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CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

On the passage of the bill for raising an additional military force.

MONDAY, APRIL 4.

(CONTINUED.)

Mr. D. R. Williams was sorry that the vote he was about to give, as it appeared that he should be in a small minority, rendered it necessary that he should offer his reasons for so doing; and he was the more sorry because he perceived that the minds of gentlemen appeared to be made up, not that any thing which he could say could have influence in making up their votes. As there appears, said he, to be a general spirit of liberality prevailing on all sides of the House, I hope I shall not be considered as not having the same object in view in voting against it, as those have who voted for it. Before I offer my reasons for voting against the bill, I will make an observation or two on what dropt from the gentleman from Tennessee in relation to epithets. Yes, sir; I did make use of the expressions alluded and do believe them correct; I am willing to tell this nation and all the world that I denominated Great Britain a shark and France a tyger; and men who can read the paper this morning and not feel their blood boil, can have no American feeling in them. Talk about war, and you need not go back to the attack on the Chesapeake. Mr. Erskine's note contains enough; the gentleman was obliged by his government to address our government, and plainly tell us we are considered either as fools or knaves. I speak the feelings of the American people; and I speak them from no other inducement than love of my country, and I speak them on this floor in preference to speaking them any where else. The British proclamation and orders of council are explained, commented on, and in a manner which considerders us as reduced to a state of vassalage, and shall I in the heat of debate be considered incorrect in indulging in any thing like intemperance of expression? What is the effect of the British orders of council? Will gentlemen point out in what they differ from placing us in a colonial state? The monstrous woven wings of Great Britain are spread over the whole ocean to carry the commerce of the world to her own ports. What commerce have we with any part of the world, exempt from their orders of council, but the ports of the Baltic? None. And why that exception in our favor? Great Britain is cut off from her naval supplies, and cannot get them any where but from Russia and America, and no where at the present day but through American vessels. Is not this sufficient cause to excite our passions? It is astonishing to me that the gentleman from Tennessee, who is usually so warm should now be so cool.

I will vote against this bill, and for this reason amongst others. I believe it is incompetent to a certain object, if that object is in view, and not necessary if that object is not in view. I do believe that the state of peace or war in which this country is to continue depends upon herself; and my object is to adopt a system of policy which shall be uniform and consistent with itself. I never knew a half way measure which did any good, and it strikes me that your 6,000 men will have the same effect as your non-importation law. It is not proper for peace or competent to war, because, as the gentleman from Virginia has said, it is incompetent to the defence of any one point on which the enemy could act. Will gentlemen recollect the astonishing difference between a power acting on naval establishments, and the defence necessary on land? Will gentlemen talk about 6000 men when Copenhagen was laid in ashes with a defence of a much greater number? Will they talk about it when fourteen sail of the line sailed up the Dardanelles in triumph? I am for pursuing steadily one course or another. I have no hesitation to say that before all the documents were laid before us, I was for war with G. Britain—for expiating blood with blood, and I would have gone any length to do it; I would at least have done that to which we are competent; I would have rooted the British name from the continent; but now I am more satisfied that a NEUTRAL position ought strictly, justly and rigidly to be maintained. You want no troops to do that. It is impossible to believe that G. Britain will lop off her best limb to injure you. It is impossible to believe that she will attack you rather than she has done already, by compelling you to submit to her commercial regulations. She will keep off; she will not come upon your soil if you will keep off from her's. Commercial regulations are not to be met by 6000 men; you have since the 22d of Dec. a measure going home to her—a greater evil to her in her West-India islands than 50,000 men. Her commercial restrictions will be removed; they must, or they must sacrifice the West Indies. She must do more; she must risk a commotion of her own people. You have taken away her whole trade, carried on by your vessels and by artificial means: keep on the embargo and she will lose them; they will be gone; she cannot subsist without you. Will G. Britain sacrifice a trade which yields her one third of her whole customs—a market which in ordinary times consumes 15 millions, and increasing in a degree unexampled? What then will you do with 6000 troops? If the House determine however not to maintain this course, let us take up the other. If it is expedient and proper, let us go to war; let us do it in earnest—not talk of *six* thousand troops, but of *fifty* thousand. None of your defensive measures; they are worse than nothing; let us make them oppressive by making them offensive. This half way measure never will do, never has done any good, nor can any gentleman shew where a half-way measure ever did.

