

Worcester, June 5, 1859

Mr. Spooner,

Dear Sir,

Your note of the 18<sup>th</sup> ult. can not reach me till the present week. The previous note to which you refer, with an accompanying private document, was duly received. I hope to be able to communicate my views of your proposed plan of anti-slavery action long before this, but the pressure of other engagements, & an annoying attack of rheumatism which entirely unfit me for any kind of business, or even reading, after nightfall, have hitherto prevented.

I have long seen or felt the necessity of a change in policy on the part of the friends of freedom. For a time our progress was rapid, or indicates a speedy triumph. But, for several years past, we seem to have done little more than maintain strength already required. Whatever our present measures are adapted to accomplish, has been already done; & no further progress can reasonably be expected, till our efforts shall be directed by wiser counsels.

The grand defect in our present policy is that it sets our practice in direct conflict with our principles & preaching. We proclaim the great truth of the equality of the races, & maintain with words the equal right of the slaves with ourselves to liberty, & personal protection: but in practice, with few exceptions, we essentially ignore these theories, & either work politically with their masters in active measures for the destruction of their liberty, or put our arms & refuse them the protection which we demand for ourselves. Standing in this attitude, if we are of any service to the victims of oppression, it must be by our preaching. But of what use is that going to stop further & applying the same principles to our religious & political institutions. Amid them, it seems to me, more especially should the work of resolution begin, because it is on these institutions mainly that slavery depends for support. So long as it is entrenched behind these adamant walls, our attacks upon it will be of little avail. Demolish these bulwarks, & the whole system falls. And this can only be done by a kind of attack similar to that by which you propose to assault the claimants of slaves. Every supporter of the government must be held responsible for the entire slave system, & made identical in moral turpitude with the master, & both must be outlawed together. Where we begin the war upon the one, we must at the same time begin it upon the other, & meet both as felons who deserves to die, & whose life we shall certainly sacrifice, if necessary, whenever we may have the power.

In your efforts to organize small associations for the purpose of attacking individual slaveclaimants, I bid you God Speed, or will bid you such aid as may be in my power, consistent with my principles as a believer in the superiority of moral over physical power. But as at present informed, my main efforts must be in another direction. While you are gathering small bodies for the purposes of assailing the individual, it seems to me that I can accomplish more by laboring to gather a great national party whose avowed aim shall be the overthrow of the government as in fact the slavepower of the country, & whose will shall be expressed through the ballot box. I regard the existence of such a party as the great want of our cause at the present time. Its organization would infuse new life into our movements, or would go far towards harmonizing the many jarring & discordant elements which have hitherto essentially impede our progress.

In reply to your suggestion that perhaps I might assist you in raising funds to circulate your document at the South I must say that, at present, I am closely confined at home by the illness of our only child. I do not feel at liberty to leave him, even for a single day, except on the most urgent business, so

dependent is she on me for her daily strength. Besides, I am at present, without the vocal power to address a public assembly, having recently suffered the extraction of all my remaining upper teeth.

Should I be in Boston at the approaching anniversary of the Mass. A.S. Society, I shall hope to see you there, or express my views more fully than I can by letter.

Yours very truly,  
S.S. Foster