

BURROW LIBRARY  
Southwestern at Memphis

Clay, a citizen of Kentucky, makes out that whilst he was a member of Congress in June or February 1864, he went with Col Robertus Topp of Tennessee to introduce Col Topp to the President.

Col Topp's object was to get from the President permission for <sup>the owners of</sup> five or fifteen Boats then lying up the Red River to come out of that <sup>river</sup> and engage in trade, without being liable to seizure, or confiscation. Also to be permitted to load these boats with cotton and bring that out to market.

These propositions from Col Topp led to a lengthy and intensely interesting conversation between the President and Col Topp, perhaps occupying two hours or more. The President detailed at length the reasons and views entertained by himself and cabinet, especially with regard to the policy then pursued in reference to cotton. Col Topp in reply stated that the war had cut off the usual article of export, cotton, that gold was being exported in the place of cotton, that if that character of trade, shipping specie to pay for exports, was prevented <sup>in, to</sup> ~~or~~ <sup>at least</sup> for a considerable time, its effect would be seen in disastrous emboldenings, financially, and consequently. He stated that if cotton was let in, each bale of cotton would be a sterling bill of exchange for its rated value on Liverpool, and to that extent, serve to prevent the export of specie, and in addition, serve the great manufacturing establishments, which would be compelled to import cotton or cease operations.

After Col Topp finished with his views, which seemed



to strike the President with great force. I remember that the President after he had walked the floor for some ten or fifteen minutes, absorbed in contemplation, turned around and addressed Col. Tapp, saying "The views you have presented are striking and forcible - they are very different from those entertained by a majority of my cabinet - I am not prepared to say they are not the right views - on the contrary they strike me as correct."

I had thought we were done with these cotton questions in our cabinet consultations. This made me change my determination. I will bring them up again."

I remember as we were about leaving, Mr. Lincoln asked Col. Tapp "if he was acquainted with Chase" upon being informed that he was, he said to him, "Do me the favor to call and see him in the morning and present to him the views you have presented to night; Chase understands these matters."

I remember of being informed by Col. Tapp that he had called on Mr. Chase as requested, and that he reported Mr. Chase as having said he concurred in all that Col. Tapp says - and that if he had the power he would give him authority to bring out every bale in the Union Summertime or later.

After this the policy of giving out permits and sending out purchasing Agents was adopted. I have always thought they ~~were~~ resulted from the forcible views presented by Col. Tapp. Col. O. H. Barbidge <sup>of Kentucky</sup> was present at that conversation and one or two others whose names I have forgotten.