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SPEECH

OF

HON. OLIVER P. MORTON,

OF INDIANA,

DELIVERED

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

DECEMBER 21, 1870.

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WASHINGTON:  
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ANNEXXATION OF DOMINICA.

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The Senate having under consideration the joint resolution (S. R. No. 232) in relation to the republic of Dominica, as follows:

*Resolved, &c.*, That the President of the United States be authorized to appoint three commissioners, and also a secretary, (the latter to be versed in the English and Spanish languages,) to proceed to the island of San Domingo, and to inquire into, ascertain, and report—

1. The political state and condition of the republic of Dominica.

2. The desire and disposition of the people of the said republic to become annexed to and to form part of the people of the United States.

3. The physical, mental, and moral condition of the said people, and their general condition as to material wealth and industrial capacity.

4. The resources of the country, its mineral and agricultural products, the products of its waters and forests, the general character of the soil, the extent and proportion thereof capable of cultivation, the climate and health of the country, its bays, harbors, and rivers; its general meteorological character, and the existence and frequency of remarkable meteorological phenomena.

5. The debt of the Government and its obligations, whether funded and ascertained and admitted, or unadjusted and under discussion.

6. Treaties or engagements with other Powers.

7. Extent of boundaries and territory; what proportion is covered by grants or concessions, and generally what concessions or franchises have been granted.

8. The terms and conditions on which the Dominican Government may desire to be annexed to and become part of the United States as one of the Territories thereof.

9. Such other information with respect to the said Government or its territories as to the said commissioners shall seem desirable or important with reference to the future incorporation of the said Dominican republic into the United States as one of its Territories.

Sec. 2. *And be it further resolved*, That the said commissioners shall, as soon as conveniently may be, report to the President of the United States, who shall lay their report before Congress.

Sec. 3. *And be it further resolved*, That the said commissioners shall serve without compensation except the payment of expenses, and the compensation of the secretary shall be determined by the Secretary of State, with the approval of the President.

Mr. MORTON said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Senator from Massachusetts, [Mr. SUMNER,] this afternoon, in the course of his speech, thought proper to refer to my personal relations to the President of the United States, and he presented me as the confidential adviser of the President, a frequent visitor at the White House, and as conferring with the President alone in the Blue Room.

I have seen the President in the Blue Room

on several occasions, for I am somewhat lame and unable to go up stairs, and the President is kind enough when I visit the White House on business to come down stairs and see me, and I presume he would do the same for any Senator or Representative, or any other person who was not able to climb the stairs without difficulty. But, sir, in going into the Blue Room, I beg to assure my friend it has not been for the purpose of secrecy or private conference.

The Senator advises me to go and tell the President certain things, and to give the President certain advice which he puts into my mouth. Sir, I do not propose to act in the capacity of a go-between. I am too old and too lame now to begin the exercise of that character. I sometimes go to the White House—not as often as a great many others—and I always go there on business. I have never obtruded upon the President my opinion on any subject. I have never given it except when asked for, and then I have endeavored to give it honestly, and to tell the truth, for to advise a President falsely in regard to matters of State has always been and must be regarded as a crime.

If the Senator means to impute to me the fact that I am a friend of the President, personally and politically, he is quite right. I have been his friend and admirer ever since the battle of Fort Donelson; and although I sometimes disagree with him, perhaps in regard to appointments, or perhaps in regard to measures, I always try to differ with him in such a way as not to assail his personal character or to demoralize the party of which he is the head.

A series of assaults have been made on the President, from time to time, ever since his inauguration; scarce has one subsided before another is begun. And I think he has been treated with a bitterness of persecution and a torrent of calumny that have not been lavished upon any Executive of the United States perhaps since the days of Thomas Jefferson. But, sir, one by one these assaults have failed, utterly failed; they have been exposed, and have become contemptible to the people of this country. The arrows of calumny have fallen harmless at his feet; and although it has been frequently announced that the President has

fallen, he always manages to fall upon his feet; and so he will, I predict, throughout his administration or his connection with public life. Sometimes the arrows of calumny have been so thick as to darken the air; but invariably he has triumphed, and I predict his continued triumph.

