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To the people of the 7th Congressional District
of Indiana.

The American people are now charged with the decision of an issue of far more solemn & momentous import than was ever before submitted to any nation. Such are the fearful proportions to which the rebellion has grown, that unless it shall be speedily suppressed, the Union must, inevitably, be destroyed, and the Government be lost forever.

The Constitution has made it the duty of Congress to decide upon the best means of carrying on the war. For this purpose the "Conscript Law" has been passed, pursuant to all the requirements of the Constitution, and until repealed, or declared to be null & void by the Courts, no citizen can exempt himself from the obligation of obedience to it. No court has yet decided it to be unconstitutional, and, therefore, the man who puts himself in opposition to its execution, is, clearly & manifestly, a Violator of Law, and subject as such to punishment in the civil Courts of the United States. If a number of men shall combine together for that purpose, they are, in the eye of the law, conspirators. If they go so far as to carry their common purpose into execution by force of arms, they have levied war against the United States, and are guilty of Treason.

Such has always been the law; - and whenever it shall become otherwise, there will be an end of all government, and we shall be plunged into universal anarchy, without any protection to life, liberty, or property.

When I accepted the office of Provost Marshal of this District, to aid in the execution of this law, I acted from a sense of duty to the Country, and from no personal motive whatsoever. I yielded more to the wishes of others, of all parties, than to my own, and, in return for their confidence, can only pledge myself, as I now do, in all sincerity & earnestness, that I will neither do any thing myself, nor suffer it to be done by others acting under my authority, except what may be necessary to an honest & impartial enforcement of the law. The draft shall be publickly and fairly made, so that no individual shall have just cause of complaint. This shall be done, whatever the personal sacrifice necessary to accomplish it, and I have the right not only to invite but to expect the co-operation of all the people.

War exists by the act of those who are seeking to destroy the Government. It is the most terrible conflict

known to history, and leaves no neutral ground for the citizen to stand upon. He who does not aid in resisting the rebellion by all the means in his power, leaves his influence against the government. He who actively resists the employment of the means provided by law for that purpose, aids the rebellion. The law is not the act of the President; - it is the act of the Government. Oorable resistance to it, therefore, is resistance to the Government. The citizen may discuss its provisions and his conduct remain, comparatively, harmless; - but when he resists it, his conduct becomes criminal. These consequences cannot be escaped. No sophistry can argue them away.

It is well known that in this District there has been already serious resistance to the execution of the conscript law. In several neighborhoods, the Enrolling officers have been threatened that, if they persisted in the discharge of their duties, their lives should pay the forfeit. In others, their houses have been entered in the night and the enrolling papers taken and destroyed. In others, they have been terrified by threats of personal violence. And, in one neighborhood, an Enrolling officer has been compelled

& brutally murdered in sight of his own home.

In some sections of the District these efforts to defeat this law have engendered opposition to all authority of the Government. Deserter from the army are protected from arrest by bodies of armed men, who, by pre-concerted signals, are brought together in a few hours. Hundreds of these have been so wrought upon by adroit appeals to their passion, that they have, in a great measure, abandoned their ordinary pursuits, and parade the country under arms, both day & night, openly proclaiming defiance to the military and civil authority of the United States. They have notified the supporters of the government that they must quit their homes, or suffer the consequences of remaining; - and there are now in this city no less than five citizens of ~~Lullivan~~^{one} County who have sought refuge here against threats of assassination. Secret organizations exist where men are put upon trial for their support of the government and the war, and where special agents are deputed to execute their sentences. And, in more than one instance, those who are misled by these combinations have avowed that they are ready for war with the government authorities, and have boasted that they are strong enough to resist any force that may be sent against them. It is impossible for this state of things

to continue. Those who have brought it about must submit themselves to the authority of the law, or bloodshed will, inevitably, follow. The Government cannot and will not recede.

What object do these men seek to accomplish? He who supposes that, by the murder of one or of a dozen Enrolling officers, or other supporters of the government, the enforcement of the Conscription Law can be defeated or postponed, must have become insane with passion. Let him not delude himself, or be deceived by others.

The law will be executed: — "peaceably if it can, forcibly if it must." The government has the power to execute it in every neighbourhood, and they who invoke, by persistent opposition, the employment of this power, will have no just cause to complain of the consequences, however severely they may be visited by them. I declare, in all sincerity, that no man could deplore more than I ~~would~~, the necessity which would drive the government to this extremity, and solemnly promise that I have done & will continue to do whatever I can rightfully do, to avoid it. But the law must be executed, at every hazard.

I am not aware that a single

right of any peaceable citizen has been invaded by the government. And yet those in this district who have combined to defeat the law, seem resolved to begin another rebellion in the loyal states, because of the pretence that some rights in the rebel States, has been impaired. Will they consent to destroy their own government - all that is left to them of law, order and security - Merely that such imaginary wrongs may be avenged? I beg them not to forget that the rebel states are at war against the Constitution, which they have scorned & trampled under foot, and that they are the common enemies of the government and of all who support & defend it. Will they resist the public authorities, for employing whatever means may be necessary to reduce them to obedience, by putting down the rebellion? Rebels in arms have no rights under the Constitution and the laws. They have spurned & ignored both. Hence, no intelligent man can fail to see that resistance to whatever mode may inflict the severest & speediest punishment upon them, is neither more nor less than taking sides against the government. Mr Douglas enforced this idea, in his own strong and expressive language, when he said: -

"There are only two sides to the question. Every man must be for the United States, or against it. There can be no neutrals, in this war, only patriots, or traitors."

