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CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, MARCH 7.

DEBATE

On MR. GREGG's resolution

(CONTINUED.)

MR. MAC CREERY. Mr. Chairman: I am extremely sorry that the gentleman from Georgia, as well as many others who have spoken on this question, should entertain an idea of the carrying trade so exceedingly erroneous as it respects us. Do gentlemen suppose that every American vessel which has coffee, sugar, or any other W. Indian produce on board is engaged in what is called the carrying trade? If our vessels engaged in the W. India trade, and which carry out American produce, together with some European goods, sell, as they often do, for double the cost, and bring back much more W. India produce than can be consumed at home, what must become of the surplus? We must certainly be permitted to export it; and although it is not the produce of our soil, it undeniably is of our industry, and therefore as much entitled to protection as the other.

But we are told, sir, that our merchants are covering belligerent property; and to prove this, a celebrated pamphlet called "War in Disguise," is now quoted on this floor as gospel.—For my part, sir, I consider that production entirely apocryphal; but, sir, here is a production which I always consider orthodox—here is the report of our Secretary of the Treasury—this I have examined, and what does it say? If by his reports we shall find that the articles we import from the W. Indies do not exceed in value the goods our merchants send thither, where will the author of 'War in Disguise' find this so much talked of covered property?

According to this report it appears, that in 1804 we imported from the W. Indies in

Molasses, galls. 5,747,256 at 25 cents, cost there	1,436,814
Pimento, lbs. 663,648 at 10 cents	66,364
Cocoa, lbs. 1,481,564 at 12 cents	177,787
Coffee, lbs. 46,708,089 at 18 cents	8,407,456
Sugar, 113,434,409 lb. or 1,012,464 cwt. at 7 dolls.	7,087,248
Indigo, 282,503 lb. at 1 d. 25 cents	353,129
Cotton, 2,056,704 lb. at 20 cents	411,340
Rum, galls. 6,862,347 at 50 cents	3,431,173
	21,371,311

And we exported to the W. Indies in the same year, viz.

In American produce to the amount of dolls.	11,266,163	
Foreign do.	4,587,620	
dolls.	15,853,783	
Freight and insurance 33 1-3	5,284,294	
		21,139,377
		231,934

I hold it fair to include freight and insurance, for although a man may send his own vessel, and stand his own underwriter, he will always make these calculations before he undertakes an expedition: and considering the nature of the trade we have been carrying on there, this allowance is very moderate. And now, sir, let me ask, what is there left of masked property for the author of War in Disguise and my lord Collingwood? Why, truly, the mighty sum of 231,934 dollars!

But, sir, independent of this statement, where is this mighty sum about which so much fuss is made, that we are screening from G. Britain? Why, in France, no doubt! And what does it amount to? I will tell you, sir: Our whole exports to that nation in 1804, consisting of our own and foreign produce, amounted to 8,800,000 dollars. Now, sir, I do suppose, that most of the coffee we have sent thither came to us from St. Domingo. I would therefore ask the author of 'War in Disguise,' or any one else, whether they really think the black nobility of St. Domingo have been sending their produce, masked under our flag, to supply their friends in France? The whole of this allegation is too absurd to merit a serious refutation. The fact is, that of this 8,800,000, we receive payment in French goods to the amount of about 1,800,000, and the residue, together with the surplus of our other exports to Europe, is remitted to G. Britain to make up the balance of 12,000,000, which our trade with her annually subjects us to. Now, sir, who has the best right to complain of us in this business? Certainly not England.

We are also told that if this resolution passes, our exports to G. Britain will be materially affected. Although the resolution does not go to prevent us from sending our produce thither, I will examine that part of the argument of the gentleman from Georgia respecting tobacco

The whole of our export of that article in 1804, was 83,000 hhds. and if you will take your pen and calculate the population where this tobacco is consumed, you will find they amount to about 33 millions, which gives to G. Britain the consumption of about 14 or 15,000 hhds. Now, sir, you will find, that in 1803 we exported to that nation 50,000 hhds. and on an average we send them near 40,000 hhds. annually. What is the consequence? That by sending more than they can consume, the price is kept below its intrinsic value;—whereas, were we wise enough to send them no more than they do consume, the price would be always good: for it is an axiom in trade, that when the medium of consumption is exceeded, the price must fall; whereas, if the supply is deficient, it occasions a competition in the market, which never fails to raise the article above its real value. It will therefore be highly advantageous to the tobacco planter that less of it goes to G. Britain.

On the subject of our revenue, we are often exultingly told, that it comes exclusively off the farmer and planter, who are the great consumers. Let us examine this question.

