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Fictional Jackson Impeachment Speech  
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Honorable members of the United States Senate, we have heard the testimony of numerous witnesses discussing the entire spectrum of Andrew Jackson's conduct in office over the last eight years, yet all of it points unequivocally to a single resolute conclusion: our president, the man of humble background, the former military hero and Indian vanquisher, the man called "Old Hickory" by his troops and the "Hero of New Orleans" following his victory in that battle, is guilty of four principal charges that the prosecution will presently summarize.

First, gentlemen, his rash and uncompromising actions have jeopardized the economic stability of our nation and triggered an economic downturn that is projected to become a depression of unprecedented proportions; Mr. Jackson's obliteration of the Second National Bank of the United States is the first of these. After its creation by Congress in 1816—a few of you, respectable Senators, voted for it—the National Bank served functions indispensable to the stability of our national economy: it furnished credit to incipient business ventures, it restrained the excesses of state banks by preventing their issuance of unsound notes, and it printed its own stable, uniform currency. Most recently headed by Nicholas Biddle—that most dedicated witness whom you yesterday heard—this bank stood as the preeminent symbol of America's firm commitment to a robust and unified national economy. Not only did Mr. Jackson scoff at the bank, foolishly maintaining that gold and silver specie should be the only basis of currency, not only did Mr. Jackson veto the 1832 bill to re-charter the bank that Congress—and therein, the American people—so passionately countenanced, not only did Mr. Jackson dispose of two treasury secretaries, who refused accedence to his mad ideas of weakening the national bank before its natural expiration by depositing federal funds in pet banks, before the third, Roger B.

Taney, carried out orders, but, gentlemen, Mr. Jackson went further still, commanding his obsequious treasury secretary to actually siphon federal deposits out of the national bank and into a hodgepodge of state banks, to which the poor Mr. Biddle—as he explicated so clearly yesterday—was compelled to respond in the most prudent fashion: raising interest rates and calling in loans with the purpose of imploring Congress to renew the charter of this most essential institution of our national economy; needless to say, his noble efforts were unsuccessful in the face of Mr. Jackson’s perverse obstinacy.

But, my good men, Mr. Jackson’s assaults on the American economy do not end there. Following the death of our beloved John Marshall—Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court—in 1835, our president installed one of his most servile, sycophantic supporters: Roger Taney. In his 1837 ruling in *Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge*, Mr. Taney blatantly contradicted Mr. Marshall’s sapient decisions—in such cases as *Fletcher v. Peck* and *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*—establishing the irrefrangibility of contracts. This morning, Mr. Taney told you that he allowed the violation of a contractual monopoly on the basis of his ridiculous belief that a government has the authority to revise a contract for the common good. This is nonsense; Mr. Taney’s ideologically driven ruling will bring economic chaos, for the sanctity of contracts and monopolies is not secure as long and Mr. Jackson and Mr. Taney remain in power.

However, gentlemen, our president’s issuance of the 1836 “specie circular” may yet prove the most economically detrimental of all. In his testimony this afternoon, Mr. Jackson speciously told you that his action will help the federal government by requiring all payments for western lands to be in the form of gold and silver or in currency firmly backed by the same. What he insidiously neglected to mention was that his order is straining banks by overwhelming them with requests for the exchange of bank notes with specie. Already many banks and

businesses have failed, unemployment has risen, prices have plummeted—and economists predict that this is just the beginning. Good gentlemen of the Senate, I consider it tenable to aver that any president who annihilates a National Bank, who supports Supreme Court decisions that vitiate contracts and destroy monopolies, and who plays a central role in the origins of an impending economic depression deserves nothing less than immediate impeachment.

