

## JOSEPH SMITH'S PRESIDENTIAL PLATFORM

*In this election year it seems particularly valuable to reconsider a little-known document of great significance from the Mormon past — the pamphlet published by the Prophet Joseph Smith, early in his campaign for the Presidency of the United States, giving his considered positions on the major political and social issues of 1844. These views remain amazingly relevant to crucial issues of our own time, but the document is even more important as a moving prophetic witness of the forms and spirit of a society in which all men are accorded dignity and trust.*

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*The photocopy of General Smith's Views is courtesy of the Brigham Young University. Original in the Brigham Young University Library.*

### JOSEPH SMITH AND THE PRESIDENCY, 1844

*Richard D. Poll*

At a meeting in the mayor's office in Nauvoo, Illinois, on January 29, 1844, it was moved and voted unanimously that "we will have an independent electoral ticket, and that Joseph Smith be a candidate for the next Presidency; and that we use all honorable means in our power to secure his election."<sup>1</sup> Whereupon the Mormon Prophet remarked to the Quorum of the Twelve and others who were present at this informal political caucus:

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City; Deseret News, 1950), VI, 188. Hereafter cited as D.H.C. (Documentary History of the Church).

If you attempt to accomplish this, you must send every man in the city who is able to speak in public throughout the land to electioneer and make stump speeches, advocate the "Mormon" religion, purity of elections, and call upon the people to stand by the law and put down mobocracy. . . .

. . . Tell the people we have had Whig and Democratic Presidents long enough; we want a President of the United States. If I ever get into the presidential chair, I will protect the people in their rights and liberties. I will not electioneer for myself. . . . There is oratory enough in the Church to carry me into the presidential chair the first slide.<sup>2</sup>

Among many historical questions left unresolved by the untimely death of Joseph Smith is the question of the Mormon leader's intent and expectations in announcing for the Presidency. Recent scholars like Robert Flanders and Klaus Hansen relate the 1844 candidacy to the projects of the General Council (Council of Fifty) and believe it was seriously meant.<sup>3</sup> B. H. Roberts expressed the traditional L.D.S. view when he quoted with approval the Prophet's own language later in 1844: "As to politics, I care but little about the presidential chair. . . ."<sup>4</sup> By this interpretation, Smith was acutely dissatisfied with the major parties and so ran primarily to give the voters among his own people an acceptable option and to avoid further entanglement in the partisan politics of Illinois.

This editorial introduction to *General Smith's Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States* does not undertake to resolve the question of intent. It seeks only to establish a historical context for the document which is commonly referred to as Joseph Smith's Presidential platform and to clarify some of the allusions in that document. A companion article by Dr. Martin B. Hickman suggests some possible relevance of the Prophet's *Views* for the present day.

The idea of announcing for the Presidency probably occurred to Joseph Smith during the winter of 1843-44, when his inquiries to some of the leading national political figures about what would be their course of action toward the Mormons if elected to the White House drew unsatisfactory answers or no answers at all.<sup>5</sup> Following the meeting described above, the *Times and Seasons*

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Robert B. Flanders, *Nauvoo, Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1965), pp. 301-302; Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire* (E. Lansing: Michigan State University, 1967), pp. 75-79; the candidacy is also interpreted as a serious project in Edward G. Thompson, "A Study of the Political Involvements in the Career of Joseph Smith," (unpublished master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966), pp. 113-16ff., and Kenneth W. Godfrey, "Causes of Mormon Non-Mormon Conflict in Hancock County, Illinois, 1839-1846," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1967), pp. 60-69.

<sup>4</sup>B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Century I* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1930), II, 209.

<sup>5</sup>On November 4, 1843, letters were addressed to John C. Calhoun, Lewis Cass, Richard M. Johnson, Henry Clay, and Martin Van Buren. Cass, Clay and Calhoun responded, but none proposed the kind of federal intervention in behalf of the Latter-day Saints that the Prophet desired and that his *Views* and his caustic replies to Calhoun and Clay recommended. D.H.C., VI, 64-65, 155-60, 376, gives all the correspondence except the letter from Cass and the grossly insulting reply to Clay; these appear in Thompson, *op cit.*, pp. 178-84.

of February 1, 1844, promised to name a candidate, and six days later the other Church paper, the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, concluded a long editorial, "Who Will Be Our Next President?" with the name of "General Joseph Smith."<sup>6</sup>

The first draft of the *Views* was the product of a collaboration between Smith and William W. Phelps (and perhaps John M. Bernhisel), with Phelps possibly being responsible for the turgid style. Given a first public reading on February 7, the document was reread in several meetings and apparently revised a little before fifteen hundred copies came off the *Times and Seasons* press in Nauvoo on February 24.<sup>7</sup> It was mailed to President John Tyler, members of his Cabinet, Supreme Court judges, members of Congress and many newspaper editors, postmasters, and other prominent persons, and it elicited a limited and mixed response during the following weeks.<sup>8</sup>

As his running mate, General Smith first proposed James Arlington Bennett, a New York lawyer, religious eccentric, and political opportunist who had recently been baptized by Brigham Young.<sup>9</sup> When it was discovered that Bennett was apparently Irish-born and thus ineligible, the Vice Presidential nomination was extended to Colonel Solomon Copeland, of Paris, Tennessee, but Sidney Rigdon, "of Pennsylvania," ultimately received the designation of the General Council on May 6.<sup>10</sup>

The official but secret organization of the General Council, or Council of Fifty, took place meanwhile on March 11, 1844, and thereafter the direction of the Presidential project appears to have been in the hands of this body.<sup>11</sup>

The campaign was aggressively launched by a special conference on April 9, immediately following the annual conference of the L.D.S. Church. Brigham

<sup>6</sup>References to the semi-monthly *Times and Seasons* and weekly *Nauvoo Neighbor* are drawn from the microfilm copies at Brigham Young University.

<sup>7</sup>D.H.C., VI, 189, 197, 214, 221, 224. Copies of this first edition are in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Office, the Illinois State Historical Society, the Yale University Library, the Newberry Library, and the Reorganized L.D.S. Church Library. The 12-page pamphlet bears the imprint: *General Smith's views of the powers and policy of the government of the United States*. Nauvoo, Ill. 1844. John Taylor, printer.

<sup>8</sup>D.H.C., VI, 268-70; *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, April 24, 1844; *New York Herald*, March 18, 23, 1844.

<sup>9</sup>Smith and Bennett never met, but correspondence between them is in D.H.C., V, 112-14, 156-59, 162-64; VI, 71-78, 231-33. Earlier, possibly on recommendation of John C. Bennett, James Arlington Bennett (also spelled Bennet) had been named inspector-general of the Nauvoo Legion and granted an honorary LL.D. from the University of Nauvoo. *Ibid.*, IV, 593, 600-601. Ultimately Brigham Young wrote him off as an adventurer when he volunteered to come to Nauvoo and take over command of the Nauvoo Legion after Smith's death. *Ibid.*, VII, 429, 483, 488, 528. In 1855 Bennet (t) privately published *A New Revelation to Mankind, drawn from Axioms, or self-evident truths in Nature, Mathematically demonstrated* (Microfilm at B.Y.U.).

<sup>10</sup>D.H.C., VI, 244, 248, 268, 356. Bennett to Willard Richards, April 14, 1844, denies foreign birth but declines the nomination. Cited in Godfrey, *op. cit.*, p. 62, which also says that Copeland declined.

