West Point,
Dec 9, 1860.

My Dear Mr. Davis,

With the repeal of the Wilmot Proviso, no substitute being supplied, the existence of the Union became in danger.

In all wise policy, there are arrangements and organic laws theoretically inconsistent, but practically harmonious and beneficial. In the Constitution of England, and of the United States many instances may be found. Admit in the compromise metaphysical inconsistency with some legal principles. Practically it solved a difficult question.

It has ever seemed to my judgment that the greatest and wisest statesmen...
are they who can allow theoretical con-
tradictions, if thereby they attain per-
manent and permanent benefits, unattainable by
any other method.

One of the reasons why I despair
of the Republic is that so many of the pub-
lic men do not have that kind of Statesman
ship. The prominent question in their minds
is not "cui bono?". The sincere appear to be oc-
cupied with deductions and abstractions;
the insincere with plans for personal success,
at the risk of public ruin. A Statesman re-
veres what he finds consecrated by time; makes
no radical changes without necessity; appre-
ciates constantly the value of "masterly mea-
tivity" when inferior men would baffle and
fail; and when he finds that a measure
works well, is satisfied, though a whole cloud
of logicians and fanatics, and lawyerlings
must prove theoretically that it can and
must not work, as with his own eyes he
sees it working. Such men are not abundant
now. These are other reasons for my despair.

See sagacious business men, so like Children
in the very elements of political science; men of mark and in public life, who have no appreciation of the distinction between State and national politics; but heedlessly conclude that what is not destructive in carrying a state election is safe among the delicate nerves and thrumming arteries of the great body politic. I am saddened at the strange and appalling forgetfulness of the faithful counsels of Washington; at the oversight of the first elements of American legislation which required mutual tolerance and in all things the minimum of interference; at the return of the spirit we supposed had been left on the other side of the Atlantic, which seeks to weave moral and religious theories, with legislation and public measures; at the disregard of the very alphabet, the very first spurious element of civilized society and government—that it is a heading of diverse feelings, interests, passions, opinions, into one harmonious whole—harmonious because diversified, and diversified because one.
But I know not when I should for
minimize the last, if I continued. I there
fore leave it abruptly.

Regarding then the coming evil at
present, I only want to fulfill an office
of friendship. Do it because I suffice
you need the counsel especially. You
have acted on the public scene with
propriety and dignity. Go to the last,
in this solemn and awful crisis.

Remember my dear friend that
the eyes of the world are on you. What
is now said, and what is now done
will pass into history. You are made
you that are about to apply that terrible
remedy of decision, a spectacle to the
world, and the future, and to gazing and
wistful crowds. Let every thought and
word be weighed. Give no disproportionate
thought this act. Let all be with the dignity
and calmness becoming your lofty
position as a Senator.
But I have more to say. Yes, I know it to be in vain. Yet I must say it as a matter of duty.

You ought not to go out of the Union. You can gain all you want within it. You can fight the battle most effectively there. Wait but a year, and you will see the manifestations of a public sentiment which will surprise you.

It is rising like the ocean tide. Christian people and little children are praying daily and nightly for the preservation of the Union. The national heart is limpid, and its tears are flowing. In my home and at my family altar that prayer is incessant. Ministers who never touch on party politics are speaking now for the preservation of national existence. Men that knew Christ's Kingdom is not of this world, who would not pollute their tongue with the voice of partisans, they are calling spontaneously, and apart, in different denominations, for the states that have “broken the covenant” and seized unconstitutional land, to re-secure them, and to repeal those two, un-
conditionally, not with a motive, but because it is right; because what is against the highest law of the land is illegal and to sanction it is wrong. I have been reading such sermons. I have heard of others. The other day I met a clergyman in New York, who had just delivered me, and who was then hastening to one of many prayer meetings held solely to pray that the Union might be preserved and secession avoided. His heart was full. Oh how those men speak with blended grief, and shame, and bitter prophesies of the fanatical preachers who have been beating the drum of discord and repeating the extravagance of Cromwell's day. This great tide is rising fast. They are wise who see its approach. They are mad, who think it good. The sentiment of national existence is to a people what life is to an individual. A people think from anarchy as man from death.
These deep sentiments lie under that which I have said give me so much encouragement, as the calm deeps of the ocean lie beneath the rush on the surface. Could you but wait, could you but have patience, I know you would find within the union all you could desire.

