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CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, MARCH 14.

DEBATE

On Mr. NICHOLSON's Resolution.

(Speech of Mr. Mumford concluded.)

Sir, I beg leave to call the attention of the committee to an important fact. Examine your treaty with Spain, your treaty with France, your treaty with Holland, your treaties with some of the northern powers; what do they say? "Free ships make free goods." What does G. Britain say? "You shall give up the goods of my enemies," and you accede to it. Is this reciprocal? Is it just? Is it not a humiliating concession? Is this cause of war? What says that *oracle*, that celebrated pamphlet, on this occasion? Not a word, sir—silent as the grave. Who now has the greatest cause of complaint, Great Britain or her enemies? Her motto is "Universal Domination over the seas," the common high road of all nations; and unless you assert your rights you will be swept into the general vortex.

We are told this is a war measure. If it be true and commercial regulations are of that nature, we are at war with G. Britain this very moment, for she imposes four per cent. on her exports to our country; you cannot impose any on your exports to her country; it is unconstitutional.

In the course of debate on this subject the honorable gentleman from Virginia observed, "Is there a man so credulous as to believe that we possess a capital not only equal to what may be called our own proper trade, but large enough to transmit to the respective parent states the vast wealthy products of the French, Spanish and Dutch colonies?" I will not pretend to say how much of this wealth we do carry in our own vessels; I am sure we do not transport the whole of it; but the following statement of the capital employed in the carrying trade (so called) will shew that we have sufficient funds to load our own vessels, & that it is worth our while to give it protection.

Agreeably to the secretary of the treasury's report it appears we had the last year 672 thousand tons of shipping employed in foreign commerce, the net revenue of which has been called the carrying trade

	Dollars. 850,000
Deduct this amount, to make it average with the tonnage of the last 13 years of neutrality	105,000
	745,000
550,000 tons of American shipping have been employed in foreign commerce, per treasury reports, will average for the last 13 years neutrality, calculating at the low estimation of one voyage per annum (some vessels make two voyages, and others are lost) it will leave an average of 14 dollars per ton net gain to the United States for each year, is	7,700,000

Freight to Europe average	22
East Indies, do.	5
West Indies do.	15
	87
Deduct wages, provisions, commissions, insurance, &c.	45
Average per ton	14

Calculating 13 years of neutrality, from February 1793, to February 1806, on 550,000 tons, the average, as above stated, makes 8,445,000 dolls. per annum, gained in the carrying trade. It must be understood that the freight is calculated on the produce of our own soil, as well as the foreign produce carried in our vessels. No reference to profit is made, it is uncertain, but may be presumed to be at least as much as the

freight	104,445,000
Add to this, about the actual capital of all the banks in the U. S.	35,000,000
To this must be added 50 per cent. as most of the banks divide from 8 to 9 per cent. per annum; and as they are only allowed 6 per cent. per annum on the capital, they must of course loan out this amount to the merchants and others, which answers all the purposes of money	17,500,000
Total	156,945,000

Is not this sufficient capital to export the produce of our own soil, and import that of other nations, at least so far as our own tonnage extends? There may be some inaccuracies in the above statements, but I believe they are substantially correct.

That oracle of some gentlemen, the celebrated book, "War in Disguise," asserts that we do not use sugar in this country. How far that is true I will leave the committee to decide. I believe when the premises are found to be false, we may conclude that very little reliance can be placed on the other assertions. I believe, sir, this book was designed to operate a double purpose; first, attack your commerce with one hand, and with the other throw the firebrand between your agricultural and commercial interests.

Gentlemen may talk about a foreign government fighting for its very existence. I believe it: but, sir, I intreat them to look at home. See what this book and the emissaries of that nation aim to accomplish. Beware of them. I believe it is a deadly blow aimed at your own existence by promoting discord and dissensions among the clashing interests of your extensive country, the issue of which no human foresight can predict.

After all this, shall we not relieve our citizens held in slavery? Shall we let commerce protect itself? Shall we do nothing? Yes, sir, we will demand satisfaction. The love of country is not yet extinguished in the breast of Americans: No, sir, it is their birth right; it is inherent in their very nature.

We have heard a great deal about neutral rights among nations. There is no such thing *at this day*. Sir, I consider them all alike. *Power is right.* The following will shew it:

The ship Little Cornelia, belonging to the district I have the honor to represent, was taken & carried into G Britain. The Captain informed his owner she was likely to be condemned. The news of the capitulation of Ulm arrives; the decree of the court of admiralty is suspended. A few days afterwards Lord Nelson's victory is announced; and when the court met she was condemned, vessel and cargo. You can no more depend upon the doctrines of her courts of admiralty, than you can upon her ministry. Witness the correspondence between your late minister, Mr. King and Lord Hawkesbury. Sir, there is a kind of legerdemain in all this business, to filch you out of your property. Sir William Scott, whose private character (out of office) is very much respected, is, if I am correctly informed, one of the privy council; and it is *there*, sir, your neutral rights are arbitrated, according to the favorable or adverse news they may have received.

