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CONGRESSIONAL.

SPEECH OF HON. WM. H. POLK,

OF TENNESSEE,

On the Presidency and the Compromise Measures; delivered in the House of Representatives, April 8, 1852.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, (Mr. HIBBARD in the chair,) on the homestead bill—

Mr. POLK rose and said:

Mr. Chairman, I shall vote for the bill now under consideration. I am in favor of its passage, for the reason that I believe it to be auxiliary in carrying out the mission of this great republic. I believe that its passage would have the effect to attract from the cities on the seaboard that portion of the laboring classes who are living there in a state of poverty, in many cases the most deplorable, and place them in the independent position of the cultivators of the soil—thus contributing to the development of the resources of our country and adding to our progressive greatness.

The government of the United States, Mr. Chairman, is a great one; its policy should be a magnanimous one. For what purpose or object should it retain in its possession the immense tracts of wild land belonging to it? Should it be, sir, to have the grass, the native fruits, and the forest trees growing in wild luxuriance, while a population of laborers, with sinewy arms, are suffered to throng our cities, with not a pulsation in their veins directed to the advancement of the country. Or, sir, shall we, in our endeavors to carry out our mission, to preserve and advance a great nation, send laborers to the ploughshare, give them a right and an interest in the soil, and make their patriotism identified with the interest of the country? If we do that, if war should ever again breathe upon our land, they will enter the army not only with cheerfulness but with enthusiasm. They will know as they march, and when the bullets, the destructive missiles of death, whistle about them, they will be enabled to say, although we may fall here, although we may be cut down, although one of these messengers of death may send us to "that bourne from whence no traveller returns," yet a great, a good, a magnanimous government has furnished for our wives and our babes an abiding-place—a home which cannot be wrested from them. Would not such reflections inspire the heart of any soldier? Would not this policy identify the foreign population with the country and make them of us? These are some of the reasons, Mr. Chairman, which will induce me to vote for the bill.

As it has been the custom, however, to speak upon presidential matters, perhaps it would be well enough for me, in this connexion, to say something upon that subject; and I shall, in the progress of my remarks, call the attention of the House particularly to some remarks, untrue in themselves, identifying the whig party with the compromise measures, that were made on the first day of this session, and which have been subsequently repeated upon this floor, for the purpose of creating a whig capital to which they are not entitled, but to which they have directed all their attention to form, to operate upon the country.

I am, Mr. Speaker, one of those denominated the young Americans. I am in favor of young America; but my definition of what constitutes young America may differ from that of others. What I understand young America to be is to keep up with the progress of the age; to understand the progress of the republic; to live in the eye of the world, and to carry out our great mission. I do not denounce "old fogyism," nor do I classify it as meaning a wrinkled brow, decrepit body, age hanging upon the forehead. I mean by young America, the man that lives up to the present point of our progress, and is ready, and willing, and determined to wield the influence and power of this great government, and to carry it out for the great public good. I contend, sir—and upon this occasion I especially state it—that I object to the remarks made by some who belong to the same glorious party with myself, and whose blood leaps and dances through their veins as mine does.

I object, Mr. Chairman, to the attacks that have been made upon the old democrats, who have stood and battled for the success of our cause, which, as I believe, is the country's cause; the men who stood in the front ranks, and who marshaled us, as young Americans, up to the struggle against our common enemy—the whig party. I, Mr. Chairman, would consider it parricidal to strike a blow against one of those gallant bosoms, so sacred in the service of our country.

I go for the interest of the party, because I believe that the success of the principles of the party and the purity of the government are identified. I may have my own preference—that preference I will frankly avow; but do not ask me, if you please, young Americans, in whose fold I live, (and I sympathize with the palm that never grasps another insincerely)—do not ask me to strike Lewis Cass a blow. I cannot do it. I will not. Lift my arm, and it shall fall dead to my side when that noble old bosom is presented to me to inflict a wound upon it. I will not do it. He has served his party too long. He has served his country in various positions. He has maintained its dignity abroad. He has sustained its honor at all times. He stands to-day of those men who are progressing to the grave, marked with nearly three score years and ten, "the noblest Roman of them all."

So much, Mr. Chairman, for my position with regard to "young America" and "fogyism." I hope I am an honest democrat, ready to go forward, place my hand upon the altar of my party—and that altar I consider the altar of my country—and say that I will sustain and vote for the nominee of the Baltimore Convention. I will make the sacrifice of any preference I may have. Is there a democrat here who will not do the same? Is there a single one who will paint upon his flag his own preference, and ask all others to obey it? Such a request upon me I will never obey. Such a request I will never dare to make. The whigs have their troubles about their candidates, and we have our own. We will arrange ours at the Baltimore Convention—and if they ever get into convention, suppose they will arrange theirs—which is considered at this time very doubtful, judging from the recent whig caucus, in which it was *ruled out of order* by the chairman (Mr. MANGUM, senator from North Carolina) to offer or consider a resolution approving the Compromise. This fact of itself speaks the tone of sentiment governing the whig party.

