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Washington, D.C. Peace conference, 1861.

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

CONFERENCE CONVENTION.



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WASHINGTON, *February 4th*, 1861.

A number of Commissioners assembled at Willards' Concert Hall in consequence of the following preamble and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of Virginia, January the 19th, 1861.

WHEREAS it is the deliberate opinion of the general assembly of Virginia, that unless the unhappy controversy, which now divides the States of this confederacy, shall be satisfactorily adjusted, a permanent dissolution of the Union is inevitable; and the general assembly, representing the wishes of the people of the commonwealth, is desirous of employing every reasonable means to avert so dire a calamity, and determined to make a final effort to restore the Union and the Constitution, in the spirit in which they were established by the fathers of the republic: Therefore,

Resolved, That on behalf of the commonwealth of Virginia, an invitation is hereby extended to all such States, whether slaveholding or non-slaveholding, as are willing to unite with Virginia in an earnest effort to adjust the present unhappy controversies, in the spirit in which the Constitution was originally formed, and consistently with its principles, so as to afford to the people of the slaveholding States adequate guarantees for the security of their rights, to appoint commissioners to meet on the 4th day of February next, in the City of Washington, similar commissioners appointed by Virginia, to consider, and if practicable, agree upon some suitable adjustment.

Resolved, That ex-president John Tyler, William C. Rives, Judge John W. Brockenbrough, George W. Summers and James A. Seddon are hereby appointed commissioners, whose duty it shall be to repair to the City of Washington, on the day designated in the foregoing resolution, to meet such commissioners as may be appointed by any of the said States, in accordance with the foregoing resolution.

Resolved, That if said commissioners, after full and free conference, shall agree upon any plan of adjustment requiring amendments to the Federal Constitution, for the further security of the rights of the people of the slaveholding States, they be requested to communicate the proposed amendments to Congress, for the purpose of having the same submitted by that body, according to the forms of the Constitution, to the several States for ratification.

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Resolved, That if said commissioners cannot agree on such adjustment, or if agreeing, Congress shall refuse to submit for ratification such amendments as may be proposed, then the commissioners of this State shall immediately communicate the result to the executive of this commonwealth, to be by him laid before the convention of the people of Virginia and the general assembly: provided, that the said commissioners be subject at all times to the control of the general assembly, or if in session, to that of the State convention.

Resolved, That in the opinion of the general assembly of Virginia, the propositions embraced in the resolutions presented to the Senate of the United States by the Hon. John J. Crittenden, so modified as that the first article proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States shall apply to all the territory of the United States now held or hereafter acquired south of latitude thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes, and provide that slavery of African race shall be effectually protected as property therein during the continuance of the territorial government, and the fourth article shall secure to the owners of slaves the right of transit with their slaves between and through the non-slaveholding States and territories, constitute the basis of such an adjustment of the unhappy controversy which now divides the States of this confederacy, as would be accepted by the people of this commonwealth.

Resolved, That ex-president John Tyler is hereby appointed by the concurrent vote of each branch of the general assembly, a commissioner to the President of the United States, and Judge John Robertson is hereby appointed, by a like vote, a commissioner to the State of South Carolina, and the other States that have seceded, or shall secede, with instructions respectfully to request the President of the United States and authorities of such States to agree to abstain, pending the proceedings contemplated by the action of this general assembly, from any and all acts calculated to produce a collision of arms between the States and the Government of the United States.

Resolved, That copies of the foregoing resolutions be forthwith telegraphed to the executives of the several States, and also to the President of the United States, and the governor be requested to inform, without delay, the commissioners of their appointment by the foregoing resolutions.

A copy from the Rolls.

WM F. GORDON, JR.,
C. H. D. & K. R. of Va.

Mr. MOREHEAD of Kentucky, called the meeting to order, and moved that Mr. Wright of Ohio be appointed temporary chairman, to be followed by the appointment of a committee consisting of a member from each delegation, to be named by such delegation, who should recommend officers for a permanent organization, and should also report rules for the government of the body.

The motion to appoint Mr. Wright was thereupon put and unanimously carried.