Why, sir, this Administration is thus far a great success. The assaults upon it are of a personal character, and do not touch the merits, the wonderful success of the Administration. The general results of this Administration are grand, grand almost beyond precedent. If it shall go on for the next two years as it has for the last twenty-one months, these grand results will be so conspicuous, so well understood and admired of all men that they will overwhelm all opposition.

Mr. President, the people do not look to these personal considerations. They do not care whether Mr. Cox is the Secretary of the Interior, or Mr. Delano; whether Mr. Motley is the ambassador to the Court of St. James, or General Schenck. What they want to know is that the Government is well and faithfully administered, and all these personal considerations are brushed aside as mere idle straws.

I must say that the assault of the Senator from Massachusetts upon the President this afternoon was most unprovoked and indefensible. It was not a difference from the President on mere political principles, but he charged the President with usurpation, with crimes. He compared his administration to that of Buchanan and to that of Pierce, and denounced it as he formerly denounced the administrations of those predecessors; and, sir, he drew a comparison, and I was pained to hear it, between Saget, the murdering usurper of the Government of Hayti, and President Grant, much to the disparagement of the President of the United States. Saget, who murdered Salnave in cold blood; Saget, who has led the "dance of blood" of which the Senator speaks, has been held up to the admiration of the American people in favorable comparison with President Grant!

He says that President Grant has threatened Hayti in his message; ay, he says there are nine menaces against the republic of Hayti in the President's message. I was surprised to hear that. I had heard that message read here in the Senate; I had myself read it carefully, and I confess it never suggested such a thought. Sir, these "nine menaces" are simply nine men in buckram, existing only in the Senator's imagination; and I submit to candid men of all parties that the President's message does not mean any such thing as the Senator has attributed to it. He gives it a strained and technical construction that has never been given before by anybody or by any newspaper that I have read or heard of. He says the President threatened the whole island of San Domingo, threatened the republic of Hayti, and he endeavors to support that by referring

to the conduct of Admiral Poor upon the coast of Hayti.

Mr. President, if you will take this message and read it on that point, you will say unquestionably—I say unquestionably—that the President only refers to the acquisition of the territory of the republic of Dominica. He does speak of "the island of San Domingo" in one or two places. He does that perhaps inadvertently, because we often speak of "the island of San Domingo." In common parlance, perhaps, "the island" is spoken of more frequently by that name than it is by that of Hayti and the distinction drawn between that and the republic of Dominica. But, sir, allow me to read a brief extract to show what the President means; and I was surprised that the desperation of the Senator's cause required him to put what I regard as a false and strained construction upon this message. Speaking of the republic of Dominica, the President says:

"It is a weak Power, numbering probably less than one hundred and twenty thousand souls"—

That is about the population of Dominica, while Hayti has seven or eight hundred thousand—

"It is a weak Power, numbering probably less than one hundred and twenty thousand souls, and yet possessing one of the richest territories under the sun, capable of supporting a population of ten millions of people in luxury. The people of San Domingo are not capable of maintaining themselves in their present condition, and must look for outside support. They yearn for the protection of our free institutions and laws, our progress and civilization. Shall we refuse them?"

I therefore put aside this pretense that the President in his message has threatened the republic of Hayti.

The argument of the Senator from Massachusetts throughout has demonstrated the necessity and the importance of this investigation. My friend has appeared upon the stand this afternoon as a witness. He has testified copiously, voluminously, and yet has scarcely produced any testimony to sustain one of his assertions. He states these things, he says solemnly, because he knows them to be true; but he has not favored the Senate with any evidence to sustain the most of them. Perhaps the Senator thinks that what he does not know in regard to the republic of San Domingo is not worth knowing; but while he may know it very well, he may not be able to satisfy all the rest of us; he may not be able to satisfy the country. And now we propose a commission that shall go upon the ground and make an examination so far as it can be made, and report to us the facts, that we may judge for ourselves whether or not annexation is desirable; and, as I have said before, when I introduced this resolution I supposed it could not elicit debate; I supposed it would not be resisted, for, presuming that the Senator himself was desirous of full and complete knowledge, that he desired to be accurately informed, and believing that this was the very best possible method to get full information upon points which have been here-

before in dispute, I supposed this resolution would pass without opposition.

