

# GOV. SAM HOUSTON

## On the Crisis.

HUNTSVILLE, Nov. 14, 1860.

TO GENERAL HOUSTON,

*Dear Sir,*—We, the undersigned, feeling a deep interest in regard to the Crisis which now impends over the country, and we fear threatens our liberty, property and prosperity, are desirous of having your opinion in regard to the best course to pursue in this important period in our history. We fear too hasty action may prove deleterious, and to prolong too much an expression of opinion may prove fatal to our best interests. Let us hear from you at your very earliest convenience.

Respectfully, &c.,

H. M. Watkins,	J. H. Whitehead,	W. H. Randolph,	Jesse A. Robinson,
P. W. Kettrell,	M. M. Singletory,	Jeremiah Randolph,	John W. Cary,
Sandford Gibbs,	W. T. Robinson,	John Randolph,	Thomas Aikin,
Robert P. Archer,	George Fearhake,	Epp L. Hallmark,	Thomas Carothers,
James L. Smither,	J. S. Wooton,	Isaac A. Carothers,	J. T. Simms,
G. M. Baker,	W. A. Rawlings,	Sam Y. Smith,	John R. Robertson,
Gus Wynne,	H. C. Oliphant,	J. W. Alexander,	Theo. W. Markham,
Wm. E. Archer,	A. H. Mason,	B. W. Walker,	S. A. Moore,
George R. Luff,	Arthur Eastham,	D. C. Smith,	P. H. Fullenwider,
L. B. Hightower,	Silas Morgan,	W. D. Wynne,	J. P. Harris,
W. F. Spivey,	Byrd Eastham,	C. S. Prescott,	Jo. Priestley,
S. E. Kulan,	W. H. Brooks,	Robt. L. Garcey,	J. C. Kenneymore,
Jas. A. Baker,	M. C. Rogers,	Wm. Viser,	B. Carington,
J. C. Hopkins,	Thomas Seargent,	L. O. Black,	P. M. Woodall,
F. Gibbs,	Ben. W. Robinson,	Levi B. Hatch,	J. T. Menshew,
Benton Randolph,	Wm. Robinson,	Geo. W. Grant,	A. M. Butler.

# LETTER FROM GOVERNOR SAM HOUSTON.

AUSTIN, TEXAS, Nov. 20th, 1860.

MESSERS. H. M. WATKINS,  
P. W. KITTBELL,  
SANDFORD GIBBS,  
R. P. ARCHER,  
J. L. SMITHER, and others,

GENTLEMEN:—Your letter of the 14th inst., asking my views respecting the present crisis in our political affairs, is at hand. I can reply but briefly; and I shall do so the more frankly, feeling that this is a time when truth should be plainly spoken by every lover of his country.

I recognize among you, names of men of all parties. Some of you are old and tried friends and citizens of Texas. To such, especially, I look with confidence now, when the country is agitated and revolution threatened. In all the troubles of the Republic, I found you the friends of Constitutional liberty. Having seen the throes of one Revolution; having shared in its vicissitudes, and borne a part in bringing Texas into the Union, I trust that you, in common with patriots of those times, will ask some more weighty reason for overthrowing the Government, than rash enthusiasts yet have given; and that while others are carried away by the impulse of the moment, the men of experience will be calm and decided.

I had hoped that an opportunity would have been afforded me to rejoice in the triumph of some one of the conservative candidates for the Presidency. Had the candidates for whom the voice of Texas was declared, been elected, I should have had an additional cause of gratification, but such is not the case. On the contrary, I must regret and deplore the election of men whose only claims to the confidence and support of the whole country, must be the official character with which the Constitution invests them.