Mr. Chairman, I will touch now upon the all engrossing subject, Who is responsible for the agitation of the slavery question? Without stopping to enumerate or to cite the record of the country in regard to it, I proclaim here to gentlemen upon the other side of the House, and I stand prepared to prove, that the whig party are responsible for the origin of the slavery agitation; that they have nursed it; that they have fed it; that they have stimulated it to the present hour. And if anything is to follow from it, if anything is to grow out of it, if the republic is to be destroyed by it, to you, gentlemen, alone belongs—particularly the southern whigs—the blame. You are now allied with the northern whig abolitionists. You stand entirely coalesced with them. Let this be denied! Without the northern abolition party, there is no whig party in the land. There is no whig party in the whole country that has strength enough to claim the consideration of a party, if *separated* from the northern abolition strength. Deny it, and I will prove it. How many whig governors have you who are for the Compromise? One; and Tennessee can boast of him. Name another. Gentlemen on the whig side, please answer me.

Mr. CABELL, of Florida. I represent a State, and our governor is a decided Compromise man.

Mr. POLK. It is so small a State that I had almost forgotten it. [Laughter.] It is not a whig, but a democratic State. I submit the plain proposition, that there is not north of the Potomac at this hour a single whig governor but was elected upon the principle that he was for the repeal or modification of the fugitive-slave law. I will take Vermont; I will take Rhode Island—indeed, I will take all of the States where the whigs have governors, and there is not a single one of them—Hunt, of New York, and all—but who was elected upon the plain and distinct proposition that the fugitive-slave law should be altered, modified, or repealed. Will any whig deny it? Then why do you assume to yourselves the prerogative of being the Compromise party? Show me the record—show me the act of the people—their decision between the whigs and democrats throughout the nation to that effect! I am willing it should be so, if you can name to me a single State North that acts, that votes with you, that assists you in electing presidential candidates, or that acts with you in caucus to make presidential nominations. Name to me the single State North that stands by you, except upon the principle of destroying the Compromise of 1849 and 1850, which is the third great pledge of peace between the North and the South, and I will abandon the point.

Mr. KING, of Rhode Island. I wish to ask the gentleman this question, as Rhode Island has been mentioned: Does the gentleman mean to say the governor of Rhode Island was elected upon the principle that he states—opposition to the compromise measures?

Mr. POLK. Is he a democrat or a whig?

Mr. KING. A democrat.

Mr. POLK. Then he was elected as against the repeal of the fugitive-slave law. [Laughter.]

Mr. KING. I will address to the gentleman another question. Does the gentleman mean to say that that question was at all agitated in the State of Rhode Island during the last election—the question of the repeal of the fugitive-slave law?

Mr. POLK. About the State of Rhode Island I will only answer that I cannot stop to attend to such little matters. I can only state this: that a gentleman from North Carolina—[Mr. JONES]—once fought a duel in it, and the governor demanded him of the governor of North Carolina. He answered by letter, stating that the next time he went there to shoot he would fire across his little State. [Laughter.]

Mr. KING. I will only reply that the gentleman has made an assertion which he has no testimony to support, in regard to the test in that State.

Mr. POLK. Does the gentleman tell me the whigs of Rhode Island are against the repeal or the modification of the fugitive-slave law?

Mr. KING. I say that question was not agitated.

Mr. POLK. I ask you what they will do about it, and will wait if you have an answer to give.

Mr. KING. When you answer mine in regard to the other question. [Laughter.]

Mr. POLK. Are you for or against the amendment or modification of the fugitive slave law?

Mr. KING. I am not for agitating that question.

Mr. POLK. Will you go for or against it? I will wait for an answer.

Mr. KING. I have no objection to answering the gentleman.

Mr. POLK. I have made no statement that is not susceptible of proof; and if the gentleman intends to intimate in the slightest manner that I intentionally made any statement not consistent with the record, he does me injustice—he states what is not in accordance with truth.

The action of the two parties in the last Congress is succinctly stated by the following remarks of my colleague, [Mr. HARRIS,] and my friend, [Mr. RICHARDSON,] and so clearly as to dispense with the necessity of dwelling upon the course of parties in the last Congress. The facts attested by the journals, and uncontradicted by the most reckless partisan of the whig party, must be convincing:

"Mr. HARRIS, of Tennessee, (Mr. RICHARDSON yielding the floor,) said that during the progress of this discussion he had analyzed the vote by which the fugitive-slave law had passed the House of Representatives, and found, upon examination of the journal, that eighty-two democrats voted for that bill, and only twenty-six whigs—and this, too, in a House composed of about an equal number of whigs and democrats.