And yet, the crimes of Mr. Jackson do not end there, inasmuch as his responses to the just assertions of the state of South Carolina amount to nothing less than tyranny. Mr. Calhoun yesterday explained so cogently the sources of his state's discontents. Paramount among them is the exorbitantly high 1828 "tariff of abominations," which protects northern manufacturers from foreign competition at the same time that it harms the South, both by raising the prices of manufactured goods and by fomenting the resentment of foreign countries, which are now less inclined to purchase southern agricultural commodities. These consequences come on top of enormous economic troubles already suffered by the South: it has not yet recovered from the Panic of 1819, farmers are faced with high production costs and low prices, and the southern monopoly on crop production is being challenged by the West. This situation, moreover, aggravates sectionalist tensions, as southerners are burdened with the fear that, since Congress approved a tariff to benefit the North at the expense of the South, it might do the same concerning the issue of slavery.

As you recall, Mr. Calhoun then proceeded to eloquently expound his doctrine of nullification, which he based on the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions—written by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in response to the 1798 Alien and Sedition Acts—as well as the Tenth Amendment to our glorious Constitution, which reserves for the states and the people any powers not delegated to the federal government or forbidden. He argued that because the federal

government is a creation of the states, it is they—not the Supreme Court and not Congress—that are the final arbiters of the constitutionality of federal laws. Endowed with this power, they reserve the right to convoke special conventions for the purpose of nullifying an offensive or pernicious law within their boundaries.

In response to Mr. Calhoun's honest assertion of the wishes of the people of South Carolina, Mr. Jackson regarded him with hostile contumely. Because Mr. Jackson supported the Union over the rights of individual states, he grew increasingly alienated from Mr. Calhoun, and by 1831, he selected Mr. Van Buren over Mr. Calhoun as his successor.

However, my fine gentlemen, our president's harsh treatment of a dutiful representative of the people is not the worst of it. In 1832, South Carolina finally did call together a convention that advanced the interests of the people by nullifying the 1828 and 1832 tariffs. Mr. Jackson—supposedly an advocate of the “common man”—declared this democratic expression of the popular will to be treason in his Proclamation to the People of South Carolina. He furthermore persuaded Congress to approve a force bill, allowing the president to deploy military force to prevent the just exercise of the practice of nullification! Faced with this excessively bellicose response, poor Mr. Calhoun was compelled to compromise the good of the people by accepting Henry Clay's settlement, whereby the tariff would be gradually lowered to approximately the original 1816 level by 1842.

Consider it, gentlemen. The president has not only employed coercion to maintain a tariff that continues to harm the economy of the South. Far worse, he has in effect eviscerated the system of federalism (a division of power between the federal and state governments) on which our magnificent country was founded. An action any worse can hardly be imagined.

And yet, gentlemen, Mr. Jackson has perpetrated still more baleful actions, one of which is his contradiction of the principles of equality, life, liberty, and happiness proclaimed in our glorious Declaration of Independence. Our president, in his eight long years in office, has not found time to address the brutal working conditions and penurious food, clothing, and shelter situations endured by so many immigrants, blacks, and others. He has not found the time to address rampant discrimination against Irish immigrants on account of their willingness to work cheaply, their dilapidated housing, their Roman Catholic faith. He has not found the time to see that the Mormons and their leader, Joseph Smith, secure a location for a community of “saints” that is able to practice polygamy and rigid social control free from harassment. And he has not, in eight years, found the time to extend suffrage to women or the overwhelming majority of free blacks who currently lack it.

What then, I ask you, has Mr. Jackson done in his eight years in office? He has further contradicted the Declaration of Independence by infringing upon the life, liberty, and happiness of Indians. From 1831 to 1832, our government, under his leadership, defeated the Sauk and Fox Indians of Illinois with exceptional brutality in the Black Hawk War; white military leaders even attacked Indians attempting to surrender! Mr. Jackson, moreover, approved the 1830 Indian Removal Act, furnishing federal assistance to negotiations aimed at relocating southern tribes. He then oversaw the removal of two of the Five Civilized Tribes to the Indian Territory in the West: the Choctaws in 1830 and the Creeks in 1836; he also set the stage for future removal of the Chickasaw and the Cherokee. In fact, Mr. Jackson dispatched an army of 7,000 men under the leadership of General Winfield Scott to forcibly uproot the Cherokees from their homes, claiming that a corrupt treaty signed in 1835, to which no representatives of the Cherokee Nation acceded, could legitimize a gratuitous violation of individual rights. As if this were not enough,

gentlemen, Mr. Jackson sent troops to Florida, as well, in a futile effort to remove the Seminoles from their own land; many of the Indians, led by Osceola, resisted this display of force.