In remembering the many evidences which a portion of the Northern people have presented of their willingness to disregard their constitutional obligations and infringe upon the rights of their Southern brethren, I am not in the least

surprised at the indignant responses now uttered by Southern men. It shows that if the time should come when we can no longer trust to the Constitution for our rights, the people will not hesitate to maintain them. It will be well if those States, which have yielded to a fanatical sentiment, so far as to interpose between the Federal authority and the Constitutional rights of a whole section of the Union, will now, inspired by a spirit of patriotism and nationality, retrace that step. Upon a citizen of their own section and one of their own party, they have now placed a responsibility which he cannot avoid. As the Chief Executive of the nation, he will be sworn to support the Constitution and execute the Laws. His oath will bring him in conflict with the unconstitutional statutes, created by his party in many of the States. Elected by that party, it is but natural that the conservatism of the nation will watch his course with jealous care, and demand at his hands a rigid enforcement of the Federal laws. Should he meet the same resistance, which other Executives have met, it will be his duty to call to his aid the conservative masses of the country, and they will respond to the call.—Should he falter or fail, and by allowing the laws to be subverted, aid in oppressing the people of the South, he must be hurled from power. From the moment of his inauguration, there will commence an "irrepressible conflict" different from that which the party of Mr. Lincoln is based upon. It will be an "irrepressible conflict" between the Constitution, which he has sworn to support, and the unconstitutional enactments and aims of the party which has placed him in power. He has declared that the Fugitive Slave Law is Constitutional. In its enforcement, the conflict is with the North alone. I need not assure you that whenever the time shall come, when we must choose between a loss of our Constitutional rights and revolution, I shall choose the latter; but if I, who have led the people of Texas in stormy times of danger, hesitate to plunge into revolution now, it is not because I am ready to submit to Black Republican rule, but because I regard

the Constitution of my country, and am determined to stand by it. Mr. Lincoln has been constitutionally elected and, much as I deprecate his success, no alternative is left me but to yield to the Constitution. The moment that instrument is violated by him, I will be foremost in demanding redress and the last to abandon my ground.

When I contemplate the horrors of civil war, such as a dissolution of the Union will ultimately force upon us, I cannot believe that the people will rashly take a step fraught with these consequences. They will consider well the blessings of the government we have, and it will only be when the grievances we suffer are of a nature that, as freemen, we can no longer bear them, that they will raise the standard of revolution. Then the civilized world, our own consciences, and posterity, will justify us. If that time should come, then will be the day and hour. If it has not—if our rights are yet secure, we cannot be justified. Has the time come? If it has, the people who have to bear the burthens of revolution must themselves effect the work.

Those who reside in cities and towns, where masses are carried in crowds and influenced by passionate appeals, may be ready for hasty action, but the working men and farmers, whose all is identified with the prosperity and peace of the country, will ask time to reflect.

As all will be alike involved in the horrors which will come after dissolution, all have the right to consider whether dissolution shall come. The liberties and securities of all are at stake. It is not a question for politicians to tamper with. The masses must settle it for themselves. They are to consider whether with Congress and the Supreme Courts largely in favor of the Constitution, revolution will be justified, because the President, who is constitutionally elected, is inimical to them. It must come to this.

With all these checks and guarantees in our favor, it is urged that we should no longer wait, but at once let go the Constitution. Passion is rash—wisdom considers well her way. When the bone and sinew of the country, after calmly considering the issue in all its bearings, shall feel that a yoke of oppression is upon them, they will rise to shake it off. Then, when their now peaceful homes are the scene of des-

olation, they will feel no pang of regret. Moved by a common feeling of resistance, they will not ask for the forms of law to justify their action. Nor will they follow the noisy demagogue who will flee at the first show of danger. Men of the people will come forth to lead them, who will be ready to risk the consequences of revolution.

If the Union be dissolved now, will we have additional security for slavery? Will we have our rights better secured? After enduring civil war for years, will there be any promise of a better state of things than we now enjoy? Texas, especially, has these things to consider. Our Treasury is nearly empty. We have near half a million of dollars in the Treasury of the United States. A million of our school fund is invested in U. S. bonds. We have an extensive frontier to defend. Pecuniary or personal considerations ought to weigh nothing when tyrant is in the seat of power, justified in sacrificing these, when we have yet the Constitution to protect us and our rights are secured.

