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SPEECH OF MR. CLINGMAN,

OF NORTH CAROLINA,

ON THE LATE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION,

in the House of Representatives, Jan. 6.

CONCLUDED.

Without going further with this matter Mr. Speaker, I have read enough to afford an accurate idea of this system of organization. That it would be most effective in practice is obvious, when it is remembered that there are in every country some who, from indecision of character, may be persuaded—some who, from honest credulity and want of political knowledge, can be imposed upon by artfully-framed documents or verbal misrepresentation; while others may be overcome by the influences of what are called "refreshments" or other means. This or some similar plan of organization was adopted in many parts of the country. In the State of Tennessee, as I have been informed by what I regard as first-rate *democratic* authority, the following was the mode relied on: There are about fifteen hundred civil districts in that State, in each of which there is a precinct for voting. In each one of these districts the democratic party selected five individuals, who were, by their combined exertions prior to and on the election day, to endeavor to change two voters in each district, which in the whole State would amount to three thousand, and taken from the Whig to the Democratic side, would make a difference of six thousand in the result. By this means they hoped to overcome the majority of four thousand which had been cast against Mr. Polk the year previous. That this scheme failed is solely owing to the fact that in that State the Whigs were more zealous, more active, and better organized than they were in the other States. Nothing gives such confidence and spirit to an individual as the knowledge that his efforts will be seconded and sustained by all of the members of his party. It is a similar feeling which gives courage to a soldier going into battle in the ranks of veterens, whom he knows and confides in, that he would not feel in the midst of a body of raw militia.

The leading members of the Democratic party, being in the late canvass well aware that the system of Whig policy was approved by a majority of the people of the Union, and that their nominee had also a vast personal superiority in the estimation of every body over Mr. Polk, felt that the issue, if determined with respect either to measures or men, would be decided against them. They therefore called into exercise to the fullest extent their system of party organization, to obtain as many votes as possible for their candidate, and showed themselves devoid of all scruples as to the mode in which these votes were to be procured.

But, Mr. Speaker, our opponents did not content themselves with merely obtaining the votes of individuals. They also courted and won over all the various smaller factions of the country. It is the natural tendency of these in every country to array themselves against the strongest party. The Whig party was as all will concede, the strongest and it stood firmly on well known and fixed principles. With these principles none of the factions of the country harmonized But the Democratic party avowedly stood on no general system of principles with respect to the administration of the Government. It contained in its body men who professed opposite opinions on every political question. Its broad and catholic spirit could receive in its bosom the members of every faction without obliging them to sacrifice or modify any of their professed opinions. In short, it was a fit receptacle for the fragments of all factions, and it would act in the manner best calculated to win:

The abolition party had nominated as its candidate for the Presidency James G. Birney; but the Democratic party likewise afterwards nominated him for the Legislature of Michigan. He accepted his nomination, and by that means, or perhaps by more solid appliances, he was induced to use his influence with his party in behalf of Mr. Polk. In his published letters before the election—I allude not to his spurious letter, but to his genuine one—he declared that, though opposed both to Mr. Clay and Mr. Polk, yet he much more deprecated the election of Mr. Clay, because being a man of greatly superior abilities, he was always able to lead his party, and would do much more to retard and overthrow abolition principles than Mr. Polk, whom he spoke of as a man of no talent, incapable of controlling his party, and powerless as against abolition. Mr. Speaker, when I first read these letters, I saw that they were so ingeniously framed that they would have the desired effect with the abolition party. Nay, sir, they take the precise view of the matter which a sagacious sincere abolitionist would. Nothing surely could be more fatal to the progress and even existence of that faction, than the administration of a man of the lofty patriotism, splendid abilities, vast personal popularity, moderation and firmness of Henry Clay. To give us such an administration would inspire that confidence, repose, and prosperity which the country so much needs. On the contrary, all little factions vegetate and thrive under the weak vacilating administration of a feeble man. Rightfully or wrongfully, however, as it may be deemed, it is certain that these views of Birney, and like efforts on the part of the Democratic party, had the desired effect on the mass of the abolition party. The States of New York, Pennsylvania, and perhaps others, were carried for Mr. Polk, and, as our candid political adversaries admit, the abolitionists, have made the President.

