

SPEECH OF B. F. PERRY, OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

IN THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION AT CHARLESTON, S. C.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Convention:

I thank you for this opportunity, un-
animously awarded me by the Convention,
of defining my position in remaining here
whilst my colleagues have seen proper to
withdraw from the convention. First, how-
ever, I have a word to say to the distin-
guished gentleman from Illinois, Governor
Richardson, who has just taken his seat.
He told us the truth, a well known truth,
when he said that the Kansas-Nebraska
Bill was a compromise between the North-
ern and Southern Democracy on the sub-
ject of slavery in the Territories. That
compromise proposed to take the question
of slavery from Congress and refer it to
the people of the Territories under the
Federal Constitution. All questions of
territorial legislation on the subject of
slavery would go to the Supreme Court,
and the decision of that tribunal was to
be final and conclusive. This was the
compromise, as has been also just stated
by the honorable member from Georgia,
Mr. Seward. At the time this compromise
was made, the Southern Democracy had
an abiding confidence of their right to
carry their slaves into the Territories,
which were the common property of all
the States, and, moreover, they had a con-
viction that the Supreme Court of the
United States would so decide whenever
the question was properly made. With
this confidence and conviction on their
minds, they were willing to, and did as-
sent to, the non-intervention of Congress
as a compromise. By that compromise I
am willing to stand, and I now ask the
gentleman from Illinois to carry it out in
good faith, by endorsing the decision of
the Supreme Court, in the Dred Scott
case. If he and the Northern Democracy
will reaffirm the Cincinnati Platform, which
embodied the principles of this compro-
mise, and endorse the principles enuncia-
ted in the opinion of Chief Justice Taney
in the Dred Scott decision, it will be ac-
ceptable to the Southern Democracy gen-
erally. The refusal of Judge Douglass to
do this, as leader of the Northern Democ-
racy, and his perseverance in contending
for a different construction of the Nebras-
ka-Kansas act and Cincinnati Platform,
has produced all the confusion and dis-
cord which now unhappily divide and dis-
tract the great Democratic party of the
United States.

I am not one of those who ask for Con-
gressional interposition on the subject of
slavery in the Territories. The South has
contended for years past against Congres-
sional legislation on this subject. They
have denied the right of Congress either
to prohibit or legislate slavery into the
Territories. The right to carry our prop-
erty into the common domain of the
Union, is a constitutional right guaranteed
to us by the Federal Constitution, and
which neither Congress nor the territorial
government can deprive us of in any way
whatever. Why, then, do Southern Dem-
ocrats ask a slave code or Congressional
interposition? It is suicidal, and we all
thought so ten years ago. Then we were
apprehensive that Congress would, in the
formation of a territorial government, at-
tempt to exclude slavery as they had done
on previous occasions. We felt this to
be an outrage on the rights of the South.
We contended that a Southern planter had
the same right to carry his property into
the Territories that a Northern manufactur-
er had to carry his. Whether he one
consisted of slaves and the other of ma-
chinery made no difference. Slaves are
recognized as property, not only by the
laws and constitutions of the Southern
States, but by the Federal Constitution it-
self, in various ways and in different
sections of that just and wise system of gov-
ernment. With great deference to the judg-
ment and opinions of distinguished South-
ern Democrats, I think it is unwise and
dangerous to go back and ask for Congres-
sional intervention, which we have been
warring against for so many years, and
have now established by compromises,
platforms, the action of Congress and the
decision of the Supreme Court. For one,

I will abide by what has been done, and
what has been agreed to be done, by the
Democratic party, and I here call on my
Northern Democratic friends to do the
same. It will restore harmony and good
feeling to the Convention, and once more
unite the Democracy against the com-
mon foe—the Black Republicans—and
insure a triumphant victory.

For the Northern wing of the great
Democratic party I have the highest re-
gard and profoundest respect. They have
fought the battles of the South and the
Constitution like gallant patriots, and have
sacrificed themselves in our cause. We
owe them a debt of gratitude, and South-
ern honor and Southern magnanimity
should not hesitate to pay it by yielding
to them all we can consistently with our
faith and principles. I felt deeply the
noble and manly appeal made to the South,
the other evening, by the distinguished
gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. Samuels.
There is neither justice nor wisdom in
forcing our Northern friends to assume a
position unnecessarily, which will crush
them in their contest with the Black Re-
publicans, and defeat our own hopes and
expectations. We ought to give them a
platform to stand on which they can de-
fend and maintain at home, when by so
doing we sacrifice no principle. We have
construed the Cincinnati Platform one
way, and the Supreme Court of the Uni-
ted States has established our construction
by one of the ablest opinions ever deliv-
ered by any Court. Why, then, should
we be so tenacious of guarding against a
different construction by words and lan-
guage, which render it odious or unac-
ceptable to the North? We shall gain
nothing by it but a Black Republican vic-
tory, which may be the death-knell of the
Republic.