<sup>11</sup>Hansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 60, 73-81; Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-42. That neither the Prophet nor the Council was totally preoccupied with the political race is clear from the investigations of Texas and other possible new homes for the Saints which were in progress, and also from the intriguing and rather convincingly documented report that the Prophet was ordained "king on earth" in the Council during this period. Hansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 66 and 45-89; Godfrey, pp. 63-65.

Young's call for volunteers "to preach the Gospel and electioneer" drew 244 immediate responses and donations of \$100 cash and \$100 on loan. As president of the Quorum of the Twelve, and probably also as spokesman for the Council of Fifty, Young instructed the elders to proceed quickly to their assigned states and conferences and there put Smith's views before the people and line up electors.<sup>12</sup> Reports of meetings around the nation, some attended by disturbances, and copies of the *Views* with 1844 imprints from Pontiac, Michigan, and Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York City bear witness to their efforts.<sup>13</sup> After designating May 17 for a nominating convention in Nauvoo and sending D. S. Hollister to Baltimore to observe and possibly lobby for the Smith candidacy at the forthcoming Whig and Democratic conventions, the General Council joined the political missionaries.<sup>14</sup>

The May 17 convention followed the standard routines of this first generation of organized political party pep rallies. By counting the places of origin of the overwhelmingly Mormon delegates, all 26 of the states and ten Illinois counties were found to be represented. Tactical reasons probably explain the prominent speaking roles of two Gentile delegates, Dr. G. W. Goforth and John S. Reid, and the reading of a letter from Joseph Smith to the National Reform Association of New York, pledging support of a "uniform land law" for free homesteads. The nomination of Smith and Rigdon was uncontested, as was the designation of Willard Richards, John M. Bernhisel, W. W. Phelps and Lucian R. Foster as a committee of correspondence for the campaign.<sup>15</sup>

The resolutions adopted by the convention are puzzling in that they do not square in all respects with the *Views*. One is led to speculate that a gesture to the Democrats was deemed expedient to offset press charges that the *Views* were full of Whig doctrine.<sup>16</sup> After denouncing the existing government and the major parties for corruption and imbecility, this platform document stated in part:<sup>17</sup>

4. *Resolved*, that to redress all wrongs, the government of the United States, with the President at its head, is as powerful in its sphere as Jehovah is in His.

<sup>12</sup>D.H.C., VI, 334-40. In all, 340 missionaries were appointed to all 26 states and Iowa Territory, and 47 special conferences were scheduled to be conducted by the Twelve, ending in Washington, D.C., Sept. 7-15, 1844.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, VI, 399-401; *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 8, June 5, 1844; George R. Gayler, "A Social, Economic and Political Study of the Mormons in Western Illinois, 1839-1846," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1955), p. 183. The pamphlet editions of the *Views* varied in format and pagination, and William A. Linn, *The Story of the Mormons* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), p. 254, mentions editions in Kirtland, Ohio, and Dresden, Tennessee. At least one of the political proselyters, John D. Lee, apparently confined himself to preaching the L.D.S. religion. Juanita Brooks, *John Doyle Lee* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark, 1962), p. 60.

<sup>14</sup>D.H.C., VI, 340-43, 416-18.

<sup>15</sup>Details of the convention are found in D.H.C., VI, 385-98, and *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 22, 1844. According to Godfrey, pp. 65-67, the meeting was followed by a street parade in which the Presidential candidate was carried on the shoulders of the jubilant crowd.

<sup>16</sup>See examples of this charge and Smith's replies in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, April 10, 17, 1844.

<sup>17</sup>D.H.C., VI, 391.

5. *Resolved*, that the better to carry out the principles of liberty and equal rights, Jeffersonian democracy, free trade, and sailors' rights, and the protection of person and property, we will support General Joseph Smith, of Illinois, for the President of the United States at the ensuing election.<sup>18</sup>

6. *Resolved*, that we will support Sidney Rigdon, Esq., of Pennsylvania, for the Vice Presidency.

7. *Resolved*, that we will hold a National Convention at Baltimore on Saturday, the 13th day of July.<sup>19</sup>

Events were already moving toward the showdown between Joseph Smith and his opponents in and outside the Church, and the month of June found Presidential politics pushed to the background in Nauvoo. Still, the committee on correspondence continued to solicit support in the East and many of the missionaries kept at their labors until word of the tragedy at Carthage on June 27 finally reached them.<sup>20</sup>

A parting word on the candidacy of the Mormon Prophet was an editorial in the *Times and Seasons*, August 15, 1844, which pledged that the Latter-day Saints would support only candidates who would carry out "General Smith's program." In the November election, Hancock County went almost 2 to 1 for the dark-horse Democrat, James K. Polk, over the Whig candidate, Henry Clay, which may or may not be interpreted as a fulfillment of that pledge.<sup>21</sup>

The original of the document which follows is the eight-page pamphlet printed in Nauvoo in May, 1844, from type previously used to present *General Smith's Views* to readers of the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 8, and the *Times and Seasons*, May 15.<sup>22</sup> When Roberts edited the *Views* for the *Documentary History of the Church*, he changed some paragraphing, spelling and punctuation, but the substantial changes were the deletions of some of the ostentatious foreign language phrases, which Roberts attributes to Phelps.<sup>23</sup> As a campaign tract the *Views* would have benefited from compression and tighter organization, but as it stands, it is an intriguing blend of *ante-bellum* political rhetoric, Whig economic doctrines, Democratic expansionism, abolitionism, and the original and wide-range constitutional and political ideas of Joseph Smith himself.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>The writer has not found the source of this resolution, which in its free trade plank contradicts the Prophet's *Views* and in its invoking of sailors' rights recalls a minor political issue of the years immediately preceding the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842. The resolutions committee was G. W. Goforth, John Taylor, W. W. Phelps, William Smith and Lucian R. Foster. According to Roberts, *Comprehensive History . . .*, II, 207-208, the resolution found expression in the campaign slogan: "Reform, Jeffersonian Democracy, Free Trade and Sailors' Rights."

<sup>19</sup>Gayler, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-84, cites a report in *Niles National Register*, July 20, 1844, that the national convention actually met in Baltimore and in the face of the recent tidings of the death of Joseph Smith adjourned *sine die*.

<sup>20</sup>D.H.C., VI, 404, 416-18; Godfrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>21</sup>Gayler, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

<sup>22</sup>It seems nearly certain that this is the same type used in the February pamphlet edition.

<sup>23</sup>D.H.C., VI, 197-209, 75 fn.

<sup>24</sup>Comparison of the Prophet's platform with those of the political parties which fielded

## THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF JOSEPH SMITH

*Martin B. Hickman*

There is a game popular among Mormons which any number can play; it is easy to learn and it requires very little equipment: it is called, "Quoting the Prophet." To play the game all one needs is at least one contemporary issue and the writings of Joseph Smith, preferably the seven volumes of the *History of the Church*, or, if one has no taste for research, any of the short collections of the Prophet's teachings will do nicely. The point of the game is to force the other players to accept your views on the issue in question by proving with a series of quotations — relevant if possible, irrelevant if necessary — that the Prophet agrees with you rather than with your opponents. The best part of the game is that everyone wins because the players are simultaneously the judges, for the Prophet cannot be questioned as to which side he really prefers.