So strong, however, sir, was the Whig party in the country that even this manœuvre would not have defeated us had it not been for other similar artifices. Nearly one hundred thousand foreigners are estimated to arrive annually in the United States; of this number a very large poportion are Roman Catholics. By means, which time does not permit me to recount, but the most insidious and unjustifiable, the Democratic party succeeded in inducing them to band themselves together and rally to the support of Mr. Polk. Some of them avowed their preference for him because his free trade policy was more favorable to the interest of the mother countries from which they came than was Mr. Clay's. Others openly proclaimed on their banners that they would not be ruled by Americans. As evidence of the sort of feeling which has been inculcated into the minds of the most ignorant of them, I may be pardoned for mentioning a little incident that occurred in the room of a friend to whom I chanced to be making a visit.—Whilst making his fire, the Irish porter inquired when Mr. Polk would come on to the city. "I am told," he added, "that he is a great friend to us poor foreigners: we elected him, and we can do most any thing when we all try." Sir, had the foreign Catholics been divided in the late election as other sects and classes generally were Mr. Clay would have carried by a large majority the State of New York, as also the States of Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and probably some others in the Northwest—Not only did we have to encounter the influence of foreigners here, but British gold was openly and profusely used to promote Mr. Polk's election, professedly with a view of breaking down the tariff and promoting the sale of their manufactures in this country. All the world may interfere in our domestic matters. With one hand Great Britain stimulates the Abolitionism of the North; with a view of desolating the South or forcing a dissolution of the Union; and with the other, under the influence of motives equally selfish, she seeks to array the planting and farming interest of the country against the tariff, and thereby break down the manufacturing establishments of the North. And we, as a nation, sit stupidly quiet while she foments for her own advantage our domestic dissensions.

Our political opponents; likewise, derived accidently great advantage from the official patronage of the present Administration. Usually the opponents of the acting President have, as a counterpoise to his direct influence, the advantage of holding his administration responsible before the country for its errors or crimes. But in the present instance the acts of the Executive, though heart and soul completely identified with the Democratic party, because he had not been elected by them, were, whenever it suited their purpose, disavowed. He thus occupied a position of seeming neutrality between the two parties, and was able to turn to account the power in his hands. He accordingly exerted to the utmost the power which he possessed over them, going even to the odious extent practiced in Mr. Van Buren's time of compelling them, on pain of dismissal from office, to contribute a part of their salaries to create a fund to be used in favor of Mr. Polk's election. At their several assessments of 1 per cent. each of salary in the custom house, $15,000 is said to have been raised. One of the officers there, John Orsa, is said to have presented to the Empire Club several hundred hickory clubs, to enable them to beat away from the polls the Whig voters, for which laudable act he seems to have received a vote of thanks from said Empire Club

To ascertain the extent of this influence on the whole country is not easy, but the number of office-holders in the State of New York alone is such as to account for a greater number of votes than Mr. Polk's actual majority there.

From Mr. Clay's character, political experience, and associations it was known that his selections for office would be made from the best men in the country. All of the old defaulters, therefore—all mere needy adventurers, without character to support their claims for office, having nothing to hope from him, naturally arrayed themselves on the other side.

Without doubt, too, they are right, to some extent, who suppose this to have been the case, another influence, not properly political. The gambling portion of the community, finding, at the beginning of the canvass, that they could not get persons to bet against Mr. Clay, did so themselves, with large odds in their favor, and afterwards devoted a portion of the many millions staked to effect the result desired by them.

