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THE IDAHO TEST OATH.

DURING the dispute in the so-called Constitutional Convention in Idaho, the following speech was made concerning the infamous provision to disfranchise a large proportion of the citizens of the contemplated State, solely on account of their membership in an unorthodox Church, without reference to any overt act on their part. We clip from the Idaho Democrat:

The election and suffrage report No. 11 being under consideration in committee of the whole, in the debate ensuing Mr. Pefley said:

"I have often wished to be a great orator but never so much as at the present time from the fact that I believe that all the rights of citizenship worth living for are at the mercy of an unscrupulous party. Not only those of the Mormons but of every voter in this Territory. But before I proceed further I wish to call your attention to a few of the fundamental maxims of the Fathers who were present at the birth of our liberties; not, however, that I think it will make a change in the vote of any member on this floor, as that is impossible in any case where fanaticism reigns supreme.

"A jealous care of the right of election by the people." "No republican government can be permanent in which the people are denied a direct voice in the election of their representatives." "Universal suffrage and equality of all men before the law." "No religious test as qualification for citizenship or the right to vote or hold office." "Taxation without representation is tyranny."

Such are the sayings of those who framed the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States; and in none of the thirty-eight States of the Union do you find any other qualification for the right of suffrage than that of citizenship, and the age of twenty-one, except those of unsound mind, etc. Even the Negroes, Indians and mixed breeds are accorded their true American prerogatives, without inquiry as to what they may think or believe on this or that subject. Now, why this discrimination in the constitution of Idaho against a class of our own race who have never been convicted of any crime, and because they are simply adherents (or in the language of Section 3 of this article "or who is a member of") a different religious sect from that of our-

selves? That word, remember, includes all children born of Mormon parents, cursing and condemning all from the youth to the cradle and even those yet unborn just because and for no other reason than that their parents refused to vote the Republican ticket.

Other States and Territories have colonies of these people but do not seem to have such trouble, and even in Utah they vote and hold office. Mr. Caine is their Delegate in Congress. He is paid for his services by the United States. He calls on the President, and all the departments, makes speeches in the House of Representatives, and no one has ever attempted to have him expelled from that august body, which is only the inferior of one other body on earth and that is the Idaho constitutional convention. But, sir, it appears to have been reserved to Idaho to put the first religious qualifications of the right to vote and hold office into a constitution on the American continent, and also to make the first attempt to revise and enforce two of the most hated and damnable heresies against the inalienable right of the citizen—taxation without representation and punishment for opinion sake instead of overt acts.

Citizenship is the highest and most sacred relation that can exist between a man and this government. With it bestowed he can travel all over the civilized world and all the time be under the protecting hues of the Stars and Stripes; and any infringement of his rights or liberties guaranteed by our laws and constitution would call forth all the powers of his country to avenge the same, though it might exhaust the surplus of the treasury and decimate the army and navy to do it. Yet, after all this expenditure of blood and treasure in order to restore that citizen to his proper standing before the world and his countrymen, if one of those eagle-eyed sage-brush statesmen should discover that he was a resident of Idaho and belonged to the Mormon Church, he would at once raise the howl that said Mormon could neither vote nor hold office.

But section four of this article does not apply to the Mormons only, but can be made to apply by the legislature to every voter in the Territory. It makes that body the sole judge of the most sacred privileges known to man for his own protection from the oppression and abuses of government when administered by bosses instead of the people. I object to the legislature having anything to do with the right of suffrage in the proposed State. You all know what such an unheard-of power means. No other State has entrusted it to that source, but all, without exception, have defined and confined it strictly and unequivocally to their constituents.

Now, I have this to say to every member on this floor who loves and respects right above wrong; vote this infamy down here and now, and if you are overruled here by the fanaticism of the majority, then go before the people and point out the danger of voting to adopt such an

instrument. It gives to any party in power the means to perpetuate itself by a few political shysters manipulating the legislature, which experience in this Territory has fully shown.

It was in vain that Washington and his compatriots assumed the right, sword in hand, to repel those same innovations on the simplest and dearest human rights, receiving the plaudits and approbation of all good-thinking people for more than a century, if we now are not entitled to the full benefit of those grand achievements equally with all other citizens of this great republic. If we are not, then our boasted liberty and even life itself is an idle dream. If fanaticism is to become the ruling passion, as is now apparent in this proposed State, and the bloody scenes of two hundred years ago are to be re-enacted (in sentiment at least), then anarchy will take the place of good government.

It is said that these people are traitors to the country. If so, show me the proof and I will help you hang every mother's son of them found guilty, as I despise a traitor to any cause above all other criminals on the face of the earth. But until some evidence is furnished to sustain such a charge they must be presumed to be innocent, and especially as long as they can act the part of good and loyal citizens by paying taxes, suffering all the pains and penalties of just and unjust laws, are willing to bear arms, and are subject to the draft in case of war to defend the State and even the homes and firesides of those same fanatics who are seeking to disfranchise them and their posterity forever in this proposed State.

Universal suffrage and equality of all men before the law has ever been considered the quintessence of republicanism, and on that just and humane proposition it succeeded and became a great national party, and carried out the idea by enfranchising several hundred thousand negroes, of whom nine out of ten did not know what the word ballot meant. But it appears the party in Idaho has a different notion about these rights, and that is, that only a select few should be permitted to exercise the right of suffrage as prescribed by this constitution, and that the legislature be empowered to further curtail this right, as in its wisdom it may see proper.

There are several men on this floor who profess to be followers of a Master whose commands are as follows (not even Mormons excepted): "Do good for evil. Love thine enemies, Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It is better that ninety-nine guilty escape than to punish one who is innocent;" and who will vote for these infamous, outrageous and proscription measures against their fellowmen. Now, I ask, how can you reconcile your actions with the above commands of your pretended Master? No doubt you think me a very bad man because I differ in opinion from you on some questions. But I request that when you reach that