

and more suddenly perhaps than we imagine, that this awful cloud of war may lift, and peace with her white wings may descend upon the soil that is now soaked in the blood of our fellow-citizens. That is my hope, and that is the principle upon which I shall vote.

Have not we carried out the policy of consolidation with a vengeance? Have not we given the coercive theory a full trial? Not satisfied with the States' rights theory that prevailed at the beginning of this war, have not we given the other a full and fair trial in these three years? Has not the Government been as consolidated as any friend of consolidation could wish? Has it not exacted an allegiance such as you could not imagine to be due to any power? Has it not exercised every right, every privilege, every coercive power that any friend of the coercive theory could imagine? And what is the result? At home, I have alluded to it. Abroad we are the contempt of foreign powers. At this day on our heads, among thinkers in England, there rests a degree of contemptuous regard such as no people ever before found upon the face of the earth; for these men look at this system as well as the results; at the logic of our position as well as the adventitious circumstances connected with it. We have to day, more fully than any people ever possessed, the actual contempt of foreign powers. To the amazement of mankind we are ruining the country, destroying each other, abandoning our self-respect, surrendering the powers of the States to the federal system; and the result of the whole sacrifice is that we are laughed at by foreign nations.

If I could have had my way, this thing should have been checked at the very beginning of it. This war should never have been begun. There was nothing to justify it, no necessity for it. At the time when it all began, the pursuit of the single line of policy which the terms of the Constitution indicated would have saved the country. The Government did, indeed, do one act, which in my judgment is one of those luminous spots which history, after the passions and the prejudices of the times shall have worn away, will record upon her pages. Mr. Buchanan, in his last message, so heavily criticised, said he stood in this position: As President of the United States, he did not recognize in the Constitution that the State of South Carolina, or other States, had the individual right of secession. Still he could not persuade himself that the Federal Government had any coercive power. That was the true logic, and represented precisely the naked difficulty. The Federal Government stood in the position that it could not recognize the correctness of the political action of the seceding States; and yet had no power to coerce them. If they had pursued that policy, as a wise statesman would, there would have been no war, and no dissolution of the Union.

I hold this to-day, and I believe it, that the true theory and policy of federal statesmanship would have been to withdraw these garrisons; and for the Federal Government to assume the attitude of treating these people like spoiled children, and saying, "We will not take this issue with you; we will not fight; we will not have civil war; we will withdraw from the forts." If we had said this, what would have been the result? The Federal Government would have maintained its dignity, a dignity that the universal world would have respected. South Carolina, Alabama, and perhaps Mississippi, would have seceded. But what would Virginia have done? No power on the face of the earth, under these circumstances, could have taken Virginia out. Virginia has been the backbone of the war. No person could have weakened the devotion of Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, or any other State. If your Government had occupied that attitude, these States I have named would have seceded and staid out until by the common sentiment of the whole country, the middle States and the North together, they would have been ashamed of their position; and even if they had not returned to the Union by this time, as I hold they would have done, I say here and am responsible for it as my deliberate judgment, I would rather have lost South Carolina, and Georgia, and Mississippi, and as many more States, than to have had this war, so help me God.

Neither this government, nor any government, nor this cause, nor any cause that arms were ever invoked to support, are worth the price this country has paid. Perish the government; perish the whole cause; perish everything, rather than lose liberty; rather than lose what we are now daily losing; rather than have toppled from under us the very foundations on which formerly rested the pillars of that power in the States which is the foundation of the domestic circle, and of all the rights we hold dear to us as men.

Mr. PUGH. We are here to-day considering the question of the theory of our Government. The falsehood of the theory attempted to be established by those who are opposing the amendment before the House, is written all around us. It is in the very air we breathe. As we ask ourselves to-day the question whether the States' rights theory is the proper theory of this government or not, down yonder in the neighborhood of Richmond, thousands upon thousands of our fellow citizens are dying to prove to us that there never was a worse heresy existing upon the face of the earth, and that those who espouse it are responsible before God and man for the highest crimes ever committed upon the face of this green earth.

We are here to-day, talking among ourselves, listening to authorities, and argument upon argument, urged with ability I admit,