Now, sir, allow me to say that nearly all the Senator's points are immaterial—immaterial for the purpose of this resolution. He has spent his force upon matters that, so far as the merits of this resolution are concerned, may be designated as frivolous, wholly unimportant. We are not now proposing to examine whether the treaty was correctly and properly negotiated. We have passed by the treaty; we are beginning *de novo*; we are proposing to examine this question as if a treaty had never been made, and we propose to go to the vital and material points in the matter, and to do that we propose to send a commission to the island, where this information is most accessible and can be most accurately obtained. We are proceeding, as I said before, as if there had been no treaty; and now, of what importance is it in proposing to examine these questions and ascertain the facts, to go into a long, labored, ingenious, and, I may say, unfriendly examination of the mode in which that treaty was negotiated? The Senator has spent perhaps half an hour in commenting upon the way in which General Babcock had signed his name, alleging that he had styled himself *aid-de-camp* to the President. Why, Mr. President, if we were considering the treaty itself, if that was before us, it would be a mere frivolous objection; it would be a mere verbal complaint that the Senator would make, and could not possibly go to the merits of the case; but he brings that circumstance here as one of overwhelming importance that must override the value of the interrogatories that are to be answered by this commission.

And as to the protocol that General Babcock entered into, he says that protocol provides that the President should privately use his influence with members of Congress or of the Senate to bring about its ratification. Sir, it provides no such thing. The protocol was privately made; was not attached to the treaty; was not part of the treaty; but it made no provision that the President should privately influence members of Congress or try to do so; but that was the interpretation the Senator gave to it—that the President agreed privately to influence members of Congress. No such thing; the protocol does not read that way. But, sir, what of the protocol? The Senator seemed to think it was a very important matter, a great lion in the way that could not be gotten over, and that rendered this resolution improper, and the interrogatories unimportant. Why, sir, he confessed himself, as I understood him, that General Babcock had made that protocol without authority; and he did do it upon his own motion, and there was nothing in his instructions that authorized him to do so; but, as all men familiar with diplomatic negotiations understand, protocols are of very common occurrence, and are always of

a private character, and never constitute a part of the treaty. But as the treaty is gone, as we have passed that by, as it is merely a relic of the past, where is the importance of dwelling upon this protocol and attempting to fix crime upon the President in consequence of it? Sir, the objection is frivolous, and I pass it by.

The Senator began his speech by saying that this resolution inaugurated a "dance of blood." This was a tremendous sentence, and burst upon the Senate like a rocket in the air, which always leaves darkness just after; and I would like to inquire whether anybody was hit by the stick when it came down. And I might inquire whether blood can dance, and if that was ever heard of before; and if it can, whether his favorite and his model president, Saget, the president of Hayti, did not engage in that "dance of blood?"

Then he says again that my resolution creates three officers whose pay is governed by the statute which he read. I was very much surprised to hear this. The statute that he read refers to a form of diplomatic and commercial agent, a permanent officer that is described as a commissioner, like the commissioner to the Sandwich Islands, and does not refer at all to such commissioners as are provided for in this resolution. A great many persons are called commissioners, but they do not fall within the purview of the statute that provides for a permanent diplomatic officer such as we have at the Sandwich Islands and at other places. We have commissioners to examine twenty miles of railway, and to do various other things.

Mr. CONKLING. That statute does not refer to any commissioners except those named in the statute itself. They are specifically enumerated.

Mr. MORTON. Certainly; the commissioners thereby created. But still this was paraded here as an argument to go before the country to show that we were creating commissioners who were officers in the meaning of the law, and to derive large compensation, such as is provided for in that statute. Then the Senator from Massachusetts says that this commission will commit Congress to the policy of annexation. Is there one word of foundation for this statement? Is any Senator who may not favor the annexation of San Domingo under his present convictions to be frightened from voting for this resolution by the bald declaration that it commits Congress to annexation? Not one word like it in the resolution; but it simply provides for an examination; the commissioners are simply to report upon what terms San Domingo may consent to be annexed or desire to be annexed. That report is to be made to the President, and he is to lay it before Congress for its consideration. If the facts therein stated are favorable to annexation, well; if they are unfavorable, well; the commissioners are not authorized themselves to give their opinion upon the question. I was careful in drawing the resolution to provide that

they should have no authority to give their opinion at all. They are simply to report the facts, and we are to pass upon them. So nobody need be frightened against the resolution by saying that it commits Congress to the policy of annexation.

