

some — in my opinion, however, a small proportion of the true Union men of the State — who from early associations or other influences, have not yet relinquished their attachment to slavery, and still cherish the hope that it, as well as the Union, may be preserved.

They too, however, as they calmly consider the death-blow which the rebellion must necessarily inflict upon the institution, and actuated by a desire to avoid all collisions with their loyal brethren upon any subject that may weaken the effect of their united efforts in behalf of the Union, are day by day yielding their first impressions upon the subject and acquiescing in the policy of state emancipation by the earliest practicable means; and nothing but the most inconsiderate and violent measures upon the part of those who may be called ultra in their emancipation views can prevent, ere long, an almost unanimous sentiment among the loyal men of the State in favor of gradual emancipation.

That such is at this moment the prevalent sentiment of our loyal men I cannot doubt, and it is daily extending and becoming more and more decided, and the only thing that can possibly arrest it is the inordinate and violent policy which a few seem disposed to adopt, and which bears the appearance, whether so designed or not, of constraining by Military force the public sentiment of the State into some short but contrary to the current into which it is so satisfactorily gliding.

When I express the opinion that the public sentiment of the State, if let alone, is daily becoming more united in favor of gradual emancipation, and by the earliest legal means, I trust that no one will doubt the honesty of that purpose, or misapprehend the means to which I refer.

I am satisfied that the conviction has been slowly but surely, maturing in the minds of our people for years past, that the future growth and prosperity of our State demanded a change in our system of labor, and the events of the last two years have only served to show the necessity of providing for that change with the least possible delay. When we speak of gradual emancipation it must not be supposed that the phrase is employed by way of postponement of the operation, but it honestly expresses only what it truly means: that such emancipation shall only be so gradual as to guard it against the evil consequences that must necessarily result to slave as well as master from too sudden a change in any system of labor that is of indigenous growth. Nor will any one so trust, imagine that in speaking of emancipation by legal or practicable means, we mean to embarrass or delay the project by the use of any equivocal terms calculated to leave any doubt of the good faith of those who avow that policy. But the people of the State — honestly and earnestly as they may look to the policy of emancipation as calculated to secure future prosperity — will however, never consent that such a policy shall be consummated by any action but their own, or by any means but those which their Constitution allows.

That Constitution expressly prohibits the Legislature from abolishing the relation of master and slave as at present subsisting in the State, and it can hardly be supposed that, however inclined we may be to abolish that relation, we can consent to do so in the face of this positive prohibition.