It is not my intention to play that game. What follow are some comments on the contemporary relevance of Joseph Smith's political views as expressed in his presidential platform of 1844. I readily admit that these are the comments of only one Mormon and that others who see politics differently may find my comments irrelevant or simply wrong. But my first concern is to deal fairly with the Prophet and not to use him to grind my own axes. My second concern is to give full recognition to the fact that Joseph Smith was addressing himself to specific problems as he experienced them, and that attempts to deduce solutions for our own problems from the solutions he suggested for the problems of his day is a risky business indeed. But it seems to me that the specific solutions he proposed flow from some fundamental propositions about politics which remain as valid today as they were in 1844. I shall try to suggest what those propositions are and leave it to the reader to perform the task of deriving solutions from them.

The specific proposals in Joseph Smith's presidential platform are relatively few in number. He proposed the abolition of slavery, the establishment of a national bank, the adoption of a "judicious tariff," a reduction in the size of the House of Representatives, economy in government, annexation of Texas and Oregon, reform of the penal system, elimination of courts martial, and granting of power to the President to suppress mobs without waiting for a request from state governors. Let us look at these in some detail.

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candidates in 1844 reveals the extent to which eclecticism and originality are mingled. The Democratic Party (James K. Polk), responding to the growing Southern influence in its leadership, affirmed that the federal government is one of limited powers and that those powers did not include a protective tariff, a national bank or the distribution of public land proceeds; yet its expansionism on Texas and Oregon was unrestrained. The Whig Party (Henry Clay) concentrated on the virtues of the candidate without itemizing the elements of his "American System" or mentioning Texas and Oregon. The Liberty Party (James Birney) called for the abolition of slavery by state and ultimately federal action, but without compensation to the owners. Kirk H. Porter and Donald B. Johnson, eds., *National Party Platforms, 1840-1964* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1966), pp. 3-9.

The major plank of the Prophet's platform was the elimination of slavery by compensating slave owners for the loss of their slaves. Joseph Smith thought slavery violated the basic truth enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness . . . ." The corollary of this truth is that the Constitution was adopted to protect all men in their equal rights, and that the desire of government leaders ought to be "to ameliorate the condition of all, black or white . . . ." The platform is particularly scornful of those in the Prophet's day who were willing to interpret the Constitution in such a way as to make some favorite legislation constitutional but who insisted that the Constitution prohibited interference with slavery. The immediate goal Joseph Smith sought, the elimination of slavery, has been won, but a belief in the political theory of the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution as the principal protector of equal rights is the heart of his political legacy to us. We ignore at our peril the importance the Prophet placed on all Americans sharing equally in the rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

The Prophet's concern for equal rights for all Americans brought him into direct conflict with the doctrine of "states' rights." That conflict is reflected in his proposal to give the President the power to use armed forces to suppress mobs without waiting for an invitation from a governor for assistance. While this proposal appears reasonable and unobjectionable on its face, it has profound implications, for it assumes the existence of individual rights of American citizens to which all "states' rights" must be subordinated. Joseph Smith reserved his deepest scorn for those who asserted that federalism prohibited the federal government from intervening on behalf of citizens who were denied their rights as American citizens. His letter to John C. Calhoun testifies to this scorn, as does his recommendation that the federal Constitution be amended to provide capital punishment for any public official who refused to assist those denied their constitutional rights, and as does his own decision to run for the Presidency. In his journal he noted: "The state rights doctrines are what feed mobs. They are a dead carcass — a stink and they shall ascend up as a stink offering in the nose of the Almighty."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps better than eloquence, this earthy characterization of what he considered to be a corruption of federalism reflects his contempt for those who used political abstractions as excuses for not granting justice to his people.

One must be careful here. There is no evidence that Joseph Smith wished to abandon federalism, which is one of the basic concepts of the American Constitution. What he wanted apparently was a definition of federalism which would assure protection of individual rights. What he faced, as we do today, was the task of defining within the framework of the American Constitution the jurisdiction of these two governments so as to help them each become efficient and responsive servants of the people. It was clear, I think, to Joseph

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Smith, *Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. VI (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1948), 95.

Smith, as it certainly must be to us, that an effective federal system rests on the willingness and ability of local governments to outstrip, not lag behind, the national government in the protection of individual rights, the promotion of the general welfare, and in the courage to assume the financial burdens which these tasks require.

A careful reading of the platform will reveal, however, that Joseph Smith was opposed to those who used the cause of "human rights" to promote special interests. He denounced the abolitionists who even in 1844 were fanning the fires of civil conflict; he saw the ultimate outcome of their actions and sensed that for some the cause of abolition was less a commitment to "human rights" than a path to fame, popularity, and power. Thus he balanced, as we must, a deep concern for the fundamental rights of all men with an awareness that all good causes can be used by men with "hidden agendas" for their own purposes. No less timely now than it was in 1844 is his recognition that if good causes are not to be exploited then the "establishment" must give more than just lip service to the cause of equal rights within the framework of the Constitution.

The economic plank of Joseph Smith's platform consists of two proposals: a "judicious tariff" and the creation of a national bank with the capital stock owned by the federal government. This bank would have branches in the several states, and the stock of each branch would be owned by the appropriate state government. These proposals flow from the Prophet's belief that "when the people are secure and their right properly respected then the four main pillars of prosperity—viz., agriculture, manufactures, navigation, and commerce, need the fostering care of government . . ." In 1844 Joseph Smith thought "fostering care" required a national bank and the protection of infant industries; it does not seem implausible that in 1968 "fostering care" may well include monetary and fiscal policies designed to steer the economy between the twin evils of inflation and depression. I think it also not unreasonable to suggest that despite the Prophet's proposal for a national bank owned by the national government, the concept of "fostering care" generally looks to policies which create an environment in which the "pillars of prosperity" can flourish rather than to direct government ownership. Also implicit in this concept, I believe, is a recognition that even though men are willing and able to work, economic factors beyond their control may rob them of their livelihood. Government must, therefore, adopt policies motivated by the spirit of "fostering care" so that a vigorous and developing economy will provide employment opportunities for all men; the goal is the creation of opportunities for meaningful labor, without which there can be no individual self-respect or community stability. In one respect the Prophet's 1844 platform might well have been taken from a modern political platform; he insisted on the principle of economy and efficiency in government. Believing as he did that the people were sovereign, he saw so reason why the sovereign's affairs should not be conducted as prudently as private affairs. His immediate proposal was to reduce the size of the House of Representatives, and to require economy in the operation of both state and national government. The need for improvement in the

administration of the public's business is as real today as it was in 1844. Despite the reforms in the public services and governmental organization which have been instituted since Joseph Smith's day, the problems which confront government have grown in number and complexity and threaten always to outrun our ability to cope with them. Therefore, in addition to integrity, honesty, and impartiality, we must demand competence and devotion to the public welfare from public administrators. The bureaucracy is a favorite whipping boy for any number of political opportunists, but we should not let our disdain of irresponsible criticisms of government officials blind us to the really crucial need for improvement in the caliber of our public servants. I am tempted to suggest that given the complexity of our problems we are an underdeveloped country when it comes to finding public administrators at all levels of government equal to the tasks they face. We must realistically recognize also that governmental officials are not immune to temptation and that their access to more and better information than the average citizen may lead them to think of themselves as an elite, immune from popular control. If government officials are to resist this temptation they must be imbued with the values of a democratic society so that not only external restraints but also a deep commitment to the political values of our society turn their heads and hearts from the pursuit of power to the service of the people.