Gentlemen say we have taken a position and will we not maintain it. A great many such positions have been taken; if we are struck, the blow cannot be repelled by 6000 men. If you were to mount them on the wings of the wind, and arm them with the artillery of Heaven, they would not be competent to their intended purpose.

Mr. W Alston believed the ideas of the gentleman from South Carolina on the subject of our foreign relations to be pretty correct; but it was impossible to reconcile the gentleman's vote with the noble sentiments which he had expressed. The gentleman asks, said Mr. A. what we will do with these 6,000 troops. If he had listened to the observations of the gentleman from Kentucky, he would not have had occasion to ask the question. That gentleman's reasons were so conclusive that I shall not add to them. I can tell the gentleman from South-Carolina another purpose for which they may be of use. Let him look at the great seaport town in his own state, and he will see occasion sufficient for a few of them; and I hope a portion of them will be destined to that place. Look at the large sums of money already appropriated for arms and ammunition, a considerable part of which will no doubt be deposited at Charleston. Look also to other points at which they may be deposited; and then look at the regular force of the country, and see whether they are sufficient to resist the crew of a single frigate. They are not, sir; they are destined to particular spots, and hardly capable of keeping together. I never did believe, ingenious as I know that gentleman to be, that he could have proved, from any documents on your table, that the non-importation law was a half way or weak measure. The very contrary will be found to be the opinion of foreign governments, and of our ministers abroad. Although the honorable gentleman was opposed to that measure, I rather suppose he cannot produce a single document to shew that it was a half way measure, or so considered by foreign nations, for the contrary is the fact. When gentlemen possessed of the noble sentiments of that gentlemen, take upon themselves to find fault with the measures taken for the defence of the government, I should have expected that they would in the course of 4 or 5 months that we have been in session, have laid on the table some plan, some system of defence which they would have wished to be pursued; but none such has been proposed except that of arming the militia, which is in itself so futile, that it would be laughed at if attempted to be carried immediately into effect.

The gentleman's blood boils at the outrage which was committed on our sovereignty, in consequence of the attack upon the Chesapeake, and he was ready and willing when we appeared here, to have sacrificed his blood in defence of the nation. Has any thing turned up since to lessen his ardor? Has a single document been read to you to shew a disposition in that government to do you justice? Is it worth while to bring to his mind the attempt or pretence of negociation in the city of Washington? Is there a man in the nation who has one drop of American blood in him, who will say that our government should have withdrawn the proclamation? that we, the injured party should in the first instance ask pardon of the aggressor for the insult he has offered us as preliminary to negociation for atonement? Assuredly not; and in this point alone can I view it. Wherefore then this change in the gentleman's sentiments? In mine there is none.