Our imports amounted in 1804 to about 80 millions, whereof 36 millions were re-exported. Of the remaining 44, how much is consumed by the farmer and planter? I compute the population of our sea ports to be about one-eighth of that of the U. S. and from the luxury and waste, the extraordinary consumption of liquors, tea, coffee, sugar, &c. &c. and even of salt, of which I do believe one ship commonly consumes as much as ten farmers—that these towns consume one-third; which leaves 30 millions out of 80 to the farmer and planter.

As to the article of cotton, it would appear that of 35 millions exported, about 25 go to G. Britain: and although I do not know accurately, I believe that part is re-exported the same as imported; but if not, it is well known that G. Britain must and will have it; and when it is considered that they at this moment command Spanish wool and French claret, they will find little difficulty in procuring our cotton.

I thought it incumbent on me to make these few remarks to the committee, because, although they may have occurred to some, I believe they have not to all.

MR. ELMER. Mr. Chairman, I will rise to make a few observations on the subject now under consideration, but I will not detain the committee more than a few minutes. The resolution on your table is denounced by gentlemen as a war measure; but I cannot discern its tendency to that point. It is acknowledged on all hands that we have received from Great Britain repeated and grievous injuries. The whole American people are alarmed, and their feelings excited by the reiterated acts of oppression and insult. A gentleman from Georgia has told you that our constituents have not dictated any measures;—it is true, they have not dictated, but they have complained, and they look up to the collected wisdom of Congress to devise a remedy for the evils under which they are labouring. This is the business upon which we are in part assembled; and it is the most important to which our attention will be called; we should therefore engage in it with all that seriousness and impartiality which its importance demands. Every member should divest himself of all national and party prejudice, when he decides on a question in which the interest of his country is so deeply concerned. And can we, as men and as patriots, tamely submit to have our seamen impressed and forced to fight the battles of a foreign nation; and to have our commerce embarrassed, interrupted and perplexed, and the property of our citizens engaged therein, condemned and made the property of the unjust captors? I trust not.

But we are told peace is of all things most desirable, and that by stopping importation from Great Britain we shall provoke the wrath of that nation, and plunge our country into a most destructive warfare. But, sir, is this a true state of the case? Will this measure justify Great Britain in retaliating upon us in any hostile acts? Certainly not. I have an unquestionable right to employ, or not employ, any mechanic or manufacturer, as my interest or convenience shall direct; and a nation has an equal right to trade, or not to trade, with another nation, as it may suit their policy so to do. We do not thereby infringe on any of their perfect rights; nay, I do not know that by refusing to receive the products of a nation we do thereby violate any of her imperfect rights. And let it be remembered, that no nation is justified in making war upon another, unless some of her perfect rights are invaded. Nor is every accidental violation of a perfect right considered as a just cause of war. The injury must be repeated, and every other mode of redress exhausted, or at least become extremely precarious before a nation can justify herself in resorting to force. We have suffered an invasion of a national right, but we only wish to have recourse to peaceable means of redress—to withhold in a degree our intercourse with the nation from whom we have received the injury. If we adopt the resolution, Great Britain will have no pretext for making war. She will know the precise terms upon which she can regain our trade and friendly intercourse. The preamble will direct her inquiries, & lead her to the goal whenever she desires it. She will only have to cease from doing evil; to respect our rights; to do as she wishes to be done by, and an amicable settlement will immediately ensue.

We are, however, told that Great Britain will have no respect to the law of nature, the law of nations, or the principles of justice. That she will measure the rule of right only by the length of her sword; and that she is all powerful by sea, and able to crush us before her. This is a distressing picture indeed, but really I do not know that she has become so superlatively corrupt; and I do not believe she has. I trust she has some sense of right and wrong left; and some regard to the opinions of other nations; if I thought otherwise, I should be disposed to break off all intercourse of every kind, and withdraw from the touch of a being so highly polluted. And is her power irresistible? I have had some experience of her power, and I see no just cause to be alarmed; the people of the United States have no such mighty reason to fear her wrath: they know from experience her power is not irresistible. They have met it—they have repelled it. I should indeed fear to give her just cause of offence, and Congress ought to abstain from doing any improper or unjust act towards her. We ought to do nothing but what we could justify to ourselves, to our God, and to all the nations of the earth; with this confidence, we may safely trust the consequences to the direction of Heaven. It is a sound maxim, that it is better to endure the greatest inconveniences and evils, than submit to reiterated wrongs and insults. We have suffered repeated wrongs. The measure before us is justifiable upon every principle of the law of nature, or of nations; it is only necessary then to enquire whether it is wise and politic to adopt it in the present form.