There is another aspect of the Prophet's concern for effective government which must be noted. A strong undercurrent in the platform is resentment that justice depended in 1844 not so much upon the equal protection of the laws as on the wealth and power of the litigants. We can no more be blind today to the need for equal justice than could the Prophet. While many of the abuses of which he complained no longer exist in the crass form he noted, still injustice has not been expunged totally from our public life. We must share Joseph Smith's passion for equal justice until that goal is a living reality.

The foreign affairs plank of the Prophet's platform called for the bringing of Oregon and Texas into the Union. Underlying this proposal was Joseph Smith's belief that the principles of liberty on which the American political system rests and which are given concrete expression in the Constitution, are universal principles which can benefit all the world. "Come—yea, come Texas, come Mexico, come Canada; and come, all the world: let us be brethren, let us be one great family and let there be universal peace." I assume that this hope for peace and this plea for unity on the principles of liberty remains as meaningful today as the Prophet found it in 1844. He was not interested in international integration at any price, for he realized that governments are after all only the superstructure which reflects the underlying values of society. What Joseph sought in his day was agreement on those values, and where such agreement existed the traditional limits of the nation might be widened to include all "sons of liberty." There are those who will interpret the Prophet's vision of the family of man as suggesting support for international government. For myself I am more cautious: I think the Prophet would have been unimpressed with mechanical solutions to international conflict which did not reflect a real community of values. His idealism was always tempered by a

deep appreciation of the limits which our imperfect world imposes on the aspirations of men. But where deep and abiding agreement on fundamental political values exists among nations, I am inclined to think that the Prophet would have welcomed bold and imaginative policies which promised to hasten the day when mankind would be united as one great family. We can do no less.

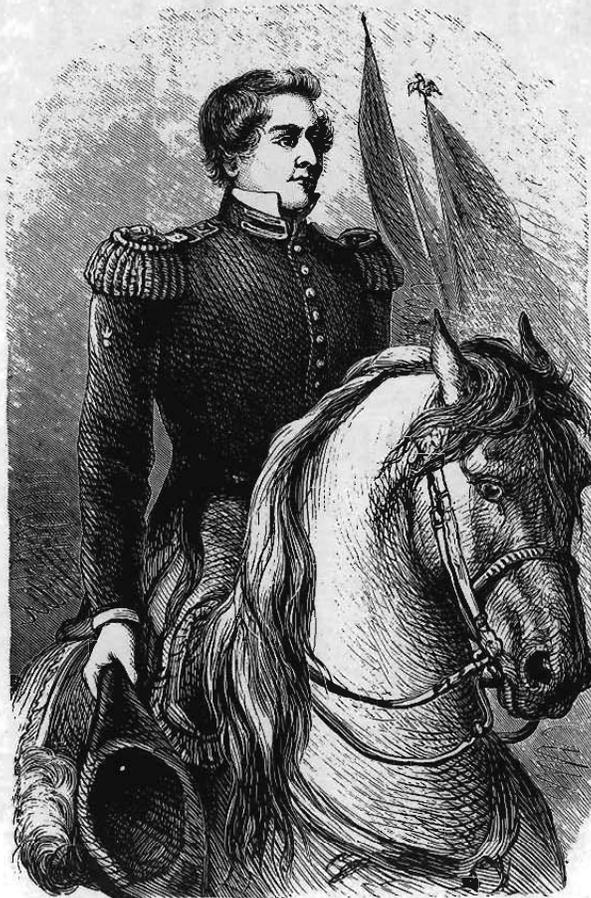
There are two proposals in the platform which seem strange to us as we struggle with the problem of crime in the streets and a growing problem of desertion from the armed forces. These are the planks on penal reform: Joseph Smith wanted to abolish most prisons — and courts martial. He proposed that deserters be given their pay and discharged, never again to merit the nation's trust. Whatever one thinks of these specific proposals, they reflect the Prophet's sensitivity to social problems, as does his concern over slavery; and across the years the message is clear — be anxiously engaged in a good cause. We do not fight the social ills Joseph Smith fought, or the ones our grandfathers fought, nor those of our fathers; we have our own with which to do combat. What we do have in common with our forefathers is the responsibility to improve society for all men. Complacency, smugness, indifference, neglect have no more place in our lives than they did in theirs. Every Mormon knows, "he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant," and we have no less authority than the Lord for that truth. And are we not under the obligation to seek after all that is "virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy"? Ending the evils of the penal system and the practice of court martial for desertion were the "good causes" which engaged Joseph Smith. What our "good causes" will be depends on the lens through which we view the world. But no Latter-day Saint is worthy of the name who has not searched his own heart, as the Prophet did his, and found a good work to which along with his service to the Church he can commit himself wholeheartedly.

The review of American history which the Prophet undertakes as an introduction to his platform includes quotations from a number of former Presidents. I think the choice of these quotations reveals much about Joseph Smith's political views, and because they seem to me to be relevant to our problems, I should like to call attention to one or two. First the quotation from Washington, which makes two points: (1) that the general interest should be given precedence over "local prejudices or attachments," over "separate views" and "party animosities"; (2) that private morality should be the fundamental basis of national policy. (Fully in this tradition was the General Conference address of Elder Mark E. Peterson at April Conference, 1968.) I can only surmise that Joseph Smith found the first quote particularly telling after hearing time and time again that "states' rights" barred the way to justice for the Mormons expelled from their homes in Missouri. The second, of course, is the message of the Gospel that the measure of creation is man and that unless private morality exists all efforts to achieve social justice must necessarily fall short of their mark.

A quotation from John Adams strikes a particularly responsive chord in our hearts today: "If national pride is ever justifiable or excusable, it is when

it springs not from *power*, or riches, grandeur or glory, but from conviction of national innocence, information and benevolence." In a day when our power, riches, glory and grandeur surpass those of all other nations, not only of our own day, but of all history, perhaps we might well ask What have we achieved if these are the only sources of our national pride? What would our answer be to the Prophet if he should appear to inquire if we also excel in "national innocence, information and benevolence"?

One last point: Joseph Smith was a Prophet engaged in a secular political contest. He entered that contest on terms dictated by the American political system. His presidential platform was a secular document couched in the political language of his day; he presented himself to the American people on his merits as a man and on the relevance of his political views to the problems of the day. In no place in the platform does he assert that he is speaking in the name of the Lord; he promises only to supplicate the Lord for the good of the people. Joseph Smith was willing to enter the political contest of his day on these terms and in this spirit; we all might well ponder his example.



LIEUTENANT-GENERAL JOSEPH SMITH.  
[Prophet, Seer, and Revelator.]

