

Document 8

Source: Harry T. Peters, "America on Stone" Lithography Collection, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution. Cartoon created in 1856.

Document Note: On May 19 and 20, 1856 Senator Charles Sumner, an abolitionist from Massachusetts, delivered a long speech entitled "The Crime Against Kansas." The occasion was the Senate debate over the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Sumner attacked pro-slavery men as "hirelings from the drunken spew and vomit of an uneasy civilization." He then went on to insult South Carolina and one of its Senators, the well-liked Senator Andrew Butler.

Two days after the speech, Butler's kinsman, Preston Brooks, himself a member of the House of Representatives, burst in to the Senate chambers and beat Sumner with a cane. Sumner's injuries were serious enough that he had to retire from the Senate for three years. Sympathetic Southerners sent Brooks dozens of gold-headed canes to replace the one he broke over Sumner's head. Northerners published thousands of copies of Sumner's speech and vilified "Bully Brooks."

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