Upon being conducted to the chair by Mr. Meredith of Pennsylvania, and Mr. Chase of Ohio, Mr. Wright made a brief address explanatory of the object of the meeting, and expressed a hope and belief, that, as the delegates present from the several States, had assembled under the influence of the most friendly feelings, if they carried those feelings into an examination of the difficulties which surround the country, the result would be a suc-

cess, earnestly to be hoped for, by every lover of his country, so as to establish the Union, according to the spirit of the existing Constitution of the United States.

On motion, Mr. BENJAMIN C. HOWARD of Maryland, was appointed Secretary.

The following States responded to a call of their names; the lists of Delegates to be handed in to-morrow:

New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana.

Mr. MEREDITH of Pennsylvania, then renewed the motion for the appointment of a committee as above mentioned, which was carried, and the following members named by their respective delegations, viz:

New Hampshire, Amos Tuck; Rhode Island, William W. Hop-
pin; New Jersey, Joseph F. Randolph; Pennsylvania, Thomas
E. Franklin; Delaware, George B. Rodney; Maryland, John
W. Crisfield; Virginia, William C. Rives; North Carolina, Thomas
Ruffin; Kentucky, Charles A. Wickliffe; Ohio, Reuben Hitch-
cock; Indiana, Goodlove S. Orth.

On motion, the Convention adjourned until to-morrow at 12 o'clock.

B. C. HOWARD,
Secretary.

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WASHINGTON CITY, *February 5, 1861.*

The Convention was called to order pursuant to adjournment, by Mr. Wright, President pro tem.

The Journal of Proceedings of yesterday, was read and approved.

Mr. THOMAS E. FRANKLIN of Pennsylvania, moved that a committee of five be appointed by the President, to whom the credentials of members should be submitted and reported on, which was carried.

The President thereupon appointed as said committee:

May 1/20

Mr. SUMMERS of Virginia.

Mr. GUTHRIE of Kentucky.

Mr. MOREHEAD of North Carolina.

Mr. SMITH of Indiana.

Mr. FRANKLIN of Pennsylvania.

Mr. WICKLIFFE of Kentucky, from the committee on organization, made a report which was read.

Mr. CLAY of Kentucky, moved to strike out for the present and for further consideration, the report which relates to the proceedings of the convention.

This motion gave rise to a debate, pending which a division of the report was called for, whereupon it was moved, that the Convention proceed to consider the following part of the report of the committee relating to officers of the permanent organization of the convention as follows:

The committee to whom was referred the subject of the organization of the Convention made the following report: They recommend that the permanent officers of the Convention, be a President and Secretary, and that the Secretary have leave to appoint assistants, not exceeding two, to assist him in the discharge of his duties. The committee report for President, John Tyler of Virginia; Secretary, Crafts J. Wright of Ohio.

Thereupon it was moved and unanimously agreed, that this part of the report be accepted and the officers designated, be appointed.

The President pro. tem. appointed Mr. EWING of Ohio and Mr. Meredith of Pennsylvania, to conduct President Tyler to the chair.

President Tyler on taking his seat proceeded to address the Convention:

GENTLEMEN: I fear you have committed a great error in appointing me to the honorable position you have assigned me. A long separation from all deliberate bodies has rendered the rules of their proceedings unfamiliar to me, while I should find in my own state of health, variable and fickle as it is, sufficient reason to decline the honor of being your presiding officer. But, in times like these, one has but little option left him. Personal considerations should weigh but lightly in the balance. The country is in danger; it is enough; one must take the place assigned him in the great work of reconciliation and adjustment,

The voice of Virginia has invited her co-States to meet her in council. In the initiation of this Government that same voice was heard and complied with, and the results of seventy-odd years have fully attested the wisdom of the decisions

then adopted. Is the urgency of her call now less great than it was then? Our goodlike fathers created: we have to preserve. They built up through their wisdom and patriotism monuments which have eternized their names. You have before you, gentlemen, a task equally grand, equally sublime, quite as full of glory and immortality. You have to snatch from ruin a great and glorious Confederation, to preserve the Government, and to renew and invigorate the Constitution. If you reach the height of this great occasion your children's children will rise up and call you blessed. I confess myself to be ambitious of sharing in the glory of accomplishing this grand and magnificent result. To have our names enrolled in the Capitol, to be repeated by future generations with grateful applause, this is an honor higher than the mountains, more enduring than the monumental alabaster.

