

1950

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Recommended Citation

Yulee, David L. (1950) "Two Letters of David L. Yulee," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 29 : No. 2 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol29/iss2/5>

TWO LETTERS OF DAVID L. YULEE

HIS OPINION ON SECESSION IN 1860

*A letter to Charles E. Dyke, Editor, Floridian. and
Journal*

Washington, May 26, 1860

Dear Sir:- I have received your letter. I was inclined to avoid expression of my views, because, in some respects they are at variance with those generally entertained by trusted and able leaders of Southern opinion, in whose judgment and fidelity I have great confidence. But, as you make the request in so distinct a manner, and so formally, that to decline an answer might imply either disrespect to yourself or indifference to the subject. I have concluded, in view of the difficult conjuncture we have reached, to give you my opinions briefly- in reply. They are conclusions about which I entertain no hesitating doubts.

The delegation from Florida, in company with others, retired from the Charleston Convention because that body refused to recognize, by distinct declaration, the indubitable right of our people to occupy the Federal territories with our slave property, and to be protected in that right by the Federal authority. This is an existing fact which cannot be changed.

The right involved in the issue is one which the Democracy of Florida unitedly hold, the claim of which cannot be surrendered nor compromised, because it may be to our interests in the future to assert and enforce it, but which is not of present practical importance, the destiny of all the territory of the Union, now possessed, being already settled. The compromise measures of 1850, shut us out from the Pacific slope, and cribbed the South to the Eastward of the Rocky Mountains. Except New Mexico, there is no territory, the climate of which will allow the profitable use of slaves. In that territory the

This letter of Senator Yulee's was published in the Tallahassee *Floridian* and *Journal* of June 9, 1860 and copied in the *St. Augustine Examiner* of June 23, 1860. The original draft in the handwriting of Yulee, with numerous corrections also in his hand, is among the Yulee Papers at the University of Florida.

tenure of slave property is fully protected by the local laws.

The new Republican party has settled upon the ground that anti-slavery, or freedom as they term it, is the normal condition of all Federal territory, and that it is the duty of Congress to take care that slaves are not intruded upon it. The practical scope of the issue they present is, that there shall be no more colonization of territory by slaveholders, nor any more admission of States recognizing or allowing that form of servitude. No more slave States, is the corner stone of their organization and their cry in the campaign.

This offensive and unjust issue the Democratic party of the whole Union join, without division, in rebuking and opposing.

A great part, I should perhaps say the greater part,, of the Northern wing of the party, hold that the inhabitants of the territory may regulate the subject for themselves whenever organized under Congressional authority, into a separate territorial community.

All, or nearly all, of the Southern portion of the party deny this, and have the advantage of judicial sanction for their opinion.

A portion of the Democracy in the Southern States, by no means inconsiderable in numbers and statesmanship, while denying the power claimed for the territorial population, adopt the compromise ground of Congressional non-intervention; or, in other words, agree, that however the right may be in law, there shall be no legislative interference by Congress with the subject of slavery in the Territories.

All those of the Northern wing of the Democracy who have not reached the conviction of our right to active legislative interference for protection in the Territories, agree to this compromise of Congressional abstinence or non-intervention..

It is not to be expected that we can bring the masses of our Northern Democratic brethren, all at once, to stand

upon higher ground than a respectable portion of the South is content to occupy.

While, therefore, the South tolerates among its own citizens a division of opinion upon this subject, and keeps within its party organizations (both Democratic and opposition) avowed and zealous advocates of non-intervention, we cannot expect our friends in the North to be undivided against it; for the issue is one chiefly of Southern interest and easy enough to be carried in its extremest form in the South, but difficult to be carried in any form by a party in the North, under existing circumstances.

Individually, I have never, in any form or to any degree, yielded my approbation, or assent, or countenance to the idea that the inhabitants of a Territory have any power to exclude slaveholders, or to the other idea of Congressional non-intervention as a compromise. I met the issue upon both points instantly upon this suggestion in 1847, and 1848, and have never changed nor modified my position.

The one issue which I consider it incumbent upon the South never to abandon is the right of colonization; or, as I once expressed it, the Liberty of Growth.

My opinion is that the Democratic party of Florida should stand where it is.

I have never been favorable to the plan of National Conventions. They are, on the contrary, very objectionable to me. I think they have resulted in dwarfing the standard of statesmanship, compromising the true principles of the Constitution, confusing instead of simplifying the party issues, and perverting the system of the Constitution to the detriment of the smaller States of the Union. I heartily wish this may be the last of them and am anxious to see our State relieved from entanglement with this vicious party device.

I would not send a delegation to the proposed Richmond Convention, because I never wish to witness a Southern *party* convention, be the number of States sending delegates few or many—the more—the more dangerous. In a convention of Southern *states*, many or few,

I am ready to join at any time-the sooner, in my judgment, the better for our own security and for the Union. But a Southern party convention is a means to divide and weaken the South without any countervailing good.