Then, again, he says the resolution is unnecessary because the President has full power to appoint the commissioners without it. Why, this is a most astonishing argument! After having pressed upon us with great force that the appointment of Babcock was a usurpation, and that his negotiation was a crime, the Senator comes back and tells us that this commission is wholly unnecessary, the President has power to appoint commissioners without any act of Congress to go there and do all that we propose they shall do, and even more!

Why, sir, suppose the President had taken that authority without consulting us, would he not have been denounced fiercely for usurpation? Would this commission not have been denounced as a mere private agency on his part—and so it would have been—for the purpose of aiding him in a most iniquitous scheme? No, sir; we took a different view of it; and the President, allow me to say, has no power to appoint a commission like this; he has no power to provide a secretary; he has no power to make the provisions that are contained in this resolution.

Then, again, the Senator calls Baez, Cabral, Fabens, and Babcock jockeys—

Mr. SUMNER. Not Cabral; Cazneau.

Mr. MORTON. Ah! not Cabral; that revolutionist is in favor, is he? A mere adventurer who for the last two years has not had four hundred men under his command at any time, and has kept himself in the mountains of Hayti, and has not been in Dominica except upon one occasion, when he ran over, I believe, to Azua and was immediately driven back. Perhaps I do not name correctly the place to which he went, but it is near to the boundary line between Dominica and Hayti. Why, sir, he is a mere commander of banditti who does not and has not endangered the government of Baez; but he has all the time been presented in the consideration of this question as a formidable leader, with great strength behind him, and not to be resisted except by the naval force that the President has put at the command of Baez to keep him in power!

Ah! Mr. President, Cabral has been made good use of during this discussion of San Domingo. He has been presented constantly as a great difficulty, as an impending and threatening danger only to be overcome by the military power of the United States, a mere leader of banditti; and the evidence so far as I have seen it—and I think my investigations have been almost as extended as those of the Senator from Massachusetts—has never for a moment presented him as having any power to disturb the stability of the Baez government in Dominica.

But, then, he comes to the charge that we have kept Baez in power by three ships of war stationed upon that coast, and that the treaty was negotiated under the guns of that fleet. Admiral Poor has been denounced in the bitterest terms for his conduct in regard to Dominica and Hayti. Why, sir, I should regard this as a very serious statement if it did not appear to me to be ridiculous. With all respect to the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts, it seems to me that he has overdrawn this thing in a manner that can only be described as ridiculous or ludicrous. These revolutionists are not sea-going people. They have no fleet. Their field of operations, small as it is, is inland and among the mountains. But they have been kept in subjection by the three frigates of Admiral Poor! We must understand that the admiral has marched those frigates across the island and through the mountains, doubtless with a large crew of horse marines, that have kept this Cabral and his powerful army under subjection! Why, sir, the character of the danger, whatever it has been, that may have menaced Baez has been inland among the mountains, where the guns of Admiral Poor could not reach and where his voice was never heard. And yet, sir, the country is to be startled, a wonderful sensation is to be created by the statement that this treaty was negotiated under the guns of this fleet, and that Baez has been kept in power by its presence!

Mr. President, the truth is simple; it lies upon the surface; I have been long satisfied with it; and I confess to you that, so far as I am concerned, I do not require the investigation on many of these points to satisfy my mind. But while I may be satisfied others may not be. The great truth is that men of all parties in San Domingo are in favor of annexation. The evidence is that the followers even of Cabral are for it, and that Cabral himself has been in favor, and is now in favor, of annexation. He undoubtedly would like to make the treaty or to conclude the negotiations, instead of Baez. But it has been the desire and the earnest desire of the great body of the people upon that island for years to be annexed to the Government of the United States, and it makes no difference, so far as that is concerned, whether Cabral or Baez is in power, or some other military adventurer that may rise to the surface. They will all be in favor of annexation, because nearly the entire people, with the exception of a few desperate military adventurers, are in favor of it.

