

SECESSION ORDINANCE 1: SOUTH CAROLINA

Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union, Dec. 20, 1860

...Thus were established the two great principles asserted by the Colonies,...the right of a State to govern itself; and the right of a people to abolish a Government when it becomes destructive of the [reason] for which it was [created]...

...We maintain that in every compact between two or more parties, the obligation is mutual; that the failure of one of the contracting parties to perform a...part of the agreement, entirely releases the obligation of the other.... We assert that fourteen of the States deliberately refused...to fulfill their constitutional obligations....

The Constitution of the United States, in its 4th Article, provides as follows:

"No person held to service or labor in one State, under [its] laws, escaping into another [state] shall, [where slavery is illegal], be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up, [to the person who claims them as property]."

For many years these laws were executed. **But an increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the Institution of slavery has led [them] to [ignore] their obligations....¹** [The non-slaveholding] States...have enacted laws which either [make the fugitive slave clause void], or [make] useless any attempt to [enforce the fugitive slave clause of the Constitution].... Thus the constitutional compact has been deliberately broken....

The right of property in slaves was recognized by giving to free persons distinct political rights, by giving them the right to represent, and [burdening] them with direct taxes for three-fifths of their slaves; by authorizing the importation of slaves for twenty years; and by [requiring fugitive slaves be returned].

...Those [non-slaveholding] States...have denied the rights of property established in [the slaveholding] States and recognized by the Constitution; they have [criticized] as sinful the institution of Slavery; they have [allowed] the...establishment [of groups that are against slavery].² They have encouraged and assisted thousands of our slaves to leave their homes; and those who remain, have been [encouraged] by [leaders], books and pictures to [rise up in rebellion].

¹ South Carolina representatives are stating that because the non-slaveholding states are not enforcing the Fugitive Slave Clause of the U.S. constitution, the agreement between states represented in the constitution is now void, giving South Carolina the right to secede from the Union.

² South Carolina representatives want to secede because they claim that their right to property in enslaved people is being restricted and they are unhappy that the institution of slavery is being criticized and challenged by abolitionists.

For twenty-five years this agitation has been steadily increasing, until it has now secured to its aid the power of the [National] Government.... A geographical line has been drawn across the Union, and all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery....

...The Guarantees of the Constitution will then no longer exist; the equal rights of the States will be lost. The slaveholding States will no longer have the power of self-government, or self-protection, and the Federal Government will have become their enemy....

Source: May, J. A., & Faunt, J. R. (1960). South Carolina secedes (pp. 76-81). University of South Carolina Press. Retrieved July 1, 2020, from:

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/south_secede/south_Secede_southcarolina.cfm

SECESSION ORDINANCE 2: MISSISSIPPI

A Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi from the Federal Union, Jan. 9, 1861

In the...step which our State has taken of dissolving its connection with the government of [the United States], it is but just that we should declare the [major] reasons which [influenced us to do so].

Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery—the greatest material interest of the world. [Slave] labor supplies the products which [make up] the largest and most important portions of [trade] of the earth.³ These products are peculiar to the climate verging on the tropical regions, and by [the] law of nature, none but the black race can bear exposure to the tropical sun. These products have become necessities of the world, and a blow at slavery is a blow at [business] and civilization. That blow has been long aimed at the institution [of slavery], and was at the point of [being carried out]. There was no choice left us but submission to...abolition, or a [breakup] of the Union, whose principles had been [corrupted] to [ruin us].⁴

That we do not overstate the dangers to our institution [of slavery], a reference to a few facts will...prove.

The hostility to [slavery began] before the adoption of the Constitution, and was [shown] in the well-known Ordinance of 1787, in regard to the Northwestern Territory.

The feeling increased, until, in 1819-20, it deprived the South of more than half the vast territory acquired from France.

The same hostility [divided] Texas and seized upon all the territory acquired from Mexico.

It has grown until it denies the right of property in slaves, and refuses protection to that right on the high seas, in the Territories, and wherever the government of the United States has [authority].

It refuses the admission of new slave States into the Union, and seeks to [end slavery] by [keeping it only where it currently exists], denying the power of expansion....⁵

...It has nullified the Fugitive Slave Law in almost every free State in the Union, and has utterly broken the compact [maintained in the Constitution].

³ Mississippi representatives cite protecting the institution of slavery, and the wealth that it can bring to slaveholders, as a reason why the state has seceded.

⁴ Mississippi representatives would rather leave the Union than submit to the abolition of slavery; therefore, the state must secede.

⁵ Mississippi representatives argue that limiting the expansion of slavery threatens the practice in places where it is already established, and this threat warrants secession.

It advocates negro equality, socially and politically, and promotes [rebellion] in our midst.

It has [used] its press, its pulpit and its schools against us, until the whole popular mind of the North is excited and inflamed with prejudice [against slavery].