"Out of seventy-six whig representatives from the North, ONLY THREE VOTED FOR THE BILL. And out of only fifty democratic representatives from the North, TWENTY-EIGHT RECORDED THEIR VOTES FOR IT.

"The State of New York had at that time thirty-two whig representatives upon this floor, and not one of them voted for this bill; while the Hon. HIRAM WALDEN, the only democratic representative from the State, recorded his vote for it.

"In the Senate there was not a northern whig vote for the bill. And, sir, if gentlemen will take the trouble to analyze the vote by which the other bills composing the adjustment were passed, they will find, as already stated by my honorable friend from Illinois, that there were about two democrats to one whig that voted for those bills. When these facts have gone to the country, the people will be enabled to determine from them to whom they are indebted for the passage of these measures, and the settlement of those vexed and agitating questions.

"Mr. CAMPBELL. Are those three whigs in this House? They were in the last House.

"Mr. HARRIS. I meant the House of Representatives when I used the term. But three whigs of the last House voted for the fugitive-slave bill.

"Mr. MARSHALL, of Kentucky. How many of those democrats who voted for it have got back to this House.

"Mr. HARRIS. There were more democrats returned than whigs. I see quite a number around me—I have not counted them—my friend, Mr. RICHARDSON, and a number of others.

"Mr. RICHARDSON. I will with pleasure reply to the inquiry of the gentleman from Kentucky, [Mr. MARSHALL,] and I am under deep obligations to him for affording me the opportunity of placing this fact before the House and the country. Of the twenty-eight democrats from the North who voted for the fugitive-slave bill, twelve are members of this House, viz: Messrs. Bissell, Dimmick, Dunham, Fuller, Gorman, Hibbard, McLanahan, Peaslee, Richardson, Robbins, Ross, and Wildrick. Mr. Bissell, of Michigan, was beaten by a whig for the vote he gave for the bill, and it may be that this whig was one of those northern whigs who, in caucus this morning, adopted the Compromise as the whig platform. Of the twenty-eight northern democrats who voted for this bill, fifteen were candidates for re-election, twelve elected, two defeated by whigs, and one by a democrat."

It is shown that but three whigs voted for the fugitive-slave bill; that the compromise acts were passed by the virtue alone which belonged to the democratic party, with a slight postscript from the whigs—an indefinite sort of postscript—not enough, scarcely, to swear by. Still, they make a parade, and proclaim to the country that they are the best compromise men in the land. The result of the course of the democratic party upon this subject is evidenced here. We find that a large majority of the members present are in favor of the Compromise. We find the democratic party in a large majority here. How does this occur? Has it been the result of accident, or the result of the force of principle? Surely we must take it in the latter sense. Surely we must understand that every democrat who left this hall, and went to the bosom of his people, taught them the importance of the Compromise, and that they sustained and returned him. The whigs have strangely dwindled in their opposition. This accounts for the victories which constantly reach us upon the wings of a friendly lightning. It brings to us constant information of the triumph of democracy—of the triumph of our principles—of the triumph of the Compromise.

The gentleman from Florida, [Mr. CABELL,] upon the first day of the session, made the following remarks:

"They (the democratic caucus) voted to lay it (the compromise resolution) on the table. I say, then, that I came to Congress believing there was truth in what we had heard, and with a determination to cut myself loose from all party affiliations; to stand by those who stood by the rights of my section of the Union, and by the constitution of these States. When I came to the city of Washington, on yesterday, I learned that a resolution approving of the Compromise had been introduced into the democratic caucus, and, much to my surprise, had been defeated. The whig party held a meeting to-day, and, I confess somewhat to my surprise, put themselves upon my platform."

I wish this House to mark that "somewhat to my surprise."

"They stand where I stand; where the great Union party of the South stand; they stand upon the constitution as it is; they endorse the Compromise as a total and final settlement."

Now, I take issue with the gentleman from Florida, [Mr. CABELL,] and will prove that the whig party never endorsed it. I am here, as I believe, with facts and figures to show that a majority of the whig party there assembled—certainly never one-third of them—approved of it as a finality. I hope my friend from Massachusetts [Mr. FOWLER] will please indulge me in making him a witness. [Laughter.]

Mr. FOWLER. Will the gentleman allow me to explain?

