

Know-Nothing National Platform, July 13, 1855

KNOW-NOTHING NATIONAL PLATFORM

XII. The American party, having arisen upon the ruins and in spite of the opposition of the whig and democratic parties, cannot be held in any manner responsible for the obnoxious acts or violated pledges of either. And the systemic agitation of the slavery question by those parties having elevated sectional hostility into a positive element of political power, and brought our institutions into peril, it has therefore become the imperative duty of the American party to interpose, for the purpose of giving peace to the country and perpetually to the Union. And as experience has shown it impossible to reconcile opinions so extreme as those which separate the disputants, as there can be no dishonor in submitting to the laws, the national council has deemed it the best guarantee of common justice and future peace to abide by and maintain the existing laws upon the subject of slavery, as a final and conclusive settlement of that subject, in spirit and in substance.

And regarding the highest duty to avow their opinions upon a subject so important in distinct and unequivocal terms, it is hereby declared, as the sense of this national council, that Congress possesses the power under the constitution to legislate upon the subject of slavery in the State from admission into the Union because its constitution does or does not recognize (sic) the institution of slavery as a part of its social system; and especially predetermining any expression of opinion upon the power of Congress to establish or prohibit slavery in any Territory, it is the sense of the national council that Congress ought not to legislate upon the subject of slavery within the territory of the United States; and that any interference by Congress with slavery as it exists in the District of Columbia would be a violation of the spirit and intention of the compact by which the State of Maryland ceded the District of the United States, and a breach of national faith.