Yes, Virginia's voice, as in the olden time, has been heard. Her sister States meet her this day at the council board. Vermont is here, bringing with her the memories of the past, and reviving in the memories of all her Ethan Allen and his demand for the surrender of Ticonderoga in the name of the Great Jehovah and the American Congress. New Hampshire is here, her fame illustrated by memorable annals, and still more lately as the birth-place of him who won for himself the name of Defender of the Constitution, and who wrote that letter to John Taylor which has been enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen. Massachusetts is not here. [Some member said she is coming.] I hope so, said Mr. TYLER, and that she will bring with her her daughter, Maine. I did not believe it could well be that the voice which in other times was so familiar to her ears had been addressed to her in vain. Connecticut is here, and she comes, I doubt not, in the spirit of Roger Sherman, whose name with our very children has become a household word, and who was in life the embodiment of that sound practical sense which benefits the great lawgiver and constructor of governments. Rhode Island, the land of Roger Williams, is here, one of the two last States, in her jealousy of the public liberty, to give in her adhesion to the Constitution, and among the earliest to hasten to its rescue. The great Empire State of New York, represented thus far but by one delegate, is expected daily in fuller force to join in the great work of healing the discontents of the times and restoring the reign of fraternal feeling. New Jersey is also here, with the memories of the past covering her all over. Trenton and Princeton live immortal in story, the plains of the last incrimsoned with the hearts blood of Virginia's sons. Among her delegation I rejoice to recognise a gallant son of a signer of the immortal Declaration which announced to the world that thirteen Provinces had become thirteen independent and sovereign States. And here too is Delaware, the land of the Bayards and the Rodneys, whose soil at Brandywine was moistened by the blood of Virginia's youthful Monroe. Here is Maryland, whose massive columns wheeled into line with those of Virginia in the contest for glory, and whose State-house at Annapolis was the theatre of a spectacle of a successful commander, who, after liberating his country, gladly ungirthed his sword and laid it down upon the altar of that country. Then comes Pennsylvania, rich in Revolutionary lore, bringing with her the deathless names of Franklin and Morris, and I trust ready to renew from the belfry of Independence Hall the chimes of the old bell which announced freedom and independence in former days. All hail to North Carolina, with her Mecklenburg Declaration in her hand, standing erect on the ground of her own probity and firmness in the cause of the public liberty, and represented in her attributes by her Macon, and in this assembly by her distinguished son at no great distance from me. Four daughters of Virginia also cluster around the council board on the invitation of their ancient mother—the eldest Kentucky, whose sons, under the intrepid warrior, Anthony Wayne, gave freedom of settlement to the territory of her sister Ohio. She extends her hand daily and hourly across *la belle rivière*, to grasp the hand of some one of kindred blood of the noble States of Indiana, and Illinois, and Ohio, who have grown up into powerful States, already grand, potent, and almost imperial. Tennessee is not here, but is coming—prevented from being here only by the floods which have swollen her rivers. When she arrives she will wear the badges on her warrior crest of victories won, in com-

pany with the great West, on many an ensanguined plain, and standards torn from the hands of the conquerors at Waterloo. Missouri and Iowa, and Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, still linger behind, but it may be hoped that their hearts are with us in the great work we have to do.

Gentlemen, the eyes of the whole country are turned to this assembly in expectation and hope. I trust that you may prove yourselves worthy of the great occasion. Our ancestors probably committed a blunder in not having fixed upon every fifth decade for a call of a General Convention to amend and reform the Constitution. On the contrary, they have made the difficulties next to insurmountable to accomplish amendments to an instrument which was perfect for five millions of people, but not wholly so as to thirty millions. Your patriotism will surmount the difficulties, however great, if you will but accomplish but one triumph in advance, and that is, a triumph over party. And what is party when compared to the task of rescuing one's country from danger? Do that, and one long, loud shout of joy and gladness will resound throughout the land.