In this enquiry all our discretion, all our wisdom, and all our patriotism, unfettered by prejudice or partiality, should be called in to our aid. Will the measure re-act upon Great Britain so as to induce her to relinquish her unjust claim to the capture of our ships, and release of our seamen, or will it not? Or will it produce a re-action upon ourselves which will be felt most sensibly by our citizens, and by our government? These are the important and the only questions which we have to consider; and it is our duty to consider them fully with all their bearings and tendencies. I confess I am not without doubts on the subject. That it will give us some shock, cannot rationally be questioned. Our revenue will doubtless be affected in some degree, and its clear amount diminished, at least for a time. Inconveniences will arise from the want of some of those articles of consumption which habit has rendered agreeable and useful. But these evils may and will be cheerfully borne if they will tend to produce a great national good, and free our commerce from those injuries which it has and continues to sustain from the depredations of G. B. If the manufactures of that nation are so important to her prosperity & strength as some of our wisest and best informed statesmen have represented, she will, she must yield to our equitable demand, or bring upon herself an accumulated weight of distress.

Some gentlemen have said that this is an improper time to re-act upon G. Britain; that she is now contending with the most powerful despot on earth, for her liberties, and her very existence. That she is now doing that for the freedom of nations which revolutionizing France was some years ago; and that her sensibility will be excited by every measure which may have a tendency to affect and injure her in her struggle. I confess it would be ungenerous to press her unreasonably at this time; but surely it is not improper to call upon her in any way we think politic for justice, and the free exercise of our independent rights. These we are entitled to, and these she ought to yield us, or she cannot expect our friendship. And this is the most suitable time to call loudly upon her for them. She will, I trust—she must give up her unjust claims if we persist in this measure for any considerable time, or the consequence will be more injurious to her than any advantage her present conduct gives her.

If, however, the resolution now under consideration should be thought going too far, let us take up one less extensive and less energetic. A high degree of unanimity is extremely desireable on this important occasion. I am willing to meet gentlemen on any ground which may be thought tenable. If a total non-importation is not adviseable, let us resort to a partial one, and adopt a measure embracing the object contemplated by the resolution offered by the gentleman from Maryland. We certainly ought, and we must do something. Your table, Mr. Chairman, is loaded with complaints from all quarters of grievances and insults too intolerable to be quietly borne by any people. It is true, the gentleman from Georgia has said the citizens of this country have a very imperfect and incorrect view of this subject; and that they have been imposed upon and misinformed by merchants, whose cupidity has led them to sound the alarm; and, that when they shall be correctly informed, and come to have true ideas on the subject of our differences with G. Britain, not one in ten will be found in favor of any measure in the form of the proposition on your table. But, I trust the more the people are informed on the subject of their complaints, the louder and the more impressive will they become. It is the injuries they observe and feel, not the representations of interested men, that excite in them the sentiments they have expressed. Under these circumstances, and amidst the variety of complaints, shall we remain quiet? Shall we continue in session four or five months, at the public expence, remaining deaf to the cries of our citizens, and depart without affording them any relief? I hope not. We cannot expect to enjoy the privileges and advantages of our independence unless we firmly and resolutely maintain them. As an independent nation we should feel no partialities towards any of the Europeans; but treat them all with justice and humanity, meeting their friendship by returns of friendly actions, and repelling their aggressions by lenient but manly firmness.

Much pains has been taken to represent our complaints as trivial and incapable of redress. It has been said that we are injured only in our carrying trade, which has been represented as of little consequence, and not worth the expence necessary to defend it. This appears to be the idea which the gentlemen from Virginia and Georgia entertain of the business; but the subject presents itself to me in a very different complexion. To me it appears far more important to the U. S. than they represent. I consider it highly interesting not only to our merchants, but to our agricultural citizens. If we should abandon this trade totally, our wheat, corn, beef, pork, and other products of the middle states would shortly become a drug, and the price of them be greatly diminished in our market towns. Perhaps the southern states might find a market in the ports of G. Britain for their cotton and tobacco: but if the carrying trade should be relinquished the best market for those other staple productions of our country would be shut to us. By carrying these commodities to a foreign market, there exchanging them for the productions of that country, and after bringing them to our ports, exporting the surplus of them as well as some of our own productions to another foreign country. By which trade we are enabled as well to sell our surplus produce, as to pay for the manufactures of G. Britain which we consume. Further, would it not be highly degrading to our national character to relinquish so just and advantageous a trade to satisfy the whim, interest or caprice of any nation? If we permit G. Britain to substantiate her present doctrines, she will most assuredly extend in her demands and the strictness of her doctrines, until she left us no no trade worth defending, neither circuitous nor direct. But shall we tamely submit without one effort to this degradation? Shall we not rather do what is in our power to ward off the evils that surround us? The gentleman from Georgia has said that he should be ashamed to meet his constituents if he should give his assent to the proposition before us. But whatever may be the sentiments of the people of the south, I believe those to the eastward would be dissatisfied if we should rise without taking any measure upon this momentous subject. They look for something from our hands, and I hope we shall not rise until we have devised and put in operation some plan whereby we may redress the grievances under which our citizens groan, and of which they have so loudly complained.

