National Intelligencer.

& WASHINGTON ADVERTISER.

VOL. IX. | WASHINGTON CITY, PRINTED BY SAMUEL HARRISON SMITH, PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE. | NO. 1282.

FIVE DOLLARS PER ANNUM, | WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1808. | *PAID IN ADVANCE.*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DECEMBER 3.

DEBATE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS CONTINUED.

Mr. MACON said, before the question was taken, he wished to make a few observations, in doing which he would endeavor to follow the advice of the gentleman from Maryland, (Mr. Nelson) who had just sat down; neither to repeat what others had said, nor to make a long speech. He felt no disposition to fatigue the House or to tire himself.

Mr. M. said he had stated when he introduced several resolutions some days past, that there were but three alternatives—submission to the edicts of the two belligerents who had injured us—war—or a continuance of the embargo. If there were any other he had not discovered it, nor had any one yet told the House of another; but if any other productive of the same ends should be offered, that would be more satisfactory to others, he was not so much attached to the embargo, as to prevent his voting for that.

Do we know, said Mr. M. that we have a single friend in the civilized world. We have not Hannibal at the gate; but Rome and Carthage have both declared against us. Upon our own means alone we must depend, and if properly managed, they are equal to the crisis.

The second resolution reported by the committee, Mr. M. said was in substance the same with two that he had moved. On this subject he had reflected much, not only since his arrival here, but whilst at home. On the subject of the embargo, he had endeavored to ascertain the opinion of well informed merchants and navigators, not of one political party but of both. The result of the enquiry was that the embargo was a wise measure, and it was considered by some, to have saved to the U. S. fifty thousand sailors and fifty millions of property. This was the smallest number of either which had been mentioned to him, and was not considered too high.

If you raise the embargo, said Mr. M. what will you do? Submission is out of the question; and there is no proposition for war on your table. This is a proof that all consider our present situation better than actual war; and in my opinion, the embargo, aided by the second resolution which proposes a non-intercourse, will produce all the effects which can be desired by us on the two great belligerent nations. The second resolution proposes to put both these nations on the same footing. In their conduct to us there is not much, if any difference. G. Britain impresses our seamen and attacked the Chesapeake frigate, and France pays no regard to the treaty which now exists between the two countries. In every thing else I consider them as acting towards us alike, and at all times on the same principles. At this moment we have a law prohibiting the importation of certain goods from G. Britain, and the armed ships of that nation are prohibited by proclamation from coming into our waters. Adopt the resolution and you place the two nations on the same footing, and if one or both shall not like the situation, they know how to get out of it. We only want them to act justly towards us, and nothing more.

When gentlemen talk of trading to this or that place under present circumstances, they seem to forget the omnipotence of the English fleet, and that to carry on their desired trade, they must fight their way through that fleet. Permit me, sir, to add a few words as to war with both nations. Both have long endeavored to get us into the war on their side, and if we now go to war with both, it will be only a nominal war with France, while it will be an actual war with England; and so long as the British fleet prevents a French vessel from sailing on the ocean, so long the war will be only nominal with France, because we shall never meet. This to my mind is an additional reason, to induce us to try the embargo some time longer. To me it is as clear as noon day, that you cannot trade except to G. Britain and her dependencies without fighting your way thro' her fleet. I have another reason for wishing to try the embargo some time longer, and to have it amended in such manner as to prevent evasion. It is this; that from the earliest age of our country, we have believed, that by withholding our supplies and withdrawing from the ocean for a while, we could bring the most powerful European nation to fair terms. The experiment is now making, and I am desirous that it should be fairly made; that if it succeed we shall know the value of the measure, and if it fail, hereafter we may not depend on it.

Some gentlemen, living not very far from me, have advanced opinions on the subject of the carrying trade, against which I now, as I always have done, whenever I have heard them advanced protest. I am now willing, and always was willing to go as far as any member of the House in the protection of the trade which fairly grew out of the agriculture and fisheries of the U. S. I never will consent to risk the best interest of the nation, for a trade which we can carry on, only when Europe is at war. I do not hesitate to maintain this opinion at this time, notwithstanding the cry, that a part of the U. S. are not only willing to cramp trade but to destroy it. A recurrence to the laws will shew the great encouragement which has been given to it. Is the drawback nothing? Are the discriminating duties nothing? Besides these, many other things have been done for trade. Attempt to repeal only one of them, and you will immediately produce a ferment among the merchants. Ask the sailor too, who is brought home by the government, if nothing has been done for him?

