

4. Representative Roger Griswold Is Unhappy (1803)

Jefferson summoned Congress into special session because the Senate had to approve the Louisiana Purchase treaties, and the House and Senate had to vote the money. The New England Federalists fought the acquisition, largely because "the mixed race of Anglo-Hispano-Gallo-Americans" would ultimately outvote the charter-member states of the Union and, they feared, cause its dismemberment. Representative Griswold of Connecticut, perhaps the ablest Federalist spokesman in the House, had already attained notoriety in 1798 by caning Representative Matthew Lyon of Kentucky after the latter had spat in his face. On what terms would Griswold, in the following speech, have accepted Louisiana?

It is, in my opinion, scarcely possible for any gentleman on this floor to advance an opinion that the President and Senate may add to the members of the Union by treaty whenever they please, or, in the words of this treaty, may "incorporate in the union of the United States" a foreign nation who, from interest or ambition, may wish to become a member of our government. Such a power would be directly repugnant to the original compact between the states, and a violation of the principles on which that compact was formed.

It has been already well observed that the union of the states was formed on the principle of a co-partnership, and it would be absurd to suppose that the agents of the parties who have been appointed to execute the business of the compact, in behalf of the principals, could admit of a new partner without the consent of the parties themselves. . . .

The incorporation of a foreign nation into the Union, so far from tending to preserve the Union, is a direct inroad upon it. It destroys the perfect union contemplated between the original parties, by interposing an alien and a stranger to share the powers of government with them. . . .

A gentleman from Pennsylvania, however (Mr. Smilie), has said that it is competent for this government to obtain a new territory by conquest, and if a new territory can be obtained by conquest, he infers that it can be procured in the manner provided for by the treaty.

While I admit the premises of the gentleman from Pennsylvania, I deny his conclusion. A new territory and new subjects may undoubtedly be obtained by conquest and by purchase; but neither the conquest nor the purchase can incorporate them into the Union. They must remain in the condition of colonies, and be governed accordingly. The objection to the third article is not that the province of Louisiana could not have been purchased, but that neither this nor any other foreign nation can be incorporated into the Union by treaty or by a law. And as this country

¹*Annals of Congress*, 8th Congress, 1st Sess., 461–462, 463, 465.

has been ceded to the United States only under the condition of an incorporation, it results that, if the condition is unconstitutional or impossible, the cession itself falls to the ground. . . .

This subject was much considered during the last session of Congress, but it will not be found . . . that any individual entertained the least wish to obtain the province of Louisiana. Our views were then confined to New Orleans and the Floridas, and, in my judgment, it would have been happy for the country if they were still confined within those limits. The vast and unmanageable extent which the accession of Louisiana will give to the United States; the consequent dispersion of our population; and the destruction of that balance which it is so important to maintain between the Eastern and the Western states, threatens, at no very distant day, the subversion of our Union.