Yet with all the acquisitions and advantages which I have been recounting, our adversaries were too prudent to rest secure. They knew that the Constitution had provided no mode by which the fairness of a Presidential election could be contested, no means of purging the polls of illegal votes. If a vote were received by the inspectors of the election at each precinct, and by them returned, it mattered not whether the person professing to give it were qualified to vote or not at that place. They therefore, by means of the system of organization already described, deliberately formed a widely extended plan for the purpose of securing a sufficient number of illegal votes to carry States enough to secure the election of Mr. Polk. Their first demonstration seems to have been made in the city of Baltimore in the October election. There it was that they gave a vote so much larger than was ever poled at any preceding election, as to satisfy all persons that fraud had been practised. Investigations since then have made it manifest that the increased vote was owing, not only to the fact that many persons voted not authorised at all to vote there, but that likewise those qualified had in some instances voted two, three, or more times at different precincts in the city. About fifty persons have already been convicted and sentenced to punishment for this offence by the Courts, not one of whom is a Whig, though they have been pardoned from time to time by the Democratic Governor there. The fraud here was but the precursor of what followed.

The great State of New York claims the first notice. During the past year there were naturalized there not less than seven thousand foreigners. This was effected entirely by the Democratic party, the Whigs having no office provided for that purpose, because as I learn, there is not one of these foreigners out of fifty who will vote the Whig ticket. Of this large number a great proportion, not having been five years in the country, could not be legally naturalized, and their votes, therefore when given, were illegal.

Men who had not been one month in the country, from the penitentiaries of Europe, unacquainted even with the language in which they were sworn, voted for what they knew not.

But the principal frauds were practised in New York was the great theatre where this was consummated. As the Empire Club bore such a prominent part in these transactions, I must devote a remark or two to it. It was organized in July last, and it consisted of gamblers, pickpockets, dippers, burners, thimble-riggers, and the like, and its association seems to have been their mainly for the purpose of carrying on successfully these and similar trades. Most of its members had been repeatedly indicted for crimes. Its general character, however, may be sufficiently inferred from that of some of its officers. Its president was Isaiah Rynders, often arrested for thimble-rigging and similar offences. He and Joseph Jewell, being indicted for murder, fled from New York to New Orleans.—By the bye, I may here mention that this Jewell, who has indictments for murder in two different cases hanging up against him was the standard bearer of the Club, and figured as the bearer of the Texas banner in the processions. These worthies had not been long in New Orleans before they found it convenient to leave, being charged with stealing treasury notes.—They came to this city, and were arrested and sent back in irons by order of Capt. Tyler. I mention this circumstance to show the mutations of the times, for since the election this man Rynders, having become a great man among the Democracy has not only dined with Benjamin F. Butler, when the electoral vote was given to Mr. Polk at Albany; not only has he received a complimentary ball from the Chairman of the Democratic General Committee of the city of New York, but, having come on with his friend Jewell to this place for office, I am told, if the papers are to be relied on, he has been cordially received at the White House. Whether President Tyler or President Rynders then remembered the ironing, is not, however, chronicled. But I am digressing. John J. Austin, vice president of the club, has likewise pending against him an indictment for murder, and was likewise implicated in the charge of stealing Treasury notes. Woodridge, its secretary, but recently came out of the penitentiary. William Ford, one of its directors, in the short interval of time which elasped between the publication of a notice of one of its processions and the arrival of the day of parade, was indicted by the grand jury in seven cases, rape and burglary being among the offences. Being put in the tombs he unfortunately lost the opportunity of figuring on that occasion. Soon after tried and convicted of the first named crime, he was sent to the penitentiary, but his services being valuable to the party, he was immediately pardoned and turned out by his Democratic Excellency Governor Bouck. I may remark, too that this official dignitary, a short time before the election, restored to their political rights all the criminals in the State, and pardoned a great number who were in the penitentiary.

