon an extended scale, in our connexion with the Union. We may, and must concern ourselves with the questions involved in the national action; but after all, here is Vermont—a name dear to us all—at the mention of which our hearts thrill with honest pride. Vermont! Our own beloved State, that claims our first attention, and deserves our warmest affection, and our untiring efforts for her good. In regard to her let us say,—If I forget thee let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer thee not above my chief joy.

In conclusion, I need hardly say to the representatives of a Christian people that the efforts of our highest wisdom—our most carefully matured schemes for the advancement of the public good, will be unavailing without the divine blessing. Let us, amid the cares and labors and excitement connected with the performance of our duties, take fast hold of this great truth—maintaining a just sense of the magnitude of the trust committed to us, and an abiding conviction of the true character of our responsibilities in connection with it.

Suffer me to tender, through you, to the people of Vermont my grateful acknowledgments for the recent expression of their confidence—my sense of the value of which, and of the increased responsibilities it imposes on my life to the promotion of the highest interests of this State, of my country and the world.

WILIAM SLADE.

EXECUTIVE CHAMBER  
October 11, 1844

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