

Kansas Memory



Platt Potter to C. P. Williams, H. H. Van Dyck, B. R. Wood, Deodalus Wright

Potter, writing from Schenectady, New York, expresses his antislavery opinions to members of the New York State Kansas Committee. He is critical of the Franklin Pierce administration's handling of the Kansas issue. Potter believes that antislavery settlers in Kansas should defend themselves against proslavery violence in Kansas.

Date: March 12, 1856

Callnumber: William Barnes Coll. #269 Box 2 Folder 2

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Potter, Platt

21359 1/2

Schenectady, 15th March 1856

Suttemen

I am honored by the receipt of your letter of invitation to attend a meeting tomorrow evening at the Capitol, for the purpose of concerting measures for the protection of the Citizens of Kansas from the Russian incursions of Missouri Borderers, and to give my views of the appropriate measures to be adopted in their behalf-

It is a humiliating view of our political condition as a nation, that the necessity of such a meeting as you propose should exist. And it is as disgraceful as it is humiliating, that the National Administration should permit the existence of such a necessity.

Judging from the history and experience of the last few months, the most appropriate measure of relief, in my humble opinion, will be ~~and~~ the employment of moral agents, as the most entirely effective to attain that end. I agree with the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher in opinion that for such a purpose, Sharps Rifles possess a moral power not exceeded by any other instrumentality - I would on no occasion encourage illegal violence, - The law of self defence is the first law of nature, It is a law of acknowledged authority. It exists in every system of every country - and has prevailed in every age of the world. The law, ^{of nature} is defined to be "the mind of God signified to man as a rational agent." The law of

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Self defence, which is a part of this great law of nature, is given to man to be made available for his own preservation. It is a law of which no citizen can be deprived, and it is a law which should be diffused in the world just in proportion to its important usefulness & dignity.

The occasion has arrived, it appears to me, to the peaceful Citizens of Kansas, which presents ^{to them} the extreme emergency, for calling into exercise this high law of necessity. ^{The occasion} is nothing less than the case of the government wilfully withholding from the citizens in time of peril, that protection, which is its bounden, solemn duty to give. It is more ~~it is~~ ^{the case of a government} wickedly refusing to perform its first, its highest, its most sacred obligation to the citizens in this respect.

Such a crisis as this, as I understand it, is the occasion of your meeting. It is a crisis which will mark this age with momentous, if not fearful consequences. It exhibits an administration bound in degrading & imbecile ~~servility~~ ^{dependence} to the Slave power, in unfortunate contrast with the high positions of those illustrious Statesmen, the founders of the Republic, who, while they held the same high ~~places~~ ^{places}, were found devoting their patriotic energies to the cause of freedom.

Should your meeting agree with me as to the kind of relief to be furnished ^{to aid the citizens of Kansas,} ~~as far as possible~~

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I am willing to subscribe for the purchase
of some of the aforesaid Ninjal agents, to execute this law of
necessity ~~with immediate effect~~.

I had hoped until this afternoon to have been
with you at the meeting - but other engagements prevent

I am most truly

Yours Ob[liged] Servt

Platt Potter

To Messrs

C. P. Williams

H. H. Van Dyck

B. R. Wood

Deodalus, Missl, & other Committee