

Documents

A LETTER OF DANIEL WORTH TO GEORGE W. JULIAN
AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

BY GRACE JULIAN CLARKE

Introduction

Following the Pittsburg convention of 1856, where the new Republican party was nationally launched, Indiana did not at once take her place in the list of States that boldly endorsed the new movement. There were too many Fusionists and Know Nothings here, men who looked rather to immediate success than to the triumph of antislavery principles. The State convention which met in Indianapolis on May 1, 1856, refused even to adopt the name "Republican," insisting on being known as the "People's" party, some of its members having been delegates to the national Know Nothing convention which had nominated Millard Fillmore.

But there was a considerable leaven of genuine anti-slavery men in the State. Some of these were dyed-in-the-wool Abolitionists of the extreme type, like the writer of the following letter, a minister of the Gospel who afterwards suffered imprisonment in North Carolina for having circulated "seditious literature," especially Helper's *Impending Crisis*. Such men performed genuine service in keeping before the people the sin of slavery and by the Christ-like spirit with which they bore persecution.

The suggestion in Worth's letter in regard to calling another convention to select delegates to Philadelphia was not acted upon, and the writer's characterization of the Pittsburg platform as "a miserable truckling affair" is a little amusing inasmuch as Julian himself had served as chairman of the committee on organization, the adoption of whose report called the Republican party into existence. As for the platform adopted at Pittsburg, it demanded the freedom of Kansas and of all our national territories, which meant the restriction of slavery to the States where it already existed and was understood by slaveholders as necessarily paving the way for the

destruction of the institution. It also pledged the new party to work for the overthrow of the Buchanan administration as the ally of slavery. It might have been more emphatic, but in the then state of public opinion it was probably wise not to take a more extreme position.

That there was much dissatisfaction with the slowness and timidity of some of the leading exponents of the new party movement in Indiana is abundantly shown by the correspondence of George W. Julian. The three documents which follow the Worth letter below are also evidence of the fact. The first communication of the Bidwell brothers occupied the front of a little circular which consisted of a single folded sheet, about the size of ordinary note-paper. It was marked "Private Letter." On the reverse page, written in a clear and delicate hand, was the short personal appeal to Mr. Julian. On page three of the little sheet, with the title in large type appeared the subjects of a series of prospective articles which were to be published during the year 1857 in the proposed weekly paper.

The Western Presage appeared fourteen times only, the last issue on April 4th, and the following day Julian recording in his Journal its demise, said: "It told too much truth in its short life to suit the chief priests and they crucified it. I fear Indiana is politically past praying for." I have often wondered what became of the Bidwell brothers, whose names were Andrew and Solomon—whether they remained in Indianapolis or went elsewhere, what was the business to which they "returned," and if it proved successful. It would be interesting to know. I wonder, too, if there is in existence a file of those fourteen numbers of their paper, and who were the other contributors. The Indiana State Library ought to have them, but I am told that they are not to be found.

[THE WORTH LETTER]

Greensboro, May 13, 1856

G. W. Julian Esq.

Dear Sir:

Being at this place this morning I have felt like addressing a hasty note to you before the mail leaves. I attended the convention at Indianapolis the other day and listened and looked on to the *wonderful affair*. I came deliberately to the conclusion that it was not the party for me. A poor miserable truckling concern without either soul or body. I have

just about as much faith in it as I have in Franklin Pierce himself. Look if you please at such leaders as Sol. Meredith, Dave Kilgore, Charley Test, Bill Gross, D. Zigler, Will Sheets, Martin L. Bundy, Rawson Vaile!! There is not any appreciable quantity of Antislavery about a million of such creatures. All the old Antislavery men who are reliable are opposed to this contemptible concern. By the by, the late Pittsburg platform itself is a miserable truckling document, and I say now as I said when my eye first met it, that the man who represents no higher phase of Antislavery than that document can never get my vote for office, no never.