My heart is full my dear friend. I love my country. It has been to me a holy sentiment. I have believed and acted on the belief till it has become a part of my being, that I was to live for God first, and the Church universal with my own, next, and then the country. I knew I was to do so because the public good was the greater; because the great things of collective self-interest were found there; because the discipline of states, and towns and families, and all, was bound in that national weird and derived from it. I say public and mean it. God says, men must lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. This is the reason why we are to pray for all in authority. So I feel.
At this awful moment I feel I must
To appreciate a human body addressed
Trace these wonderful nerves; explore the
Heart and the brain, till you say "fear
fully and wonderfully made." So
As I see this great nation dissolving, as
My heart and my pity run to all the
Mortal and imminent interest affected by it, I understand that in doing what
God told me, and loving my country
Intensely, I was loving man and mor-
tal welfare. Hence I feel deeply, I
must write warmly and plainly.
My heart is aching. I carry to the
Sanctuary and the altar a grief
That knows no cessation. I feel for
The land, for the future, for the interests
Of free governments; for the kindness,
Thrown out of employment; for the
Families in gloom; for the death of
The land gone. Out of the land,
ness. Out of it, I foresee.
I will then state my views.

When the repeal of the Missouri
Compromise was first proposed, Mr.
Ingersoll of Connecticut, mentioned it to
me as we were walking towards the Cap-
itol where I was going to the Library. When
I expressed my apprehensions of the
consequences to the Country, he stated that
the President had said he would cut or
swing on the precarious, or something to that
effect. We had reached the top of the stairs
where he would go to the Chamber of Repre-
sentatives, and I turned to the Library. I
shall never forget that moment. It gave
me almost a prophetic vision. The future
vote as in a picture before me, and I said
(I believe) you will turn the whole North
and West into an abolition society and
bring the South into power. The result
has corresponded very nearly to my antici-
pation.

Soon after I was in the North.
Though I had anticipated the feeling,
yet I confess its depth and strength
exceeded all which one could have ex-
pected. The most calm, natural and
conservative men had become violent.
heard them express sentiments like these. This was a lethal compact made between two sections, for all future time, on an acute and delicate question. You of the South have brooked it. I heard the answer made. We of the South did no such thing. It was professed by Northern men, and we would not refuse the boon.

A feeling seemed to exist like that of a person who has received a blow, and who determines to stave it off by a blow given in return.

Those who wanted to make political and literary capital out of the sentiment began to work with all in tendity. Politicians who had put up their law suits after the measure of 1860 were called out. Mr. Stone prepared a work which I have never read. "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Dramas were prepared, in the style of the Octavian, to madden the public mind still more by exaggeration.

The movement went on till the sentiment became a piece which politicians could use effectually.

I need not pass over the details to the present time, known as they are to you.
With this great current were the smaller streams. There was the want of confidence in the integrity of some leading men of the Democratic party. There was this to repeat which would be giving a false tale.

Out of all the mass, I only select one or two particulars. The old Whig party wanted power. The fact was so apparent as to stretch all conscience. They sought to attract all fragments of all parties. They wanted to give cohesion to the mass. They did it by stimulants. They made all the turpentine and the balsam, which parties of all kinds think useful for a political campaign. They charged the cup a little more highly than usual, to be certain of the effect.

With all this rush, there was one concession to conservatism. The candidate who was deemed more radical, was set aside, and the one who was deemed more moderate was selected.

What conclusions do I draw from these facts? None.

First, neither the party nor the successful candidate are such as you
at least many imagine. Many things
were said, in carrying the election, which
were only said to keep up the excitement
and to succeed, in the South. You do not
realize the trickery which adheres to the
leaders of the movement in commercial and
manufacturing communities. They
saw; they said; they said. Listen to the
man, and you would think his very
soul was torn by emotion. But look
at his cool calculating eye, and mark
the almost imperceptible curve in that
part of the mouth where Nature put
the smile and the sneer. You see that
he is calculating, as much as if he
were whittling while making a Shaker
bargain in votes. Draw back; rear
behind the curtain, and you will fail
he is like the character mentioned
by Solomon, who cast firebrands, arrows,
and death, and then say, 'He said
ye may
in vain.' Disregard their trash
of the election, and wait for a public
act, before Secession.
As to the successful Candidate.
In all fairness, it must be said that he
gives evidence that he is an honest Con-
servative man. If he were put so his
hands are tied, then there is the constitution
already always at hand. His past-offense de-
monstrates quite strongly if he had no idea of losing significance.
Secondly, if you remain in the Union
that party cannot endure. No party can
which is based on a single idea. It can
stand upon a point while it is rapidly whis-
pering. As the motion ceases, mark it, stopping,
and listen to its humming, till it rolls, all
buzzing, hushed, upon the floor. It was
kept critical by excitement. But what do you
see, even now? The strength of the democratic
party was in its nationality. That caused a
multitude of sins. In the old wing party
was the want either of that essential ele-
ment or of its satisfactory manifestation.
In our present Union, no party yet altogether can indulge.
If you go out of the Union, then there
is a different outlook on which I will not
enter. The curtain I dare not lift.
Equacitism with nationality is!
But I will not go on.