Mr. Taylor said, it was strange that the reasons which actuated gentlemen on both sides of this question, appeared to be the same, and yet the result so different—he could not but believe that the good of our country was the main, the sole object of all. In the means to be adopted for this great object we differ, this difference therefore does not, cannot imply that either the one or the other of us are less actuated by laudable motives. I confess that I accorded with the feelings of my colleague (Mr. D. R. Williams) when first I came here; what created the change on his mind had its operation on mine also. I now say, that altho' in my opinion it would *then* have been magnanimous in our government, and although there was ample cause to justify us to the nation, (for we could look no way, we could point to no subject of complaint against Great Britain in which there was not sufficient grounds for war,) I say that although under all the circumstances which imposed themselves on our consideration, it would have been magnanimous and dignified in us to have declared war against this power—yet now I am free to declare that such a course would not be proper. This change of opinion has been produced on my mind by the letter of the minister of exterior relations in France, Champagny, to our Minister at Paris. That act which would have been spontaneous in us then, would now be construed and would in fact be justly considered as a succumbing and passive obedience to that power by which our opponents have so often and so erroneously charged us with being led and impelled. It is not necessary for our vindication, that I should say that, the threats of no nation on earth, can, or ought to drive the Americans into any measure, which in their honest judgement they condemn. Thus the orders of the king and council of Great Britain, for the grasping at the monopoly of the trade of the whole world; thus the deliberate Legislation of the British Parliament, for the taxation of neutral independent nations, of our own nation, which when in embryo they had failed in their attempts to tax; thus *these orders* which never can be submitted to by us while we claim to be an independent nation, and which I would pledge myself to resist at the expence of the last drop of American blood, are not now sufficient motives (although justifiable causes) for our declaring war against that nation. Because it is plainly inferable that the French Emperor has ordered us to go to war with *this nation*. I hold your vessels and cargoes in sequestration (another word for condemnation) to be released (*redeemed*) on the condition of your being at war with Great Britain. Sir, such a redemption as this would be worse than an expiation on the rack. It would be mean & degrading. On the other hand, not to go back to the long unsettled account of injuries done to our nation by Great Britain; her minister Mr. Erskine, has in a *very polite and friendly manner told us*, that his government has laid the scourge on us, that we may scourge our next neighbor, or more properly as a punishment for our not having done so before she asked it. Can it be thought strange that in this delimma, we choose to disobey both these mandates, and trust to operations defensive against both; to await the effect of our embargo which my colleague has said is operating so powerfully upon both nations. But I am not for waiting with folded up arms for this effect. And although I cannot answer the opposers of this bill, whether the troops are to be raised as an addition to our peace establishment (if the present state of things might authorise us to call any establishment by that name) or whether it is a war establishment: Yet convinced of the necessity of such a measure I shall vote for the bill. It will be for the oppressors of our nation to give the answer the gentlemen ask for.

In the vote I shall give I shall be governed by the circumstances of the case as well as they who have said that they will vote differently. What are the circumstances? It has been conceded that the nation who can most easily annoy us has the inclination to do it, if she dare so to do. Great Britain knows, the world knows, that this nation is the only one on earth which rivals her in commerce. That our commerce has been growing with astonishing rapidity. That this commerce for most part is stable, dependent upon no changes in Europe or Asia; unlike that which the Venetians lost by the discovery of the passage to the East by the Cape of Good Hope, unlike that for which there has of late been so jealous a contest at the head of the Mediterranean and the head of the Red Sea the objects of which are hunted after in the four quarters of the earth. Our is not fictitious, and dependent upon others; it depends upon ourselves and grows out of the soil. The variety of climate, the richness of soil in the ample bosom of our continent pours forth productions the most valuable, the most necessary for the consumption of every nation on the globe. These productions increase with our population, our population doubles for every 23 or 24 years, and our commerce grows still more rapidly by the enterprize and industry of our citizens. These considerations keep alive the rancour of former times, these stir up the fell envy of the presen day. From hence have proceeded the spoliations of the last 12 years! Hence the impressment and enslaving of our seamen—hence the cry of maritime rights which has been kept up in that nation, and the declarations of their politicians that they would go down with the last plank sooner than yield these pretended rights—that their national existence depended upon this power of manning their fleets, and yet while they were actually robbing our merchantmen of our citizens, they were discharging the supernumeraries of their own seamen from their fleet. From hence proceeded the restrictions on the colonial carrying trade and the objections they have made against it, as being likely to enrich their enemies by keeping up a market for their locked up productions, and yet both in this and in all former wars for 50 years past this nation has connived at the illicit trade carried on by its merchants with the Spanish Main, thereby affording to the enemy the very accommodation which they are so fearful we should also afford them.

From this source too have the late blockading decrees or orders of council proceeded. Was it to distress her enemies, that our direct intercourse to them was prohibited? Was it to prevent supplies to them? No, sir, they have not even attempted to cover this with the thinest veil of artifice. It is not to prevent the trade to France, but to rob us of a moiety of the value in most of the colonial articles, and most certainly a moiety of the value of the greatest article of export from our own country; I mean the duty of 9d per lb. on cotton permitted to be re-shipped from England to France. To say nothing of the licences which the miserable American is compelled to pay for, for the privilege of pursuing his voyage after the loss sustained by the plunder levied on him by way of duty & the loss in a circuitous voyage made under compulsion, and the detentions, delays and expences incurred against his will in a British port.