In his testimony this afternoon, you will recall that Mr. Jackson strove to justify his brutality by claiming that the removal was necessary to ensure the protection of the Indians; a more disingenuous sophism could not be contrived. Mr. Jackson's true motives are to clear valuable land for white settlers, to minimize Indian raids across the border, and to subjugate a people whom he considers a "savage" race. The extirpation of the tribes is anything but humane; indeed, thousands have died in the long, cold, inhospitable treks over hundreds of miles. Our Declaration of Independence is perhaps the quintessence of American democracy, and to blatantly and repeatedly violate its core principles is to deserve no less than immediate impeachment.

Great leaders of this nation, I have thus far spoken about Mr. Jackson's economically devastating actions, his obliteration of the federal system of government, and his policies contrary to the ideals of equality and happiness. There remains one last area in which our president has transgressed the boundaries and duties of his office: the separation of powers of the federal government. Time after time, Mr. Jackson has demonstrated his willingness to exercise executive power with abandon. His reckless use of force against Indians and South Carolina and his transfer of federal funds out of the National Bank and into pet banks—as I described previously—are but three of many instances.

As you Senators know all too well, Mr. Jackson has used and abused his veto power to excess. Our current president has vetoed more of your carefully deliberated bills than all previous presidents combined! Among them were the 1830 bill to provide federal subvention to Kentucky's Maysville Road and Mr. Clay's compromise regarding land policies. You heard Mr.

Clay yesterday tell of the time and effort he applied to reaching an agreement by which the federal government would supervise the sale of western lands while the states would receive the proceeds therefrom. The latter portion of the compromise was intended to satisfy those who favored the sale of western lands by the states themselves, but Mr. Jackson thoughtlessly rebuffed the entire proposal, thus leaving the land issue unsettled. Of course, the veto of the 1832 bill to re-charter the Second National Bank—of which I earlier spoke—represents just one more of the copious instances of Mr. Jackson’s excessive use of the presidential veto.

While Mr. Jackson’s overly frequent vetoes have curbed legislative power, his disregard for decisions of the Supreme Court has likewise diminished the influence of the judicial branch. In the 1831 case of *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, the late Chief Justice Marshall ruled that Indian tribes are non-foreign nations that have the right to sue in federal court. His subsequent decision in *Worcester v. Georgia* invalidated a Georgia law restricting access to Cherokee lands and declared Indian tribes to be “distinct political communities,” just like the states, with sovereign authority. Mr. Jackson, however—desirous of the removal of the Cherokees in spite of these rulings—impudently declared: “John Marshall has made this decision. Now let him enforce it.” In blatant disregard for his duty as the leader of the executive branch, Mr. Jackson refused to enforce the decision of the Supreme Court!

Good men of the Senate, I have presented to you the dishonorable, disingenuous, destructive, detrimental, and downright dangerous deeds done by President Andrew Jackson. He has jeopardized the national economy by his elimination of the National Bank, his support of Supreme Court rulings that undermine monopoly and contract law, and his issuance of the specie circular. He has damaged the system of federalism through his dismissive and even belligerent response to a righteous assertion of state power. He has contradicted the ideals of life, liberty,

and happiness contained in our Declaration of Independence in his neglect of numerous injustices and his coercive removal of the Indians. And he has transgressed his rightful executive authority by his unwarranted use of vetoes and his refusal to enforce rulings of the judicial branch. Honorable gentlemen, these actions constitute nothing less than tyranny, the very nature of autocracy from which the brave men of the American Revolution hoped to free America forever. It is for their sake that I exhort you to cast off our fetters of oppression and renew the checks and balances, the federalist system, the economic prosperity, and the justice for all that will make this nation a glorious gift to our posterity. It is for their sake that I implore you—  
depose King Andrew I!