It has...formed associations to carry out its [plans] of [freeing enslaved people] in the States and wherever else slavery exists....

...It has invaded a State, and invested with the honors of martyrdom the wretch whose purpose was to apply flames to our dwellings, and the weapons of destruction to our lives....

...It has given...evidence of its design to ruin our agriculture, to [weaken] our industrial pursuits and to destroy our social system....

...It has recently obtained control of the Government...and destroyed the last expectation of living together in friendship and brotherhood.

Utter [domination] awaits us in the Union, if we should [agree] longer to remain in it. It is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. We must either submit to [humiliation], and to the loss of property worth four billions of money, or we must secede from the Union...to secure this as well as every other species of property....

Source: Barksdale, E. (1861). Journal of the state convention and ordinances and resolutions. Adopted in January 1861 with an appendix published by order of the convention (pp. 86-88). Retrieved July 1, 2020, from: http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/south_secede/South_secede_mississippi.cfm

SECESSION ORDINANCE 3: TEXAS

A Declaration of the Causes which Impel the State of Texas to Secede from the Federal Union, Feb. 2, 1861

...Texas abandoned her separate national existence and [agreed] to become one of the [United] States to promote her welfare.... She was received as a [state], maintaining and protecting the institution known as negro slavery—the servitude of the African to the white race within her limits—a relation that had existed from the first settlement of her wilderness by the white race, and which her people intended should exist in all future time....

...The [non-slaveholding] States, [with the laws they have passed], have deliberately, directly or indirectly violated the 3rd clause of the 2nd section of the 4th article of the [U.S.] constitution...thereby [repealing part of the Constitution], [which promised] to secure the rights of the slave-holdings [sic] States in their [institution of slavery]....

...In all the non-slave-holding States...the people have formed themselves into a great sectional party, now strong enough in numbers to control the affairs of each of those States, based upon the...feeling of hostility to these Southern States and their...system of African slavery, proclaiming the [degrading belief] of the equality of all men, [regardless] of race or color—a [set of beliefs] at war with nature, in opposition to the experience of mankind, and in violation... of the Divine Law.⁶ They demand the abolition of... slavery throughout the [nation], the recognition of political equality between the white and the negro races, and [declare] their determination to press on their crusade against us, so long as a...slave remains in these States.

For years past this abolition organization has been actively sowing the seeds of [unrest] through the Union.... [Abolitionists] have placed the slave-holding States in a hopeless minority in the federal congress, and [have been no help] in protecting Southern rights against [the demands of non-slaveholding states]....

They have proclaimed, and [by voting] sustained, the revolutionary [belief] that there is a "higher law" than the constitution and laws of our Federal Union, and virtually that they will disregard their oaths [in the Constitution] and trample upon our rights [to property].

They have...encouraged and sustained lawless organizations to steal our slaves and prevent their recapture....⁷

⁶ Texas is threatened because the power of the slaveholding states has decreased within the Federal government. Texas representatives express frustration that many people in the United States believe in the equality of all men—a belief that threatens the ideology of white supremacy that is necessary to justify the institution of slavery. Therefore, the state must secede to protect slavery and white supremacy.

⁷ There have been successful efforts to help enslaved people escape from slavery, which has threatened the institution of slavery and the power of white slaveholders. Texas representatives use this argument to justify the state's secession.

...They have...sent [inflammatory] pamphlets and papers among us to stir up [rebellion]....

...And, finally, by the combined sectional vote of the seventeen non-slave-holding States, they have elected as president and vice-president of the whole [nation], two men [who] pledge...the ruin of the slave-holding States.

...Our own views should be distinctly proclaimed.

We hold as undeniable truths that the governments of the various States, and of the [United States] itself, were established exclusively by the white race, for themselves and their [future generations]; that the African race had no [involvement] in [the] establishment [of the United States]; that they were rightfully held and regarded as an inferior and dependent race, and in that condition only could their existence in this country be rendered beneficial or tolerable.

That in this free government all white men are and of right ought to be entitled to equal civil and political rights; that the servitude of the African race, as existing in these States, is mutually beneficial to both [slave] and free...while the destruction of [slavery], as advocated by our sectional enemies, would bring [sure disaster] upon both....

...For these and other reasons,...asserting that the federal constitution has been violated and virtually [dissolved] by the [non-slaveholding states], seeing that the federal government is now passing under the control of our enemies.... We the delegates of the people of Texas...have passed an ordinance dissolving all political connection with the government of the United States of America and the people thereof....

Source: Winkler, E. W. (Ed.). (1912). Journal of the secession convention of Texas 1861, Edited from the original in the Department of State (pp. 61-65). Texas Library and Historical Commission. Retrieved July 1, 2020, from: <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ref/abouttx/secession/2feb1861.html>