Even the people of Hayti are in favor of annexation. Only a few months ago we had Mr. Tait here, an able, educated, and intelligent man, the minister from Hayti sent by the Salnave government. He stated that the people of Hayti, the great majority, were in favor of annexation; and that they were in favor of the annexation of Dominica to the United States because they hoped that would be

the precursor of their own annexation. But Salnave was murdered in cold blood; and the wretched and desperate military adventurer, the model president of the Senator from Massachusetts, when he came into power, for some reason desired to interpose an objection to the annexation of Dominica to the United States. I am told—I do not know how true it is, but it is stated in the papers, and the Senator has evidently great faith in what is stated in the papers from the reference he made to myself—that the minister of Saget, the blood-stained president, or dictator, I should say, of Hayti, had no more knowledge of his duties than to send an impertinent note to our Secretary of State remonstrating against what the President of the United States had said in his message, and that he was promptly rebuked for his ignorance and his insolence by our Secretary of State, and I believe has apologized.

The Senator read from the message of Saget and from the message of Grant, and he presented them in painful contrast, giving the preference and expressing his free admiration for that of Saget. Then, again, he draws a picture presenting Grant with forty million people at his back and Saget with only eight hundred thousand. He presents to us a great Power desiring to overwhelm and absorb Hayti, oppressing her by our fleet and threatening her in the message of our President, all of which is pure imagination from beginning to end.

Then, again, he says that the President tried to get him and the Senator from New Hampshire [Mr. PATTERSON] off the Committee on Foreign Relations. If the President desired anything of that kind, or made any effort of that kind, I do not know it. But I would like to know who it is informed the Senator of that fact. Who is his authority? Who is so familiar with the President as to obtain the expression of his secret desires, his secret operations, and then goes and informs the Senator from Massachusetts? I undertake to say that he is mistaken.

Mr. President, the annexation of San Domingo will come. I prophesy here to-night that it will come. It may not come in the time of General Grant, or in my time; but I believe it is destined to come; and with it, too, the annexation of Cuba and Porto Rico. Why, sir, this thing was foreseen long ago. I will refer to a Massachusetts authority of high character nearly fifty years ago with regard to the propriety of annexing Cuba. Cuba is not now before the Senate or involved in this controversy. But, sir, San Domingo lies between Cuba and Porto Rico. San Domingo is the key of the West Indies. It contains the finest harbor in the world. It commands the great Mona passage from the Atlantic ocean to the Caribbean sea. But, sir, I wish to refer to what Mr. John Quincy Adams said with reference to the acquisition of Cuba, to show his foresight and his philosophy. In a letter written by him as Secretary of State to our min-

ister in Spain, as long ago as 1823, he used the following language, which I commend to the Senator from Massachusetts:

"Numerous and formidable objections to the extension of our territorial dominions beyond the sea present themselves to the first contemplation of the subject; obstacles to the system of policy by which alone that result can be compassed and maintained are to be foreseen and surmounted both from at home and abroad; but there are laws of political as well as of physical gravitation, and if an apple severed by the tempest from its native tree cannot choose but fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only toward the North American Union, which, by the same law of nature, cannot cast her off from its bosom."

Sir, I regard it as destiny not to be averted by the Senator from Massachusetts nor by any power that we shall acquire San Domingo and Cuba and Porto Rico. I referred yesterday to an official statement in regard to the commerce of Cuba and Porto Rico. It is an official document, which shows that the commerce of those two islands with the United States for the year ending July 1, 1869, was \$88,102,670. Of that amount seventy-three millions and upward were imports into this country from those two islands, leaving a balance of trade against us of fifty-eight millions to be paid in money. During the same time our entire commerce with the British possessions, with all Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the British West Indies, inclusive, was only \$72,000,000. The entire commerce with Mexico and all the South American republics during the same time was only \$72,000,000.

I have also an authority here, (Allison's History of Europe)—I do not know that I can find the particular passage, but I have had occasion to refer to it in the course of the discussion of this question—showing that in 1789, before the revolutions in San Domingo had destroyed her prosperity, the commerce of that island alone, including Hayti, if I remember correctly, was over eighty million dollars, justifying what I said awhile ago, that San Domingo is the richest piece of earth. Why, sir, it is a great natural cabinet of all the choicest productions of the world; and San Domingo alone, which if we get it will cost us but very little, is worth to us commercially, socially, and in every other way, fifty Alaskas, for the acquisition of which my friend from Massachusetts was greatly in earnest, and in the bringing about of which he had a large influence.