SATURDAY, MARCH 8.

MR. ELLIOT.—To replace the present question upon the ground which it originally occupied, to examine it with a view to its real merits, and its merits alone, however hopeless might be the task, would certainly be a very useful one. It has indeed been considered as indicative of a species of madness to attempt to stem a torrent which is known to be irresistible; but it is said that there is sometimes method in madness, and there is always honor in a gallant death in a good cause. It is in vain to conceal the fact that this resolution is devoted to destruction; but its supporters owe something to their own feelings, and they owe much more to their country. It will probably be admitted, Mr. Chairman, on both sides of the House, for it will not be pretended that there are more than two sides upon the present occasion, whatever confusion of parties may sometimes appear to exist upon this floor, that a more interesting crisis of our national concerns than the present, in reference to foreign relations, has not existed since the adoption of the present constitution. Some of the best interests of our country are at stake. But it is not believed by all that our constitution and liberties are involved in any possible issue of this question. Before we even had a constitution, while the elements of our political system were almost without form & void, the liberties of this people were safe in their own hands, and triumphant over the power of that nation whose vengeance, it is said, we shall provoke by the adoption of this resolution. Our constitution and liberties are safe. The scene is not so awful, but it is impressive. I repeat it, Sir, we owe much to our country. The friends of the resolution are prepared for the fate that awaits it: but they have taken their ground from reflection, and they cannot, they will not abandon it against conviction, until overpowered, as indubitably they will be, in the contest.

Two classes of arguments are marshalled in opposition to the motion, one of which is addressed to our hopes, and the other to our fears. To our hopes—of what? Of honorable and successful negociation, if this measure be abandoned. G. Britain will do us justice if we ask it once more. On what is this hope founded? Let us not go too far back. It was said in ancient times to be dangerous, and doubtless it is dangerous still, to rake open the ashes of a flame not yet extinguished. Do our hopes repose upon events of recent date? Upon the long continued impressment into her naval service of many of our useful citizens, citizens entitled to the same rights with ourselves, except that they are not delegated to represent the people within these walls? An outrage which no nation but Great Britain practices, and to which no nation but America submits. Upon the constant interpolation of new principles, destructive of our neutral rights, into the venerable code of the laws of nature and nations, or rather the systematic perversion and prostration, to our serious injury, of some of the most sacred principles of those laws? We can soon dismiss this branch of the subject. Coolly and deliberately systematic, severe and unbending, has the injurious conduct of G. Britain towards us long been. Unconnected with strong measures on our part we can discern no reasonable ground for hopes so flattering. Prospects so delusive have no charms for the supporters of the resolution: We repose no confidence upon the justice and liberality of G. Britain, farther than as those virtues may correspond with her interest. To that we wish to make an appeal. With myself it has long been a settled opinion that she would go to war with us whenever it should be her interest to do so. We wish for peace, we raise our voices for negociation, but for negociation sustained by measures of an energetic and commanding character.

The other class of arguments is addressed exclusively, permit me, sir, to say exclusively, to our fears. Gentlemen have taken a gloomy view indeed of this part of the subject: While we can hope nothing, we must fear every thing from the adoption of the measure. We shall injure ourselves greatly, and G. Britain not at all; we shall inflict a deep and fatal wound upon the agriculture of our country; we shall sacrifice the interests of the people of the southern portion of the union, by provoking retaliation, to the preclusion of the only market for their staple commodities, besides subjecting them to the deprivation of foreign manufactures without which they cannot subsist; we shall destroy the most productive source of the national revenue; we cannot after all support the system; we must abandon it with disgrace, or persist in it to our destruction. It will even produce war with all its horrors, and the destruction of the constitution. It is at one moment a weak measure, at another a war measure, and sometimes both. Do we get over or go around these objections? Do we not state them in their full force, and meet them fairly? Formidable as they are, we shall even endeavor to repel them. One of those great men of whom modern times have been so justly proud, a writer whose rare combination of the powers of mind render him at once eloquent and sagacious, has advanced a principle which forms an excellent corner stone for the superstructure of argument on which the friends of the resolution rely. *Peace is the natural effect of trade. Two nations in habits of commercial intercourse have reciprocal interests; if one has an interest in buying, the other has an interest in selling; and their mutual wants and interests cement their union.* The quotation is not verbal but substantial; it is from memory. Had the immortal author of the spirit of laws been gifted with prophetic powers, he could not have described with more accuracy the relative situation of G. Britain and the U. States at the present time. To prove this let us turn to the interesting report of the secretary of the treasury, just laid upon our ta