Mr. POLK. I know you will do what is right. [Laughter.] But before I proceed to speak any further of their action, I will make a brief explanation. I had the honor, if honor it was, to introduce a resolution into the democratic caucus; and, as I stated upon the first day of the session, there was not a single objection to the purport, meaning, and finality of it. It was a question only of time, of numbers, and of propriety. The caucus assembled. I had the honor of introducing the resolution. Objection was made by my friend from Tennessee, [Mr. STANTON]—as good a southern man, as good a finality man, as there is in the House—and he urged that the matter should be referred to the Baltimore Convention. The reasons urged for this course were, that there were but eighty-nine out of one hundred and forty-two democrats present, and that it was not right that they should assume and declare to the country that the democratic party endorsed a thing when they scarcely had more than a majority of the whole number present. No! Why? The action of the democratic party has ever been to consult all its members freely, and to make the caucus an embodiment of the sentiment and feeling of the whole party. We are always endeavoring to make it, as far as we can, a direct reflection from the people. Should eighty-nine out of one hundred and forty-two attempt to dictate to the whole democracy, with what sort of force would it fall upon their ears? Would they regard it as the action of the party? Could I have told the people of Tennessee that it was the action of the party? No, sir! As the author of the resolution, when I found there were but eighty-nine present, I did not insist upon its adoption, but was willing to leave it for the action of Congress, or the Baltimore Convention. But did the democratic party adopt the compromise resolution or not? I say they did, in effect. Every officer, every nominee presented by that caucus to this House, was known to have been for the compromise measures of 1849–'50. We did not leave our action to live in the verbiage of the resolution, but we made it live in the act that we performed and put on record there. The Speaker, the Clerk, the Doorkeeper, the Postmaster, and the Sergeant-at-Arms, were not only known to be for the Compromise as a finality, but known to have been for it in the trying hour when its fate was doubtful. You tell me, then, in the organization of this House, that the democratic party took no definite action upon the compromise measures. Who is your Speaker? Who is your Sergeant-at-Arms? Who is your Clerk? Who are the officers appointed in the organization of this House? I now proclaim that they were all not only for the Compromise, but are now for its finality. Now, after the democratic party in their caucus have presented an act so distinctly, an act by which they place themselves on record, I should surely judge their action to be more of a finality than that of the whig caucus. Let us look a little into the history of the whig caucus. The whigs upon this floor have ninety-one members, all told; a meagre minority, I will allow, but their sins have brought it upon them. They have ninety-one here. How many attended the caucus that passed the finality resolution? Let us see. First, there is Mr. BROOKS, of New York, a good witness, who, on the first day of the session, states that "there were fifty or sixty present at the caucus, and that, by a clear and unequivocal resolution, they acquiesced in the compromise measures." Suppose we take Mr. BROOKS upon his own extreme statement, and the greatest number claimed to have attended the whig caucus is some fifty or sixty—one-third of whom, according to Mr. FOWLER's statement, voted against the Compromise. So, taking the basis presented on whig authority, less than one-half the number of whigs here passed the resolutions. Mr. FOWLER's statement I will come to directly. According to Mr. BROOKS's statement, less than one-half of the whig members voted for the finality resolution that now flies at the flag-staff of the "Republic." There are whigs upon this floor who, if they will answer, will say that this is true; and that this finality resolution was not the expression of the opinion and feeling of the party. I state that it was not, and I am fully prepared to prove it; and if any whig will deny it, I will prove it. Now, according to the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. FOWLER]—I love him, because I am trying to imitate his good morals and considerate course of conduct—[laughter]——

Mr. FOWLER. Will the gentleman allow me one word?

Mr. POLK. I love you wisely, but not too well. [Laughter.]

Mr. FOWLER. I am very happy to learn that the recent lessons taken by the gentleman have had so desirable an effect. [Laughter.]

Mr. POLK. I will read the statement of the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. FOWLER,] made on the first day of the session. Here is what the gentleman said:

"Mr. Clerk, I was at that caucus. I moved to lay these resolutions upon the table. I stated, in connexion with that motion, that I would not be bound by these resolutions [Laughter and applause.] *In my judgment*, there were about forty members there. I did not count them. I will further say that, in the vote to lay the resolutions upon the table, which was on a division by ayes and noes, I judge about one-third were in favor of laying them on the table [Laughter.] I will say, in conclusion, Mr. Clerk, that I deem it my duty to have the facts known as they are. If *I am a whig*," &c.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. FOWLER, I know, would not make a statement unless he believed it was true. He has lived too long in the service of morals, and his political influences have not prejudiced his mind. He therefore comes like a gray-headed father, to tell the House the truth, and nothing but the truth. [Laughter.] And he tells us that there were forty members there, and one-third of them voted against the resolution.

Mr. FOWLER. I will say, in addition to what was stated that day, that I have ascertained that there were forty-one or forty-two only there. If I am mistaken in this, I beg gentlemen who were there to announce themselves. It is very easy to ascertain the fact.

