every just way aiding the country to re-
trust from the disgraceful position of ap-
gression which it now occupies towards a
weak, distracted neighbor and sister re-
public.
Resolved, That our attention is directed anew to the wrong and "enormity" of slavery, and to the tyranny and usurpation of the "Slave Power," as displayed in the history of our country, particularly in the
annexation of Texas, and the present war with Mexico; and that we are impelled
with the unalterable conviction that a re-
gard for the fair fame of our country, for
the principles of morals, and for that
righteousness which exalts a nation, san-
sctions and requires all constitutional
efforts for the abolition of slavery within
the limits of the United States, while loy-
sity to the Constitution, and a just self-
defence, make it specially incumbent on
the people of the free States to co-operate
in strenuous exertions to restrain and ever-
throw the "Slave Power."

The Compromise of 1850

Secessional conflict over the Mexican
War and the extension of slavery reached a
dismais in the Willmar Proviso. This
measure would have prohibited slavery in
any territory acquired from Mexico, and,
therefore, raised the question of sectional
rights as against moral and democratic
ideals. Northerners saw combining eco-
nomic and social issues with the slavery
question, bluntly demanded an end to
slavery extension and by implication an
end to Southern influence over such issues
as land, tariffs, and internal improve-
ments. Southerners as bluntly insisted
on an equal right in all territories won by
the common blood of all citizens. Tempers
tone, and passions pushed reason aside.
Threats to break up the Union were heard
on all sides.

At this juncture, Henry Clay intro-
duced his compromise resolutions for the
settlement of all the sectional issues which
had now become involved. John C. Cal-
houn's speech in the debate which fol-
lowed was a Southern ultimatum; Daniel
Webster's speech was conciliatory with a
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great appeal to national feelings and hopes.
William H. Seward, of New York, ex-
pressed the growing Northern position
that slavery stood in the way of national
progress, was a relic of the Dark Ages,
and had no standing in a nation whose obliga-
tion was to establish freedom in its ter-
itories.

The text of Clay's speech (February 6) is from
the Appendix to the Congressional Globe,
111-116, passim. That of Calhoun (March
4) is from the Congressional Globe, 31st
Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. XXI, Pt. 2, pp. 452-
455, passim. Webster's speech (March 7)
and Seward's speech (March 11) are from
the same source as given for Clay, pp. 265-
276, passim, and 342-365, passim.

Henry Clay, February 6, 1850

The Senate proceeded to the considera-
tion of the following Resolutions, submit-
ted by Mr. Clay on the 29th ultimo:

1st. Resolved, That California, with
suitable boundaries, ought upon her appli-
cation to be admitted as one of the States
of this Union, without the imposition by
Congress of any restriction in respect to
the exclusion or introduction of slavery
within those boundaries.

2d. Resolved, That as slavery does not
exist by law, and is not likely to be intro-
duced into any of the territory acquired
by the United States from the Republic of
Mexico, it is inexpedient for Congress to
provide by law either for its introduction
into or exclusion from any part of the said
territory; and that appropriate territorial
governments ought to be established by
Congress in all of the said territory, not
assigned as the boundaries of the proposed
State of California, without the adoption
of any restriction or condition on the sub-
ject of slavery.
3d. Resolved, That the western boundary of the State of Texas ought to be fixed on the Rio del Norte, commencing one marine league from its mouth, and running up that river to the southern line of New Mexico; thence with that line southerly, and so continuing in the same direction to the line as established between the United States and Spain, excluding any portion of New Mexico, whether lying on the east or west of that river.

4th. Resolved, That it be proposed to the State of Texas that the United States will provide for the payment of all that portion of the impolitic and heavy foreign public debt of that State contracted prior to its annexation to the United States, and for which the duties on foreign imports were pledged by the said State to its creditors, not exceeding the sum of $———, in consideration of the said duties so pledged having been no longer applicable to that object after the said annexation, but having chanceforward become payable to the United States; and upon the condition that the said State of Texas shall, by some solemn and authentic act of her Legislature, or of a convention, relinquish to the United States any claim which it has to any part of New Mexico.