Let us not embrace the higher law principle of our enemies and overthrow the Constitution; but when we have to resist, let it be in the name of the Constitution and to uphold it.

Why this military display and call to arms in Texas. Have we enemies at home or is an enemy marching upon us? When was there the time, when the citizens of the country were not ready to flock to its standard in its defence? Are the people to deliberate on this question with a military despotism in their midst, ready to coerce them? We want sober thought and calm reason, not furious harrangues or the argument of bayonets.

If this government is to fall, wisdom must furnish another and a better one, and if patriots yield now to the rash and reckless, who only aspire to military glory, or for anarchy and rapine, they may find that the government, they have lost the power to rear another.

I trust the gloom which now hangs over the land will soon be dispelled. Now is the time for the patriot to come forth and consider what is to be gained by a change. We are called upon to desert the gallant thousands who for years have been fighting our battles against fanaticism in the North. Heretofore they have aided us to conquer and we have been willing

to abide with them. Now, after a struggle more glorious than any they yet have made, they have been driven back. They still offer us the guarantees of the Constitution and are ready to battle with us in its defence. Let true men all over Texas and the South see to it, that we leave them not without a cause.

I cannot believe that we can find at present more safety out of the Union than in it. Yet I believe it due to the people that they should know where they stand. Mr. Lincoln has been elected upon a sectional issue. If he expects to maintain that sectional issue, during his administration, it is well we should know it. If he intends to administer the government with equality and fairness, we should know that. Let us wait and see.

I have left upon record my position, should the rights of Texas be sacrificed by the Federal Government. In reply to Mr. Seward, in the Senate, I used these words; and I pray my friends to consider them calmly, as they were uttered:

"Whenever one section of this country presumes upon its strength for the oppression of the other, then will our Constitution be a mockery, and it would matter not how soon it were severed into a thousand atoms and scattered to the four winds. If the principles are disregarded upon which the annexation of Texas was consummated, there will be for her neither honor nor interest in the Union; if the mighty in the face of written law, can place with impunity an iron yoke upon the neck of the weak, Texas will be at no loss how to act, or where to go, before the blow aimed at her vitals is inflicted. In a spirit of good faith she entered the federal fold. By that spirit she will continue to be influenced until it is attempted to make her the victim of federal wrong.

"And she will violate no federal rights, so will she submit to no violation of her rights by the Federal Government. No covenant she entered into with the Government must be observed, or it will be annulled. Louisiana was a purchase, California, New Mexico, and Utah a con-

quest, but Texas was a voluntary annexation. If the condition of her admission is not complied with on the one part, it is not binding on the other. If I know Texas, she will not submit to the threatened degradation foreshadowed in the recent speech of the Senator from New York. She would prefer restoration to that independence which she once enjoyed, to the ignominy ensuing from sectional dictation. Sorrowing for the mistake which she had committed in sacrificing her independence at the altar of her patriotism, she would unfurl again the banner of the "LONE STAR" to the breeze, and re-enter upon a national career, where, if no glory awaited her, she would, at least, be free from a subjection by might, to wrong and shame."

Here I take my stand. So long as the Constitution is maintained by "Federal authority," and Texas is not made the victim of "Federal wrong" I am for the Union, as it is.

I am now an aged man, my hair has become white in toiling, as I believe, for the liberties of mankind. Were I young, that I might look forward to the future, feeling that whatever danger might come my strong arm would be at hand to defend my family, I should feel less anxiety than I do at present. The years that I will have to endure the misfortunes of civil war, will be but few. If I could feel that with the close of my career would end the miseries of my race, I could share its misfortunes with patience; but to feel that the perils of revolution must continue; that war with its attendant horrors of bloodshed, rapine, and devastation must still be visited upon it, would embitter my last moments, and after living to witness the dissolution of the best government that ever existed, I would sink to the grave without a hope that freedom would be regenerated or our posterity ever enjoy again the blessings with which we have parted. Let us pause and ponder long before we cast any shadow on the side of the Constitution!

Truly thy friend,

SAM HOUSTON.