Mr. POLK. I understand the fact is distinctly stated that there were but forty-one or forty-two. [Laughter.] Now, of ninety-one whig members of Congress, there were forty-one assembled, one-third of whom voting against the Compromise would leave but twenty-seven going for the resolution; and, as you have thirty-two whig members from the South, I wonder where your northern friends would come from? [Laughter.] Then I understand the fact to be this: that only twenty-seven members of the whig party pronounced the finality upon the resolution which now flies at the mast-head of the "Republic," the administration organ.

In connexion with this, I would call the attention of the House to a most singular coincidence. I have fairly proven by the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. FOWLER] that only twenty-seven members voted in the whig caucus, before the commencement of the session, for the finality resolution; and upon a similar resolution, presented to the House by Mr. JACKSON, of Georgia, the same number—probably the very same twenty-seven whigs—voted to sustain it, as will appear by the record:

For Jackson's Resolution.

Northern whigs	7	Democrats	35
Southern whigs	20	Democrats	39
	27		74

For Hillyer's Resolution.

Northern whigs	10	Democrats	36
Southern whigs	22	Democrats	30
	32		66

Now, sir, I ask you—I ask the House, particularly the whig part of it—how they can claim to be the finality party, when two test votes—one in caucus and one in the House—have exhibited that the whole whig strength in Congress in favor of the compromise measures, as they now are, is only twenty-seven?

Mr. OUTLAW. I had the honor of presiding over that meeting; but I am not able to state distinctly the number present, because I did not count the persons who were there. The gentleman who acted as secretary of that meeting was directed to ascertain the individuals who were present, and he informed me he had done so. Upon the motion to lay the resolution upon the table, there was a large vote, though I am confident the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. FOWLER] is mistaken when he says there was one-third. There was a considerable number who did vote to lay the resolution upon the table; but upon the adoption of the resolution, I state—and I am sure all who were there present will confirm my statement—if there were more than four or five opposed to that resolution, they made it convenient to keep that opposition to themselves. They did not declare it upon that occasion. I was about to state further that, when the resolution was adopted, the honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. FOWLER,] and the honorable gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. STEVENS,] and perhaps one or two others, retired from the hall——

Mr. POLK. I cannot allow the gentleman to occupy any more of my time.

Several VOICES. Oh, let him finish.

Mr. POLK. Very well.

Mr. OUTLAW. I was going on further to state that when the resolution was adopted the honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. FOWLER,] and the honorable gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. STEVENS,] and perhaps one or two others, retired from the meeting. My own impression is that there were about fifty members present, though I cannot state positively as a fact the number present, because I did not count them.

Mr. FOWLER. I wish to add one single word. It was the understanding, at the suggestion of the gentleman from Kentucky, [Mr. MARSHALL,] that the vote to lay on the table should be the test vote. I think he will agree with me as to that. And that vote being taken, several gentlemen told me that they did not vote on the passage of the resolution, as the test had passed.

Mr. MARSHALL, of Kentucky. I concur in the statement made by the gentleman from Massachusetts. My statement in the caucus was, that the men who would lay that resolution on the table, and who could not vote for it, had no business in a whig meeting.

Mr. POLK. I am sorry to be creating so much contradiction on the other side of the House; but as there seems to be a difference of opinion as to the action of the whig caucus, I want to know, gentlemen, where is your record? It was stated by the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. FOWLER] that you took the yeas and nays; where is your record?

Mr. FOWLER. That is a mistake. I stated that there was a division.

Mr. POLK. You stated that there was a division by yeas and nays, and you are so reported in the Congressional Globe of the first day of the session. The record is correct, I know.

Mr. FOWLER. I had no intention of saying that the yeas and nays were taken. I meant to say that the ayes were called, and that the noes were called. That is what I meant.

Mr. POLK. The gentleman from Massachusetts, I know, measures his language carefully, because he would not do an injustice to friend or foe. He is never in the habit of allowing his passions to lead him off into declarations that are not strictly in conformity with truth, and he said upon the first day of the session, and is so reported by those gentlemen there, (pointing to the official reporters,) who always report correctly:

"I will further say, that in the vote to lay the resolutions upon the table, which was on a division by ayes and noes, I judge about one-third were in favor of laying them upon the table."

Mr. FOWLER. Very well; that was true. I did not mean that the yeas and nays were called.

Mr. POLK. I do not like to keep the gentleman from Massachusetts too long upon the floor; but I understand that the whig party as a body assembled in caucus on the Sabbath. I was astonished that they should have assembled on the Sabbath for the purpose of perpetrating a wrong on the democratic party, and of trumpeting forth declarations that did not contain the imbodiment of the sentiments of the party; but the only thing that brought a chilling doubt across my mind was that my good parent—the gentleman from Massachusetts—should be there. [Laughter.]