5th. Resolved, That it is inexpedient to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, while that institution continues to exist in the State of Maryland, without the consent of that State, without the consent of the people of the District, and without just compensation to the owners of the slaves within the District.

6th. Resolved, That it is expedient to prohibit within the District the slave-trade; in slaves brought into it from States or places beyond the limits of the District, either to be sold therein as merchandise, or to be transported to other markets without the District of Columbia.

7th. Resolved, That more effectual provision ought to be made by law, according to the requirements of the Constitution, for the restriction and delivery of persons bound to service or labor in any State, who may escape into any other State or Territory in the Union.

And 8th. Resolved, That Congress has no power to prohibit or obstruct the trade in slaves between the slaveholding States; but that the admission or exclusion of slaves brought from one into another of them, depends exclusively upon their own particular laws...

When I came to consider this subject, there were two or three general purposes which seemed to me most desirable, if possible, to accomplish. The one was to settle all the controverted questions arising out of the subject of slavery; and it seemed to me to be doing very little if we settled one question and left other disturbing questions unconquered. It seemed to me to be doing, but little if we stopped one leak only in the ship of State, and left other leaks capable of producing danger, if not destruction, to the vessel. I therefore turned my attention to every subject connected with the intimidation of slavery, and out of which controverted questions laws sprung, to see if it were possible or practicable to accommodate and adjust the whole of them.

Another principal object which attracted my attention was, to endeavor to frame such a scheme of accommodation as that neither of the two classes of States into which our country is unhappily divided should make a sacrifice of any great principle. I believe, sir, that the series of resolutions which I have had the honor of presenting to the Senate accomplishes that object.

Another purpose, sir, which I had in view was this: I was aware of the difficulty of opinion prevailing between these two classes of States. I was aware that while a portion of the Union was pushing matters, «as it seemed to me, to a dangerous extremity, another portion of the Union was pushing them to an opposite, and perhaps to a no less dangerous extremity. It appeared to me, then, that if any adjustment, any satisfaction adjustment could be made of the controverted questions be-
between the two classes of States, that adjustment, that arrangement, could only be successful and effectual by exciting from both parties some concession—out of principle, not of principle at all, but of feeling, of opinion, in relation to the matters in controversy between them. I believe that the resolutions which I have prepared fulfill that object. I believe that you will find upon that careful, rational, and attentive examination of them which I think they deserve, that by them, neither party concedes any concession of principle at all, though the concessions of forbearance are ample.

Jones C. Calhoun, March 6, 1830

... A single section, governed by the will of the numerical majority, has now, in fact, the control of the Government and the entire powers of the system. What was once a constitutional Federal Republic is now converted, in reality, into one as absolute as that of the Autocrat of Russia, and as despotic in its tendency as any absolute Government that ever existed.

As, then, the North has the absolute control over the Government, it is manifest that on all questions between it and the South, where there is diversity of interest, the interests of the latter will be sacrificed to the former, however oppressive the effects may be, as the South possesses no means by which it can resist through the action of the Government.

... There is a question of vital importance to the southern section, in reference to which the views and feelings of the two sections are as opposite and hostile as they can possibly be.

This tangible feeling on the part of the North towards the social organization of the South long lay dormant, but it only required some cause to act on those who felt most intensely that they were responsible for its continuance, to call it into action. The increasing power of this Government, and of the control of the northern States over all its departments, furnished the cause. This was sufficient of itself to put the most fanatical portion of the North in action for the purpose of destroying the existing relation between the two races in the South.

The first organized movement toward it commenced in 1835. Then, for the first time, societies were organized, presses established, lecturers sent forth, to excite the people of the North, and inordinate publications scattered over the whole South, through the mails. The South was thoroughly aroused. Meetings were held everywhere, and resolutions adopted, calling upon the North to apply a remedy to arrest the threatened evil, and pledging themselves to adopt measures for their own protection if it was not arrested. At the meeting of Congress, petitions poured in from the North, calling upon Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, and to prohibit what they called the internal slave trade between the States, amounting at the same time that their ultimate object was to abolish slavery, not only in the District, but in the States and throughout the Union.