This empire Club, constituted as I have related, for some time devoted its energies to the prosecution of the laudable objects for which it had been originally organized. Several weeks, however, before the election the Democratic leaders thought it could be effectively employed in the political canvass and they thereupon took its members into pay. These gentry being furnished with money thus by other means, abandoned for the time their peculiar avocations and some of the neutral papers of the city made the subject of remark the disappearance of these particular classes of crime.—Their numbers rapidly increased from one or two hundred to not less than eight hundred; in fact they boasted that they had three thousand men enrolled. This Club, with other members of the Democratic party, perfected the most extensive system of fradulent voting ever known. Sir, in what I have been stating, and what I am now about to state, I speak from information derived in part from public sources, but mainly from private ones; sources however, on which I fully rely. I have taken pains to get accurate information. If there be error in any of my statements, which I am not prepared to admit, I desire to be contradicted. One of my objects is to provoke investigation into this matter. If any thing which I can say or do here should induce this House to order an investigation into this whole transaction, I shall think I have done the country much service. Let gentlemen meet me on this ground. In the city of New York there are more than seventy places at which votes are given in.—I understand, sir, that one prominent feature of this plan was, that in each of the seventeen wards into which the city is divided there were one hundred & 20 picked men, each of whom was to leave his own ward and go to one where he was least known, on the evening before the election. Staying one night there enabled him to make oath that he resided in that Ward, and he was permitted to vote there. He then returned to his own ward and voted there without being questioned. But these two thousand & 40 persons, however formed but a part of those who voted more than once. From the information which I have received I think that an investigation will show that there were companies of men who voted in some instances as much as sixteen times each. It was the calculation of the managers to give fourteen thousand illegal votes in the city, and they admit that they got in eleven thousand. A portion of these votes were excluded at some of the boxes, by the Whigs requiring them to state on oath if they had not already voted, as being an unusual question, of dignified decision. The Washingtonian's Advocate, a Democratic paper of the city, has admitted that the party had agreed to give five dollars for every vote after the first one which any individual could get in.—Many of the gamblers predicted what occurred afterwards with wonderful accuracy. One of them who happened to be a Whig informed a prominent individual in the city, from whom I received the statement, long before the election, of the plan and likewise notified him that on a future day, before the election, however, this matter would be published in a Democratic paper, the Plebeian I think,) and charged on the Whigs as their plan, so as to divert suspicion, and, in the event of discovery by the Whig press, to anticipate such charge and thus break its force. When the day came on, as predicted, the publication appeared in the Plebeian.

There is said to have been an incident of no great consequence in itself, which for a particular reason is worth a notice. I understand that the North Carolina line-of-battle ship was moored at the Brooklyn wharf, and it had been arranged that the men on board of her were to go ashore & vote for the gentleman who represents on this floor the Brooklyn district; and their votes if received by him, would have been sufficient to elect him. But on the morning of the election, by some singular freak of that legerdemain which was practised on so extensive a scale that day, these men were in a body spirited across the river into the city, and voted mostly in the 7th ward, but partly in the 6th and 11th, for the Democratic member there, (I mean the only one of the present city delegation returned, Mr. MACLAY.) These votes were just enough to save him. Now I have no doubt but that the gentleman from Brooklyn, (Mr. MURPHY,) though he was overthrown by having the staff on which he was about to lean thus suddenly jerked from under him, by a brother Democrat, has public spirit and party devotion enough to be quite as well satisfied by a result which gives the party a member, as if he had been himself the successful individual. But the object I had in view, sir, in alluding to this incident, is to ascertain what is the standard of party morals as it respects the members themselves. What is their mode of dealing with Whigs I understand very well; but I had supposed, according to the old proverb, that among its members there was honor in every profession.—Will not some one enlighten the country as to this part of their code?

Sir, you remember that when the Whigs were in power, and they passed a registry law that would have prevented most of these enormous frauds, but it was repealed by the Democratic party, and we see the fruits of that repeal. From the best information I can obtain, I am fully satisfied that under the existing laws provided by the Democratic party of that State, frauds enough can be perpetrated in the city alone to determine the vote of that great state—in fact, I may say the result of the Presidential election; for it will perhaps generally be close enough for its thirty-six electoral votes to decide the matter.

But it was not in the city alone that these things were done. Similar frauds were practised at Albany, by voters some of whom were even carried from Philadelphia, it is said. Even in the interior there are facts which furnish strong evidence of ill gal voting. I should like for the gentleman (Mr. Preston King) who represents the district in which is St. Lawrence, (Mr. Wright's county, I think,) to inform us how it happened that that country gave sixteen hundred and twenty-seven votes more than it did at any preceding election? The Whig vote is stronger than it was when we carried the county, and yet we are beaten by about fifteen hundred.—How comes it that that county has given nearly two thousand more votes than some with about the same population?

