In 1870, former Democrats, running as the Conservative Party, were elected to majorities in the North Carolina General Assembly, ending the brief Republican rule in the state. In December, the state House of Representatives impeached Governor William Woods Holden for his role in the “Kirk-Holden War.” They charged that he had illegally declared martial law in Alamance and Caswell counties, ignored writs of habeas corpus, arrested and held members of the Ku Klux Klan without benefit of trial, unlawfully recruited militia troops, and illegally paid those troops from the state treasury.

In March 1871, the state Senate found Governor Holden guilty on six counts and voted to remove him from office. He was barred from ever holding office again in the State of North Carolina.

This broadside was circulated by supporters of Governor Holden before his 1871 impeachment. We don’t know how many copies of this "address" were published or where they were distributed. It was signed by seventeen state representatives, at least most of whom were black or multiracial.

To the colored people throughout the State:

...The poor people, especially the colored people are the great body of victims appointed for the slaughter, and we as Representatives, occupying [sic] the place of power, as did Esther, feel it to be our duty to warn you of the impending [2] danger, and arouse you to such action as may tend to avert [3], if possible, the threatened evil.

The only offence of Gov. Holden, and that which has brought down the wrath [4] of the dominant party upon him is that he thwarted [5] the designs of a band of Assassins, who had prepared to saturate [6] this State in the blood of the poor people on the night before the last election on account of their political sentiments [7], and to prevent them from voting. Because he dispersed [8] this murderous host, organized by the so called Conservative party they propose to destroy him. First they propose to suspend him, then to go through with a mock trial before the Senate as they have already done before the House, where a true bill has been found without taking testimony.

After impeachment [9], his enemies will not be satisfied until he is hanged, unless happily their own gallows should overtake them. When Gov. Holden is disposed of those whom he protected will be the next victims. For the blood of one man will not satiate [10] their thirst. They are mad because their slave property is lost. They are mad because the Reconstruction measures have triumphed, and we are permitted [sic] to represent you in this body. They are mad because we refuse to bow the knee to them....

We therefore propose a day of fasting and prayer throughout the State. Let us ask God to bring our good friend the governor triumphantly through this ordeal, and to avert the evils that are hanging over us....

Primary Source Citation:

Address to the Colored People of North Carolina December 19, 1870.

Published online by Documenting the American South, University Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/address/address.html [11]

User Tags:
African Americans [12]
history [13]
impeachment [14]
North Carolina [15]
North Carolina History [16]
Page [17]
politics [18]
Reconstruction [19]
Students [20]
Teachers [21]
William Woods Holden [22]
Creative Commons BY-NC-SA [23]

From:
LEARN NC North Carolina History: A Digital Textbook[24]

Copyright Date:
2009

People:
William Woods Holden

Related Topics:

- The Kirk-Holden War [26]
- Impeachment [27]

Primary Sources:
To the Colored People of North Carolina,

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA,
RALEIGH, Dec 18th, 1870.

To the colored people throughout the State:
The undersigned Representatives send greeting:

Know ye that since the time that Haman conspired to destroy all the Jews who dwelt in the Persian Dominions, because he hated Mordecai, so wickishness hath been devised that will bear any comparison with some of the measures proposed by the dominant party in the present General Assembly. Indeed there is some analogy between our case and that of the Jews at that time. In Geo. Holden we have the despised Mordecai. His enemies stand forth as the exact counterpart of Haman. The poor people, especially the colored people are the great body of victims appointed for the slaughter, and we as Representatives, occupying the place of power, as did Esther, feel it to be our duty to warn you of the impending danger, and arouse you to such action as may bend the heart of possible, the threatened evil.

The only offence of Geo. Holden, and that which has brought down the wrath of the dominant party upon him is that he thwarted the designs of a band of Associates, who had prepared to satiate this State in the blood of the poor people on the night before the last election on account of their political sentiments, and to prevent them from voting. Because he discerned this murderous plot, organized by the so-called Conservative party, they propose to destroy him. First they propose to suspend him, then to go through with a mock trial before the Senate as they have already done before the House, where a true bill has been found without taking testimony.

After impeachment, his enemies will not be satisfied until he is hanged, unless happily their own yellow-shells should overtake them. When Geo. Holden is disposed of those whom he protected will be the next victims. For the blood of one man will not satiate their thirst. They are mad because their slave property is lost. They are mad because the Reconstruction measures have triumphed, and we are permitted to represent you in this body. They are mad because we refuse to bow to their laws. Like Haman, who, after speaking of his riches, the multitude of his children, and his preferment both by the King and Queen, yet declared it all void nothing so long as Mordecai sat at the King’s gate—so with our enemies. It avails nothing, that they have got control of the General Assembly, by bribery, fraud, and intimidation; so long as the friends of the poor, and protectors of the innocent and defenseless, compose the Chair of State, and you have the right to go to the polls unmolested. They have therefore commenced a system of disfranchisement, by assailing the charters of towns, by allowing, but one day for voting, by allowing voters to be challenged at the polls, and by requiring each to vote in the township in which he resides. They have thereby already disfranchised thousands. But progress in this way is too slow for their purpose. They therefore propose to call a Convention. Having repealed the Militia Law, they propose to lose their

[Very respectfully,]

GEO. L. WABSON,
Rep. from New Hanover County,

J. W. DUDLEY,
Rep. from Craven County,

ROBERT FLETCHER,
Rep. from Craven County,

J. H. WILLIS,
Rep. from Craven County,

RICHARD TUCKER,
Rep. from Craven County,

STUART ELLISON,
Rep. from Wake County,

H. FALLOWER,
Rep. from Wake County,

W. H. BEAVES,
Rep. from Pittsylvania County,

AUGUSTUS ROBBINS,
Rep. from Bertie County,

W. C. NEWBORN,
Rep. from Bertie County,

J. R. JOHNSON,
Rep. from Northampton County,

WILLIS BROWN,
Rep. from Craven County,

J. B. BRYANT,
Rep. from Craven County,

W. W. MORGAN,
Rep. from Craven County,

J. B. PAGE,
Rep. from Chowan County,

R. M. JOHNSON,
Rep. from Craven County.

This broadside, or poster, published in December 1870, warned African Americans of the danger they faced if Governor Holden were removed from office.

3 January 2018

Source URL: https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/primary-source-address

Links