Sir, I will not pledge myself for this gentleman's resolution, or that gentleman's resolution: but, sir, I will agree to adopt such strong measures as shall command redress. I will not tamely submit to such lawless aggressions. No, sir, I will not. We are not sent here to legislate for any particular section of our country; we are sent to promote the general welfare—I hope, and do repose that confidence in this honorable body, that we shall unite in one common cause, and rally round our constitution; give protection to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west; and, as the storm threatens, place full powers in the hands of our political captain to guide the ship, weather out the storm, and conduct the barque to her desired haven.

MR. CHANDLER. Mr. Chairman, unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, it is with extreme diffidence that I rise to make a few observations on the measures now under consideration—But the subject is so important, that I am unwilling to give a silent vote.

It appears to be acknowledged, by almost all the gentlemen who have spoken before me, that we have just cause of complaint against G. Britain—that she has impressed our seamen and compelled them to serve on board her ships of war, to the number of several thousands; that she holds them in the most degrading servitude, and compels them to fight her battles against a nation, with whom we are at peace, and that she has seized and condemned contrary to the laws and usage of nations, our ships and property to a large amount. This fact, Mr. Chairman, is so evident and notorious, that it would be trifling with the time of this committee, were I to attempt to introduce new evidence to prove it.

This point being conceded, it then remains to be determined, whether we will tamely submit to these wanton aggressions upon our rights, as an independent and a neutral nation, or have recourse to measures of some kind, calculated to obtain redress for the past and security for the future. The first, Mr. Chairman, ought to be put out of the question. To submit, without opposition, to so wanton and so flagrant a violation of our rights, would render us unworthy the name of Americans.

For what did we contend with this same Britain, in 1775 and the succeeding years? When we were few in numbers, and at first without arms, without ammunition, without money, or other established resourses, and without allies.

A Warren, a McClary, a Montgomery, a Mercer and a host of heroes, fought, and bled, and died; for what? For the rights, the liberties, the freedom and independence of our country. And shall we, Mr. Chairman, without one effort, surrender those dear bought rights and privileges, the price of which was the best blood of our countrymen? No, sir, we shall not, we will not do it, our faces will be covered with shame; and disgrace as well as injury would descend to our children. But, sir, this committee will not consent to a surrender of these rights, which they are constituted to guard and protect. They will, I presume, at least a great majority of them, be disposed to take measures sufficiently strong, to compel that haughty nation to do us justice.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, the only difference in opinion, with most of us, is, what measures will be most likely to have the desired effect, with the leaſt injury to ourselves. For my own part, I was in favor of the resolution laid on the table by the gentleman from Pennsylvania. I allude to the one which has been several days under discussion. I was in favor of it, because I believe it would be the most effectual; and no man, I think can doubt our right to adopt such a measure, it being only a commercial regulation, such as every independent nation may rightfully make, whenever her interest or convenience requires it. It would, in my opinion, be most likely to effect our object, because it would most deeply touch that tender point, their interest, and it is their interest which govern them. If we forsake their work-shops and their ware-houses, it will materially affect their manufactures and trade. Indeed to use the language of the gentleman from Pennsylvania, it will reach the vitals of her commerce; and if it were to go the vitals of their nation, the fault is not ours, they are the aggressors, we act on the defensive only. If, sir, that nation has two million of people employed in the cloth manufactures alone, as was stated by a gentleman from Maryland, (which number, however, I think too large) she must at leaſt have four millions in the whole, employed in manufactures of all kinds. We take from her, of theſe manufactures, to the amount of thirty millions annually; a market for which ſhe cannot find elſewhere. Interdict the importation of her goods, and what is the conſequence? She cannot pay, and therefore cannot employ her workmen. She will not find her account in manufacturing goods, annually to the amount of thirty millions of dollars, more than ſhe can find a market for—therefore, her workmen, at leaſt one million of them, will be out of employment. How are they to ſubſiſt? How can they get their bread? Other means they have not, they cannot find any other occupation; and, if they could, they are not fitted for them. This derangement of buſineſs muſt be ſeverely felt—their merchants and manufacturers will, I believe, be perſuaſive advocates for us. They will feel the evil, and will powerfully preſs the government to do us juſtice. The miniſter will be convinced of the danger. He will be careful not to ſuffer our cuſtom to be diverted from England; for he knows if the channel of our trade is once turned, it will not eaſily, if ever, be reſtored. He will pauſe, before he finally drives his beſt cuſtomer to the neceſſity of leaving him; for he cannot be ignorant that our trade, conſiſting of the exportation of raw materials, and the importation of wrought manufactures, will be courted by other nations, who will ſoon find it for their intereſt to accommodate us with a ſupply of our demands on ſatisfactory terms. I conſider, Mr. Chairman, that our commerce is, and will be ſo valuable to the nations of Europe, as to furniſh us the means of commanding reſpect and procuring juſtice, by commercial regulations. I have no fear that Great Britain will venture on a war againſt us—but, if from a predetermination to quarrel with us at all events, ſhe ſhould make a commercial regulation, or any other of our meaſures a pretext for hoſtilities, notwithſtanding all that has been ſaid on the floor of this Houſe by certain gentlemen, to diſparage the troops or militia of our own country, and of our weakneſs, inferiority and inability to defend ourſelves, and to prove the invincible power of G. Britain, yet I truſt ſhe would ſtill find us Americans.