Mr. FOWLER. Does the gentleman affirm that I attended a caucus on the Sabbath?

Mr. POLK. Was not the caucus held on the Sabbath?

Mr. FOWLER. That caucus was held on Monday, at ten o'clock in the morning.

Mr. POLK. I stand corrected. Leaving the resolution, I now come to another point—to draw a line between the action of the democratic caucus and the action of the whig caucus. If the whig caucus passed a resolution in favor of the finality of the Compromise, why did they not nominate a man for Speaker who would reflect those principles to the country? I ask the gentleman from Massachusetts if, after the adoption of that resolution, a motion was not made to nominate a candidate for Speaker upon that basis, and if that motion was not voted to the table?

Mr. FOWLER. I will answer the gentleman's question. The subject of nominations was incidentally spoken of and dropped *before* action was had upon that resolution.

Mr. POLK. I ask the gentleman if a distinct proposition to present a gentleman as the nominee of that party, upon the basis of the compromise resolution, was not made and voted down?

Mr. FOWLER. No, sir; no such thing.

Mr. POLK. Was no such motion made?

Mr. FOWLER. Whatever was said in regard to nominations was said before the resolution was introduced.

Mr. POLK. Then, was anything said on that subject before the introduction of the resolution?

Mr. FOWLER. It was incidentally spoken of, but no specific action was proposed. I call upon the honorable gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. OUTLAW,] who was chairman of the meeting, and every other member who was there, to sustain me in this declaration.

Mr. OUTLAW. If the gentleman from Massachusetts will allow me, I will answer the question of the gentleman from Tennessee. The honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. FOWLER,] as I before stated, retired from the caucus. Subsequently a motion was made by the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. MARSHALL] to present a candidate for Speaker, and it was voted down.

Mr. POLK. Then, sir, the whig caucus that passed the finality resolution, voted to the table a proposition to nominate a candidate for Speaker upon the principles which would be reflected from the adoption of that resolution. Now, how does the whig party stand in this connexion? They pass a compromise resolution by less than one-third of their number; they vote down a proposition to nominate a candidate for Speaker upon that basis; and then they come here and claim that they are Compromise men! Why, sir, it is only one of those vaporings that are characteristic of that party. They are afraid of the light. They are afraid of publication. The gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. WARD] stated that the whig party succeeded gloriously in 1840. Why? Because they published no opinions. He stated that in 1844 they inscribed their principles upon their banners, and were defeated; and that in 1848 they did not make known their principles—they did not give the people an opportunity of knowing them—and they succeeded again. *I am quoting whig authority;* and he argues that one wrong upon the public mind, one infliction upon its purity and patriotism, justifies a gross and malignant sin now. Why, sir, the whig party, according to whig authority, have never been able to succeed, save when they concealed the cloven foot and fought under a veil of darkness. I agree with the gentleman from Kentucky that the only fair and generous fight was in 1844. Since then we have been fighting an insidious enemy, who are coalescing, harmonizing, and fraternizing with the men who steal our negroes.

Mr. Chairman, I do not believe that the compromise acts of 1849 and 1850 gave to the South the full measure of her just rights. I do not believe that, in the adoption of those measures, full justice was done to the faith which we had pledged twice before. In the formation of the constitution, the most fretful question that agitated the minds of our fathers was the slavery question. They compromised it. The country passed on prosperously until 1820, when Missouri made her application for admittance into the Union. Another compromise was then made, marking out a line dividing slavery from the non-slaveholding population. This was considered the second offering we had made to our northern brethren upon the altar of our country. Time passed on; the country prospered; in 1849–'50—that memorable session which will long be remembered—the questions arising out of the territory achieved—if I may use the word—as indemnity from Mexico, presented themselves. I was then in the still wilds of the deep West. I was not familiar with the progress of politicians and parties; I was unprejudiced by that magical sort of influence. I was looking at this matter, I trust, as a patriot should do; when I saw the old man CASS, and the old man Clay, who stands at this hour with one foot in the grave and the other upon its crumbling brink, and the young, gallant, spirited, and noble man from Alabama, [Mr. CLEMENS]—when I saw them all standing under the portals of this Capitol—Douglas was there, too, grasping the main pillar, like Samson of old, but to save the edifice, not to destroy it—when I witnessed their efforts to carry the compromise measures, I threw aside any opinion that I might have, and went in and fought with them, and I will fight with them still. And I claim for Tennessee to-day that when the republic falls, she will stand ready to shed her tears and give forth her loudest moans over its ashes.

