

Article Title: Extract of a letter from Gov. Holmes to Sec. of State. Documents and declarations from the organizers of the revolt in West Florida.

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Extract of a letter from Governor Holmes of the Mississippi Territory, to the Secretary of State, dated OCTOBER 17th, 1810.

" The enclosed letter I have been requested to transmit to you."

To the Hon. Robert Smith, Secretary of State for the United States.

SIR, The convention of the state of Florida have already transmitted an official copy of the Act of Independence, through his Excellency Governor Holmes, to the President of the United States, accompanied with the expression of their hope and desire, that this commonwealth may be immediately acknowledged and protected, by the government of the United States, as an integral part of the American Union. On a subject so interesting to the community represented by us, it is necessary that we should have the most direct and unequivocal assurances of the views and wishes of the American government without delay, since our weak and unprotected situation will oblige us to look to some foreign government for support, should it be refused to us, by the country which we have considered as our parent state.

We therefore make this direct appeal through you, to the President and General Government of the American States, to solicit that immediate protection, to which we consider ourselves entitled ; and to obtain a speedy and favorable decision, we offer the following considerations :1st. The government of the United States, in their instructions to the envoys extraordinary at Paris, in March, 1806, authorised the purchase of East Florida, directing them at the same time to engage France to intercede with he cabinet of Spain, to relinquish any claim to the territory which now forms this commonwealth. 2d. In all diplomatic correspondence with American ministers abroad, the government of the United States have spoken of West Florida as a part of the Louisiana cession. They have legislated for the country as a part of their own territory, and have deferred to the take possession of it, in expectation that Spain might be induced to relinquish her claim by amicable negotiation. 3d. The American government has already refused to accredit any minister from the Spanish Junta, which body was certainly more legally organized, as the representative of the sovereignty, than that now called a regency of Spain ; therefore the United States cannot but regard any force or authority emanating from them, with the intention to subjugate us, as they would an invasion of their territory by a foreign enemy. 4th. The Emperor of France has invited to the Spanish Americans to declare their independence, rather than remain in subjection to the old Spanish government ; therefore an acknowledgment of our independence by the United States could not be complained of by France, or involve the American government in any contest with that power. 5th. Nether can it afford any just cause of complaint to Great Britain, although she be the ally of Spain, that the United States should acknowledge and support our independence ; as this measure was necessary to save the country from falling into the hands of the French exiles from the Island of Cuba, and other partizans of Bonaparte, who are the eternal enemies of Great Britain.

Should the United States be induced, by these or any other considerations, to acknowledge our claim to their protection, as an integral part of their territory, or otherwise, we fell it our duty to claim for our constituents an immediate admission into the union as an independent state, or as a territory of the United States, with permission to establish our own form of government, or to be united with one of the neighboring territories, or a part of one of them, in such manner as to form a state. Should it be thought proper to annex us to one of the neighboring territories, or a part of one of them, the inhabitants of this commonwealth would prefer being annexed to the Island of Orleans, and in the

mean while, until a state government should be established, that they should be governed by the ordinances already enacted by this Convention, and by their further regulations hereafter.

The claim which we have to the soil, or unlocated lands, within this commonwealth, will not it is presumed, be contested by the United States, as they have tacitly acquiesced in the claim of France or Spain for seven years, and the restrictions of the several embargo and non-intercourse laws might fairly be construed, if not as a relinquishment of their claim ; yet at least sufficient to entitle the people of this commonwealth (who have wrested the government and country from Spain, at the risk of their lives and fortunes) to all the unlocated lands. It will strike the American government that the monies arising from the sales of these lands, applied, as they will be, to improving the internal communications of the country, opening canals c. c. will in fact be adding to the prosperity and strength of the federal union.

To fulfill with good faith our promises and engagements to the inhabitants of this country, it will be our duty to stipulate for an unqualified pardon for all deserters now residing within this commonwealth, together with an exemption from further service in the army or navy of the United States.

A loan of 100,000 dollars is solicited of the American government, to be reimbursed at 3, 6 and 9 years from the sales of public lands. This loan may be made by the Secretary of the Treasury immediately, without committing the government or making it known to foreign ministers at Washington.

In order not to embarrass the cabinet of the United States, and to receive first, through their own confidential agents, their wishes and views with respect to us, it is deemed prudent to defer the departure or out envoy, already named, who will be dispatched immediately on receiving information that such a measure will meet the approbation of the United States.

We pray you to accept the assurances of our respect and high consideration.

By order of the Convention,

(Signed) JOHN RHEA, President. Baton Rouge, Oct. 10, 1810. THE CONVENTION OF FLORIDA

To his Excellency the Governor of the Mississippi Territory.

SIR We, the Delegates of the people of this state, have the honor to enclose to you an official copy of their act of independence, requesting that it may be forthwith transmitted by you to the president of the United States, with the expression of their most confident and ardent hope, that it may accord with the policy of the government, as it does with the safety and happiness of the people of the United States, to take the present government and people of this state under their immediate and special protection, as an integral and inalienable portion of the United States.