Have gentlemen, who speak so degrading of the American character, forgotten Bunkers Hill, Bennington, Bemens height, Saratoga, Eutaw Springs, Kings-mountain, Yorktown, Tripoli, Derne, and many other places, which have witnessed the heroism of our citizen soldiers and seamen? If they have, Great Britain has not, nor has the American nation. Our country possesses ample means of defence, and will be found to have spirit enough to use them, when necessity require it.

Mr. Chairman, whatever measures we may adopt, I consider it of importance that we should enter upon them with a majority as nearly approaching to unanimity as possible, and therefore, although I should prefer a total non-importation to this proposition for prohibiting certain enumerated articles of British manufactures; yet, as the principle is the same, and the difference is only in the degree of its application, I am willing to meet other gentlemen on this middle ground. Perhaps this measure may prove efficacious, if so, we shall be satisfied, if not, I presume the nation, and Congress at another session, will be prepared and determined to have recourse to such measures as the God of nature has placed within our power to protect our national rights. Under this impression I shall give my vote for the resolution, and wait the event.

MR. J. RANDOLPH. I ſhould have been better pleaſed if the gentleman who has ſo eloquently painted the wrongs which we have received from Britain had, inſtead of telling us of the diſeaſe, pointed out the remedy. The gentleman a few days ago offered himſelf as a collateral ſecurity for the facts ſtated by the Preſident, and our illuſtrious miniſter at the court of London. Did the gentleman believe that what we could not take from them, we ſhould accept from him. That our commerce has been pirated upon and our ſeamen impreſſed we all knew before. But where is the remedy? Gentlemen ſay they are for taking commanding ground that will enſure reſpect. Where is it? Let them give in their project. Is this the remedy, or is this the time? Gentlemen tell us we ought not to ſtop ſhort of indemnity for the paſt and ſecurity for the future. Are they then for going to war with Britain, on the ſame ground which Mr. Pitt took with the French republic? Do they expect ſucceſs in their project? And is peace to be deſtroyed, and the intereſts of this people compromitted, until what they pleaſe to call indemnity and ſecurity ſhall be obtained? Are they for going to war with Spain and France, and making a ſimilar convention with them, with that we ſome time ſince made with Britain for ſpoliations committed on our commerce, and then by a kind of legerdemain draw from our own pockets wherewith to pay for thoſe very ſpoliations? Is this the indemnity they expect to obtain? I want none of it. I almoſt dread to ſee a convention with any power acroſs the Atlantic, with a ſtipulation to pay money; as I fear its only tendency would be to deprive us of that we have left. Make any ſort of convention you pleaſe, and ſomething will ſcarcely fail to fall out between the cup and the lip by which you will have to pay the debts due to you by others. By ſome ſort of legerdemain, the money of your bona fide citizens will get into the pockets of your diplomats, or their creatures on this and the other ſide of the water; into the hands of bureau men, of compting-houſe politicians. But I find gentlemen undertake to ſay, becauſe I am indiſpoſed to go to war, I am the advocate and apologiſt of Great Britain: and becauſe I quote the able pamphleteer, who ſtands forth the god-father of the doctrines contained in it—I abjure them, and ſo far from coſting me ſix cents—they coſt me one hundred and fifty; and I conſider that a better bargain than the other pamphlet which did not coſt me a ſous. Am I to be conſidered as the apologiſt of Britain, becauſe the defence of this country has been committed to weak advocates, or becauſe its cauſe has been weakly defended or treacherouſly abandoned? No; I am the advocate of the circumſtances of the times—of the conſtitution of this people—of common ſenſe—of expediency. What does the gentleman from New-York tell you? I admire the reſentment he feels for the wrongs committed on our country; and I entertain a reſpect for him. He tells you every thing I have told you—that American merchants are employed in covering enemy's property?—No, he draws a diſtinction between native and adopted merchants; and ſays that he conſiders the latter as the root of the evil. I agree that this trade is carried on by foreigners naturaliſed among us. But the gentleman ſays the other nations of Europe treat us on the principle that free ſhips make free goods, while Great Britain treats us on the oppoſite principle, and contends for the principle of contraband of war, and the liability of enemy's property to ſeizure. Why is there this difference? Becauſe thoſe who treat on the principle of the *mare liberum* find it their intereſt to treat on this principle. But do they who have the maſtery of the ocean conſider it as their intereſt? And yet the gentleman arraigns one country for being governed by her own intereſt, while he applauds another for being governed by the ſame feelings.