On motion of Mr. EWING, action on the remainder of the report of the committee on organization, was postponed until Wednesday.

Mr. WICKLIFFE of Kentucky, offered the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Convention shall be opened with prayer, and that the clergy of the City of Washington be requested to perform that service.

Which was adopted.

That with a view to carry out the resolution of the Convention, the Rev. Mr. Gurley be now requested to offer up prayer, which was agreed to. Whereupon Mr. Gurley offered up prayer.

The Convention being informed by the President of the tender of the room by the Mayor and Council of the City of Washington, for the use of the Convention, and also of tender of police officers to attend the sittings of the Convention, it was moved and agreed to, that the same be accepted.

On motion of Mr. JOHNSON of Maryland, it was resolved that the President be requested to furnish a copy of his speech to the Convention to be made part of this day's proceedings, and that the same shall, with the proceedings of this day be published.

Mr. GRIMES of Iowa, informed the Convention that he had a letter in regard to the appointment of delegates from Iowa, which, on his motion, was referred to the committee on credentials.

Mr. WRIGHT of Ohio, moved that the Convention do now adjourn until 12 o'clock to-morrow, which was agreed to.

The Convention adjourned until 12 o'clock to-morrow.

CRAFTS J. WRIGHT,

Secretary.

WASHINGTON, *February 6th*, 1861.

The Convention met pursuant to adjournment.

President TYLER in the chair.

The journal of the proceedings of yesterday were read, amended, and approved.

Mr. SUMMERS, chairman of the Committee on Credentials, made the following report:

The credentials of the following gentlemen from the States hereafter enumerated, have been duly submitted and examined by your committee, and approved by them.

New Hampshire—Amos Tuck, Levi Chamberlain, Asa Fowler.

Vermont—Hiland Hall, Levi Underwood, H. Henry Baxter, L. E. Chittenden, B. D. Harris.

Rhode Island and Providence Plantations—Samuel Ames, Alexander Duncan, William W. Hoppin, George H. Browne, Samuel G. Arnold.

Connecticut—Roger S. Baldwin, Chauncy F. Cleveland, Charles J. McCurdy, James T. Pratt, Robbins Battelle, Amos S. Treat.

New Jersey—Charles S. Olden, Peter D. Vroome, Robert F. Stockton, Benjamin Williamson, Joseph F. Randolph, Frederick T. Frelenghuysen, Rodman M. Price, William C. Alexander, Thomas J. Stryker.

Pennsylvania—Thomas White, James Pollock, William M. Meredith, David Wilmot, A. W. Loomis, Thomas E. Franklin, William McKennan.

Delaware—George B. Rodney, Daniel M. Bates, Henry Ridgeley, John W. Houston, William Cannon.

Maryland—John F. Dent, Reverdy Johnson, John W. Chrisfield, Augustus W. Bradford, William T. Goldsborough. J. Dixon Roman, Benjamin C. Howard.

Virginia—John Tyler, William C. Rives, John W. Brockenbrough, George W. Summers, James A. Seddon.

North Carolina—George Davis, Thomas Ruffin, David S. Reed, D. M. Barrengen, J. M. Morehead.

Kentucky—William O. Butler, James B. Clay, Joshua F. Bell, Charles S. Morehead, James Guthrie, Charles A. Wickliffe.

Ohio—John C. Wright, Solomon P. Chase, William S. Groesbeck, Franklin T. Backus, Reuben Hitchcock, Thomas Ewing, V. B. Horton.

Indiana—Caleb B. Smith, Pleasant A. Hacklenear, Godlove S. Orth, E. W. H. Ellis, Thomas C. Slaughter.

Iowa—James Harlan, James W. Grimes, Samuel R. Curtiss, William VanDever.

On motion of Mr. Wickliffe, the Secretary was authorized to employ the additional assistants.

Mr. WICKLIFFE, chairman of the committee on organization, called up for consideration that part of the report not heretofore agreed to, and moved that the same be adopted.

