

"Pass the Ordinance of Secession"

I came to this Convention, sir, representing a Union constituency. It has been my purpose, so far as my humble abilities would go, to contribute to carry out as faithfully as I could the purposes and the object which I know that constituency desired when they elected me. I believed, sir, through the long period in which we have been engaged in our deliberations, that not only was it our duty, if possible, to conserve that Union under which we have lived so prosperously, but sir, I believe that it was practicable and that, by pursuing the course which had been chalked out and marked by this Convention, that our efforts would have been ultimately crowned with success. I believe now, that but for the interposition of the power which stands at the head of the Executive government of this nation, these efforts would have been triumphantly successful. Event has been treading so rapidly upon the heel of event within the last 30 days, as to render it utterly impossible for any man's mind to be fixed positively upon any particular line of action.

The last two days, sir—the last forty-eight hours—have been filling with events which, if they have not produced impressions upon the minds of others, have produced a profound impression upon my mind.

Sir, the hope of reconstructing this Government has passed away. The chance of reconstructing the Union is but a myth. It no longer exists but in the mind of the visionary. Sir, the last act in this drama has come upon us. The curtain has been, at last, lifted, and we now see in all its hideous deformity, the long concealed policy of that party, which, I fear, we all misunderstood. Be that as it may, we are now face to face with revolution, and with war, and I, for one, have ceased to look upon the question as a political question, or a question of reconstruction. I am now looking upon it as a military question. It is useless to disguise it. We cannot put the image away from us. We must regard it now as a military question, and a military question alone. . . .

Under these circumstances, sir, although I am representing a Union constituency, and don't know what change has been produced upon their minds by recent events—nor can I now wait for instruction from home—yet I will do what I believe my gallant constituency would have me to do—record my vote according to my judgment, with reference to the interests of this State;



Transcription

and that, sir, will be that Virginia shall assume the power which she has granted to the General Government.

Mr. President, what is the argument in favor of co-operation? It is that we may invite all the slave States in one consolidated mass for the purpose of resisting this horde of Hessians which is soon to be thrown upon our coasts. This will take time; aye, and our action may lead to misconstruction, so far as those States are concerned. I hold that it is important that they should know at once what Virginia's position is, and that our friends in those States should have the advantage of the moral argument of Virginia's position. Let them feel and know that we are in earnest. Let those who are determined upon resistance know that Virginia has led the van, and then, sir, we can co-operate just as well out of the Union as in the Union. . . . Now is the time for our column to be closed up in solid mass. Now is the time for our people to stand shoulder to shoulder and fight for the purpose of resisting this oppression. We cannot retreat. The bridge is cut away. We are compelled to resist. We stand pledged to resist; honor requires it; self-interest and self-preservation require it. Then, sir, under these circumstances, shall we throw in a question of doubt and difficulty, to be contested and canvassed throughout the State of Virginia for the next two months? I trust not, and hope it will be the pleasure of the Convention to pass the Ordinance of Secession. . . .

Citation: Excerpts from speech of George Blow, April 17, 1861, printed in George H. Reese and William H. Gaines, Jr., eds., *Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861* (Richmond, Va: Virginia State Library, 1965), 4:85–88.