I would not send a delegation to Baltimore, because, having once left the convention, we cannot return with dignity and self-satisfaction; because I do not believe the convention can or will, nor could any National Convention, in the present divided opinion of the constituencies, come up to the full declaration of the principle upon which we went out, while to accept any compromise of it, or even a doubtful declaration, might involve us in an apparent surrender of our ground ; and because I do not wish to give further countenance to National Conventions.

I would support the nominee of the Baltimore Convention, if nominated by a vote of *two thirds of the Convention*, because a sufficient number of the votes from the South must combine in such result to challenge our respect; because the policy I' would desire for the South, and which I will not now explain, is most likely to prevail under the administration of such a nominee; because our support could be given, under the circumstance of our withdrawal and persistent absence, without involving us in any surrender or modification, direct or implied, of our claim to full rights in the territories ; and because I do not think it advisable to dissolve the great Democratic party, which has so long upheld the Constitution of the country and the rights of the States, and which is yet destined, I hope, to much useful service in the cause of Constitutional Government. It is entirely united now in resistance to the odious abolition issues of no more slave States and the civil equality of the negro race, and if the coming campaign does no more than to trample out these abominable -and monstrous violation& of the principles of our Federal Union, it will have accomplished much.

[*Secession*]

I give my opinions without arguing to convince or persuade others to their adoption. They are very much in-

fluenced by the very serious and controlling conviction I entertain, that if the modern Republicans succeed in acquiring possession of the Federal Government, it will be the duty of the Southern States to secede from the present confederacy until new guaranties of their rights can be obtained; and in failure of this, to seek their safety in a new Union of sympathizing and homogeneous States.

Respectfully,
Your obedient serv't,
D. L. YULEE.

CHAS. E. DYKE, ESQ., Tallahassee.

DUTY

A letter to his son

New York, Octbr 18, 1856

My Dear Son.

You have returned home and father was not there to meet you. Your mother writes me you are becoming impatient to see me. I am glad to hear that, because it is a sign you love me, and think of me. I am very anxious to see you too; because I love you very much. If I was not kept away by a duty, I would have come long ago to hug you in my arms.

You will wish to know what is meant by a duty. I will try to explain it to you. You cannot fully understand such matters yet, but you can begin to try to understand them.

God made us all. As he had the power to make us, and it was his will to make us, he made us as he pleased; and the same power and will can change us, or destroy us, how and when he pleases. And so, because God made us, we are subject to his will. If you make a picture on your slate, you can change it when you please, and destroy it by rubbing it out when you please: And the picture is only on the slate because you chose to make it-and stays there because you chose to keep it there. It couldn't make itself-and it couldn't keep itself there. Could it? So it

is subject to your will. Well then for the reason that God by his power made us, and keeps us in existence, we are subject to his will If your will is that the picture shall hang on the wall, there it has to hang But it has no life and no understanding. The difference between the picture you made and the man God made is that God had the great power to make man with life and understanding When God tells the man that he has made that he must do this, or do that, the man ought to do it—because God made him and has a right to use him.

That is duty—to obey the will of God, who made us.

Now one of the commands of God is that besides loving him, we must also love our fellow men. So then, it is our duty to love all men—because that is God's will and command—and He made us.

Well, when we love any one we wish to make them happy—we give them anything we have—we do anything that will be useful to them or give them pleasure. As an example. You love your mother, and because you love her you like to do what she desires you to do, and to give her anything you have that would please her, and to spend your time in making her happy, and being useful to her.

Well, as I love my fellow men, I spend time in doing what will be useful to them, and will make them happy. One of the things that will do them good and make them happy, is to make a rail-road, so that they can visit each other easier, and get more good from what they labor to make from the earth. And so, as nobody else was attending to making this railroad for them, and I could do it, it was my duty to do it: for God made me to love my fellow creatures, and I can only show my love for them, by making myself useful to them.

So then, I am absent from Washington doing a duty, and that has kept me away from you and I am losing all the pleasure of seeing you, and your sister, and your mother, and aunts, because I ought to do my duty to others when it is not contrary to my duty to my family—for God has bid me to serve my family first. My family-

is my wife, and my children, and all that depend upon me.

I don't think you can understand what I have been writing to you, but as it is a great happiness for a man to obey God, and act under a sense of duty, I wish to help you turn your thoughts in that direction as early as possible. You will get a little glimmer of what I mean from this letter-and every now and then I will tell you the same thing over and over again-and at last you will understand and be accustomed to think about it. And this will help you to make you a good man-and if you are a good man you will be a happy man.

This City that I am in is a very large one. (One of these days I will bring you to see it.) There are ten times more people here than in Washington. And yet I am not happy with them, but am longing to be at Washington—Why? because I love you, and sister and mother-and you are all in Washington. Of all the people in this place and of all the people in this world, I love your mother, and sister, and you most-so you can judge how much I love you.

Now, my son, I wish you every morning to go and kiss little Margaret for me, and tell her it is for father-and then do the same with mother.

God bless you my son

Yr father
D. L. YULEE

MASTER CHARLES W. YULEE