But I know there is talk about the populations of these countries. Sir, they are friendly to us now, and will rapidly incorporate and consolidate with the people of this nation in case of acquisition. They will become consolidated and absorbed in this great people long before the people of Canada will be converted to annexation. The Senator from Massachusetts is greatly in favor of the acquisition of all the Canadas, and I shall be, too, when the time comes, but I tell him that the most unreasonable, the most unconquerable, and ob-

stinate thing in this world is a British prejudice, and that the people of Canada are further from us to-day, and are less inclined to annexation at this time, than they were thirty years ago. When they are ready to come peaceably, and are anxious for it, I am ready to receive them; but the line of demarkation between them and us in point of feeling and sentiment would still remain distinct long after that between us and the people of San Domingo and Cuba would be obliterated.

I remember, when the proposition was made to annex California and New Mexico, what fearful pictures were drawn of the character of the New Mexican population, and yet there is not to-day a more loyal people to this Government than the people of New Mexico.

The people of San Domingo, as I have said before, I believe are almost to a man in favor of annexation. I believe that is the feeling with the great majority of the people of Hayti. I am satisfied that it is the feeling of an overwhelming majority of the people of Cuba. But we are not now dealing with that island. We are only addressing ourselves to the question of San Domingo; and I do not propose further to examine the general merits of the question of annexation.

This resolution expresses no opinion on either side. It simply seeks to lay before this Congress and before the American people the great facts upon which we should determine whether we will annex San Domingo or not. The Senator from Massachusetts stands up here and opposes information. He, the great advocate of knowledge upon all ordinary occasions, is now utterly opposed to obtaining it on this subject.

I was struck with the argument of the Senator from Delaware [Mr. BAYARD] this afternoon. He said, forsooth, that this resolution was unnecessary, because the President himself was able to lay before us all the information we needed. The President has come into great favor very suddenly with the Senator from Delaware, who argued that we need not to inquire for ourselves, we need not send to San Domingo for the facts, because the President knew them all, and we ought to be satisfied with what he might lay before us. I will say to the Senator from Delaware that the President gave us the result of his knowledge in his message. If the Senator accepts that as sufficient, then he is justified in his statement; not otherwise.