Thirdly. The sober second thought
of the people will settle things to you
satisfaction. The North thought that you struck a blow in the repeal of the compromise. They give a blow in return by this election. The two sides then stand even. But, we may cry, let there now be parted, and made to keep the peace.

I believe that if time be only given, things may now be settled on a basis of pacification.

Fifthly, I do earnestly and fully believe that if you remain in the Union a geographical, sectional party will never be formed again. Now men are rebuilding the wall. Now they feel the evil, brought by it. They see the gulf of national anarchy growing before them. The stern determination now is forming and expressed to put an end to things dear forever. It shall never be again either among ourselves or the children.

Fifthly, there is real and deep affection for you in the heart of the North. A family quarrel has been created. Hard words have been said. Those who thought they could pick up some money from the fire, have stimulated the quarrel.
Put oh be assured, there is no set.
Red hate. You are none of our line,
they will say to you. Our fathers fought
it together; and we have wrought together
to build up this magnificent nation.
We have had a quarrel. Let us shake
hands and be friends. Talk with the
rest of them. My dear friend and
see if it be not so.
Sixthly, you rights cannot be and
will not be attacked within any of your
states. The best measure perhaps to
continue and deserve the abolition in
pule is to put at the head of affairs
such a man at the head of such
a party. The outs are often radical
enough. When they are in power they
push away the ladder and become
conservative. Look at Carnwell and
Carnell ut, at Napoleon's writings when
a subaltern, and his act, and looks at
Carnell, and his influence. Look over the hi
story of parties in England. The possession
of power makes you conservative.
A Government is to be administered
and under every party the task
is very much the same.
But I must not weary you. I will at present draw no undue
conclusions.

What then is the prospect of your
prospect it is sunk to you?
Go out of the Union. Right no doubt,
as nurtured scenes appear to the imagi-
nation, always, when we pursue some
cause of action, and feel the stirrings
of hope. But to lay the foundation of
a new government, to secure the wise
adjustment of liberty and law; to form
and sustain the elements of national
power; to secure recognition among
the nations of the earth, to secure
loans, fix revenues, secure income
satisfy public creditors; to write and
regulate immigration; to apportion
taxation so as not to cause disturbance
and not to drive out population;
to raise an Army and Navy and
to erect fortifications; to be strong
enough on the sea to carry out all your aims, and yet to be able to wield
the armament of powerful nations,
--all this and more, which I might enumerate, will be
found a task of no slight magnitude.

But on the attack, suppose
consideration which will tend to force
--it seems to me that nations grow
like the trees of a forest; they grow when
things do combine to make those
rise naturally. But when the attempt
is to make to build those artificially to
force them by unnatural efforts, to cre
ate a nationality, because of some one
grievance, or for some one dispute or
I cannot see that they succeed. I cannot
see the element which all history shows
they must have for succeeding.

Oh that you could remain. It
is sweet as the music of varied and
well-sung voices, this according legis-
lation from diversified states. The South
furnishes that class of men, which
is the true and last reliance of all
governments. Country gentlemen
were lauded profusely. The other sec
was give that which in that wet 
the
puishe a heated mass too much
absorbed in gain for the highest political
wisdom yet too much linked with gain
to be only fanatical and one-sided.
Blended together how all deficiencies
are met, but all demands supplied!
It was such a mixture which carried
us through the Revolution and gave
us the Constitution. Washington in a
country gentleman, the symbols of
the land. They in every stage what
was due to that class. To cut this
concert of diversified voices heedless in
harmony, the harmony of political
and social order, and to say this on
cost cannot go on half face, and
half tackle, seems to me madness.
What government can you have, what
society can you have, what
confederacy state union, village if
there is to be no diversity! That one
part of the village break from the
other, because one eats with three
yunged folks, and the other with
two! The Indians then lie in the
right way. The flat heads and the Chey
ennies have differences and they have
old scores.
Oh in the Union, you can benefit the country and right yourselves. You will grow in the South. The consequence of the Pacific crossing with population will flow things. The upper part of Texas, Cuba, and your neighborhood will be affected. The Monroe doctrine will be fearlessly applied. You will be strong enough to restore the counterbalance of the Confederacy. The South will either have peace, or control the balance of power. She will sometimes make it, and sometimes unmake it. She will sometimes present for a while a patient, watchful, patient minority, pending its time; and then, a counterbalance; and then a majority, and again a minority. And so through recurrent cycles.