After all, Mr. President, this question
of slavery in the Territories is a mere ab-
straction. If climate and soil are adapted
to slavery, it will go there, and if it is
not, we cannot force it into the Territories.
Like water, which always seeks its level,
will go slavery where it is profitable, and no-
where else. If it is known or supposed that
Territory will be a free State when ad-
mitted into the Union, no Southern man
will carry his slaves into the Territory to
remain whilst the territorial government
continues. If the soil and climate of a
Territory are adapted to slavery, the insti-
tution will go there, and be protected
there, without Congressional intervention,
and in spite of it. Why, then, should
we insist on it, at the hazard of break-
ing up the Democratic party? I can well
see a motive on the part of disunionists,
who indulge the delusive hope of separ-
ating the North from the South. But,
in all truth and sincerity, I can assure such
that they are under a delusion. This
Union is too strong, geographically, politi-
cally and socially, ever to be dismembered
whilst the Republic continues in its pre-
sent advanced state of civilization and
science. And I can, with the same truth
and sincerity, declare to my Northern and
Southern friends, that the institution of
African slavery is also too strong in the
Southern States ever to be assailed suc-
cessfully by any power on earth. I have
no alarms for the safety of slavery or the
Union.

I stand before you, Mr. President, an old
fashioned Union Democrat, born and bred
such, and such I have continued, consist-
ently, without faltering or wavering in
my faith, amidst the storms of secession
and nullification which have swept over
South Carolina. I am a Southern man in
heart and feeling, and identified with the
South, my birth place, by every tie that is
sacred on earth and every interest that can
bind a man to his own native soil. I love
the South, and it is because I love her,
and would guard her against evils which
no one can foresee or foretell, that I am a
Union man and a follower of Washing-
ton's faith and creed. It was as a Democ-
rat and a Union man that I came into
this Convention, determined to do all that
I could do, to preserve the Democratic

party and the Union of the States. I came
here not to sow the seeds of dissension in
our Democratic ranks, but to do all that
I could do to harmonize the discordant
materials of the party. I came, in good
faith, as a Democrat, to remain here, and
represent the Democracy of South Carolina,
and abide by the actions and nomination
of this Convention. In honor I feel my-
self so bound, and if I had entertained
other feelings and other views, I should
not have taken my seat in the Convention.
I had confidence in the patriotism and just-
ice of the party to which I belong. If I
had not I would not have made a common
cause with them. No party can be kept
together unless the members are disposed
to yield something. Every one cannot
carry out his own views and notions of
propriety and justice.

The Convention which sent me here ad-
journed but a few days since. In that
Convention resolutions similar to those of
Alabama were offered and voted down by
an overwhelming majority. Another re-
solution was proposed and advocated with
great power and ability to stand by Ala-
bama, and it too was voted down by a
large majority. I heard no one, in that
Convention, speak of any contingency on
which it would be proper for the South
Carolina Delegation to leave this Con-
vention. I feel confident in saying, that I do
not believe my colleagues contemplated
such a step when they came here. I
know that such a feeling was cherished by
others outside of the South Carolina Con-
vention. It was cherished by those who
sneered at our Convention and scorned to
come into it. Somehow or other their
feelings and sentiments have been imbibed
by the most of my colleagues, and they
have gone out of this Convention, leaving
my friend Colonel Boozer and myself the
only delegates from South Carolina. It
is true that Col. Simkins, another Dele-
gate, concurs with us in remaining here,
and would act with us if he were here,
but he has been called home by the sick-
ness of his family.

In remaining here, my friend Col. Boozer
and myself do not regard ourselves as dis-
obeying any mandate of those who sent us,
or of compromising any principle which
we or they have professed. When the
South Carolina Convention assembled in
Columbia last week to send Delegates here,
I introduced a resolution reaffirming the
Cincinnati platform with the principles
enunciated in the Dred Scott decision, and
they were adopted as the platform of South
Carolina. The platform just adopted by this
Convention reaffirms the Cincinnati plat-
form, but neither affirms nor repudiates the
principles of the Dred Scott decision. It
is well known that those principles are
maintained in the Southern construction of
the Cincinnati platform. In voting for
that platform, I voted for it with this well
known Southern construction, sustained as
it is by the Supreme Court. All the other
resolutions adopted by this Convention,
were voted for by South Carolina, as the
record shows. But because a majority of

this Convention would not adopt a resolu-
tion declaring that it is the duty of Con-
gress to intervene and protect slavery in
the territories, my colleagues have with-
drawn, with a portion of the delegates
from Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Missis-
sippi, Louisiana, Texas and Florida. The
delegates from Virginia, Maryland, Ken-
tucky, Missouri and Tennessee have seen
proper to remain in this Convention. For
one, sir, am more inclined to stand by
Virginia, than by Alabama, and in doing so
I will have a wiser counsellor in danger
and difficulty.

I feel all well that the Congressional
District which I represent in this Con-
vention will approve and sanction the course
which I have seen proper to take, and I
shall remain here and represent that Dis-
trict as long as I remain in Charleston.
With the explanation of my position, I
conclude by rendering my thanks to the
Convention for the opportunity offered
me, so graciously, by them, of defining
my position.