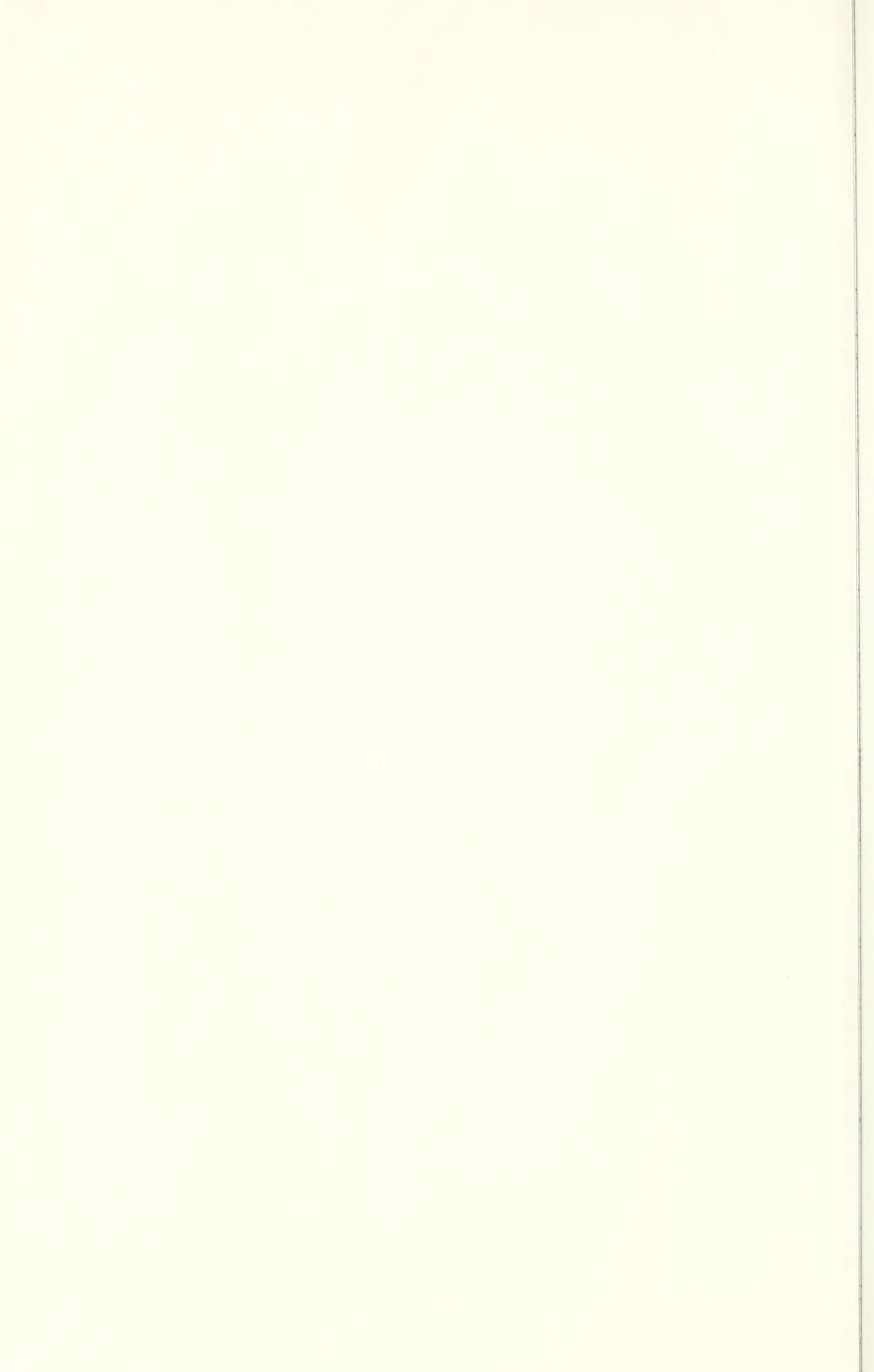
Now, Mr. President, I have said about all I desire to say on this subject. I have referred

to every point made by the Senator from Massachusetts. In conclusion I would say that his points, almost without exception, are wholly immaterial, considered with reference to the inquiry as a new thing. We are now proposing to start out on another basis. If we are to have a treaty, it is to be a new treaty. It may be that we would prefer a joint resolution, as in the case of Texas. But all these things are in the future. This resolution does not propose to determine any of those questions, but simply to get the facts and leave them for the consideration of Congress and the nation.

But the Senator wants this resolution referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. Why, sir, we have had a report from that committee yesterday and to-day. At least three distinguished members of it have reported against this resolution. They made strong speeches denouncing it from beginning to end, the Senator from Missouri, [Mr. SCHURZ.] as one member of the committee, describing it as a humbug and a sham. After that committee has thus made a report in open Senate, and given its opinion against this resolution in every possible aspect, the Senator from Massachusetts desires it still to be referred to that committee for a second report. I do not think the second report would be any improvement upon the first. I am satisfied that the less we have of that kind of report the better. That committee has expressed its sentiments. The motion is for delay, and can result only in holding this resolution back to such a late hour as will, perhaps, forbid action during the session.

Now, sir, as a matter of fairness to all—and I appeal as well to those who were unfavorable to the proposition of annexation of San Domingo before as to those who were in favor of it, I appealed in the very beginning to the Senator from Massachusetts to favor this examination—let us have the facts fairly and impartially stated; not something to be disputed, not something to be asserted by the Senator from Massachusetts and to be denied by myself or some other Senator, but some statement authoritatively made to which we can all appeal, and by that we will consent to stand or fall. If that statement shall show *prima facie* that we ought not to annex Dominica I shall be as earnestly opposed to it as the Senator from Massachusetts. But if it shall do what I believe it will do, show that the annexation of San Domingo would be profitable, that it would be expedient in every sense of view, then I shall be earnestly in favor of it.













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