These are my views. I give them without hope. I give them because they will have no influence unless they come from my deep earnestness for the country's welfare and yours own.

If I have any hope of preventing some precipitate action, I would implore. I should say...
to your, look before you, you may succeed. You think you will.
Take in the most favorable view, weigh the conditions for success. Look fully at what must lie between the present and that future.
Lay not out of view the universal law that life moves over, fanaticism will, and that the fanaticism of this country, of England, of Europe, of the age, is now held back by the strong arm of the existing Government. But you may not succeed. Suppose you do not. Then what a future is before the communities led out to try sovereignty and to fail in the attempt?
What position will the leaders occupy in history? If there be no war, how melancholy is the prospect of ephemeral sovereignties dying in vanishing! If there be Civil War, what a prospect, tearing the heart with appalling sick ness! And in Civil War as in other, one side is the Victor. And whichever side be the Victor, what then? Something. And then? Something else. And what then? Yes what then, but what is found or can be formed in the Union!
But I will cease. You are deter mined. Then, still seeking the smallest grains of good in all this mass of evil, I would say to you and to them, you want the empire
This of the world. You want the adm-

iration of posterity. First, wait til you

have a cause and a list of real griev-

ances from the Government you abandon; that you

may stand justified by the verdict of all

nations, and by that of after ages. I have

something more to complain of than bad

words, but acts of States which are null and

void. If you leave a Government without a

single blot from that Government itself, which

you can complain of how will the Declaration

appear by the side of the gigantic act! Will

not one seem small as the moon, and the other,
towering as the mountain! But you say,

there are future dangers from tyrannical

majorities. Sufficient unto the day is the evil

thereof. These anticipated evil may overtake

you, can guard against those in the Union.

May Niles be burned. Shall I therefore

move all my furniture out of doors and

live in a tent during this cold weather? Surely

we should not choose a present evil, to

avoid one that is prospective, and uncer-
tain. I may be started. It does not follow

that I should kill myself.

Next if you will go out, do so with

all calmness and dignity. Look at the great
Eccentrics of the Revolution. So now they learned the admiration even of their foes. For myself I know that you are ready to adopt the sentiment. Let all the "end, think almost at be the Country, the Facts, and Truths. Then if then fall it then, "fallet a Mister." I keep constantly saying more than I intended. I lost the flow of recollecting thought and deep emotions.

Write this in a standing Bakery as a duty of necessity and of charity. I am wearied by labors and sometime disturbed by interruptions. If there be a spirit of industry and completeness that is the cause.

I know that men knew their weakness by going beyond their employment. Hardy they were mine, by writing these on public affairs to a Statesman. The all for the motive.

I never wrote as many words on political affairs before. I never expect to do so again. Nationality has been my sentiment, and I have felt an thirst on the game of politics "ad extra" sympathy with one or another party, with one or another public man, just as its measures and this,
appeared to promote the Common
good. I have never voted. I have never
acted to further or hinder anything, be
cause I knew my Master's principles, an
I saw the wickedness, and the danger
to the Country from mingling religion
with politics. Therefore I leave off now
my ground. Nothing but the expense
and danger could have made me step my
silence; be silent nothing but that all the
act to possible good for yourself.

Regard this letter as to yourself
alone the conversation of friend with
friend. I want tranquility. When the storm
is abroad I would give my mind to the echo
To fulfill my life's mission and work I
must have calmness. Do not bring me into
the arena.

And now, my dear friend, for whom I
have thus spoken out of my deep affec
tion for you be assured that in all the
changes of this mortal life there is
one heart, which will live to the last,
you and yours. My dearie, my longing
one set on seeking some quiet spot, where
I can worship God daily in some lonely
Fenrice, and devote every hour set given
to him, to the embodiment for these after
one of the thoughts which He has given me.
I shall not be rash. I shall not leave until out reason and necessity, a position where Providence has been so full of furtherance and mercy both in the sacred and secular spheres. But to that quiet rest, that elevation from human turmoil; that deadness to all mortal and personal aims, my soul turns in this time of trouble, with all my naturally feeling so sorely I long for the distracted land, and for the friends yet left me. There may I look from earth to heaven when the stars have fallen one by one from the expanse of the country; there may I teach my children those precepts the forgetfulness of which has brought on all this ease. There may I prepare for those after me instructions and ideas which may save from that perilous and unnatural drift into which we have come.

Love to my sons. May God ever bless you. May He guide you, may He guard you, may He keep you from every step which is not at the pleasure of His Heeding.

P. W. B.}
Jefferson Davis

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