There is but one whig governor in the whole Union who is for the finality of the compromise measures, and he is the governor of Tennessee. I ask each member from that State if he was not elected upon that finality? If you were elected on that finality, can you vote for Gen. Scott? Will you betray the confidence reposed in you? Can you say to the people of Tennessee that Gen. Scott is sound upon this question. I know the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. WARD] said that General Scott marched under his country's flag to Vera Cruz, to Cerro Gordo, to Pueblo, to Churubusco, to Molino del Rey, to Chepultepec, and to the city of Mexico—that he stood upon those fields, and did battle upon them manfully. If General Scott did all this, has he fallen into such a state of second childhood that he is unwilling now to fling his banner to the breeze? Do you mean to say that the old soldier who fought in Mexico now refuses to inscribe his principles upon his banner? Will the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. WARD] tell me how it is that this gallant spirit, who belongs to his party, is unwilling now to declare what he is for and what he is against? I ask any member of the whig party, for the purpose of bringing this thing to a direct issue, if General Scott is elected, will he veto any measure having for its object the repeal, change, or modification of the fugitive-slave law? Gentlemen, I wait for your answer. Is there no voice to answer me?

Mr. WHITE, of Kentucky. I cannot sit silent and listen to such an interrogatory without endeavoring, at least, to answer it. I believe I am authorized to say, from General Scott himself, that he is opposed to any alteration of any of the measures contained in the Compromise.

Mr. POLK. Will he put it in writing? Will the gentleman from Kentucky say to me that General Scott will put that in writing?

Mr. STANTON, of Tennessee. Will my colleague allow me to call his attention to the fact that the gentleman from Kentucky says that *he believes* he is authorized to say that General Scott is opposed to any change of the compromise measures.

Mr. POLK. As the gentleman from Kentucky has seen proper to answer for the whig party, will he state to me that he is authorized by General Scott to say that, if President, should such an effort be made, he would veto any such alteration, amendment, change, or modification of the compromise acts of 1849–'50?

Mr. CAMPBELL, of Ohio. I do not speak for any candidate for the presidency; but I undertake to say that General Scott is a whig, and that, as such, I believe he would act in accordance with the long-established whig doctrine that no President of the United States should veto any law passed by Congress upon the ground of expediency alone. [laughter;] and——

Mr. POLK. I cannot yield to the gentleman to discuss the principle. He is running off into one of those side-bar——

Mr. CAMPBELL. I hope the gentleman will allow me to ask him a question. I wish to know of the honorable gentleman from Tennessee what democratic candidate for the presidency has pledged himself to veto any measure that is not in violation of the constitution of the United States?

Mr. POLK. All of them. [Great laughter.]

Mr. CAMPBELL. In other words, I wish to know what democratic candidate for the presidency would veto any measure upon the ground of expediency alone?

Mr. POLK. I now understand the gentleman's explanation. One gentleman understands General Scott one way, and another another.

Mr. CAMPBELL. The gentleman misrepresents me—not willfully, I am sure. I did not say what General Scott would do. I expressly said I did not speak for him, except as one who has always been recognised as a whig, sustaining this particular whig doctrine in regard to the veto. That is all.

Mr. POLK. Oh, I will not do injustice to the gentleman.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I hope the gentleman will answer my question.

Mr. POLK. What was it? [Laughter.]

Mr. CAMPBELL. Whether any candidate of the democratic party is pledged to veto any law to alter or modify the fugitive-slave law?

Mr. POLK. All of them.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I would like to see the record.

Mr. POLK. The whole policy of the whig party is apparent. The old soldier—he who has fearlessly faced the enemies of his country—has yielded himself to the trammels of whig principles and policy. He has been encircled bodily within those mysterious coils which that party, on the eve of a presidential contest, throw around their candidates to give them hope of success. Through its magic influence they expect again to succeed, as we have been boastingly told by the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. WARD] they have heretofore succeeded. No more disclosures for the public eye! No inscription upon their banner! Concealment and strategy are to do the work. As an evidence that the whig plan of operations will be to deceive the people into the support of their candidate, I will quote from their papers, North and South.

The Kennebec (Maine) Journal, in the plainest language, advocates the doctrine of supporting their candidate without a pledge. It says:

"We ask no more of them (southern whigs) in this case than we conceded to them in the election of 1848. We then accepted General Taylor as the whig candidate, without requiring any pledge upon the subject of the Wilmot proviso, and we now ask them to accept General Scott without requiring any pledge touching the compromise measures."