... With the increase of their influence, they extended the sphere of their action. In a short time after the commencement of their first movement, they had acquired sufficient influence to induce the Legislatures of most of the northern States to pass acts which in effect abrogated the provision of the Constitution that provides for the delivery up of fugitive slaves. This was followed by petitions and resolutions of Legislatures of the northern States and popular meetings, to exclude the northern States from all territories acquired or to be acquired, and to prevent the admission of any State hereafter into the Union by construction, does not prohibit slavery.

... I return to the question with which I commenced. How can the Union be saved? There is but one way by which it can be saved in any certainty, and that is, by a full and final settlement, on the principle of justice, of all the questions at issue between the two sections. The South asks for justice, simple justice, and less she sought not to take. She has no compromise
to offer but the Constitution, and no concession or surrender to make. She has already surrendered so much that she has little left to surrender. Such a surrender would go to the root of the evil, and remove all cause of discontent; by satisfying the South she could remove hostility and safety in the Union, and thereby remove the harmony and fraternal feelings between the sections which caused antipathy in the Missouri agitation. Nothing else can, with any certainty, finally and forever set the question at issue, terminate agitation, and save the Union.

But can this be done? Yes, easily, not by the weaker party, but it can of itself do nothing—not even protect itself—but by the stronger. The North has only to will it to accomplish it—to do justice by conceding to the South an equal right in the acquired territory, and to do her duty by causing the stipulations relative to fugitive slaves to be faithfully fulfilled—to cease the agitation of the slave question, and to provide for the insertion of a provision in the Constitution, by an amendment, which will ensure the South in substance the power the possession of protecting herself, before the equilibrium between the sections was destroyed by the action of this Government. There will be no difficulty in devising such a provision—one that will protect the South, and which at the same time will improve and strengthen the Government, instead of impairing and weakening it.

But will the South agree to do this? It is for her to answer this question. But, I will say, she cannot refuse, if she has the love of the Union which she professes to have, without justly exposing herself to the charge that her love of power and aggrandizement is far greater than her love of the Union. At all events, the responsibility of saving the Union rests on the North, and not the South,

Daniel Webster, March 7, 1850

Mr. President, I wish to speak to-day, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a northern man, but as an American, and a member of the Senate of the United States. . . . It is not to be denied that we live in the midst of strong agitations, and are surrounded by very considerable dangers to our institutions of government. The imprisoned winds are let loose. The East, the West, the North, and the stormy South, all combine to throw the whole mass into commotion, to test its limits to the skies, and to dictate its profoundest depths. I do not wish to regard myself, Mr. President, as bold as to hold the helm in this combat of the political elements; but I have a duty to perform, and I mean to perform it with facility—not without a sense of surrounding dangers, but not without hope. I have a part to act, not for my own security or safety, for I am looking out for no fragment upon which to fasten away from the wave; I seek there must be, but for the good of the whole, and the preservation of the whole; and there is but which will keep me to my duty during this struggle, whether the sun and the stars shall appear, or shall not appear, for many days I speak to-day for the preservation of the Union. "There is no for my cause." I speak to-day out of a sedulous and anxious heart, for the restoration is the country of that quiet and that harmony which make the greatness of this Union so rich and so dear to us all.

Now, as to California and New Mexico, I hold slavery to be excluded from those territories by a law even more certain to which adhering and sanctions it in Texas—I mean the law of nature—at physical geography—the law of the formation of the earth. That law settles forever, with a strength beyond all terms of human expression, that slavery shall not exist in California or New Mexico. . . . I look upon it, therefore, as a fixed fact, to use an expression current at this day, the behalf California and New Mexico are destined to be free, so far as they are settled at all, which, I believe, especially is regarded to New Mexico, will be very late for a great length of time—free be the arrangement of things by the Power above us, I have therefore to say, in this respect also,
that this country is fixed for freedom, to
as many persons as shall ever live there, by
an ineradicable and a more irremovable law,
than the law that attaches to the right of
holding slaves in Texas; and I will fur-
ther, that if a resolution, or a law, were
now before us, to provide a territorial gov-
ernment for New Mexico. I would not
vote to put my proposition into it what-
ever. The use of such a provision would
be idle, as it respects any effect it would
have upon the territory; and I would not
take pains to stigmatize an ordinance of na-
ture, nor to redden the will of God. And
I would put in no Wilmot proviso, for the
purpose of a taunt or a reproach. I would
put into it no evidence of the venge of su-
perior power, to wound the pride, even
whether a just pride, a national pride, or
an irrational pride—to wound the pride of
the gentleman, who belongs to the north-
ern States. I have no such object—to such
purpose. They would think it a vaunt
as indignity. They would think it to be
an act of taking away from them what
they regard a proper equality of privilege,
and whether they expect to realize any
benefit from it or not, they would think it
a delusive wrong—that something more or
less derogatory to their character and
their rights had taken place. I propose to
exclude no such wound upon any body, un-
less something essentially important to the
country, and efficient to the perpetuation
of liberty and freedom, is to be ef-
feeted, ...

