

Free Soil Party Platform of 1848

June 22, 1848

[NOTE: The "Barnburners" faction of the New York Democratic Party, who were disgusted with the proceedings of the National Convention which had nominated Cass and Butler for President and Vice-President, met in Convention at Utica, June 22d, 1848. Delegates were also present from Ohio, Wisconsin and Massachusetts. Martin Van Buren was nominated for President.

*On August 9, a second Convention was held at Buffalo to found the Free Soil Party, which was attended by delegates from the States of Maine, New-Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, and the District of Columbia. Charles Francis Adams, of Massachusetts, presided, and the Convention nominated Messrs. Van Buren and Adams as candidates for President and Vice-President, and adopted the following Resolves, since known as **THE BUFFALO PLATFORM**]*

Whereas, We have assembled in Convention, as a union of freemen, for the sake of freedom, forgetting all past political differences in a common resolve to maintain the rights of free labor against the aggressions of the Slave Power, and to secure free soil to a free people.

And Whereas, The political Conventions recently assembled at Baltimore and Philadelphia, the one stifling the voice of a great constituency, entitled to be heard in its deliberations, and the other abandoning its distinctive principles for mere availability, have dissolved the National party organisations heretofore existing, by nominating for the Chief Magistracy of the United States, under the slaveholding dictation, candidates, neither of whom can be supported by the opponents of Slavery Extension without a sacrifice of consistency, duty and self- respect;

And whereas, These nominations so made, furnish the occasion and demonstrate the necessity of the union of the people under the banner of Free Democracy, in a solemn and formal declaration of their independence of the slave power, and of their fixed determination to rescue the Federal Government from its control;

Resolved, therefore, That we, the people here assembled, remembering the example of our fathers, in the days of the first Declaration of Independence, putting our trust in God for the triumph of our cause, and invoking his guidance in our endeavors to advance it, do now plant ourselves upon the National platform of Freedom in opposition to the sectional platform of Slavery.

Resolved, That Slavery in the several States of this Union which recognize its existence, depends upon State laws alone, which cannot be repealed or modified by the Federal Government, and for which laws that government is not responsible. We therefore propose no interference by Congress with Slavery within the limits of any State.

Resolved, That the Proviso of Jefferson, to prohibit the existence of Slavery after 1800, in all the Territories of the United States, Southern and Northern; the votes of six States and sixteen delegates, in the Congress of 1784, for the Proviso, to three States and seven delegates against it; the actual exclusion of Slavery from the Northwestern Territory, by the Ordinance of 1787, unanimously adopted by the States in Congress; and the entire history of that period, clearly show that it was the settled policy of the Nation not to extend, nationalize or encourage, but to limit, localize and discourage Slavery; and to this policy, which should never have been departed from, the Government ought to return.

Resolved, That our fathers ordained the Constitution of the United States, in order, among other great national objects, to establish justice, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty; but expressly denied to the Federal Government, which they created, all constitutional power to deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due legal process.

Resolved, That in the judgment of this Convention, Congress has no more power to make a Slave than to make a King; no more power to institute or establish Slavery than to institute or establish a Monarchy: no such power can be found among those specifically conferred by the Constitution, or derived by just implication from them.

Resolved, That it is the duty of the Federal Government to relieve itself from all responsibility for the existence or continuance of slavery wherever the government possesses constitutional authority to legislate on that subject, and it is thus responsible for its existence.

Resolved, That the true, and in the judgment of this Convention, the only safe means of preventing the extension of Slavery into Territory now Free, is to prohibit its extension in all such Territory by an act of Congress.

Resolved, That we accept the issue which the Slave power has forced upon us; and to their demand for more Slave States, and more Slave Territory, our calm but final answer is, no more Slave States and no more Slave Territory. Let the soil of our extensive domains be kept free for the hardy pioneers of our own land, and the oppressed and banished of other lands, seeking homes of comfort and fields of enterprise in the new world.

Resolved, That the bill lately reported by the committee of eight in the Senate of the United States, was no compromise, but an absolute surrender of the rights of the Non-Slaveholders of all the States; and while we rejoice to know that a measure which, while opening the door for the introduction of Slavery into Territories now free, would also have opened the door to litigation and strife among the future inhabitants thereof, to the ruin of then- peace and prosperity, was defeated in the House of Representatives, its passage, in hot haste, by a majority, embracing several senators who voted in open violation of the known will of their constituents, should warn the people to see to it, that their representatives be not suffered to betray them. There must be no more Compromises with Slavery; if made they must be repealed.

Resolved, That we demand freedom and established institutions for our brethren in Oregon, now exposed to hardships, peril and massacre by the reckless hostility of the Slave Power to

the establishment of Free Government for Free Territories; and not only for them, but for our new brethren in California and New-Mexico.

Resolved, It is due not only to this occasion, but to the whole people of the United States, that we should also declare ourselves on certain other questions of National Policy: therefore,

Resolved, That we demand Cheap Postage for the People; a retrenchment of the expenses and patronage of the Federal Government; the abolition of all unnecessary offices and salaries; and the election by the people of all civil officers in the service of the government, so far as the same may be practicable.

Resolved, That River and Harbor improvements, when demanded by the safety and convenience of commerce with foreign nations, or among the several States, are objects of national concern, and that it is the duty of Congress, in the exercise of its constitutional powers, to provide therefor.

Resolved, That the free grant to actual settlers, in consideration of the expenses they incur in making settlements in the wilderness, which are usually fully equal to their actual cost, and of the public benefits resulting therefrom, of reasonable portions of the public lands, under suitable limitations, is a wise and just measure of public policy, which will promote in various ways the interests of all the States of this Union; and we therefore recommend it to the favorable consideration of the American people.

Resolved, That the obligations of honor and patriotism require the earliest practicable payment of the national debt, and we are therefore in favor of such a tariff of duties as will raise revenue adequate to defray the necessary expenses of the Federal Government, and to pay annual instalments of our debt, and the interest thereon

Resolved, That we inscribe on our own banner, "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor, and Free Men," and under it we will fight on, and fight ever, until a triumphant victory shall reward our exertions.