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Letter from George Sibley to Daniel D. Barnard, December 21, 1843

George Champlin Sibley
Lindenwood College

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Hon. D. D. Barnard
Rep. from N. York
Washington City

Geo. C. Sibley

Linden-Wood (near St. Charles, Missouri)
December 21^t. 1843

Sir, - The Nat. Intelr. of the 7th Inst. gives the proceedings in the House of Repr. of the 5th. and 6th. touching the admission to Seats of certain persons from the four undistricted States, Missouri being one of them- On looking over those proceedings, I was very much Surprised at the bold attitude assumed by Some of those pretenders, particularly Messrs Bowlin & Hughes of Missouri, who claim Seats and equality among the Lawfully elected Representatives in Congress, on the ground that if not elected in conformity with the Law of Congress, but against that Law, the "Sovereign people," upon the principle of Nullification, have declared it to be their will, in electing them contrary to Law, thus to be Represented; and that it is a monstrous Stretch of arrogance to Set up the Law as of any binding force, when the "Sovereign people" have determined not to obey it- Of course Messrs. Bowlin and Hughes mean the people of Missouri in References to themselves and colleagues; and thus attempt to implicate the majority at least, of the good people in this state, in the nullifying process by which Missouri has been disgraced, and the Laws and Constitution of the Union insulted and trampled on- In the Supposition that the facts and circumstances connected with our General Election in August 1842 may have escaped your notice, and that they ought to be known, I will here give you a brief account of them, as far as Relates to the Congressional part of it- Mrssrs. Jameson, Bowlin, Relfe, Hughes and Bowers are the issue, political of a Small, very Small Caucus that assembled at the City of Jefferson, virtually by their own appointment, early in '42, in February, I think- The nomination of those Gentlemen as the party candidates for Congress, was effected by "a Gambling process" as was publickly and indignantly asserted, by more than one of the most prominent and influential members of "the democracy" of Missouri- Two of them, Jameson & Bowlin, So far from being favorites of the party to which they claim affinity were, and yet are, in very "bad odour" therewith- two others, Hughes & Bowers, were, as they yet are, Scarcely known beyond the Counties in which they reside- the other, Relfe, having once Served as the U. S. Marshall, was better known, tho' Rather unpopular. There was much dissatisfaction in the party produced by these nominations; and it is by no means certain that they would have been acquiesced in, if a General ticket Election had been Lawful, and any Whig candidates had been in the field. I do not believe they would have been.- Our election, as before intimated, was in '42 a General election- that is, we had to elect Senators and Representatives to the Genl. Assembly, County Judges & Justices, Sheriffs, Constables, Assessors & and there prevailed an unusual degree of interest and

excitement among the Voters, chiefly local, and especially in Relation to the choice of County & Township officers- So that from those causes there was a very general turn out of “the Sovereign people”.- Agreeably to our election laws in this State “The Votes given at all elections, Shall be given Viva voc or by tickets handed to the Judges” & - The great Mass of the Voters use tickets, and these tickets are profusely Supplied, printed in the most attractive forms, by those who take most interest in the elections- When Governour, Lt. Govr. or Congressmen are to be elected, printed tickets headed by the names of the party candidates for those offices, are duly provided and sent into the more remote precincts, to be filled up by the party leaders with the names of the local party candidates- So that the Simple Voter, who is entirely absorbed in his anxiety for the Success of his favorite candidate for Sheriff, Constable or Assembly-man and cares but little about the rest, is very easily prevailed on to “hand to the Judges” a pretty printed ticket containing with others, the names of his personal favorites. I have known bundles of tickets thus prepared, Sent more than two hundred miles into the interior Settlements, where there were no printing offices, and these completed by adding the names of the local candidates.- Thousands of Such tickets, headed by the names of the Caucus Nominees, Jameson, Bowlin, & in flaring Capitals, printed on gay coloured paper, were distributed throughout the State, in due Season for the Election in August 1842; and thousands of them were used (unwittingly) by the ignorant and Reckless Voters, who neither knew nor cared whether the Congressional Candidates might be legally voted for or not; they “handed in their tickets to the Judges”; upon whom they considered Rested the Responsibility of allowing votes for Congressmen to be recorded or not, indifferent in most instances whether the printed names were noted or not.- Doubtless there were others, many others, who voted the whole ticket inderslandingly and most heartily- there were Some, as I know myself, who did So vote, in open, avowed contempt and defiance of the act of Congress; being So advised and drilled- And I also know, that there were many, very many, others of “the democracy” who not only Refused, but Refused indignantly, to vote at all for Congressmen; publicly declaring that they nor no other voter could do So lawfully, except as in Districts.- In Some counties, no polls were opened for Congress, and in no one County I believe, did the party vote for Congressmen equal the Vote for County officers.- In Some instances the differences was very great, from 100 to 400. And not withstanding all the excitement- the So general turn out- the ticket trickery, and the Official influence of the Governour, and other active and Zealous Nullifiers including the Caucus Candidates; from Five to Six thousand voters of “the democracy” refused to Sanction by their Votes, or otherwise, this most alarming violation of the Supreme law of the land.- It is hardly necessary to Say, that not one Whig note was cast on the occasion.- As well as I remember, our Five Caucus nominees did not receive 30,000 Votes altogether;

while about 37,000 were withheld from them- Had the elections been for Congressmen only, it is not probable that ten thousand Votes could have been polled in the State; Indeed I am very far from admitting that there are in Missouri, anything like 10,000 deliberate Nullifiers among her intelligent Voters- Our next General and Presidential elections in August and November next, will, as I confidently trust, result very differently from those of Some years past.- And I doubt not that the desperate, Revolutionary effort now making here, and in Congress, will tend greatly to accelerate the downfall of those wild and reckless and unprincipled men now in the ascendancy; who appear to be ready to Sacrifice Constitution, Laws, Institutions, everything, for party power- With Mr. Jefferson, "I believe this is the Strongest government on earth.- I believe it is the only one where every man at the call of the Law, will fly to the Standard of the Law, and will meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern."-

The present crisis will Severely test Mr. Jefferson's theory.- I confess I have but little reliance on the majority in the present House of Repr. in Relation to our Nullifiers.- But I have the most unbounded and unwavering confidence in the power of truth and Reason, as they will forthwith be Set forth all over the land, to produce a most glorious triumph of Right and Righteous principles, before the 4th of March, 1845.-

If apologies were worth anything in Such cases, I might offer you one for troubling you with this Rigmarole; having no personal acquaintance with you; but as I address you in your capacity as a publick man (well known to me as Such) let that Suffice. My only object has been to illustrate the fallacy of the argument So confidently used before Congress by our Missouri Nullifiers, founded on the assumption that "the Sovereign people" are their backers- in that they are wodully mistaken and they must know it.-

With very great respect, I have the
honour to be Sir

Yr. -----

G. C. Sibley

Hon. D. D. Barnard
Rep. from N. York
Washington City.

I shd. state that I am not personally acquainted with either of the Five-four of them I have never Seen- as far as I know they are all Respectable Men, and are Respected where known as men.

Sibley Mss. V. I,
Missouri Historical Society

[The dashed line after "Yr." in Sibley's signature is copied from the typescript. It is not clear whether it is meant to indicate illegible text or a real figure in the original letter, although I suspect that the former is more likely.]