

DELIVER TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR



Background: Attached is an opinion column from *The New York Times* calling for the impeachment of Secretary of War Floyd from office due to evidence that suggests that he provided weapons to the state of Georgia a month prior to its secession from the U.S. Although this may not be a topic that Secretary Floyd wishes to discuss with his boss (the President), a re-examination of this evidence is important for two reasons: First, do attempts by southern states suggest that the new Confederacy is preparing for war against the U.S.? Second, this article discusses a growing amount of distrust toward President Buchanan, which may hurt his ability to take action in Congress because so many politicians do not trust him, especially now that President-elect Lincoln is waiting to be inaugurated. As this committee plans its response to this secession, both of these factors must be considered.

“The Department of War”

Opinion Column Published in *The New York Times*

December 29, 1860

The official proceedings of Secretary FLOYD imperatively demand the scrutiny of Congress. It seems impossible to doubt that he is using his position and power as an officer of the Federal Government, to give aid and comfort to those who avow themselves enemies of the United States. Nor is it merely his own influence and aid that he thus throws into the hands of traitors; -- he is betraying the rights and the honor of the Government he serves. He is placing the arms and munitions of war which have been intrusted to his care for the defence of the United States, in the hands of their enemies. He is doing precisely the work which BENEDICT ARNOLD attempted at West Point. He is betraying a fortress intrusted to his command.

It is stated on the authority of Gen. WOOL that on the 9th of this month Secretary FLOYD ordered 10,000 muskets at the Watervliet Arsenal in Troy, to be sold to S.B. LAMAR, of Savannah, Georgia, at \$2 50 each, -- and that they were shipped from the Arsenal on the 14th inst. Our Washington correspondence stated yesterday that, upon the application of the Governor of Georgia, Mr. FLOYD had granted Col. HARDEE, late commandant of West Point, leave of absence on full pay, to go to Europe to purchase arms for the State of Georgia. He has ordered large quantities of guns and warlike munitions, removed from the Arsenal at Pittsburgh, to extreme Southern points, where there are no troops, and where they are morally certain to fall into the hands of the Disunionists. He has permitted all the arms of the Government at the Arsenal in Charleston to be seized by the avowed enemies of the Union.

If he is doing all these things upon his own volition, and in the exercise of his own authority, Congress should hold him to a rigid responsibility. If he is acting under the orders of the President, then the President should be required to explain his conduct to the representatives of the people. Affairs are becoming too serious to be permitted to pass without inquiry. Mr. BUCHANAN has utterly lost the confidence of all parties. No one has any further confidence in his fitness for the conduct of national affairs in an emergency like the present, -- and the only point of doubt that remains is, whether he is deliberately betraying the Constitution he has sworn to support, or whether he is only a helpless imbecile tool in the hands of conspirators. In either case, Congress owes it to the country to demand full information as to the steps he has taken, and the military orders that have been issued upon his authority. A resolution of inquiry ought forthwith to be passed which should cover this whole subject.

Secretary FLOYD, beyond all question, deserves impeachment, -- not only in connection with these transactions, but for the general conduct of his Department. We believe it to be susceptible of proof, -- sufficient to satisfy the whole country, -- that he has used his office systematically for purposes of plunder and personal profit. It is notorious that he came to Washington utterly bankrupt: and it is equally notorious in financial circles that he has deposited with a Washington banker more than \$100,000 to his private account since he has been in office. It is utterly impossible that he should have accumulated anything like this amount of money, by any means consistent with his duty as an officer of the Government, or with the character of an honorable and an honest man. The power of his office has been used corruptly. His favors have been sold to contractors, and black mail has been exacted as the condition of his compliance with the just requisitions of law. We believe it to be susceptible of proof that an officer of the Army has been compelled to pay \$500 to an intimate, confidential agent of the Secretary as a condition of getting Mr. FLOYD's signature to a warrant for payment of a claim which had been audited and allowed. It is folly to attempt to screen Mr. FLOYD himself from responsibility for such exactions. In the specific case to which we refer, Mr. FLOYD's personal attention had been called to the claim repeatedly for six months, -- yet his signature could not be had. Upon advice the \$500 was paid to his confidante, and the signature was affixed the next day.

The robbery in the Department of the Interior disclosed the fact that Mr. FLOYD was in the habit of accepting, unconditionally, drafts from Messrs. RUSSELL & MAJORS for contract services in advance of their performance. We believe it can be proved that he did this all through the Utah war, -- and that he did it for a consideration. We believe there are men now in this City who were in the habit of negotiating with these contractors for Mr. FLOYD's acceptances, -- receiving in some instances tens of thousands of dollars as a condition of procuring them.

These are some of the transactions of the War Department which have not yet seen the light. Whether they could be dragged forth by the process of a Congressional inquiry may be doubtful. But it is due to justice and to the country that the experiment should be tried. The Fort Snelling sale, the Willett's Point purchase, the Flour and Mule contracts, and other public acts, have fastened upon Mr. FLOYD the character of being utterly corrupt and unfaithful to his public trust. We have not the slightest doubt that, if the truth can be disclosed, he would be proved to have administered the affairs of his Department with sole reference to his own personal emolument.

That such a man should crown such a career by acts of treason is only a natural consummation. He can have no scruples of conscience, no principles of honor, to stand

in his way. His ends are best promoted by whatever will divert public attention from his conduct. If he can plunge the country into civil war, he may hope for the impunity which burglars seek by firing the house they have robbed. We hope, however, that Congress will not suffer him to close his official career without subjecting his conduct to a rigid official scrutiny.

THE PRESIDENT'S ORGAN. -- The Washington Constitution gives the public to understand that the President is in no sense or degree responsible for its views on political affairs. If this statement should obtain general credit it would at once deprive the Constitution of all the importance that has ever been attached to it. No one would consider its utterances worthy of notice, if it were not supposed to reflect the views of the Executive Department of the Government.

Nor will all the disclaimers which the editor may be instructed to make weaken this impression in the public mind. It is notorious that the present editor of the Constitution was placed in his present position by the immediate and direct interposition of Mr. BUCHANAN. The paper is supported wholly by patronage of the Executive department, over which Mr. BUCHANAN claims and exercises a direct control. Positive and sworn testimony moreover, has proved that when the paper was sold, his agency was as personal and immediate in the matter as if he had been its absolute owner.

All these things show conclusively that the Constitution pursues no course which the President does not approve. Its editor derives his inspiration constantly from him, -- as he is dependent for his place solely and exclusively on his countenance and support. The paper is now an open organ and advocate of the Secessionists. It vindicates their action, -- denounces and defames every man who asserts and would defend the integrity of the Union, -- and does all in its power to prevent any adjustment of pending differences, except on terms that involve the virtual break-down of the incoming Administration, and the ruin and disbandment of the Republican Party. It has never for a moment risen above the merest partisanship in its treatment of this question. It has no sympathies with the country, -- no regard for the Union, -- not the slightest sensitiveness about the honor and the welfare of the American people. Its horizon is bounded by party interests and the gratification of partisan malignity. And in this, as in everything else, it faithfully reflects the sentiments and the spirit of Mr. BUCHANAN. All its disclaimers, in face of these patent and undeniable facts, only illustrate freshly the duplicity and cowardice which characterize its master.