But the gentleman ſays the federal conſtitution grew out of commerce? Indeed? I have always underſtood it grew out of the feeble and lax ſyſtem of our federation. I have no doubt the regulation of commerce, and the hope of obtaining an adequate revenue aided its formation. But will the gentleman undertake to ſay the conſtitution was made to give us the maſtery of the ſeas? If ſo, I will be glad to ſee how he makes it out. Will he ſay the finger of Heaven points to war?

The gentleman informs us that G. Britain lays an export duty. This is the beſt reaſon the gentleman could have urged againſt his own idea. It proves her conviction that no other nation can rival her in her manufactures. But it is ſaid you cannot lay ſuch a duty on your articles. Thank God! You cannot—may it always be ſo. In the firſt ſeſſion in which I was in Congreſs, I heard a gentleman from Maſſachuſetts, then in the chair of this Houſe, deplore our inability to carry on war meaſures with France, when, if we could only have laid a duty of one or two dollars a hogſhead on tobacco, we might have been enabled to carry them on. I ſaid then, I was glad we were prohibited from laying ſuch a duty—I now ſay ſo.—I think it the wiſeſt proviſion in the conſtitution. It was the opinion of the greateſt man that ever lived or ever will live, that the cauſe of the advantages of England over France in 1756 was, that France inſtead of being ſatiſfied with her ſuperiority on the continent, by attempting to protect commerce and diſtant colonies, ſtrove for the maſtery of the ſea. This infatuation carried her from her proper element, and enabled G. Britain to aggrandiſe herſelf on the ocean. The moment that France attempts to cope with G. Britain on the ocean, ſhe lays bare the heel of Achilles; and expoſes her moſt vulnerable point to her adverſary; and this it was that in the opinion of Chatham turned the fate of that war ſo memorably conducted under his auſpices. But it ſeems the late news from Europe are to have ſome effects on our diſcuſſions. On this news the fate of this nation is to be ſuſpended. But from its complexion I draw a concluſion diametrically oppoſite from that inferred by gentlemen. I cannot help it; gentlemen may call me a Britiſh partizan, as when the doors were ſhut they called me a Spaniſh partizan, or as when I firſt came into public life, I was called a French partizan—be it ſo. I cannot agree to take theſe meaſures for the defence of a trade which does not amount to more than eight per cent. upon our whole commerce—for ſuch is the ſtate of our tonnage—that the foreign tonnage does not exceed 14 per cent. of the whole. What is our fair proportion? Fifty per cent. Inſtead of this we have 86 per cent. and for the other 14—for this graſp-all, loſe-all principle, the nation is now to be plunged into a war. I ſay I am unwilling to graſp at a ſhadow and loſe the ſubſtance—to jeopardiſe the whole commerce of the U. S. in a vain attempt to engroſs the commerce of the world. But whatever may be the deciſion of Congreſs in relation to this buſineſs, I hope to ſee one thing done before we riſe. I hope to ſee the reſolution which was under conſideration yeſterday acted on affirmatively or negatively, or withdrawn; and not for a light reaſon. It hangs as a dead weight on the price of every article of our produce—it has already depreſſed the prices of your rice, cotton, flour and tobacco; and I am aſtoniſhed to ſee meaſures permitted to be hung up *in terrorem* for no poſſible good purpoſe whatever.

The gentleman from New-York has given us an animated picture of the despotism of the British on the ocean. Would that despotism did not exist! But will the gentleman, supposing success on our part possible, say that if we succeed in breaking down the tyranny of G. Britain on the ocean, another power will not succeed to its mastery. No—its only effect will be, that the same power which is now the tyrant of the land, will be then also the tyrant of the ocean. It will be still her interest to drive us from the ocean, to vex and oppress our trade; there will be only a change of masters—with this difference, that there will remain no power to balance that of our enemy. But gentlemen reiterate the question, will you do nothing? I have always thought it better to remain idle, than to do what would be worse than nothing. But I would take this course. I would remonstrate with Britain—I would tell her of the wrongs done to the American people—I would tell her how absurd it was for her, under existing circumstances, to compel us to throw our weight into the scale of her enemy—I would put this question home to her—Are you mad