There is a simple & easy method of preventing a resort to force to compel obedience to the Conscription Law. Let every citizen who cherishes affection for the government, and who has any reverence for law and order, set his face, sternly & patriotically, against the existing condition of affairs, and lend his influence to the public authorities; - and quiet will be immediately restored: - no man will be oppressed and no legal right impaired. To such I now appeal, in the name of the country, the Constitution, the Union, and all the sacred memories of the past, and all the cherished hopes of the future. Let them not be misled into the belief that they are absolved from the high obligation of citizenship, because the administration is not of their choice, or because they may differ with the President about the mode of conducting the war. When South Carolina attempted to secede, in 1832, did any Whig opponent of Gen Jackson claim that he was exempt, by reason of party differences, from the obligation to support him in what,

ever measure, he considered necessary to resist disunion? Did not all the great leaders of the Whig party, with Clay & Webster at their head, rush to his support, with unquestioning confidence in his loyalty to the Constitution? They forgot all party question, for the time, and stood by the administration because the administration stood by the country. Gen Jackson unfurled the old flag of our fathers, and that was enough for them. Wherever that was carried, they were ready to follow, without stopping amid the thunder of battle, to inquire what were the party politics of the man who bore it. And thus, Gen Jackson, sustained by all parties, was enabled to rise up ~~to~~ ⁱⁿ sight to the loftiest dignity of the Statesman, when he declared:

"The laws of the United States must be executed. I have no discretionary power on the subject — My duty is emphatically pronounced in the Constitution. Those who told you that you might peaceably prevent their execution, deceived you — they could not have been deceived themselves. They know that a furious opposition could alone prevent the execution of the laws, and they know that such opposition must be repelled."

What was then the duty of

Gen Jackson, is now the duty of Mr Lincoln. The constitutional obligation resting upon both, is precisely the same. All the world understood Gen Jackson to be a military chieftain, and knew, full well, that whenever he deemed the occasion to call for it, he would resort to military force to put down forcible opposition to any existing law. Mr Lincoln is not a military chieftain, but ~~then~~ he will be found to lack neither sarcasm, determination, nor courage in discharging a like constitutional obligation. Let those then, who have armed themselves to perish the Conscription law, take warning in time. I utter words of canton and entreaty, - not of threatening or defiance. I implore them, in the name of all they hold dear in life, to beware; and not rush forward to their own destruction. Disobedience to law can have no impunity until all law and all government is destroyed. Those who seek to destroy these must be overwhelmed by the public obloum or crushed by the public power. In either event, their names and memories will be held in perpetual execration, - as surely as the lightning beats whatever it strikes.

There is too much in the past of our history to be forgotten, and too much involved in our future to be abandoned to either chance or passion. The eyes of mankind are upon us, and as we shall decide upon the capacity of man for self-government, so will the hopes of the world for free institutions, rise or fall. If our government shall be now lost, its like will never be seen again. If it shall be sustained, & the Union become again compact, patriotism will receive a new impulse over all the world. The nations which refuse to pay respect to our greatness, will ^{then} be compelled to dread our power. To accomplish ~~this~~ this, is not the work of any party. It belongs to all alike. It demands the sacrifice, the energies, the labor of all, whatever they may

think about public men or the opinions they profess. The men of to day are nothing, compared to the great future which we have the power to secure for ourselves & children. ^{these} They may commit errors, but we can correct them. If the government is lost, it can never be regained. Mr Lincoln's administration will be at an end in less than two years. If the rebellion must be put down within that time, or we shall never have another President. If it is put down, the people have the undoubted right, to elect whosoever they please. If ^{they shall choose} this another than Mr Lincoln he will be entitled to like respect, as the Constitutional representative of the nation. But the man who, in order to bring about such a result, would risk at hazard, for a moment, the best government in the world, is either a slave to passion or insensible to the demands of patriotism.

In view, then, of the immense consequences which are involved in the present struggle, I appeal to the people of this district - of all opinions & of all parties - to submit to the laws of the land, & lend their influence to the cause of the Country. The struggle is for an independence common to us all alike, - and it is far more important for us that we shall preserve this for our children, than that any particular party shall ~~disperse~~ enjoy the emoluments of public office. Rose up, then, to the dignity of your own true manhood, - break loose whatever shackles may have bound you - and let not tho-

fair fame of the District be tarnished with the suspicion of disloyalty. The innumerable blessings which are in the future of a happy and prosperous Country, are in reserve for those who yield to this call of duty & patriotism, — but the curse and execrations of their children will rest upon those who shall persist in resistance to law until blood shall ~~flow~~
flow.

Let all those who have taken up arms to resist the conscript law, or to prevent the arrest of deserters, return to their legitimate avocation; and quiet will immediately follow. No act of mine towards them shall be otherwise than fair & impartial. They shall be dealt with as others are; — without favor or partiality to any. They will be entitled to every possible security & protection from the public authorities. But, if they will not act in obedience to this plain and patriotic duty, "they know", in the language of Gen Jackson, "that a forcible opposition can alone prevent the execution of the laws, and they know that such opposition must be repelled."

R. W. Thompson
Provost Marshal
7th District of Indiana