GENERAL SMITH'S

**VIEWS**

**OF THE POWERS AND POLICY OF THE**

**GOVERNMENT**

OF THE

**UNITED STATES.**

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NAUVOO, ILLINOIS:

PRINTED BY JOHN TAYLOR:

1844

# GENERAL SMITH'S VIEWS.

## GEN. SMITH'S VIEWS ON THE GOVERNMENT AND POLICY OF THE U.S.

Born in a land of liberty, and breathing an air uncorrupted with the sirocco of barbarous climes, I ever feel a double anxiety for the happiness of all men, both in time and in eternity. [1] My cogitations like Daniel's, have for a long time troubled me, when I viewed the condition of men throughout the world, and more especially in this boasted realm, where the Declaration of Independence "holds these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but at the same time, some two or three millions of people are held as slaves for life, because the spirit in them is covered with a darker skin than ours: and hundreds of our own kindred for an infraction, or supposed infraction of some over wise statute, have to be incarcerated in dungeon glooms, or suffer the more moral penitentiary gravitation of mercy in a nut-shell, while the duellist, the debauchee, and the defaulter for millions, and other criminals, take the uppermost rooms at feasts, or, like the bird of passage find a more congenial clime by flight.

The wisdom, which ought to characterize the freest, wisest, and most noble nation of the nineteenth century, should, like the sun in his meridian splendor, warm every object beneath its rays: and the main efforts of her officers, who are nothing more or less than the servants of the people, ought to be directed to ameliorate the condition of all: black or white, bond or free; for the best of books says, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

Our common country presents to all men the same advantages; the same facilities; the same prospects; the same honors; and the same rewards: and without hypocrisy, the Constitution when it says, "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves [do] and our posterity, to ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America," meant just what it said, without reference to color or condition: *ad infinitum*. [infinitum] The aspirations and expectations of a virtuous people, environed with so wise, so liberal, so deep, so broad, and so high a charter of *equal rights*, as appears in said Constitution, ought to be treated

by those to whom the administration of the laws are intrusted, with as much sanctity, as the prayers of the saints are treated in heaven, that love, confidence and union, like the sun, moon and stars should bear witness,

(For ever singing as they shine,) "The hand that made us is divine!"

Unity is power, and when I reflect on the importance of it to the stability of all governments, I am astounded at the silly moves of persons and parties, to foment discord in order to ride into power on the current of popular excitement; nor am I less surprised at the stretches of power, or restrictions of right, which too often appear as acts of legislators, to pave the way to some favorite political schemes, as destitute of intrinsic merit, as a wolf's heart is of the milk of human kindness: a Frenchman would say, "presque tout aimer richesses et pouvoir;" [presque] (almost all men like wealth and power.)

I must dwell on this subject longer than others, for nearly one hundred years ago that golden patriot, Benjamin Franklin drew up a plan of union for the then colonies of Great Britain that now are such an independent nation, which among many wise provisions for obedient children under their father's more rugged hand,—thus: "they have power to make laws, and lay and levy such general duties, imports, or taxes, as to them shall appear most equal and just,—(considering the ability and other circumstances of the inhabitants in the several colonies,) and such as may be collected with the least inconvenience to the people; rather discouraging luxury, than loading industry with unnecessary [2] burthens." Great Britain surely lacked the laudable humanity and fostering clemency to grant such a just plan of union—but the sentiment remains like the land that honored its birth as a pattern for wise men to study the convenience of the people more than the comfort of the cabinet.

And one of the most noble fathers of our freedom and country's glory: great in war, great in peace, great in the estimation of the world, and great in the hearts of his countrymen, the illustrious Washington, said in his first inaugural address to Congress: "I hold the surest pledges that as, on one side, no local prejudices or attachments, no separate views or party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities and interest, so, on another, that the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality; and the pre-eminence of

free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens, and command the respect of the world." Verily, here shines the virtue and the wisdom of a statesman in such lucid rays that had every succeeding Congress followed the rich instruction, in all their deliberations and enactments, for the benefits and convenience of the whole community and the communities of which it is composed, no sound of a rebellion in South Carolina; no rupture in Rhode Island; no mob in Missouri, expelling her citizens by executive authority; corruption in the ballot boxes; a border warfare between Ohio and Michigan: hard times and distress: outbreak upon outbreak in the principal cities: murder, robbery, and defalcations, scarcity of money, and a thousand other difficulties, would have torn asunder the bonds of the union; destroyed the confidence of man; and left the great body of the people to mourn over misfortunes in poverty, brought on by corrupt legislation in an hour of proud vanity, for self aggrandizement. The great Washington, soon after the foregoing faithful admonition for the common welfare of his nation, further advised Congress that "among the many interesting objects which will engage your attention. that of providing for the common defence will merit particular regard. To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace." As the Italian would say: *Buono avviso*, (good advice.)

The elder Adams in his inaugural address, gives national pride such a grand turn of justification, that every honest citizen must look back upon the infancy of the United States with an approving smile and rejoice, that patriotism in the rulers, virtue in the people, and prosperity in the union, once crowned the expectations of hope; unveiled the sophistry of the hypocrite and silenced the folly of foes: Mr. Adams said, "If national pride is ever justifiable, or excusable, it is when it springs not from power or riches, grandeur or glory, but from conviction of national innocence, information and benevolence." There is no doubt such was actually the case with our young realm at the close of the last century; peace, prosperity and union, filled the country with religious toleration, temporal enjoyment and virtuous enterprize; and gradually, too, when the deadly winter of the "Stamp Act," the "Tea Act," and other *close communion* acts of royalty had choked the growth of freedom of speech, liberty of the press, and liberty of conscience, did light, liberty and loyalty flourish like the cedars of God.

The respected and venerable Thomas Jefferson, in his inaugural address made more than forty years ago, shows what a beautiful prospect an innocent, virtuous nation presents to

the sage's eye, where there is space for enterprize: hands for industry; heads for heroes, and hearts for moral greatness. He said, "A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye; when I contemplate these transcendent objects, and see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue and the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation, and humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking." Such a prospect was truly soul stirring to a good man, but "since the fathers have fallen asleep," wicked and designing men have unrobed the government of its glory, and the people, if not in dust and ashes, or in sack cloth, have to lament in poverty, her departed greatness: while demagogues build fires in the north and south, east and west, to keep up their spirits *till it is better times*: but year after year has left the people to *hope* till the very name of *Congress* or *State Legislature*, is as horrible to the sensitive friend of his country, as the house of "Blue Beard" is to children; or "Croketts" Hell of London, to meek men. [3] When the people are secure and their rights properly respected, then the four main pillars of prosperity, viz: agriculture, manufactures, navigation, and commerce, need the fostering care of government: and in so goodly a country as ours, where the soil, the climate, the rivers, the lakes, and the sea coast; the productions, the timber, the minerals; and the inhabitants are so diversified, that a pleasing variety accommodates all tastes, trades and calculations, it certainly is the highest point of subversion to protect the whole northern and southern, eastern and western, centre and circumference of the realm, by a judicious tariff. It is an old saying [4] and a true one, "if you wish to be respected, respect yourselves."

I will adopt in part the language of Mr. Madison's inaugural address, "To cherish peace and friendly intercourse with all nations, having correspondent dispositions; to maintain sincere neutrality towards belligerent nations; to prefer in all cases amicable discussion and reasonable accommodation of intrigues and foreign partialities, so degrading to all countries, and so baneful to free ones; to foster a spirit of independence too just to invade the rights of others, too proud to surrender their own, too liberal to indulge unworthy prejudices ourselves, and too elevated not to look down upon them in others; to hold the union of the States as the basis of their peace and happiness; to support the constitution, which is the cement of the union, as in its limitations as in its authorities; to respect

[Subventio  
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the rights and authorities reserved to the states and to the people, as equally incorporated with, and essential to the success, of the general system; to avoid the slightest interference with the rights of conscience, or the functions of religion, so wisely exempted from civil jurisdiction; to preserve in their full energy, the other salutary provisions in behalf of private and personal rights, and of the freedom of the press;" as far as intention aids in the fulfilment of duty, are consummations too big with benefits not to captivate the energies of all honest men to achieve them, when they can be brought to pass by reciprocation, friendly alliances, wise legislation, and honorable treaties.