The New York Tribune, a paper of undoubted influence with a large portion of the whig party at the North, thinks there is no necessity for a Whig National Convention, or a whig platform, to aid the party in the coming contest. It is decidedly opposed to the idea that General Scott should occupy a definite position upon the subject of the Compromise. It says:

"It is well known that the northern whigs, as well as all parties at the North, entertain a great repugnance to the provisions of the fugitive-slave law. Any law for returning runaway negroes would be distasteful enough, but the existing law is especially and justly odious. For this reason, *no whig presidential candidate can hope to carry a single northern State, if he were to run as the especial advocate and supporter of that law; in a word, and softly speaking, if he were to run as a 'compromise' candidate.*"

See how willingly the southern wing of the whig party adopt the mum policy. The Richmond Whig, in a recent article, says:

"The Richmond Enquirer is perfectly right in supposing that we have entire confidence in General Scott; and that, having this confidence, we do not desire any pledges from him; and that we shall be very happy, if he is the whig candidate, to see him receive the votes of free-soilers and everybody else. The vote of our cotemporary himself will be very welcome; it will be received with thanks, and no questions asked. At any rate, we should not fear that his vote for General Scott would taint the General with democracy, any more than we should fear that the free-soil vote would make him a free-soiler. *Satisfied with the soundness of our candidate*, we wish him to get as many votes as possible. To use a piscatorial figure, everything will be fish that comes into our net.

"We repeat the declaration, too, that we would not vote for a man, whatever pledges he might make, if we did not have confidence in him without pledges. Any dirty demagogue will not hesitate to make pledges, which he will violate without scruple. We believe it may be set down as a universal principle, that a man who will make pledges to gain an office will not be restrained by those pledges when elected. A man's life and actions and reputation constitute the best guarantee for the faithful discharge of public trusts."

Mr. POLK. Such is to be the whig policy. Something has been said with regard to the democratic candidates and the fugitive-slave law. I consider it but justice to the honorable senator [Mr. CASS] at the other end of the Capitol to state his position upon that measure. Mr. Chairman, although I am a young American, and although I am for young America—although I repudiate the act of the Democratic Review in assailing Butler, Marcy, and others—although I repudiate the act of the Pennsylvanian in assailing Douglas—although I repudiate the act of the Keystone and other newspapers in assailing Mr. Buchanan—and although I repudiate every paper in the country that has assailed any democrat, and hold them all alike criminal—yet I regard them all as having done injustice to General Cass. That gentleman has been assailed upon the fugitive-slave law. Now, I stand here ready and prepared to prove that General Cass made the first speech in favor of the execution of that clause of the constitution which was to carry it out. I will read an extract from his speech, delivered in the Senate of the United States March 13, 1850, to be found on page 518 of the Congressional Globe, part 1, 1st session 31st Congress.

On that occasion General Cass said:

"My own opinion is, sir, that we should take up the bill for the recapture of fugitive slaves, reported by the Judiciary Committee. I am disposed to suspend all our discussions, and to lay aside all other business, with a view to act upon that bill, without unnecessary delay, and to pass it in such form as would be acceptable to a majority of this body. That is a point upon which the South feels most acutely, and in regard to which it has the most serious cause of complaint. I have heard but one man in this body deny the existence of this evil, or the justice and necessity of providing an adequate remedy.

"The act of 1793 provided that the State magistrates in the various cities and counties of the Union should carry that law into effect. This provision has been since rendered nugatory, as these officers will not now act; and consequently the judges of the United States alone have jurisdiction over the subject. They are not enough for that purpose, and the law therefore requires an amendment. I, for one, am willing to take up the subject, and provide the necessary means of carrying the provision of the constitution into full effect. Such a procedure would have the very best effect upon the South at this time. It would be a pledge of our sincerity, and of our desire to do justice to that great section of our common country."

I maintain that General Cass was the first man upon the floor of the Senate who proclaimed that he was willing to give authority to the State governments to carry out that provision of the constitution of the United States for the rendition of fugitive slaves. Douglas stands there now. Marcy stands there; Houston stands there; Buchanan stands there; Butler and Dickinson stand there; and every champion of the democratic party stands there; but Cass was the first. The day has scarcely marked a *sunset*, preceding the hour that I speak, that General Cass has not, by a distinct vote in the other end of the Capitol, recorded his vote against the alteration, modification, or change of the provisions of the law, adopted and imbodied as a leading and prominent feature of the acts called the *compromise acts* of 1850—I mean the *fugitive-slave* feature. Let the vote speak; it gives the position of General Cass, of Judge Douglas, and others.

The vote to lay on the table the petition presented by Mr. SEWARD, praying the repeal of the act of Congress for the delivery of fugitives from service or labor—(see Senate journal, March 29, 1852,) viz:

"YEAS—Messrs. Adams, Atchison, Badger, Bayard, Borland, Bradbury, Brodhead, Brooke, Cass, Clarke, Clemens, Cooper, Dawson, Dodge of Iowa, Douglas,