

Louisiana Purchase Elementary Level Primary Sources

Thomas Jefferson letter to John Holmes:

“...as it is, we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other. of one thing I am certain, that as the passage of slaves from one state to another would not make a slave of a single human being who would not be so without it, so their diffusion over a greater surface would make them individually happier and... their emancipation, by dividing the burthen on a greater number of co-adjutors.”

Diffusion - spread

Burthen - burden, something that weighs you down or prevents you from doing something

Co-adjutors - people

Alexander Hamilton’s Editorial on the Louisiana Purchase:

“But it may be added, that should our own citizens... become desirous of settling this country, and emigrate thither... a too widely dispersed population... must hasten the dismemberment of a large portion of our country, or a dissolution of the Government. On the whole, we think it may... be said, that whether the possession at this time of any territory west of the river Mississippi will be advantageous, is at best extremely problematical.”

Thither - there, referring to the land in the Louisiana Purchase

Dismemberment - breaking up

Dissolution - closing down

Rufus King to Timothy Pickering:

“...as Slavery is authorized & exists in Louisiana...will not the present inequality, arising from the Representation of Slaves, be increased? ...As the provision of the Constitution on this subject may be regarded as one of its greatest blemishes, it would be with reluctance that one could consent to its being extended to the Louisiana States;... ought not an effort to be made to limit the Representation to the free inhabitants only? Had it been foreseen that we could raise revenue to the extent we have done, from indirect taxes, the Representation of Slaves wd. `Never have been admitted; but going upon the maxim that taxation and Representation are inseparable, and that the Genl. Govt. must resort to direct taxes, the States in which Slavery does not exist, were injudiciously led to concede to this unreasonable provision of the Constitution.”

Blemish - a mark or a stain that is unwanted

Maxim - an ideology

Wd. - would

Injudiciously - poor judgement

Concede - to give up

Provision - part

Timothy Pickering to Rufus King:

“...Were New York detached (as under his administration it would be) from the Virginian, influence, the whole union would be benefited. Jefferson would then be forced to observe some caution... And, if a separation should be deemed proper, the five New England States, New York, and New Jersey would naturally be united. Among those seven States, there is a sufficient congeniality of character to authorize the... harmony and a permanent union, New York the centre. Without a separation, can those States ever rid themselves of negro Presidents and negro Congresses, and regain their just weight in the political balance? At this moment, the slaves of the Middle and Southern States have fifteen representatives in Congress, and they will appoint that number of electors of the next President and Vice-President ; and the number of slaves is continually increasing. You notice this evil. But will the slave States ever renounce the advantage? As population is in fact no rule of taxation, the negro representation ought to be given up.

Deemed - determined

Congeniality - collection