

Letter from Hon. Silas Seymour in favor of

Douglas.

PIERMONT, N. Y., Monday, July 9, 1860.

Col. John W. Forney, Philadelphia :

MY DEAR SIR : I embrace the first leisure moment, since the adjournment of the Baltimore Convention, to congratulate you upon the nomination of Hon. STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS as the candidate of the Democratic Party for the office of President of the United States.

Perhaps no one knows better than myself the disinterestedness of your motives and efforts in bringing about this important result ; and also the personal sacrifices and indignities to which you have submitted while defending the great principle of *Popular Sovereignty*, from its first inception to its triumphant indorsement by the regular Democratic Convention at Baltimore.

I may also say, without wishing to flatter you, that to no one more than yourself do I feel indebted for the confirmation of my present views and convictions upon the great questions now at issue between the North and South in relation to the subject of Slavery, and the intervention of Congress for its protection or prohibition in the Territories of the United States.

Since the exciting Presidential contest of 1856, I have become satisfied that unless before another Presidential campaign some solid middle ground could be discovered by our political navigators, upon which the conservative people of the North and South could rally and meet as friends, our glorious Union must either be dissolved or rendered practically useless for all the great political and commercial purposes for which it was originally established.

Ever since my first political recollections there has been a constant warfare waged between the North and South upon the subject of slavery. And it seems to me that at least three-fourths of every session of Congress, and nine-tenths of every political speech that has been made either in or out of Congress, has been devoted to this prolific scheme. The only result that I can discover is the formation of two great sectional parties, one for the North, and one for the South, whose antagonisms are so bitter that each would prefer the dissolution of the Union to the success of the other.

The effect of all this has been to retard the prosperity and development of our country and its resources to such an extent, that I sometimes think that, unless this *eternal* Slavery question can be forever put at rest, it would be better for us all if a dividing line could be peacefully drawn between the Free and Slave States, and a separate Government and laws established for each. The Government of the Northern, or Free States, could then improve her harbors for the protection of her commerce, and establish a tariff that would protect her labor and develop her resources, without being subject to the constant and united opposition of the Southern States. And we could then have a Pacific Railroad immediately commenced and constructed, as it should be, by the General Government, upon the *best natural route*, and without reference to the supposed sectional benefits that its construction upon any particular route would confer, either upon the North or South—whereas all these, and many other great measures, are now prevented by bitter sectional jealousies.

But how much better will it be if the people of all the States will consent that this vexed and most profitless question be driven out and kept out of Congress, and out of our general politics ; and the people of each State and Territory not only allowed, but *compelled*, to settle it in their own way among themselves, without the interference of Congress or the Executive ? This I understand to be *Popular Sovereignty*, as expounded by Judge DOUGLAS.

The more I reflect upon this great principle, and follow it out to its legitimate results as affecting the internal peace and prosperity of our country, the more fully am I impressed with the profound sagacity and statesmanship of its author and expounder. I can see no other way, in the present crisis, to save the Union intact, and, at the same time, restore its members to that feeling of concord and fraternity which is so necessary to our growth and prosperity.

I am, and always have been, opposed to the extension of Slavery, and in favor of Freedom, in its largest and most comprehensive sense. I do not consider it material, so far as the true policy involved in this question is concerned, whether Congress has or has not the power, under the Constitution, to prohibit or protect Slavery in the Territories. Neither am I particularly impressed with the solemnity or importance of Supreme Court decisions upon this grave question, because I believe that its final solution should, and is to be, one of *expediency* rather than of law ; and that it is far above and beyond the reach of all these powers combined. And here allow me to quote, as expressive of my own views, the eloquent language of Mr. WEBSTER, in his great speech "for the Constitution and the Union," delivered in the United States Senate in 1850 ;

"And I now say, Sir, as the proposition upon which I stand this day, and upon the truth and firmness of which I intend to act until it is overthrown, that there is not at this moment within the United States, or any Territory of the United States, a single foot of land the character of which, in regard to its being free territory or slave territory, is not fixed by some law, and some irrepealable law beyond the power of the action of the Government. I mean the law of Nature, of physical geography—the law of the formation of the earth ; and I would not take pains uselessly to reaffirm an ordinance of Nature, nor to reenact the will of God."

The Conservative men of the Republican Party say "we claim the right to legislate against the extension of Slavery ; but we never intend to do so ; the South need not be alarmed ; *we are only fighting for a principle.*" And the Southern men tell us of the North that "you must not feel alarmed, for although we claim and mean to maintain our right to establish and protect Slavery in the Territories, yet we never intend to exercise it, *we are only fighting for a principle.*" And thus, while these rival factions are fighting for an abstract principle which, in my opinion, neither of them, if they had the power, would dare carry into effect, the material interests of the country are suffering from the want of proper and efficient legislation, and the Union itself is threatened with dissolution.

The beautiful consistency of such a suicidal course was exemplified by an engineer who undertook to build a bridge of one span, upon a new *principle* which he had invented, across the Delaware river, at a point where at least two spans were required. The bridge stood very well until it was completed, and the false or temporary work, upon which it had rested, taken from under it, when, as almost every one had predicted, it fell into the river. The engineer, upon being asked what he now thought of the bridge, replied that "he did not care a d—n about the bridge, *but the principle was there.*" Would it not be well for some of our leading politicians to apply the moral, and abandon a useless and dangerous principle before it is too late ?

But I have already written much more than I intended, or than was necessary, in order to assure you that I am with you heart and soul in this contest ; and that there are thousands of others in this State who, like myself, have not heretofore acted or voted with the Democratic Party ; but who, now that it has cut loose from the dictation and control of a corrupt Administration, and the disunion faction of the South, will have their hearty and efficient support to the regular candidates of the Baltimore Convention.

I have known Judge DOUGLAS long and well, and believe him to be a statesman of great integrity and ability. If elected by the American people, as I trust he will be, to the highest office in their gift, I have no doubt that his Administration will reflect the highest honor both upon himself and the country.

Yours, sincerely, SILAS SEYMOUR.