Now, Mr. President, I have established,
so far as I proposed to go into any line of
observation to establish, the proposition
with which I set out, and upon which I
propose to stand or fall; and that is, that
the whole territory of the States is the
United States, or in the newly-acquired
territory of the United States, has a fixed
and settled character: now fixed and set-
ted by law, which can not be repealed in
the case of Texas, without a violation of
public faith, and can not be repealed by
any human power in regard to California
or New Mexico, that, under one or other
of these laws, every foot of territory in the
States, or in the Territories, has now re-
cived a fixed and decided character . . .
And now, Mr. President, instead of
speaking of the possibility or utility of re-
cision, instead of dwelling in these ca-
venus of darkness, instead of grappling with
those ideas so full of all that is absurd and
horrible, let us come out into the light of
day; let us enjoy the fresh air of liberty
and health; let us cherish those hopes
which belong to us; let us devote ourselves
to those great objects that are set for our
consideration and our action; let us make
our conceptions to the magistracy and the
importance of the duties that devolve upon
us; let our comprehension be as broad as
the country for which we act, our aspira-
tions as high as its certain destiny; let us
not be shrinkers in a case that calls for
bravery. Never did those devolve, on any genera-
tion of men, higher duties than now de-
vote us, us for the preservation of this
Constitution, and the harmony and peace
of all who are destined to live under it. Let
us make our generation one of the strong-
est, and the brightest link, in that golden
chain which is destined, I fully believe, to
grapple the people of all the States; to
the Constitution, for ages to come. It is a
great popular Constitutional Government,
guarded by legislation, by law, by judici-
aries, and defended by the whole affection
of the people. No monarchic throne
presses these States together; no iron chain
of despotic power encircles them; they live
and stand upon a Government popular in its
form, representative in its character,
founded upon principles of equality, and
calculated, we hope, to last forever. Is all
its history, it has been beneficent; it has
trodden down no man's liberty. It has
cried no State. Its daily registration is
liberty and patriotism; its ye quenchful
veils are full of enterprise, courage, and
honorable loss of glory and renown. It
has received a vast addition of territory.
Large beliefs, the country has grown, by re-
cent events, become vastly larger. This Re-
public now extends, with a vast boundless
across the whole continent. The two great
seal of the world wash the one and the
but there. We realize on a mighty scale, the beautiful description of the ornamented edge of the buckler of Achilles—

"Now, the broad, shield complete the artist adorned,
With his bare hand, and poised the ocean round;
In living silver Wore the wave to roll,
And rose the buckler's verge, and bound the whole."

*William Seward, March 21, 1859*

... But, sir, if I could overcome my repugnance to compromisers in general, I should object so this one. On the ground of the impossibility and inconsistency of the interests to be compromised. Why, sir, according to the views I have submitted, California ought to come in, and must come in, whether slavery stands or falls in our Union of Columbia, whether slavery stands or falls in New Mexico and Eastern California, and even whether slavery stands or falls in the slave State. I should have voted for her admission, even if she had come as a slave State. California ought so come in, and must come in, at all events. It is, then, an indisputable — a paramount question. What, then, are these questions arising out of slavery. What unpatriotic, but collateral questions? They are unnecessary and incongruous, and therefore false issues, not introduced designately, indeed, to defeat the great policy, yet unavoidably tending to that end. . . .