The government has once flourished under the guidance of trusty servants; and the Hon. Mr. Monroe in his day, while speaking of the Constitution; says, "Our commerce has been wisely regulated with foreign nations, and between the states; new states have been admitted into our union; our territory has been enlarged by fair and honorable treaty, and with great advantages to the original states; the states respectively protected by the national government, under a mild paternal system against foreign dangers, and enjoying within [partition] their separate spheres, by a wise partition of power, a just proportion of the sovereignty, have improved their police, extended their settlements, and attained a strength and maturity which are the best proofs of wholesome law well administered. And if we look to the condition of individuals, what a proud spectacle does it exhibit? who has been deprived of any right of person and property? who restrained from offering his vows in the mode he prefers, to the Divine author of his being? It is well known that all these blessings have been enjoyed to their fullest extent: and I add, with peculiar satisfaction, that there has been no example of a capital punishment being inflicted on any one for the crime of high treason." What a delightful picture of power, policy and prosperity! Truly the wise proverb is just: "Sedaukauh teromain goy, veh-ka-sade le-u-meem khahmaut." Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

But this is not all. The same honorable statesman, after having had about forty years experience in the government, under the full tide of successful experiment, gives the following commendatory assurance of the efficiency of the *magna charta* to answer its great end and aim: *To protect the people in their rights.* "Such, then, is the happy government under which we live; a government adequate to every purpose for which the social compact is formed; a government elective in all its branches, under

which every citizen may, by his merit, obtain the highest trust recognized by the constitution; which contains within it no cause or discord; none to put at variance one portion of the community with another; a government which protects every citizen in the full enjoyment of his rights, and is able to protect the nation against injustice from foreign powers."

Again, the younger Adams in the silver age of our country's advancement to fame, in his inaugural address, (1825) thus candidly declares the majesty of the youthful republic, in its increasing greatness; "The year of jubilee since the first formation of our union has just elapsed—that of the declaration of Independence is at hand. The consummation of both was effected by this constitution. Since that period a population of four millions has multiplied to twelve. A territory, bounded by the Mississippi, has been extended from sea to sea. New states have been admitted to the union, in numbers nearly equal to those of the first confederation. Treaties of peace, amity and commerce, have been concluded with the principal dominions of the earth. The people of other nations, the inhabitants of regions acquired, not by conquest, but by compact, have been united with us in the participation of our rights and duties, of our burdens and blessings. The forest has fallen by the axe of our woodsmen; the soil has been made to teem by the tillage of our farmers: our commerce has whitened every ocean. The dominion of man over physical nature has been extended by the invention of our artists. Liberty and law have walked hand in hand. All the purposes of human association have been accomplished as effectively as under any other government on the globe, and at a cost little exceeding, in a whole generation, the expenditures of other nations in a single year."

In continuation of such noble sentiments, General Jackson, upon his ascension to the great chair of the chief magistracy: said, "As long as our government is administered for the good of the people, and is regulated by their will; as long as it secures to us the rights of person and property, liberty of conscience, and of the press, it will be worth defending; and so long as it is worth defending, a patriotic militia will cover it with an impenetrable ægis."

General Jackson's administration may be denominated the *acme* of American glory, liberty and prosperity, for the national debt, which in 1815, on account of the late war, was \$125,000,000, and lessened gradually, was paid up in his golden day; and preparations were made to distribute the surplus revenue among the several states: and that august patriot, to use his [5]

own words in his farewell address, retired leaving "a great people prosperous and happy, in the full enjoyment of liberty and peace, honored and respected by every nation of the world."

At the age, then, of sixty years, our blooming republic began to decline under the withering touch of Martin Van Buren! Disappointed ambition; thirst for power, pride, corruption, party spirit, faction, patronage; perquisites, fame, tangling alliances; priest-craft and spiritual wickedness in high places, struck hands, and revelled in midnight splendor. Trouble, vexation, perplexity and contention, mingled with hope, fear and murmuring, rumbled, through the union and agitated the whole nation as would an earthquake at the centre of the earth the world, heaving the sea beyond its bounds, and shaking the everlasting hills: So, in hopes of better times, while jealousy, hypocritical pretensions, and pompous ambition, were luxuriating on the ill-gotten spoils of the people, they rose in their majesty like a tornado, and swept through the land, till General Harrison appeared, as a star among the storm clouds, for better weather.

The calm came; and the language of that venerable patriot, in his inaugural address, while descanting upon the merits of the constitution and its framers, thus expressed himself. "There were in it, features which appeared not to be in harmony with their ideas of a simple representative democracy or republic. And knowing the tendency of power to increase itself, particularly when executed by a single individual, predictions were made that, at no very remote period, the government would terminate in virtual monarchy. It would not become me to say that the fears of these patriots have been already realized. But as I sincerely believe that the tendency of measures and of men's opinions, for some years past, has been in that direction, it is, I conceive, strictly proper that I should take this occasion to repeat the assurances I have heretofore given, of my determination to arrest the progress of that tendency if it really exists, and restore the government to its pristine health and vigor." [7] This good man died before he had the opportunity of applying one balm to ease the pain of our groaning country, and I am willing the nation should be the judge, whether General Harrison, in his exalted station, upon the eve of his entrance into the world of spirits, told the truth or not: with acting president Tyler's three years of perplexity and pseudo whig democrat reign, to heal the breaches, or show the wounds, *secundum artum*, (according to art.) Subsequent events, all things considered, Van Buren's downfall, Harrison's exit, and Tyler's self-sufficient turn to the whole, go to shew, as a Chal-

dean might exclaim: Beram etai elauh besh-mayauh gauhah rauzeen: (*Certainly there is a God in heaven to reveal secrets;*)

No honest man can doubt for a moment, but the glory of American liberty, is on the wane; and that calamity and confusion will sooner or later destroy the peace of the people. Speculators will urge a national bank as a savior of credit and comfort. A hireling pseudo priesthood will plausibly push abolition doctrines and doings, and "human rights," into Congress and into every other place, where conquest smells of fame, or opposition swells to popularity.—Democracy, Whiggery, and Cliquery, will attract their elements and foment divisions among the people, to accomplish fancied schemes and accumulate power, while poverty driven to despair, like hunger forcing its way through a wall, will break through the statutes of men, to save life, and mend the breach in prison glooms.

