

Address of George Williamson, Commissioner from Louisiana to the Texas Secession Convention

To the Hon. O.M. Roberts, President of the Convention of the People of Texas.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the people of Texas.

I have the honor to address you as the commissioner of the people of Louisiana, accredited to your honorable body. With this communication, by the favor of your presiding officer, will be laid before you my credentials, the ordinance of secession, a resolution in regard to the Mississippi river and the ordinance to provide for the appointment of delegates to a convention to form a Southern Confederacy. These ordinances and the resolution were adopted at their respective dates by the people of Louisiana in convention assembled, after serious debate and calm reflection.

Being desirous of obtaining the concurrence of the people of Texas in what she has done, Louisiana invites you to a candid consideration of her acts in resuming the powers delegated to the government of the late United States, and in providing for the formation of a confederacy of "The States which have seceded and may secede." The archives of the Federal Government bear ample testimony to the loyalty of Louisiana to the American Union. Her conservatism has been proverbial in political circles. The character and pursuits of her people, her immense agricultural wealth, her large banking capital, her possession of the great commercial metropolis of the South, whose varied trade almost rivals that of the city of "ten thousand masts" present facts sufficient to make "assurance double sure" she did not take these grave steps for light or transient causes. She was impelled to this action to preserve her honor, her safety, her property and the free institutions so sacred to her people. She believed the federal agent had betrayed her trust, had become the facile instrument of a hostile people, and was usurping despotic powers. She considered that the present vacillating executive, on the 4th of March next, would be supplanted by a stalwart fanatic of the Northwest, whose energetic will, backed by the frenzied bigotry of unpatriotic masses, would cause him to *establish* the military despotism already inaugurated.

The people of Louisiana were unwilling to endanger their liberties and property by submission to the despotism of a single tyrant, or the canting tyranny of pharisaical majorities. Insulted by the denial of her constitutional equality by the non-slaveholding States, outraged by their contemptuous rejection of proffered compromises, and convinced that she was illustrating the capacity of her people for self-government by withdrawing from a union that had failed, without fault of hers, to accomplish its purposes, she declared herself a free and independent State on the 26th day of January last. History affords no example of a people who changed their government for more just or substantial reasons. Louisiana looks to the formation of a Southern confederacy to preserve the blessings of African slavery, and of the free institutions of the founders of the Federal Union, bequeathed to their posterity. As her neighbor and sister State, she desires the hearty co-operation of Texas in the formation of a Southern Confederacy. She congratulates herself on the recent disposition evinced by your body to meet this wish, by the election of delegates to the Montgomery convention. Louisiana and Texas have the same language, laws and institutions. Between the citizens of each exists the most cordial social and commercial intercourse. The Red river and the Sabine form common highways for the transportation of their

produce to the markets of the world. Texas affords to the commerce of Louisiana a large portion of her products, and in exchange the banks of New Orleans furnish Texas with her only paper circulating medium. Louisiana supplies to Texas a market for her surplus wheat, grain and stock; both States have large areas of fertile, uncultivated lands, peculiarly adapted to slave labor; and they are both so deeply interested in African slavery that it may be said to be absolutely necessary to their existence, and is the keystone to the arch of their prosperity. Each of the States has an extended Gulf coast, and must look with equal solicitude to its protection now, and the acquisition of the entire control of the Gulf of Mexico in due time. No two States of this confederacy are so identified in interest, and whose destinies are so closely interwoven with each other. Nature, sympathy and unity of interest make them almost one. Recognizing these facts, but still confident in her own powers to maintain a separate existence, Louisiana regards with great concern the vote of the people of Texas on the ratification of the ordinance of secession, adopted by your honorable body on the 1st of the present month. She is confident a people who so nobly and gallantly achieved their liberties under such unparalleled difficulties will not falter in maintaining them now. The Mexican yoke could not have been more galling to "the army of heroes" of '36 than the Black republican rule would be to the survivors and sons of that army at the present day.

The people of Louisiana would consider it a most fatal blow to African slavery, if Texas either did not secede or having seceded should not join her destinies to theirs in a Southern Confederacy. If she remains in the union the abolitionists would continue their work of incendiarism and murder. Emigrant aid societies would arm with Sharp's rifles predatory bands to infest her northern borders. The Federal Government would mock at her calamity in accepting the recent bribes in the army bill and Pacific railroad bill, and with abolition treachery would leave her unprotected frontier to the murderous inroads of hostile savages. Experience justifies these expectations. A professedly friendly federal administration gave Texas no substantial protection against the Indians or abolitionists, and what must she look for from an administration avowedly inimical and supported by no vote within her borders. Promises won from the timid and faithless are poor hostages of good faith. As a separate republic, Louisiana remembers too well the whisperings of European diplomacy for the abolition of slavery in the times of annexation not to be apprehensive of bolder demonstrations from the same quarter and the North in this country. The people of the slaveholding States are bound together by the same necessity and determination to preserve African slavery. The isolation of any one of them from the others would make her a theatre for abolition emissaries from the North and from Europe. Her existence would be one of constant peril to herself and of imminent danger to other neighboring slaveholding communities. A decent respect for the opinions and interests of the Gulf States seems to indicate that Texas should co-operate with them. I am authorized to say to your honorable body that Louisiana does not expect any beneficial result from the peace conference now assembled at Washington. She is unwilling that her action should depend on the border States. Her interests are identical with Texas and the seceding States. With them she will at present co-operate, hoping and believing in his own good time God will awaken the people of the border States to the vanity of asking for, or depending upon, guarantees or compromises wrung from a people whose consciences are too sublimated to be bound by that sacred compact, the constitution of the late United States. That constitution the Southern States have never violated, and taking it as the basis of our new government we hope to form a slave-holding confederacy that will secure to us and our remotest posterity the great blessings its authors designed in the Federal Union. With the

social balance wheel of slavery to regulate its machinery, we may fondly indulge the hope that our Southern government will be perpetual.

Geo. Williamson  
Commissioner of the State of Louisiana  
City of Austin Feby 11th 1861.