The Convention and their constituents of Florida, rest in the firm persuasion, that the blood which flows in their veins will remind the government and the people of the United States, that they are their children, that they have been acknowledged as such, by the most solemn acts of the Congress of the United States ; and, that so long as independence and the rights of man shall be maintained and cherished by the American union, the good people of this state cannot, nor will not, be abandoned or exposed to the invasion, violence or force of any foreign or domestic foe.

The Convention beg you to receive for yourself, sir, and to assure the President of their high respect and consideration. By order of the Convention.

(Signed) JOHN RHEA, President.

Baton Rouge, Sep. 26, 1810.

BY THE

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF

WEST FLORIDA

IN CONVENTION ASSEMBLED,

A DECLARATION.

IT is known to the world with how much fidelity the good people of this territory have professed and maintained allegiance to their legitimate sovereign, while any hope remained of receiving from him protection for their property and lives.

Without making any unnecessary innovation in the established principles of the government, we had voluntarily adopted certain regulations in concert with our First Magistrate for the express purpose of

preserving this territory, and shewing our attachment to the government which had heretofore protected us. This compact, which was entered into with good faith on our part, will forever remain an honorable testimony of our upright intentions and inviolable fidelity to our king and parent country, while so much as a shadow of legitimate authority remained to be exercised over us. We sought only a speedy remedy for such evils as seemed to endanger our existence and prosperity ; and were encouraged by our Governor with solemn promises of assistance and co-operation. But those measures which were intended for our preservation he has endeavored to pervert into an engine of destruction, by encouraging, in the most perfidious manner, the violation of ordinances, sanctioned and established by himself as the law of the land.

Being thus left without any hope of protection from the mother country betrayed by a magistrate whose duty it was to have provided for the safety and tranquility of the people and government committed to his charge, and exposed to all the evils of a state of anarchy, which we have so long endeavored to avert ; it becomes our duty to provide for our own security as a free and independent state, absolved from all allegiance to a government which no longer protects us.

We, therefore, the representatives foresaid, appealing to the Supreme ruler of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do solemnly publish and declare the several districts composing this territory of West Florida to be a FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATE and that they have a right to institute for themselves such form of government as they may think conducive to their safety and happiness To form treaties To establish commerce To provide for their common defence and do all acts which may of right be done by a sovereign and independent nation. At the same time declaring all acts within the said territory of West Florida, after this date, by any tribunal of authorities not deriving their powers from the people agreeably to the provisions established by this convention by null and void and calling upon all foreign nations to respect this our declaration, acknowledging our independence, and acknowledging our independence, and giving us such aid as may be consistent with the laws and usages of nations.

This declaration made in convention at the town of Baton Rouge, on the twenty-sixth day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ten, We the representatives, in the name aforesaid, and on behalf of our constituents, do hereby solemnly pledge ourselves to support with our lives and fortunes.

By order of the Convention.

(Signed) JOHN RHEA, President.

(Signed) AND. STEELE, Secretary. MR. SMITH TO GOVERNOR HOLMES.

Department of State,  
November 15th, 1810.

SIR, I have received your letter of the 17th of October, enclosing the memorial of the Convention of West Florida. To repress the unreasonable expectations, therein indicated, in relation to the vacant land in that Territory, it is deemed proper to lose no time in communication to you and to Governor Claiborne the sentiments of the President on the subject.

The right of the United States to the Territory of West Florida, as far as the River Perdido, was fairly acquired by purchase, has been formally ratified by Treaty. The delivery of possession has, indeed, been deferred, and the procrastination has been heretofore acquiesced in by this government from a hope, patiently indulged, that amiable negotiation would accomplish the equitable purpose of the United States. But this delay, which proceeded only from the forbearance of the United States to enforce a legitimate and well known claim, could not impair the legality of their title, nor could any change in the internal state of things, without their sanction, howsoever brought about, vary their right. It remains, of course, as perfect as it was before the interposition of the Convention. And the people of West Florida must not for a moment be misled by the expectation that the United States will surrender for their exclusive benefit what had been purchased with the treasure and for the benefit of the whole. The vacant land of this Territory, thrown into common stock with all the other vacant land of the Union, will be a property in common for the national uses of the all the people of the United States. The community of interests upon which this government invariably acts, the liberal policy which it has uniformly displayed towards the people of the Territories (a part of which policy has ever

been a just regard to honest settlers) will, nevertheless, be a sufficient pledge to the inhabitants of West Florida, for the early and continued attention, of the Federal Legislature to their situation and their wants.

These observations will apprise you, Sir, of the sentiments of the President, as to the propositions in the memorial in relation to the vacant land in West Florida, and will enable you to make, when necessary and proper, suitable explanations to the people of that Territory. You will, however, keep in mind that the President cannot recognize in the Convention of West Florida any independent authority whatever to propose or to form a compact with the United States. I am Sir, with the highest respect, your most obedient servant,

(Signed) R. SMITH

His Excellency DAVID HOLMES  
Governor Mississippi