A still higher grade, of what the "nobility of the nations" call "great men," will dally with all rights in order to smuggle a fortune at "one fell swoop;" mortgage Texas, possess Oregon, and claim all the unsettled regions of the world for hunting and trapping: and should a humble honest man, red, black, or white, exhibit a better title, these gentry have only to clothe the judge with richer ermine, and spangle the lawyer's fingers with finer rings, to have the judgment of his peers, and the honor of his lords, as a pattern of honesty, virtue and humanity, while the motto hangs on his nation's escutcheon: "*Every man has his price!*"

Now, oh! people! turn unto the Lord and live; and reform this nation. Frustrate the designs of wicked men. Reduce Congress at least one half. Two Senators from a state and two members to a million of population, will do more business than the army that now occupy the halls of the National Legislature. Pay them two dollars and their board per diem; (except Sundays,) that is more than the farmer gets, and he lives honestly. Curtail the offices of government in pay, number and power, for the Philistine lords have shorn our nation of its goodly locks in the lap of Delilah. [9]

Petition your state legislature to pardon every convict in their several penitentiaries: blessing them as they go, and saying to them in the name of the Lord, *go thy way and sin no more*. Advise your legislators when they make laws for larceny, burglary or any felony, to make the penalty applicable to work upon the roads, public works, or any place where the culprit can be taught more wisdom and more virtue; and become more enlightened. Rigor and seclusion will never do as much to reform the propensities of man, as reason and friendship. Murder only

can claim confinement or death. Let the penitentiaries be turned into seminaries of learning, where intelligence, like the angels of heaven, would banish such fragments of barbarism: Imprisonment for debt is a meaner practice than the savage tolerates with all his ferocity; "Amor vincit omnia." Love conquers all.

[omnia]

Petition also, ye goodly inhabitants of the slave states, your legislators to abolish slavery by the year 1850, or now, and save the abolitionist from reproach and ruin, infamy and shame.

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Pray Congress to pay every man a reasonable price for his slaves out of the surplus revenue arising from the sale of public lands, and from the deduction of pay from the members of Congress.

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Break off the shackles from the poor black man, and hire them to labor like other human beings; for "an hour of virtuous liberty on earth, is worth a whole eternity of bondage!"

Abolish the practice in the army and navy of trying men by court martial for desertion; if a soldier or marine runs away, send him his wages, with this instruction, that *his country will never trust him again, he has forfeited his honor.*

Make HONOR the standard with all men: be sure that good is rendered for evil in all cases: and the whole nation, like a kingdom of kings and priests, will rise up with righteousness: and be respected as wise and worthy on earth: and as just and holy for heaven; by Jehovah the author of perfection. More economy in the national and state governments; would make less taxes among the

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people: more equality through the cities, towns & country, would make less distinction among the people; and more honesty and familiarity in societies, would make less hypocrisy and flattery in all branches of community; and open, frank, candid, decorum to all men, in this boasted land of liberty, would beget esteem, confidence, union and love; and the neighbor from any state, or from any country, of whatever color, clime or tongue, could rejoice when he put his foot on the sacred soil of freedom, and exclaim: the very name of "*American*," is fraught with *friendship!* Oh! then, create confidence! restore freedom!—break down slavery! banish imprisonment for debt, and be in love, fellowship and peace with all the world! Remember that honesty is not subject to law: the law was made for transgressors: wherefore a Dutchman might exclaim: *Ein ehrlicher name ist besser als Reichthum*, (a good name is better than riches.)

[German]

For the accommodation of the people in every state and territory, let Congress shew their wisdom by granting a national bank, with branches in each state and territory, where the capital stock shall be held by the nation for the mother bank: and by the states and territories, for the branches: and whose officers and direct-

ors shall be elected yearly by the people with wages at the rate of two dollars per day for services: which several banks shall never issue any more bills than the amount of capital stock in her vaults and the interest. The nett gain of the mother bank shall be applied to the national revenue, and that of the branches to the states and territories' revenues. And the bills shall be par throughout the nation, which will mercifully cure that fatal disorder known in cities, as *brokerage*; and leave the people's money in their own pockets.

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Give every man his constitutional freedom, and the president full power to send an army to suppress mobs; and the states authority to repeal and impugn that relic of folly, which makes it necessary for the governor of a state to make the demand of the president for troops, in cases of invasion or rebellion. The governor himself may be a mobber and, instead of being punished, as he should be for murder and treason, he may destroy the very lives, rights, and property he should protect. Like the good Samaritan, send every lawyer as soon as he repents and obeys the ordinances of heaven, to preach the gospel to the destitute, without purse or scrip, pouring in the oil and the wine: a learned priesthood is certainly more honorable than a "*hireling clergy*".

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As to the contiguous territories to the United States, wisdom would direct no tangling alliance: Oregon belongs to this government honorably, and when we have the red man's consent, let the union spread from the east to the west sea; and if Texas petitions Congress to be adopted among the sons of liberty, give her the right hand of fellowship; and refuse not the same friendly grip to Canada and Mexico: and when the right arm of freemen is stretched out in the character of a navy, for the protection of rights, commerce and honor, let the iron eyes of power, watch from Maine to Mexico, and from California to Columbia; thus may union be strengthened, and foreign speculation prevented from opposing broadside to broadside.

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Seventy years have done much for this goodly land; they have burst the chains of oppression and monarchy; and multiplied its inhabitants from two to twenty millions; with a proportionate share of knowledge: keen enough to circumnavigate the globe; draw the lightning from the clouds: and cope with all the crowned heads of the world.

Then why? Oh! why! will a once flourishing people not arise, phoenix like, over the cinders of Martin Van Buren's power; and over the sinking fragments and smoking ruins of ether catamount politicians; and over the windfalls of Benton, Calhoun, Clay, Wright, and a caravan of other equally unfortunate law doe-

tors, and cheerfully help to spread a plaster and bind up the *burnt, bleeding wounds* of a sore but blessed country? The southern people are hospitable and noble: they will help to rid so free a country of every vestige of slavery, when ever they are assured of an equivalent for their property. The country will be full of money and confidence, when a national bank of twenty millions, and a state bank in every state, with a million or more, gives a tone to monetary matters, and make a circulating medium as valuable in the purses of a whole community, as in the coffers of a speculating banker or broker

The people may have faults but they never should be trifled with. I think Mr. Pitt's quotation in the British Parliament of Mr. Prior's couplet for the husband and wife, to apply to the course which the king and ministry of England should pursue to the then colonies, of the now United States, might be a genuine rule of action for some of the *breath made* men in high places, to use towards the posterity of that noble daring people:

"Be to her faults a little blind;  
Be to her virtues very kind."

We have had democratic presidents; whig presidents; a pseudo democratic whig president; and now it is time to have a *president of the United States*; and let the people of the whole union, like the inflexible Romans, whenever they find a *promise* made by a candidate, that is not *practised* as an officer, hurl the miserable eycophant from his exaltation, as God did Nebuchadnezzar, to crop the grass of the field, with a beast's heart among the cattle.