Mr. SEDDON of Virginia, offered the following amendment:

Resolved, That no part of the Journal be published without the order or leave of the Convention, and that no copies of the whole or any part be furnished or allowed, except to members, who shall be privileged to communicate the same to the authorities or deliberative assemblies of their respective States, when deemed judicious or appropriate under their instructions, and that nothing spoken in the house be printed or otherwise published, but private communications respecting the proceedings and debates, while recommended to be with caution and reserve, are allowed at the discretion of each member.

On motion, the above resolution and the original report and resolution, were referred back to the committee.

Mr. GUTHRIE of Kentucky, moved the adoption of the following resolution:

Resolved, That a committee of one from each State be appointed by the Commissioners thereof, to be nominated to the President and to be appointed by him, to whom shall be referred the resolutions of the State of Virginia and the other States represented, and all propositions for the adjustment of existing difficulties between States, with authority to report what they may deem right, necessary, and proper to restore harmony and preserve the Union, and that they report on or before Friday.

Mr. EWING of Ohio, suggested that said resolution be so modified as to authorize said committee to sit during the meeting of the Convention, which being accepted, said resolution was agreed to.

The President appointed the following committee to carry into effect that part of the report of the Committee on Rules and Organization, which related to obtaining the services of a clergyman to open the proceedings with prayer:

Mr. RANDOLPH of New Jersey; Mr. WICKLIFFE of Kentucky; Mr. JOHNSON of Maryland.

On motion of Mr. JOHNSON of Maryland, it was agreed that the members of this Convention should call in a body on the President of the United States at such time as would be agreeable to him, to be announced by the President of this Convention.

On motion, the Convention reconsidered the resolution recommending the rules of proceeding to the committee thereon, and agreed to proceed to the consideration of the same.

Mr. WRIGHT called for a division, and proposed that the several rules should be separately read, and, when no objection was raised, they should be agreed to; and when objected to, should be passed for subsequent consideration.

Which was agreed to.

The rules hereafter designated were adopted.

The remainder were recommitted.

The rules adopted were as follows:

1. A Convention to do business shall consist of the Commissioners of not less than seven States; and all questions shall be decided by the greater number of those which be fully represented. But a less number than seven may adjourn from day to day.

2. Immediately after the President shall have taken the chair, and the members their seats, the minutes of the preceding day shall be read by the Secretary.

3. Every member, rising to speak shall address the President, and while he shall be speaking none shall pass between them, or hold discourse with another, or read a book, pamphlet, or paper, printed or manuscript—and of two members rising to speak at the same time, the President shall name him who shall be first heard.

4. A member shall not speak oftener than twice, without special leave, upon the same question, and not a second time, before every other who had been silent shall have been heard, if he choose to speak upon the subject.

5. A motion made and seconded, shall be repeated, and if written, as it shall be when any member shall so require, read aloud, by the Secretary, before it shall be debated—and may be withdrawn at any time before the vote upon it shall have been declared.

6. Orders of the day shall be read next after the minutes, and

either discussed or postponed, before any other business shall be introduced.

7. When a debate shall arise upon a question, no motion, other than to amend the question, to commit it, or to postpone the debate, shall be received.

8. A question which is complicated shall, at the request of any member, be divided and put separately upon the proposition of which it is compounded.

9. The determination of a question, although fully debated, shall be postponed, if the Commissioners of any State desire it, until the next day.

10. A writing which contains any matter brought on to be considered, shall be read once throughout, for information, then by paragraphs, to be debated, and again with the amendments, if any made on the second reading, and afterwards the question shall be put upon the whole, as amended, or approved in the original form, as the case may be.

11. Committees shall be appointed by the President, unless otherwise ordered by the Convention. A member may be called to order by any other member, as well as by the President, and may be allowed to explain his conduct or expressions, supposed to be reprehensible. And all questions of order shall be decided by the President, without appeal or debate.

12. Upon a question to adjourn, for the day, which may be made at any time, if it be seconded, the question shall be put without a debate.