You will mark the fact that our wise-acres at Indianapolis ignored even the name of Republican as well as all antislavery principle. This was done for the benefit of Knownothings and old fossil Whigs who have just emanated from their old political graves where they have been "per-severing to rot," and are now ready to take office at the hands of antislavery men provided they are not compelled to take more antislavery than they might safely take of *arsenic*. A number of tried friends at this place and Carthage and other points have suggested the propriety of holding a *Republican Convention* and nominating delegates to the Philadelphia Con. on the 17th of June. A good attendance to such a convention could be had from about here and Carthage and I doubt not through the whole country. Should we meet at Indianapolis and send delegates to Philadelphia they must be received as the true representatives of Indiana, for those chosen the other day even deny the name. What say you to a Con. at Indianapolis about the first of June for this purpose? Or would it be better to hold it at some other point? The folks at Carthage would like to have your opinion on this matter. Will you write me at that place (I am living there) and let us know your views? The friends at Carthage have been expecting a visit from you and perhaps you can come and see us and address us. If so this will be better still. If you could visit us and will drop us a line to that effect we will meet you at Knightstown and convoy you down and back at any time. Now if anything is done in regard to the above suggestions it will have to be done quickly. There are hundreds and perhaps thousands of dissatisfied men in Indiana who cannot, nay who will not, fall into this movement. As to myself, I loathe it, I despise it. The editor of the late "Williams County Democrat" of Ohio wrote to me a few days before I left Ripley stating that he and many others had bolted the Pittsburg platform and that he was preparing to establish a "Radical" Abolition sheet at Columbus, O. If the Philadelphia nominating convention take no broader ground than did the Pittsburgh, the earnest antislavery men will leave the ranks by thousands. They will not fight battles for nothing. In haste,

Yours truly,
D. Worth.

[LETTERS OF THE BIDWELL BROTHERS
AND PROSPECTUS]

"Indianapolis, Indiana,
November, 1856.

Dear Sir:

The undersigned have determined to publish at this place, under the name of *The Western Presage*, a weekly paper, to be devoted to the advancement of the cause of Freedom, to Literature, general Miscellany &c. The first and foremost of the motives that impel us to undertake this work, is to aid in establishing, if possible, a higher standard of public opinion, particularly on the question of American Slavery. The existing popular opinion on that subject in this locality is far from being what it ought to be; and one of the chief causes of this, we think, lies in the false and deceptive issues that have from time to time been presented to the people by primary conventions, as well as in the great mass of argument, framed for the emergency, and so carefully constructed, to avoid giving offense, as to render it entirely impotent against the opposition, and worse than useless as a support to the cause it was designed to sustain.

The course which the Republicans have pursued towards the Know Nothing party of Indiana, has also tended greatly to weaken the party of Freedom, by driving from its support thousands of honest men who would otherwise have been with us, while it gained none of the proscriptive vote it turned aside to invite.

We intend to be plain, candid, and fair; and if we cannot succeed without compromising the truth, as many tell us we cannot, then, after we have fully tested the matter, we shall of course be compelled to return to a business from which we can derive an honest living. But we are by no means convinced that the people love falsehood better than truth. We believe that a dangerous mistake has ever been pursued by these politicians who have studied skill in what they denominate management, which would seem to mean the sacrificing of truth to party success; and we also believe that the people as a mass are far better and worthier as men than those who assume to establish false opinions for them. If we hold to the truth, they will act with us; but if we evade it, and call the act policy, most of them will go with the party that makes less pretensions to honesty.

This being our conviction, we shall never hesitate between truth and policy, but always assert the former without fear of consequences, and without regard to the peculiar opinions of party managers.

In carrying out our design, we desire the aid of our friends, and of the friends of freedom in every part of the land, and for the purpose of systematizing their work we have drawn up the accompanying list of subjects and placed opposite to each the name of the person who, in our opinion, is best qualified to discuss it. These names are known only to ourselves.

You will see by reference to the list that we have assigned to you the task of furnishing 5 articles in the course of the coming year. You will oblige us by stating, as early as possible, whether we may expect

your assistance to this extent, as we wish to have our list completed without delay.