Mr. Van Buren said in his inaugural address, that he went "into the presidential chair the inflexible and uncompromising opponent of every attempt, on the part of Congress, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, against the wishes of the slave holding states; and also with a determination equally decided to resist the slightest interference with it in the states where it exists." Poor little Matty made his rhapsodical sweep with the fact before his eyes, that the state of New-York, his native state, had abolished slavery, without a struggle or a groan. Great God, how independent! From henceforth slavery is tolerated where it exists: constitution or no constitution; people or no people; right or wrong; vox Matti; vox Diaboli: "the voice of Matty"—"the voice [17] of the devil;" and peradventure, his great "Sub-Treasury" scheme was a piece of the same mind: but the man and his measures have such a striking resemblance to the anecdote of the Welchman and his cart-tongue, that, when the constitution was so long that it allowed slavery at the capitol of a free people, it could

not be cut off; but when it was short that it needed a *Sub-Treasury*, to save the funds of the nation, it *could be spliced!* Oh, granny what a long fail our puss has got! As a Grock might say, *hysteron proteron*: the cart before the horse: but his mighty whisk through the great national fire, for the presidential chesnuts. *burnt the locks of his glory with the blaze of his folly!* [chestnut]

In the United States the people are the government; and their united voice is the only sovereign that should rule; the only power that should be obeyed; and the only gentlemen that should be honored; at home and abroad; on the land and on the sea: Wherefore, were I the president of the United States, by the voice of a virtuous people, I would honor the old paths of the venerated fathers of freedom: I would walk in the tracks of the illustrious patriots, who carried the ark of the government upon their shoulders with an eye single to the glory of the people and when that people petitioned to abolish slavery in the slave states, I would use all honorable means to have their prayers granted: and give liberty to the captive; by giving the southern gentleman a reasonable equivalent for his property, that the whole nation might be free indeed! When the people petitioned for a national bank, I would use my best endeavors to have their prayers answered, and establish one on national principles to save taxes, and make them the controllers of its ways and means; and when the people petitioned to possess the territory of Oregon or any other contiguous territory; I would lend the influence of a chief magistrate to grant so reasonable a request, that they might extend the mighty efforts and enterprise of a free people from the east to the west sea; and make the wilderness blossom as the rose; and when a neighboring realm petitioned to join the union of the sons of liberty, my voice would be, *come*: yea come Texas: come Mexico; come Canada; and come all the world—let us be brethren: let us be one great family; and let there be universal peace. Abolish the cruel customs of prisons, (except certain cases,) penitentiaries, and court-martials for desertion; and let reason and friendship reign over the ruins of ignorance and barbarity; yea I would, as the universal friend of man, open the prisons; open the eyes; open the ears and open the hearts of all people, to behold and enjoy freedom, unadulterated freedom: and God, who once cleansed the violence of the earth with a flood; whose Son laid down his life for the salvation of all his father gave him out of the world; and who has promised that he will come and purify the world again with fire in the last days, should be supplicated by me for the good of all people.

With the highest esteem,  
I am a friend of virtue  
and of the people,  
JOSEPH SMITH.  
Nauvoo, Illinois, February 7, 1844.

## EDITORIAL FOOTNOTES TO GENERAL SMITH'S VIEWS . . .

<sup>1</sup>It is likely that most of the actual writing was done by William W. Phelps, who handled much of Joseph Smith's correspondence and journalistic writing in this period. John M. Bernhisel probably also helped and others possibly made some suggestions. *Documentary History of the Church*, VI, 75 fn., 189, 197, 221. This is the edition published in May 1844, almost certainly using the type from the original pamphlet edition of February 7, 1844. "Printed by John Taylor." A number of obvious typographical errors have been corrected in brackets in the margins.

<sup>2</sup>The excerpts from the Albany Plan of Union, 1754, and from the inaugural addresses of all the Presidents to 1844 except Van Buren and Tyler are almost certainly from one of the published collections of public documents and addresses which began to appear in the Jacksonian period.

<sup>3</sup>In D.H.C., VI, 200, Roberts corrects this to read "Crockford's" Hell, and identifies it with Crockford's house at 50 St. James Street, London.

<sup>4</sup>A protective tariff had been proposed by Alexander Hamilton, adopted following the War of 1812, reduced after the South Carolina nullification crisis of 1832, and advocated rather consistently thereafter by northern and western elements in the Whig Party as part of Henry Clay's "American System." Since Joseph Smith favored the tariff at this time perhaps "subversion" should read "subvention."

<sup>5</sup>Clay also figured prominently in the Congressional adoption of this project. After three quarterly distributions had been made, the Panic of 1837 wiped out the surplus and the United States has not since been without a national debt.

<sup>6</sup>Van Buren's refusal, on constitutional as well as political grounds, to involve the Presidency in the Mormon difficulties with Missouri had long since made his name anathema among Latter-day Saints.

<sup>7</sup>William Henry Harrison's hesitancy about trying to dominate Congress or the state governments was shared by other Whig leaders, including Abraham Lincoln, before the Civil War. The praise here is not entirely consistent with the denunciation of Van Buren for similar hesitancy, and with the program for Presidential action advocated in the *Views*.

<sup>8</sup>Both the Democratic and Whig parties were afflicted with sectional and local factionalism, which produced a disposition on the part of leaders in both to straddle on many national issues as the campaign of 1844 took shape.

<sup>9</sup>In 1844 there were 223 Representatives and 52 Senators, representing 26 states and a population of approximately 20,000,000. The pay of members of Congress at this time was \$8 per diem. The total number of federal employees in 1841 was 23,700; by 1851 it had risen to 33,300. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), p. 62; E. S. Bates, *The Story of Congress* (New York: Harper, 1936), p. 101.

<sup>10</sup>Penal reform as well as improved care for the insane received widespread attention in the Jacksonian era, though proposals as sweeping as this were uncommon. Imprisonment for debt was abolished in most of the states.

<sup>11</sup>By 1820 all of the states north of the Mason-Dixon Line and the Ohio River had abolished slavery, but there had been no serious discussion of the subject in the South since the Virginia legislature debated and defeated an emancipation bill in 1830-31.

<sup>12</sup>There were almost 3,000,000 slaves in 1844, with an average value in excess of \$500. Total public land sales in the 1840's averaged approximately \$2,000,000 yearly, and the proposed cut-backs in Congressional membership and pay would have produced perhaps \$500,000. There was no "surplus revenue." *Historical Statistics*, pp. 27, 297.

<sup>13</sup>Federal expenditures in 1844 for all purposes were \$23,000,000, or less than \$1.25 per capita. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>14</sup>Clay's "American System" also called for a national bank with branches, but the stock in that institution would be partly governmentally owned and partly privately owned, while the Prophet's bank would be an entirely socialistic enterprise.

<sup>15</sup>The constitutional provision referred to is Article IV, Section 4: "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a republican form of government, and shall protect each of them against invasion; and on application of the legislature, or of the executive (when the legislature cannot be convened) against domestic violence." With the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment after the Civil War, the federal government received for the first time the authority to intervene in the states to protect citizens against state actions violative of the Bill of Rights; but Article IV, Section 4 remains the supreme law of the land insofar as the general procedure for the suppression of domestic violence is concerned.

<sup>16</sup>When the *Views* was written early in 1844, both major parties seemed likely to straddle on the Texas question because of its implications for sectional politics, but at the Democratic convention in May, Van Buren was defeated by the dark-horse James K. Polk, and the "Manifest Destiny" platform called for "Reoccupation of Oregon; Reannexation of Texas." Mexico and Canada were also in the minds of many ardent expansionists in the 1840's.

<sup>17</sup>Both Whigs and Democrats agreed in the 1840's that the Constitution protected slavery in the states where it existed. The question of the constitutional status of slavery in the territories would soon become a Union-splitting issue in consequence of the Mexican War, in which some of Joseph Smith's followers would play a significant part.

#### ERRATUM

In Louis C. Zucker's essay, "Joseph Smith as a Translator of Hebrew," in the Summer, 1968, issue, p. 42, ninth line from the top, "pogroms" should be substituted for "programs": ". . . the Mormons who survived the frontier pogroms . . ."