The uncommon state, in which Europe has been placed by the last & the present war, ought to make us at least cautious, not to enter into war with France and England, provided we can by just means keep out of it. There is no visible object for which they are contending, unless it be for the mastery of Europe. They have by some means or other involved every nation in Europe in their wars and quarrels, and have nearly ruined and destroyed all of them. When gentlemen speak of the evils which we suffer, not I say in consequence of the embargo, but of their wicked orders and decrees, let them compare our situation, and that too as bad as they declare it, with that of any nation which has gone into the war, and they will find that we have cause to rejoice. Compare it with that of Sweden, who has not suffered so much as many others, and they must be satisfied that our situation is far better than that of the Swedes. We have enough of the necessaries of life to make us content, and there is no nation in the world, at this time, that enjoys more of the luxuries of Europe and of the East and West Indies than we do; in a word, none that enjoys more of the good things of this world.

We have heard as much said about the possibility of a trade to Spain, to Portugal, to the West Indies, and to South America, as if that trade was fairly open to us and perfectly secure. But when you compare this with what the gentleman from New-York (Mr. Mumford) told us about the French officer, and the dispositions of the people of Orleans, (and I regret he mentioned them, because they have no delegate here) your attention will be drawn from this possible trade, to the troops in Nova Scotia and Jamaica; I will not hazard a conjecture as to their destination, but I will say we ought not to forget them. When I was up before I mentioned the spirit of '76. A gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Quincy) has since made many remarks on that spirit, but as he has already been satisfactorily answered by others, I shall only add, that it was a spirit of firmness, a spirit of perseverance, a spirit determined not to surrender the rights of the nation, and further, that it was a pacific spirit; having told the world, that the United States were independent, it only required of Great Britain to withdraw her troops and do us justice.

Gentlemen seem from their arguments to suppose, that only one part of the union is interested on this subject. It is a subject, sir, in which the whole nation have a common interest. Foreign nations undertake to dictate to you, and to tax you, and yet only one part of the people interested! The same gentleman from Massachusetts, seemed to consider it a question of trade. Be it so, for the sake of argument. Then he fully proved to my mind, that if the embargo was off, we should have little or no trade, because he says there is no danger of your paying tribute to England, for this plain reason, that if you go there, you cannot go thence to France or her dependencies, without your property being confiscated. Then, sir, carry all the produce of this nation to England, without the right to go elsewhere for a market, and you instantly glut that market; and experience has taught us, that under such circumstances, the price would scarcely pay the charges and duties. Let it not be forgotten that when we had a sort of war with France, the price of tobacco fell to almost nothing, compared to that which it bore before. I speak of tobacco, because I am better acquainted with the price of that than any other article which we export. Before the war it was ten dollars per hundred at Petersburg, in Virginia, and in great demand; and before the war ended, it was not more than three dollars at the same place, and not in demand. The true cause of this fall in the price, was understood to be, that all the British markets were completely glutted, and that there was great difficulty in getting it to a market on the continent of Europe. How has this same article been affected at the same place by the embargo? When it was laid, the price there did not exceed four and a half dollars, and it has not been less than three since. This, to my mind fully proves, that the embargo has not injured the price of it, whatever the orders and decrees of France and England may have done. No one can doubt, that if you were to raise the embargo, the first cargoes to Great Britain would command a good price; but the moment the market was glutted, it would scarcely pay the charges.

If I understood the gentleman from Massachusetts rightly, he said, that when I introduced the resolutions, I spoke with uncommon zeal, [Mr. Quincy explained. He had said the gentleman had spoken with a zeal which did him honor.] Sir, permit me to assure that gentleman, that it was with no other zeal than for the welfare of our common country.

