

FEDERAL RELATIONS.

I transmit herewith a communication from the Honorable William H. Seward, Secretary of State, received at the Executive Department, on the 18th June last, enclosing certain Constitutional Amendments, which will require your early action.

At the extra session of the General Assembly, in January, 1866, I presented my views at large in reference to the Policy of Reconstruction which had been adopted and acted upon by President Lincoln, and was proposed to be continued without variation in any material point by his successor in office. I was sincerely impressed with the conviction, that to bring about harmony and good feeling and restore our national affairs to the channels from which they had been diverted by the war, this was the best practicable mode in which it could be successfully accomplished. This plan proceeded upon the recognized principle, that this Union could not be dissolved by any effort of the State governments—either by peaceable or violent secession, or in any other mode. The General Government was as powerless as the States in precipitating any such result. To have conceded this revolutionary power, would have been a virtual abandonment of the whole theory upon which our compact was based. The States, if broken by the successful defection of a single member, would have established the inability of the Federal power, to maintain its National supremacy, and dissolution would have resulted as an inevitable consequence. The revolt of the Southern States was treated, and properly so, as an *insurrection* against the power of the Union, and when subdued, left the States unchanged in all their former relations. This view was not controverted by the General Assembly at that time, nor have I since heard that any other plan of reconstruction, based upon the true theory of our government, has been presented. The passage of the Constitutional Amendment, as a condition precedent to the readmission of the States to the right of representation, presents to my mind, objections of the gravest character, so long as the Constitution continues to be recognized as the Supreme Law under which we are acting.

I may also express the opinion here, that whether with or without the authority of the Constitution, Congress should hesitate to make any radical change in the organic law, without the concurrence of the requisite vote of all the States, South as well as North.

It cannot have escaped notice, that the proposed amendment, comprising five distinct propositions, embodies more than its language would seem to convey, and that the clause, to enforce these provisions, "by appropriate legislation," may leave the Southern and Border States at the mercy of the