

Rutherford B. Hayes Letter Accepting the Republican Party Nomination for
Presidency of the United States, Columbus, Ohio - July 8, 1876

Hon. Edward McPherson, Hon. Wm. A. Howard, Hon. Joseph H. Rainey, and others,
Committee of the Republican National Convention.

Gentlemen: In reply to your official communication of June 17th, by which I am informed of my nomination for the office of President of the United States, by the Republican National Convention at Cincinnati, I accept the nomination, with gratitude, hoping that, under Providence, I shall be able, if elected, to execute the duties of the high office as a trust for the benefit of all the people.

I do not deem it necessary to enter upon any extended examination of the declaration of principles made by the Convention. The resolutions are in accord with my views, and I heartily concur in the principles they announce. In several of the resolutions, however, questions are considered, which are of such importance, that I deem it proper to briefly express my convictions in regard to them.

The fifth resolution adopted by the Convention, is of paramount interest. More than forty years ago, a system of making appointments to office, grew up, based upon the maxim, "To the victors belong the spoils." The old rule the true rule that honesty, capacity and fidelity constitute the only real qualifications for office, and that there is no other claim, gave place to the idea that party services were to be chiefly considered. All parties, in practice, have adopted this system. It has been essentially modified since its first introduction. It has not, however, been improved.

At first the President, either directly, or through the heads of Departments, made all the appointments. But gradually the appointing power, in many cases, passed into the control of the members of Congress. The offices in these cases have become not merely rewards for party services, but rewards for services to party leaders. This system destroys the independence of the separate Departments of the Government; it tends directly to extravagance and official incapacity; it is a temptation to dishonesty; it hinders and impairs that careful supervision and strict accountability, by which alone faithful and efficient public service can be secured; it obstructs the prompt removal and sure punishment of the unworthy. In every way it degrades the civil service and the character of the Government. It is felt, I am confident, by a large majority of the members of Congress, to be an intolerable burden, and an unwarrantable hindrance to the proper discharge of their legitimate duties. It ought to be abolished. The reform should be thorough, radical

and complete. If elected, I shall approve every appropriate measure to accomplish the desired end, and shall oppose any step backward.

The resolution of the Convention on the subject of the permanent pacification of the country, and the complete protection of all its citizens in the free enjoyment of all their constitutional rights, is timely and of great importance. The condition of the Southern States attracts the attention and commands the sympathy of the people of the whole Union. In their progressive recovery from the effects of the war, their first necessity is an intelligent and honest administration of the government, which will protect all classes of citizens in all their political and private rights. What the South most needs is peace, and peace depends upon the supremacy of law. There can be no enduring peace, if the constitutional rights of any portion of the people are habitually disregarded. All parts of the Constitution are sacred, and must be sacredly observed the parts that are new no less than the parts that are old. The moral and material prosperity of the Southern States can be most effectually advanced by a hearty and generous recognition of the rights of all, by all a recognition without reserve or exception.

Let me assure my countrymen of the Southern States that if I shall be charged with the duty of organizing an Administration, it will be one which will regard and cherish their truest interests the interests of the white, and of the colored people both, and equally; and which will put forth its best efforts in behalf of a civil policy, which will wipe out forever the distinction between the North and South in our common country.

With a civil service organized upon a system which will secure purity, experience, efficiency, and economy, a strict regard for the public welfare, solely in appointments, and the speedy, thorough and unsparing prosecution and punishment of all public officers who betray official trusts; with a sound currency; with education unsectarian and free to all; with simplicity and frugality in public and private affairs; and with a fraternal spirit of harmony pervading the people of all sections and classes, we may reasonably hope that the second century of our existence as a Nation will, by the blessing of God, be pre-eminent as "an era of good feeling," and a period of progress, prosperity, and happiness. Very Respectfully,

Your fellow citizen,

R.B.Hayes