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Randolph) used an argument, against the embargo, and the plan now proposed, which to my mind was conclusive in favor of both. I thank him for it, because it is a better one than had occurred to me. He asked, who could have supposed that the two great conflicting interests of the nation, the agricultural and the commercial would have united to suppress all trade? Can there be a stronger evidence of the correctness of the measure, than the union of these great conflicting interests, in support of it? Would they join to support a measure which injured them both? No, sir, it was the interest of both that united them. An attempt has been made to compare the plan before you to the Chinese policy. No man in the nation can, it seems to me, seriously believe, that we intend to introduce such a system; but I will ask, would not a Chinese policy have been better for some of the nations of Europe, than the policy which they have pursued? Would it not have been better for Prussia?

In the part which I have taken in the whole of this business, if I know my own heart, there has been nothing of party in it. I have been willing from the first to discuss the question in any shape, in which any member might wish to have it discussed; and I differ very much from the gentleman of Virginia, (Mr. Dawson) who has expressed a desire to have the question immediately taken. I hope that every member who wishes to give his sentiments, will be heard, and heard patiently; and if any one should be desirous of speaking more than once, he will have my consent to speak twenty times, if he desires it. If the embargo has produced no good, and is now only producing evil, it ought to be repealed. But I firmly believe that it has produced much good, and if the laws be properly amended, that it will produce all the good that ever was expected from it; for I cannot believe, notwithstanding the opinion of the gentleman from Massachusetts, that any respectable man will be found violating the laws of his country.

If you raise the embargo, where will you trade? You cannot calculate on trading to Spain and Portugal, and their dependencies, without the consent of Great Britain? For notwithstanding they are contending for their independence, it is with the aid of England; and without that aid, they could not do much, because they could not get all the supplies that they stand in need of. It is not material to me, in the present question, for what Spain and Portugal are contending; but so far as they are contending for self-government I wish them success. It is not in their power with France on one side, and Great Britain on the other, to afford us commerce on any just terms.

I agree with gentlemen that in a state of war, some of the sea port towns will suffer more than the interior country; but it is equally true that they will have all the advantages resulting from the expenditure of the public money, by which they will be enabled to speculate with profit on the country.

There is but one way when bad laws are passed, to have them altered, and that is by elections. They are the only correctives not only against them, but against every abuse of power.—These have lately taken place, and so far as I am acquainted they terminated favorably to the embargo; in some districts it was made a question but without effect, in others where a change has taken place, it is not pretended, that the embargo had much effect, probably none.

It appears to me, that there never was a time, in which it was more necessary than the present, practically to observe one of the admonitions printed on the old continental money; UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL. Nothing but a strict attention to this can secure our rights; it will, as formerly, secure to us all that we ought in justice to expect. If on a fair experiment, the proposed plan does not produce the desired effect, and I then have a seat in the national legislature, I will go as far as any member in adopting such measures, as shall be best calculated to enforce our national rights.

I have nothing more to say; I have expressed my ideas in a very desultory manner just as they have occurred. I did not expect to address you to day. I have endeavored to do that which I promised; not to repeat what others have said, and though I have tired myself, I hope I have not fatigued the house.

MR RANDOLPH. It has been considered by every member, I believe, who has spoken on this subject, that the great question of our foreign relations is now before the House; not, sir, that this or that particular resolution is the subject matter of our discussion, but that the ultimate course to be pursued by this country with respect to foreign powers, is the point to be debated. It is, I conceive, not an unfavorable circumstance that this view of the question should have been taken; because, if not taken here and now, where I beseech you could it have been taken at all? The subject of our foreign relations has been referred to a committee who have brought in a report. If we were to confine the discussion to the minute details of this report, to the mere naked question presented to us, where is the subject of our foreign relations to be discussed generally? So far as this particular question (which is but of little magnitude though made a matter of much importance by gentlemen calling for the previous question and raising questions of order on it)—is concerned, I feel myself scarcely interested in the decision. But I do feel myself interested to a degree which it is impossible for me to express, as to the course which this House will take on the subject, ultimately. I think we are standing on the brink and verge of ruin. I address myself to this House—my observations are not intended for persons without these walls—they are addressed to the sober understandings of gentlemen who may chance to hear them.