It is charged and believed by the Whigs that a number of persons who had already voted elsewhere were run across the line into that county and voted a second time, and that similar fraud was practised in Jefferson, an adjoining county. Our friends believe that in those two counties there were given some thirteen hundred illegal votes in that way. That the State of New York gave Henry Clay a majority of her legal votes cannot be doubted. Similar frauds were practised in the State of Pennsylvania, with a like result, as I could show if I had time to go into the details. We lost Louisiana in the same way. At the precinct in the parish of Plaquemines there were given eleven hundred votes, being seven hundred more than were ever given before at an election; a vote larger, I believe, than its whole population at the last census, including women and children.—This case is so extraordinary as to require explanation. If this excess of votes above the usual amount were illegal, as I have no doubt they were, then their exclusion, to say nothing of frauds committed elsewhere, would have given Mr. Clay the vote of that State. Even in Georgia we have strong reason to believe that we were defeated by fraud. In that State, I understand that voters under sixty years of age pay by law a poll-tax; all over that age who possess property, are likewise obliged to pay a tax; so that the tax books kept and returned would give all the voters except the paupers above SIXTY. Taking these books as a guide, there were 15,911 more votes than there appear to be voters. But the census shows that the number of males above sixty is a little more than three per per cent. for these, there would still remain 9,502 votes that cannot be accounted for. Most of this excess occurs in the Democratic counties. As an example, I will read an extract from a highly respectable journal published in that State—the Milledgeville Journal:

"*More Facts connected with the above.*—The counties of Forsyth, Lumpkin, Habersham, and Franklin are all nearly *in a line* connected with each other. Habersham joins Franklin, Lumpkin joins Habersham, and Forsyth joins Lumpkin. *These four counties* return to the Comptroller General's Office 3,080 voters. Add to these four per cent. (which is a large estimate) for men over sixty years, of age, & not liable to be returned, but authorized to vote, and there would be 3,203 voters. At the late election *these same counties* gave Mr. Polk 4,044, and Mr. Clay 1,821—in all 5,835 votes, and a majority for Polk of 2,193. Deduct from the aggregate vote of 5,835 3,203, the number of voters returned on the tax-book and men over age, and it will be seen that *there are 2,632 voters of which no account is or can be given, and who are not legally entitled to vote!*

"But let us pursue *this line* a little further. Madison and Elbert join Franklin Lincoln joins Elbert, and Columbia joins Lincoln. *These four counties* return to the Comptroller General's Office 2,986 voters. Add to this, as above, four per cent. for men over age, and there would be 3,105 voters. At the late election *these same counties*, gave Mr. Clay 2,124 and Mr. Polk 999—in all 3,123 voters, and a majority for Clay of 1,125. Take the voters returned by the Tax Receiver with the per cent. for men over 60, and the votes given, and it will be seen that while the *first four counties* have given, *two thousand six hundred and thirty-two votes more than can be accounted for*, by the same information and estimate *the last four have only given eighteen more than they are entitled to.* Elbert county, which gave 813 out of 1,125 majority for Clay, and which gave the largest majority of any county in the State, voted only thirty seven more than is returned on the tax-book; add the four per cent. for men over age, and it will be seen that she voted five less than she was entitled to.

"The last mentioned counties are Whig counties; the first are Democratic: which makes the fairest showing? No one can hesitate in his answer. Neither shall we hesitate to say that, in our opinion, Henry Clay has received a majority of the legal votes of the State of Georgia."

If this result was produced by the voting of men under age or other frauds in the Democratic counties, it is sufficient without looking any further to account for our defeat in that State for the majority against us was only two thousand.