Your Constitution and laws convert hospitality to the fugitive, from the most degrading oppression on earth, into a virtue, but all mankind except you state by hospitality a virtue. The right of extradition of a fugitive from justice, is not admitted by the law of nature and of nations, not even in voluntary compacts. . . . The law of nations discusses such compacts; the law of nature, written on the breasts and consciences of freemen, resolvents them. Armed power could not enforce them, because there is no public conscience to sustain them. I know that there are laws of various sorts which regulate the conduct of men. There are consciences and statutes, codes mercantile and codes civil, but what we are legislating for States, especially when we are founding States, all these laws must be brought to the standard of the laws of God, and must be tried by that standard, and must stand or fall by it. . . .

To conclude on this point: We are not stateholders. We cannot, in our judgment, be either free Christian or real freemen, if we impart on another a chain that we deny to human power to fasten on ourselves. You believe and think otherwise, and doubtless with equal sincerity. We judge you not, and He alone who ordained the conscience of man and its laws of action, can judge us. Do we, then, in this conflict, demand or you an unreasonable thing in asking that, since you will have property that one and will exercise human powers to effect its escape, you shall be your own police, and in acting among us as such, you shall conform to principles indispensable to the security of admitted rights of freemen? If you will have this law expected, you must abandon, not increase its rigor. . . .

There is another aspect of the principle of compromise, which deserves consideration. It assuages the slavery, if not the only solution in a slave State, is at least a selling institution, and that this characteristic is recognized by the Constitution. But slavery is only one of many institutions there, and freedom is equally an institution there. Slavery is only a temporary, accidental, partial, and incongruous one; freedom, on the contrary, is a personal, organic, universal one, in harmony with the Constitution of the United States. The slaveholder belongs under the protection of the latter, in common with all the free citizens of the State, but it is more, an indispensable institution. You may separate slavery from South Carolina, and the State will still remain; but if you subvert freedom there, the State will come to exist. But the spirit of this compromise gives complete ascendancy in
the slave State, and in the Constitution of the United States, to the subject, is, acco-
cedent, and incongruous institution ever its paramount antagonist. To reduce the claim for slavery, to an absurdity, it is only necessary to add, that there are only two States in which slaves are a majority, and one in which the slaveholders are not a very disproportionate minority.

But there is yet another aspect in which this principle must be examined. It regards the domain only as a possession, to be en-
joyed, either in common or by partition, by the citizens of the old States. It is true, indeed, that the national domain is ours; it is true, it was acquired by the value and with the wealth of the whole nation; but we hold, nevertheless, no arbitrary author-
ity over it. We hold no arbitrary authority over anything, whether acquired lawfully, or seized by usurpation. The Constitution regulates our stewardship; the Constitu-
tion devotes the domain to union, to jus-
tice, to defence, to welfare, and to lib-
erty.

But there is a higher law than the Con-
stitution, which regulates our authority over the domain, and devotes it to the same noble purpose. The necessity is a fact—no inconsiderable fact—of the
common heritage of mankind, bestowed upon them by the Creator of the universe. We are its stewards, and must so discharge our trust as to secure its highest attain-
able degree, its happiness.

Sir, there is no climate ungenial to slavery. It is true, it is less productive than free labor, in many northern countries; but so is it less productive than free white labor in even tropical climates. Labor is in demand quick in all new countries. Slave labor is cheaper than free labor; and it would go first into new regions; and wherever it goes, it brings labor into dis-
honor; and therefore, very white labor avoids competition with it. Sir, I might rely on climate if I had not been born in a land where slavery exists—and this land was all of it north of the 30th parallel of latitude—and if I did not know the struggle it has cost, and which is yet going on, to get complete relief from the institutions and its unlawful consequences. I desire to propose this question to those who are now in favor of dispensing with the Wilmot proviso, Was the ordinance of
1812 necessary or not? Necessary, we all agree, it has received too many exultations to be now deemed an idle and super-
fluous thing. And yet that ordinance ex-
tended the inhibition of slavery from the 36th to the 40th parallel of north latitude, and now we are told that the inhibition named is unnecessary anywhere north of 36° 30'. We are also told that we may rely upon the laws of God, which prohibit slave labor north of that line, and that it is absurd to retrace the laws of God. Sir, there is no human enactment which is just, that is not a reincarnation of the law of
God. The Constitution of the United States, and the constitutions of all the States, are full of such enactments.