In the few desultory observations which I threw out the other day (more in the nature of heads of discourse, than regular connected argument)—I touched on one question on which I ask the patience of the House to hear me again. It is this—Wherefore was the constitution of the United States created? Out of what did it grow? From what stock does the great mass of powers possessed by the federal government spring? From relations of peace and of war—from intercourse with foreign states—from commerce. It was more immediately the regulation of commerce which gave birth to this constitution. It was not contemplated at that time that this nation should ever pursue that which in my opinion has been properly called a Chinese policy. It was as well known to the nation then as it is now, that by the revenue derived from commerce alone could the general government be enabled to perfect its engagements, to keep the public faith, to provide for the general welfare and public safety. For this purpose the constitution was adopted. I cannot help casting back my mind to the time when the adoption of that constitution was agitated in the convention of Virginia. I at this time tremble at the recollection of the predictions made in that body, when I think I can see their fulfilment near at hand. It was then foretold by the greatest statesman, if not the greatest statesman, the greatest orator that America ever knew, that if the time should ever come, when the state and federal governments should have to be supported by revenue derived from direct taxation, the existence of the one or the other must be destroyed. An attempt to feel the public pulse on this subject—a mere attempt at experiment to collect a beggarly revenue of one or two millions, has already put down a former administration. We are now called upon to resolve that we will have no connection of import or export with the rest of mankind; to substitute this measure for war, for defence, for offence. What will be the inevitable result? Are we prepared to violate the public faith—to issue continental money again to pay the expences of the government? I know the case is provided for by the constitution—but what are constitutions themselves in the mighty concussion of parties? Are we prepared for this state of things? I have the honor to belong to an important committee raised on the question, what we shall do with our surplus revenue; with the surplus revenue of a nation which neither buys nor sells; of a nation whose revenue is derived from duties on tonnage & imposts, and which is without import & without export. Sir, I hope to be excused it in the course of the observations which I make to you I should not follow the example set me by my worthy friend from N. C. (Mr. Macon.) I feel myself too deeply interested to express myself with that method and precision, which is much to be desired, but cannot be attained, at least by me. It does appear to me, sir, that the final extinction of the governments of these states is at hand. If we are to have no connection with foreign nations, no ministers abroad, none from other powers residing with us, no trade, no relations of peace or of war, (for this state of non-intercourse contemplates neither the one nor the other) where was the use of the general government? It will no longer answer the purposes for which it was instituted. I hope I may not be misunderstood—nothing is farther from my anticipation than the destruction of the general government. My fear is that it will swallow up the governments of the states. I see by a late publication that the person who is perhaps to wield the destinies of this nation has long thought that the governments of the states ought not to exist. Take this fact with another fact, that a question is pending before a committee of this house whether the powers of the general government shall not be enlarged so as to narrow down still further the powers of the governments of the states. My fear is that the strength, grandeur and magnificence of this government will swallow up the power of the states. I have no hesitation in saying that the state which I represent, cannot by all the taxes, which can be so squeezed out of her yield her quota to the support of the general government by direct taxation. What do you infer from this, sir? Is the general government going to take the attitude of a state in the interior? Ask your greatest statesmen—ask the Secretary of the Treasury out of what this government grew. He will tell you, *out of our foreign relations.* It grows out of our power to supervise the concerns of this, with the sovereigns of other nations. The moment we disrobe ourselves of this general power, and the government of the U. States employs itself in matters of mere local and interior regulation—in laying out and cutting canals and building bridges, the governments of the states are expunged—from that moment they cease to exist. The people will ask themselves this question—Since the government of the U. States has nothing to do with foreign relations, and we have no money to pay for the support of two governments, where is the necessity of having two separate governments directed to the same objects? This is my fear, and it is a fear which I feel it my duty to express.

No, sir, two governments, each of them depending for support on one and the same people, and that support derived from direct taxation, cannot exist in this country. It is as much as the people of the country in which I live can do—I will go further, and say it is *more* than they can *now* do, to pay their contributions to the state treasury. They look forward to something like a restoration of the ancient state of things for their ability to do that, and to fulfil their engagements with one another.

My friend from North Carolina (Mr. Macon) has said that this idea of coercing the nations of Europe by refusing to have intercourse with them, is as old as the revolution. I wish to ask my friend from N. Caro-