In addition to the accompanying list, we have prepared others, embracing subjects of a different character, which we also send to those whose assistance we desire to obtain.

It may be proper to state to contributors that in selecting persons to discuss the subjects assigned to them we have been careful to choose none who are not known to us to be manly and courteous in argument, and fully competent to perform the task set apart for them, without resorting to the use of mean and vulgar language. We make this statement for the purpose of assuring correspondents that their articles will be in no danger of being thrown into bad company.

Respectfully,

BIDWELL BROTHERS.

Indianapolis, Nov. 22, 1856.

G. W. Julian,

Dear Sir:

We shall be glad to have your assistance, to an extent beyond that assigned to you in the list. Indeed, we should like to regard you as a sort of home dependence.

It will be somewhat difficult, at first, to maintain the free ground we intend to assume, but by perseverance we expect to triumph. It will be necessary, however, to be vigilant, honest and unswerving. We are not able, of ourselves, in point of talent, to maintain the high position our paper will assume, and hence we desire the aid of such as are.

Respt'y,

Bidwell Brothers.

CONTRIBUTORS' LIST

Date	Subject	Name of Author
January	3—Peculiar Features of Indiana Politics	Geo. W. Julian
"	10—Popular Majority in the Free North	
	Northern Doughfaces	
"	17—Indiana Election Laws	
"	24—Terror of the Dissolution Pretense	
"	31—Early Mistakes of the Republican Party	Geo. W. Julian
Feb.	7—Relation of the States to the Republican Party	
	Freedom Right—Slavery Wrong	
"	14—Position of the Know Nothings	Geo. W. Julian
"	21—"Freedom Shriekers" of the Revolution	
"	28—"Prison of the Hundred"	
March	7—Ignoring the Question	
"	14—The President's Inaugural Address	
"	21—Inter-State Slave Trade	
"	28—Slavery in Cold Climates	

April	4—The Free Democracy of '48-9	
"	11—Slavery in the Colonies	
"	18—Free Labor and Slave Labor	
"	25—Degeneracy of Literature under Slavery	
May	2—Slavery in the District	
"	9—Inconsistency of Slavery	
"	16—Divine Right of Man to Freedom	
"	23—Perverting the Constitution	
"	30—Man's Natural Love of Freedom	
June	6—Earnings of the Underground Railroad	
"	13—Northern Apologies for Southern Slavery	
"	20—Triumphs of Labor in the Free North	
"	27—Fruits of the Declaration	
July	4—The Birthday of our Republic	
"	11—Framers of the Ordinance	
"	18—Triumphs of Literature in the Free North	
"	25—Slavery in the Territories	
August	1—Antislavery Consistency	
"	8—Effects of Slavery upon Free Labor	
"	15—Free Labor in the Harvest Field	
"	22—The Fugitive Slave Law	
"	29—Slavery Necessarily Aggressive	
Sept.	5—Condition of the Fugitives in Canada	
"	12—Betraying the Patriots of the Revolution	
"	19—Washington's Farewell Address	
"	26—Suppressing the Bible on the Plantations	
Oct.	3—Liberty and Slavery in the Same Land	
"	10—Influences of Slavery upon Christianity	
"	17—Fossil Remains of the Know Nothing Party Geo. W. Julian	
"	24—"Good Faith and Justice Towards all Nations"	
"	31—"Agitators and Fanatics"	
Nov.	7—The Difference Between Freedom and Slavery	
"	14—Present Elements in the Political World	Geo. W. Julian
"	21—The Recent Elections	
"	28—The Approaching Session of Congress	
Dec.	5—Moral Courage in Politics	
"	12—President's Message	
"	19—The Puritan Fathers	
"	26—The Departing Year--Its Trials and Triumphs	

A LETTER FROM STEPHEN S. HARDING
TO WILLIAM H. SEWARD

By MRS. ETTA REEVES FRENCH

Foreword

Since Mormonism is celebrating its hundredth anniversary this year, it would seem an appropriate time to introduce to