Wherever I find a law of God, or a law of nature disregarded, or in danger of being disregarded, there I shall vote to reaffirm it, with all the sanction of the civil au-
thority. But I find no authority for the
provision, that climate prevents slavery any-
where. It is the intolerance of mankind, in any climate, and not the natural necessity, that introduces slavery in any climate. •

But you reply that, nevertheless, you must have guarantees; and the first one is for the surrender of fugitives from labor. That guaranty you cannot have, as I have already shown, because you cannot roll back the tide of social progress. You must be content with what you have. If you wage war against us, you can, at most, only conquer us, and then all you can get will be a truce, and that you have already.

But you insist on a guaranty against the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, or war. Well, when you shall have declared war against us, you can, at least, hinder us from immediately deposing that slavery shall cease within the national capitol.

You say that you will not submit to the exclusion of slaves from the new terri-
tories. What will you gain by resistance?
Liberty follows the sword, although her way is not of peace and concord... Can you propagate slavery, then, by the sword? You insist that you cannot submit to the freedom with which slavery is discussed in the free States. Will war — a war for slavery — arise, or even moderate, that discussion? No, sir; that discussion will not cease; war would only inflame it to a greater height. It is a part of the eternal conflict between truth and error — between mind and physical force — the conflict of man against the obstacles which oppose his way to an ultimate and glorious destiny. It will go on until you shall terminate it in the only way in which any State or nation has ever terminated it — by yielding to it — yielding in your own time, and in your own manner, indeed, but nevertheless yielding in the progress of emancipation. You will do this, sooner or later, whatever may be your opinion now, because nations which were prudent, and wise, as you are, have done so already...

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

When Stephen A. Douglas introduced the Kansas-Nebraska Bill (1854), repealing the Missouri Compromise provision which would have barred slavery from new territories, a group of anti-slavery men in Congress issued a stirring manifesto appealing to all lovers of liberty to awaken to a "plot against humanity and democracy" so "dangerous" as to put "in imminent peril... the dearest interests of freedom and the Union." The charges they made and the inferences they drew as to the motives and probable effects of the Bill were hardly sound. That, however, did not matter. All that was sacred, as they saw it, was endangered by the "Slave Power" on the march. Only an aroused and alarmed people could check its progress.

The unique advantage which this group had taken of Douglas and the irresolvable charge they had made, provoked him to a Senate speech in which he exclaimed the author of the Appeal. The substance of his own account of the origin of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill is contained in a book he is said to have dictated to his brother-in-law, M. Catts, in 1859. It is here reprinted in part in the second excerpt below.

Whatever the motives, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was of momentous consequences. It precipitated the full fury of the partisan propaganda war, destroyed the old party lines, and led directly to "bleeding Kansas" and the establishment of the Republican party.


APPEAL OF THE INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

Washington, January 19, 1854. Fellow-Citizens: As Senators and Representatives in the Congress of the United States, it is our duty to warn our constituents whenever imminent danger menaces the freedom of our institutions or the permanency of our Union. Such danger, as we firmly believe, now impending, and we earnestly solicit your prompt attention to it... At the present session, a new Nebraska bill has been reported by the Senate Committee on Territories, which, should it unhappily receive the sanction of Congress, will open all the unorganized territory of the Union to the ingress of slavery.

We arraign this bill as a gross violation of a sacred pledge, as a criminal betrayal of precious rights; as part and parcel of an atrocious plot to exclude from a vast unoccupied region immigrants from the Old World, and free laborers from our own States, and convert it into a desolate region of despotism, inhabited by serfs and slaves...

We beg your attention, fellow-citizens, to these historical facts. The original settled policy of the United States, clearly indicated by the Jefferson proviso of 1820, and by the ordinance of 1854, was non-extension of slavery.