It was not granting much for the opponents of the bill to say this nation had the inclination to injure us, and now that we have for a time withdrawn our commerce from the ocean, and thereby withdrawn the supplies to her and to her West India colonies, which she absolutely stands in need of, is it probable, that under the increased irritation, under the inconveniencies and deprivations brought upon her by this measure of self-defence and self-preservation, that her malice will sleep? She has recently had a fleet on our coast; she has lately reinforced her army in Canada and Nova Scotia. The intrigues of her agents with the Indians on our frontier, alluded to by the gentleman from Kentucky, have a squinting at something more than mere defensive operations.

Does the view brighten when we look at another point in our political horizon? France is not commercial but she is nevertheless resentful. The existence of this government in its present form is the severest satire against their present order of things. She has not of late years been accustomed to be disobeyed in the mandates she has issued to other nations. We have in our embargo shewn a spirit of resistance, which has been felt by her and her dependencies. The high price of our produce and the other articles in that country heretofore afforded her by our neutral commerce; the actual scarcity, almost approaching to famine, which now exists in her newly conquered country, Portugal, cannot have a very soothing effect on the mind of the man who rules her destiny; nor can his good nature have been encreased by the manly and republican like remonstrance, which our minister has made to that government on the subject of some of her condemnations of our property. Our growing importance in the scale of nations, the manner of our increase cannot be a pleasant subject of contemplation to her; we grow in strength and wealth by peopling the uninhabited desert, she by desolating the inhabited countries she conquers.

There is another subject to which the sensations of that whole nation are alive—Louisiana has infatuated every people who have ever had the possession of it. France has possessed it more than once. The American government in a lucky hour for us, found her in want of the means of carrying on her wars. For our 15 millions, for a mere mess of pottage she has parted with her birth right, she has given up the outlet; the key to the most fertile country in the world. It has been reserved for our happy country to realise the conceptions heretofore formed on this subject by the most enthusiastic, the most vivid imagination. These realities were created and are now creating by the settlements made in our Upper Egypt, on the Mohongahela, the Ohio, the Kentucky and Cumberland rivers. Not many years have rolled over our heads, it is but a tale of our own times; it excited wonder in the listening hearer that Col. Boone had penetrated the wilderness of the west—that he had found a land of fatness. I believe he still lives to see the wonders that have been wrought in that land. That country which then was inhabited by the beasts of the forest and men more wild, now contains nearly a million and a half of civilized population. Yes, sir, the country west of the Allegany ridge, and watered by the streams of the Mississippi, now contains half as many people as our whole union contained at the commencement of our revolution. What a fulcrum has Bonaparte given up, in the little island of New-Orleans? there to rest his prise, to move, to agitate, to distract, and (as some wretches have supposed) to divide our nation. If he has the insatiable thirst for conquest, which the very opposers of this bill have often told us he has, think you that this delightful spot has lost all its charms to him? The protraction of the settlement of our differences with Spain attributable to his influence on that power, but too plainly shews that it has not. His blockading decrees, his utter disregard to the treaties now subsisting between the French nation and ourselves, the condemnation and sequestration of our property under those decrees, shew too plainly that friendship, that fair dealing and justice is not to be expected from that quarter. These words are now exploded from the laws of nations, from the vocabulary of national intercourse.

Thus have I taken a cursory view of the conduct, of the motives and springs of action of these two nations, not for the purpose of heaping unmerited censure upon them, (I wish to God they would suffer us to praise them) but of fairly stating how the case stands with us, what the circumstances are on which we are now to judge of the propriety of the present proposed measure. But under all these circumstances, and with all these motives, say the opposers of the bill, neither the one nor the other of these nations dare attack us; neither of them can spare the force, can afford the means of doing it; that they have enough to do to contend against one another. With respect to G. Britain, such might have been the reasoning of the Danes, when the confederation against France on the continent was in its last gasp, and when the land in the ocean might with certainty calculate to be left to contend with her antagonist and all her dependencies, embracing almost all Europe, alone single handed such a time it might reasonably be supposed, was not a time for making a new enemy, and yet that was the very crisis when Copenhagen was sacked and plundered. New-York holds out allurements for plunder as strong as