13. When the Convention shall adjourn, every member shall stand in his place until the President pass him.

14. That no member be absent from the Convention, so as to interrupt the representation of the State, without leave.

15. That committees do not sit while the Convention shall be or ought to be sitting, without leave of the Convention.

16. That no copy be taken of any entry on the Journal, during the sitting of the Convention, without leave of the Convention.

17. That members only be permitted to inspect the Journal.

On motion, the Convention adjourned until Thursday, 10 o'clock, A. M.

CRAFTS J. WRIGHT,
Secretary.

WASHINGTON CITY, *February 7th*, 1861.

The Convention met pursuant to adjournment.

President TYLER in the chair.

The Convention was opened by prayer by Rev. Dr. Pyne.

The Journal of the proceedings of the Convention of the 6th inst., were read, amended, and approved.

President TYLER, in accordance with the resolution of the 6th instant, in regard to calling on the President of the United States, caused to be read by the Secretary the following letter from the President of the United States :

February 6th, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR : I shall feel greatly honored to receive the gentlemen composing the Convention of Commissioners from the several States, on any day and at any hour most convenient to themselves. I shall name to-morrow, Thursday, at 11 or 3 o'clock, though any other time would be equally agreeable to me. I shall at all times be prepared to give them a cordial welcome.

Yours, very respectfully,

JAMES BUCHANAN.

His Excellency, JOHN TYLER.

President TYLER asked the action of the Convention on the subject.

On motion of Mr. Guthrie, it was

Resolved, That the members of the Convention call on the President of the United States this forenoon, at 11 o'clock.

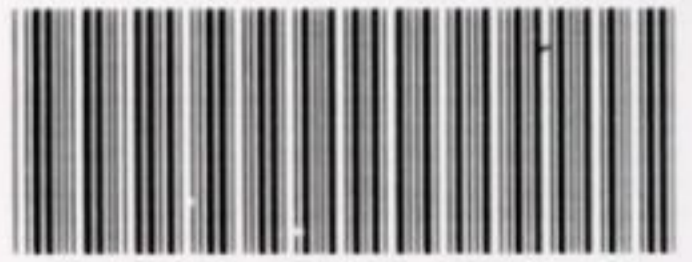
Mr. SUMMERS from the Committee on Credentials, reported that the following gentlemen from the States hereafter enumerated, had been duly submitted and examined, and were approved by them.

From New York—William E. Dodge.

From Tennessee—Samuel Milligan, Josiah M. Anderson, Robert L. Caruthers, Thomas Martin, Isaac R. Haukins, R. J. McKinney, Alvin Cullom, William Hickerson, George W. Jones, F. K. Zollicoffer, William H. Stevens, A. O. W. Totten.

From Illinois—John Wood, Stephen T. Logan, John M. Palmer, Burton C. Cook, Thomas J. Turner.

Which report was accepted.



Mr. WICKLIFFE from the Committee on Rules, offered the following resolution :

Resolved, That the Secretary procure for the use of the Convention, the necessary stationery ; and also provide for such printing as may be ordered. That the Journal up to and including this day's proceedings, as well as the Rules, be printed for the use of the members.

Which was passed.

The President appointed the following gentlemen members of the committee, on Mr. Guthrie's resolution of yesterday :

New Hampshire, Asa Fowler ; *Vermont*, Hiland Hall ; *Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, Samuel Ames ; *Connecticut*, Roger S. Baldwin ; *New Jersey*, Joseph F. Randolph ; *Pennsylvania*, Thomas White ; *Delaware*, Daniel M. Bates ; *North Carolina*, Thomas Ruffin ; *Kentucky*, James Guthrie ; *Ohio*, Thomas Ewing ; *Indiana*, Caleb B. Smith ; *Illinois*, Stephen T. Logan ; *Iowa*, James Harlan ; *Maryland*, Reverdy Johnson ; *Virginia*, James A. Seddon.

Mr. WICKLIFFE from the Committee on Rules, reported the following :

18th Rule—That nothing spoken in the Convention, be printed or otherwise published or communicated, without leave.

Which was agreed to.

Convention adjourned until Friday the 8th instant.