

Government of the United States—if you touch this question of slavery, which is a sectional one, confined to a particular section of the Union, you touch a question that will ultimately break up this Union. They not only told the Government that, but they asked them to point to the Constitution of the United States, and show where they found the power to touch that institution at all. This States' rights party said then—the only true doctrine, the only true theory of this Government is to play the game "hands off," and to leave to the States the settlement of those questions that legitimately belong to them, under a strict construction of the Constitution. Undertake to assume these powers at Washington, and you dissolve this Union and break up this Government.

Now, educated in this school, and adopting the views of Thomas Jefferson, who, I say, was at the head of this party of State rights, and admonished by him, I feel unwilling to incorporate any article in our Constitution that would lead the men at Washington who are to govern us, to set up any claim of right to interfere with the domestic concerns of this State. What said Mr. Jefferson upon this subject of concentration of power in the Government of the United States? He said in 1825, at a time when his head was cool, replete with wisdom and experience in the administration of this country, and when he had no ambitious purposes to subserve: "I see as you do and with the deepest affliction the rapid strides with which the federal branch of our Government is advancing towards the usurpation of all the rights reserved to the States, and the consolidation in itself of the powers, foreign and domestic, and that, too, by constructions which if legitimate leave no limits to their power. Take together the decisions of the federal courts, the doctrines of the President, and the misconstructions of the constitutional compact acted on by the legislation of the federal branch, and it is but too evident that the three ruling branches of this department are in combination to strip their colleagues, the State authorities, of the powers reserved to them, and to exercise all functions themselves, foreign and domestic."

I am admonished by the doctrines here taught that it is my duty here, that it is our duty to watch with carefulness and see that no provision of this dangerous and novel character, unprecedented in its character, should be adopted by this Convention, which might lead the Government at Washington so to construe its powers in relation to this State, that instead of protecting, it might place around it the iron bands of servitude. No, sir; Jefferson and those men understood this thing.

What is the proposition now before us for consideration? It is this:

"The Constitution of the United States and the laws made in pursuance thereof, being the

supreme law of the land, every citizen of this State owes paramount allegiance to the Constitution and Government of the United States, and is not bound by any law or ordinance of this State in contravention or subversion thereof."

Now, I ask my friend, the chairman of the committee (Mr. Stirling, who instead of urging upon us what the Constitution of the United States clearly indicates to be our duty, that we owe obedience to that Constitution and the laws made in pursuance thereof, says we owe paramount allegiance; I ask him why he undertakes to interpolate here, for the first time, that word "Government?" According to our acceptance of the term, the Government of the United States is composed of three separate departments, the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. And when you require me to swear paramount allegiance to the government, to-morrow Abraham Lincoln, my servant and your servant, may issue any proclamation he pleases; and under this article the gentleman may contend that proclamation is an authority emanating from the Government of the United States. Why, sir, I want no such article put in this bill of rights. I want clearly and distinctly defined what we are and what we want ourselves to be in time to come. God knows I do not anticipate that any article or clause you put in this bill of rights is likely to do anything for us as long as this war lasts. I am looking to the future. I want the men who are to come after us to read and understand why it is we have, without reason, voluntarily come forward and if not by express grant, yet I see clearly by the probabilities of misconstruction, laid down the whole of the sovereign rights of this State at the feet of the Federal Government.

I tell gentlemen here, I do not care to what party they belong, whether to the majority or to the minority, they must answer this to their children. We know that the tendency of all power in the hands of men is to pass from the few to the many, from the weak to the strong and powerful. The history of your government has been but a demonstration of that fact. The Government of the United States has left its legitimate exercise of powers and come with the strong arm to strike down the powers of the State governments. Now, sir, I want this thing explained. In the few remarks which I undertook to address to this Convention on a former occasion, I said I could not understand the reasons for this. It is true I have been absent a great deal, but have not been able to get any light yet upon this subject up to this time.

I understand one view of this thing. In my acceptance of the term, I do owe a paramount allegiance to the General Government, within the scope and the sphere of the proper exercise of its delegated powers. That is my doctrine. I do owe allegiance, and I am