The four States of New York, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and Georgia, give eighty-eight electoral votes. Added to Mr. Clay's vote of one hundred and five, and he would have one hundred and ninety-three, votes, while James K. Polk would be left with only eighty two. It is not strange, therefore, that our opponents should appear so moderate after the victory. It is not strange that they should not rejoice. No wonder some of them seem astounded at the result. Too many of them know by what means this result was achieved. Did Macbeth rejoice when he looked at the Crown and sceptre of the murdered Duncan? They look to the past with pain, to the future with dread.

This examination, Mr. Speaker, brings us irresistibly to the conclusion, not merely that the Whig measures of policy are approved by a vast majority of the people of the Union, but that, as a party, the Whigs are greatly the strongest in the country. So strong are they that nothing but a combination of all these adverse influences could have defeated us. Yes, sir, if any one of several of them had been wanting, we should still have triumphed, and had the election been conducted as our form of Government presupposes, that is, fairly and honorably, Mr. Clay's majority would have been overwhelming.

Why, then, is it, sir, since the past cannot be recalled, do I recur to these things? It is because I am satisfied, after a survey of the battle field, that in future a different result may be produced. Yes, sir, if we do our duty to the country, these evils may be averted sufficiently at least for all practical purposes. A century may pass away before the country is afflicted with such another accident as the present Executive.

The course of the abolition party has stripped them of much of their influence, by bringing them into general contempt even at the North. Besides, their late movements will array a strong influence against them in other quarters, more than enough to counterbalance their strength. And if the foreign Catholics, or foreigners generally, continue banded together with a view of controlling the elections of the country, there will be aroused antagonist feelings in the hearts of all true Americans which will sweep away the party to which they have attached themselves. But, sir I wish it distinctly understood that I am for no native American party; I care not whether a man may have been born under the icy zone that girts the pole or in the torrid clime where the morning sun is first seen, or at the place of its going down, if he comes to this land, and, after the residence prescribed by law and in the manner provided, takes an oath to support the true heart, American feelings, determining them to uphold & defend the rights & interests of this country against all others, that man will I take by the hand & welcome as an American citizen should be by his fellows, I wish, however, to meet no British Whig no French Whig, no man, in short, who places the interest or honor of another nation in the scale against those of this, or who resides among us with feelings alien to our Government or its institutions.—I desire to see the destinies of this country controlled in future as they have in the main been heretofore, by the great American Whig party. By that party & its genuine republican principles am I willing to stand or fall.

It is our duty, as far as it may be in our power, by wise legislation to prevent fraudulent naturalization and illegal voting. But this alone will be insufficient to ensure his success. Even though we should be able to see that the combination of circumstances, to which our defeat was owing in the present instance will not occur again yet it must be remembered that their will be other factions to be moved and new humbugs invented. It is absolutely necessary that the Whigs should be completely organized as a party, not to deceive the confiding, the credulous, or the ignorant, but to protect them from imposition; not to practise frauds, but to prevent their commission by our adversaries. Had we adopted a proper system of organization we should have triumphed in despite of all the adverse influences referred to. To accomplish this will, I know, require more labor than many are willing to undergo. It was a frequent complaint of Cicero that in his day the republic was always attacked with more zeal than it was defended; and, with us, it is a frequent boast of our adversaries that while the Whigs are talking they are working. But unless we make up our minds to undergo the necessary exertion, our political system will soon become the most corrupt, and, by consequence, the most despotic on earth. Such a Government will, by its heavy taxation, wars, &c. impose on us burdens, much more intolerable than would be the effort necessary to preserve our liberties. By a proper system of organization we shall always triumph, because our principles are those upon which this great Republic has heretofore been successfully and prosperously governed; and the great mass of our population, being honest and patriotic, will, with proper lights; sustain them.

What, then, Mr. Speaker, is the prospect before us? Your party having come into power, your situation is altogether different from what it was in the late contest. You must show your hand by your acts, not by mere words. Why, sir, we never could have beaten Mr. Van Buren in 1840 if we had had only his declarations of principle to contend against. Your situation is doubly embarrassing from the duplicity which, as a party, you practised to obtain power. As far as measures alone are concerned, you might, I grant, easily unite. But there is to be a struggle for preeminence of place, and measures will be

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