

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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ACTS AND RESOLVES

PASSED BY THE

THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

1857.

Published by the Secretary of State, agreeably to Resolves of June 23, 1820, February 26, 1840,
and March 16, 1842.

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1857.

RESOLVES

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE.

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CHAP. 112.

holding states on the one hand, and the non-slaveholding states on the other; that the violation of that compact by the repeal of that prohibition, after all the territory lying south of that line had been taken possession of by slavery, was a gross breach of faith towards the free states; and that the series of wrongs so begun and continued by the outrages subsequently perpetrated in Kansas, and sanctioned by the late national administration, for the obvious purpose of forcing the system of slavery on a reluctant people, ought to arouse every friend of his country to put forth the most strenuous exertions, by every lawful and constitutional means in his power, to arrest, if possible, our national progress in the practice of despotism.

[Approved April 15, 1857.]

Chapter 112.

Resolves in relation to the decision of the supreme court of the United States, in the case of Dred Scott.

Whereas, The supreme court of the United States, in the recent case of Dred Scott, over which it expressly declared it had no jurisdiction, has undertaken to pronounce an extra judicial opinion, prohibiting the people of the United States from any control of the question of slavery within the territories of the United States, either through congress, or local governments instituted under the authority of congress, or otherwise; and,

Whereas, Such extra judicial opinion subordinates the political power and interests of the American people to the cupidity and ambition of a few thousand slaveholders, who are thereby enabled to carry the odious institution of slavery wherever the national power extends, and pre-dooms all territory which the United States may hereafter acquire, by purchase or otherwise, to a law of slavery as irrevocable as the organic constitution of the country; and,

Whereas, Such extra judicial opinion of a geographical majority of the supreme court is conclusive proof of the determination of the slaveholding states to subvert all the principles upon which the American Union was formed, and degrade it into an engine for the extension and perpetuation of the barbarous and detestable system of chattel slavery; therefore,

Resolved, That the extra judicial opinion of the supreme court of the United States, in the case of Dred Scott, is not binding, in law or conscience, upon the government or citizens of the United States, and that it is of an import so alarming and dangerous, as to demand the instant and emphatic reprobation of the country.

Resolved, That the supreme court of the United States should, by peaceful and constitutional measures, be so reconstituted as to relieve it from the domination of a sectional faction, and make it a tribunal whose decisions shall be in harmony with the constitution of the United States and the spirit of our institutions, and at whose hands all classes of persons in the United States, without regard to race or locality, shall receive even and exact justice.

Resolved, That until this extra judicial opinion of the supreme court, establishing slavery in all the territories of the United States, and placing it beyond the reach of congress or the people, is reversed and set aside, and until the advance of our national flag ceases to be the advance of slavery, it will be the paramount duty of the supporters of justice and liberty to resist any further acquisition of territory which may be attempted, under whatever disguise, with the purpose of enlarging the area of an institution which is the scandal of this country and age.

Resolved, That the independent right of each state to determine who shall be admitted to political franchise and citizenship within its own limits, is clear and indisputable, and is to be exercised without question by any other state, and that persons admitted to the rights of citizenship by any state, are, by the plain letter of the constitution of the United States, "entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states."

Resolved, That whatever may be the course of political events elsewhere, the people of Maine are determined to abide by, and make effective within the limits of their own sovereign jurisdiction, the principles of the declaration of American independence, the constitution of the United States, and the constitution of this state, which, ordained "to establish justice" and "secure the blessings of liberty," declares that "all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent and unalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and of pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness."

Resolved, That Maine will not allow slavery within its borders, in any form or under any pretence, for any time, however short, let the consequences be what they may.

Resolved, That his excellency, the governor, be requested to forward a copy of these resolutions to the governors of the several states and territories of the Union, to be laid before the legislative authorities thereof, and to each of our senators and representatives in congress, to be laid before the senate and house of representatives of the United States.