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National Museum of African American History and Culture

Extension of the Ku Klux Act

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give a prize, a premium for any outbreak at the South which would justify them now in exercising these great powers, or justify Congress in granting them to the President to save him from his own maladministration, to save him from the results of these indiscretions which have shown him to be unfit to occupy the place which he holds, which have lost him the confidence of the country.

Mr. President, in South Carolina during the last election a similar condition of affairs existed in respect to the attitude of parties as that which now exists in the country at large. The carpet bag State government of South Carolina had committed such infamies that all decent men were aroused against them. Nobody now undertakes to defend or uphold them. They plundered the State right and left. A people stricken as the people of the South Carolina were, from whom everything that they had was swept by the war, have been saddled with a debt of over twenty million dollars by the thieving carpet-bag government forced upon them by the bayonets of the Federal Government. So shocking and disgusting was the conduct of those who administered the affairs of the State that even decent carpet-baggers revolted and turned against them. I will read to the Senate from page 524 of the report the estimate placed upon his colleagues by Mr. Chamberlain, who is the attorney general of South Carolina. Mr. Chamberlain appeared before the committee. He is certainly a very intelligent man, and his manners are those of a gentleman. His expressions of disgust at the corrupt practices of his colleagues in office were such as to give all who heard him a good opinion of his integrity as a man. He writes a letter to William L. Trenholm, late secretary of the treasury of the confederacy, in which he says:

"I propose to lay aside all partisanship, and simply to state facts as I conceive them to exist. Let us look at our State when the reconstruction acts first took effect in 1868.

"A social revolution had been accomplished; an entire reversal of the political relations of most of our people had ensued. The class which formerly held all the political powers of our State were stripped of all.

"The class which had formerly been less than citizens, with no political power or social position, were made the sole depositaries of the political powers of the State. I refer now to the practical results, not to the theories. The numerical relations of the two races here were such that one race, under the new laws, held absolute political control of the State.

"The attitude and action of both races, under these new conditions, while not unnatural, was, I must think, unwise and unfortunate. One race stood aloft and haughtily refused to seek the confidence of the race which was just entering on its new powers; while the other race quickly grasped all the political power which the new order of things had placed within their reach.

"From the nature of the case, the one race were devoid of political experience, of all or nearly all education, and depended mainly for all these qualities upon those who, for the most part, chanced to have drifted here from other States, or who, in very rare instances, being former residents of the State, now allied themselves with the other race.

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"From the nature of the case, the one race were devoid of political experience, of all or nearly all education, and depended mainly for all these qualities upon those who, for the most part, chanced to have drifted here from other States, or who, in very rare instances, being former residents of the State, now allied themselves with the other race.

... rare instances, being former residents of the State, now allied themselves with the other race. ...

... The nation had recovered the independence ...

... These men have passed, and the world ...

... For many months the change with which I ...

... That, to see the philosophy lodged in by ...

... Mr. SAWYER. The Senator will allow ...

... Mr. BLAIR. Certainly.

... Mr. SAWYER. I did not for a moment ...

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No man of common prudence, or who was even slightly familiar with the workings of social forces, could have then failed to see that the elements which went to compose the now dominant party were not of the kind which produce public virtue and honor, or which could long secure even public order and peace.

"I make all just allowance for exceptional cases of individual character, but I say that the result to be expected, from the very nature of the situation in 1868, was that a scramble for office would ensue among the members of the party in power, which, again, from the nature of the case, must result in filling the offices of the State, local and general, with men of no capacity, and little honesty or desire to really serve the public.

"The nation had approved the reconstruction measures, not because they seemed to be free of danger, nor because they were blind to the very grave possibilities of future evils, but in the hope that the one race, wearing its new laurels and using its new powers with modesty and forbearance, would gradually remove the prejudices and enlist the sympathies and cooperation of the other race, until a fair degree of political homogeneity should be reached, and race lines should cease to mark the limits of political parties.

"Three years have passed, and the result is- what? Incompetency, dishonesty, corruption in all its forms, have 'advanced their miscreated fronts;' have put to flight the small remnant that opposed them, and now rule the party which rules the State.

"You may imagine the chagrin with which I make this statement. Truth alone compels it. My eyes see it; all my senses testify to the startling and sad fact. I can never be indifferent to anything which touches the fair fame of that great national party to which all my deepest convictions attach me, and I repel the libel which the party bearing that name in this State is daily pouring upon us. I am a Republican by habit, by conviction, by association; but my Republicanism is not, I trust, composed solely of equal parts of ignorance and rapacity. Such is the plain statement of the present condition of the dominant party of our State."

That, to use the phraseology indulged in by the Senator from Pennsylvania, is not my language; that is not my description of the party in power in South Carolina. That is the language of perhaps the only honest man in South Carolina that belongs to that party. My eyes did not rest on the Senators from that State at the moment I made that expression. I of course had no reference to either of the Senators who sit on this floor, and I used a more sweeping expression than I intended at the time. I certainly made no allusion to either of the Senators.

Mr. SAWYER. The Senator will allow me a moment?

Mr. BLAIR. Certainly

Mr. SAWYER. I did not for a moment suppose that the Senator did have allusion to the Senators on this floor from South Carolina, for I trust that his intercourse with those Senators has not been such as to induce him to make a remark of that kind, which could include either of them; but I think he is quite wide of the mark when he says that Mr. Chamberlain is the only honest man, perhaps, who belongs to the Republican party in

South Carolina. On the other hand, if he will allow me to trespass on his
patience for

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