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Congress of the U. States.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1, 1812.

The House yesterday went into committee of the whole, Gen. Breekenridge in the chair, on the 25,000 army bill. Mr. Clay, the speaker, after several incidental amendments had been completed, rose and addressed the chairman upwards of an hour, in favour of the bill and in favor of war. Perhaps it is because I do not like his reasoning that I was disappointed in his speech. It had not his usual force and elegance, and if it had any effect it was not in causing new convictions but confirming settled prejudices and purposes.

He proceeded to show that 25,000, added to the present force, would not be too large an army to effect the conquest of Canada, and garrison the maritime and other forts; and it was better to err, if at all, on the side of vigor. He supposed that in the fortress of Quebec alone there were six or seven thousand, and that fortress ought not to be attacked with less than double that number. Troops would be wanted to garrison the forts and strong holds in Upper Canada as fast as they were taken. In all armies, from desertion, sickness and other causes, it was to be supposed that a fifth, or perhaps a fourth, would be deficient, of the nominal force. With a large force the territorial war might be ended at once, though it might for years continue on the ocean. If we commenced with a small and inadequate force, the war would be protracted, and the expence increased. Of standing armies in time of peace he was no friend, but this would be in time of war, and for war. Nor was he afraid of the designs of any ambitious chief who might command the army, if disposed to overturn the liberties of the country, little could be effected by the pitiful force of 20 or 25,000 against seven millions of souls and a military force of one million at least capable of bearing arms. If even a state, or two states, should be refractory, the others might bring them to order. Some had wished the house had gone into convolve, but it would have been useless; it would be impossible long to hide our intentions: if the law was secret, the raising of the troops must be open, and its purposes known. In a mere pecuniary point of view, he considered open war preferable to the state in which we now are; by persevering in which we lose commerce, character, and a nation's best treasure, honor (what distinction he makes between character and honor I do not understand.) He combated the idea of England's fighting the battles of the world, considering her rather fighting for her own aggrandizement; as jealous of our rising power, especially commercial and naval, and solicitous, by wanton aggressions, to destroy that power. Nothing, he said, was to be gained by further forbearance. Opposition ought at once to be made. What has not Spain lost by her long submission to France? What should not we have lost, if, at the commencement of the revolution, we had not opposed the tea tax? This government, it has been said, is not fitted for offensive war, but invasions we may repel. What is the difference between invading our territory and blockading our coast? What between surrounding my farm, so as to prevent my egress, and actually invading it? Mr. Clay dwelt on the impressment of our seamen, and concluded with declaring that all things pointed to war, and that neither he, nor he trusted, the majority, would be deterred from pursuing the measures for which the situation of the country called, by any idle fears of losing their seats and power.

Mr. Widger spoke next; and in his homespun style uttered many useful truths. He was astonished that the speaker had never once opened his lips on the subject of the militia, the volunteers, the efficient force, the bulwark of the country. Yet he was not surprised that members from some states, where conscripts were used on training days for guns, should be silent on the subject of the militia. It is impossible to raise men by this bill. In New-England you would not get ten men out of a regiment to enlist: but if you pass the volunteer bill I dare warrant you as many as you wish. We have a militia in New-England, the regular standing army of the country. They are all equipped even to a priming wire and brush; and they'll fight: the militia there will fight: witness the battle of Bennington. Massachusetts during the war, furnished upwards of 67,000 soldiers. New-York 17,000, New Jersey 10,000, Pennsylvania 25,000, Maryland 13,000, and Virginia 26,000. I mention this to show that the physical strength of the country lies to the Northward and Eastward of you. If Massachusetts did so much then, what might she not do now?—I tell you that if you are in earnest and really want men, you must depend on the militia: you can raise none worth speaking of by this bill. If you make your bill for 10,000 instead of 25,000, you'll get just as many; and that will be but a very few: your recruiting officers, among us in New-England, won't get above five or six for a company in six months. If you don't get Canada till you get it by raising men according to this bill you won't get it at all. But, if you will empower the militia of New-England, you need not trouble your hands any more about it. Give me the power and I will raise a company at once large enough to take it, and you need make no more speeches, no more bills. You can't tell you again, raise any men by this bill. If my property depended on the protection of all the men this bill will raise, I'd get it ensured some other way. There are many in the house know that men can't be raised by this bill, and yet they'll

vote for it. I have 'em in my eye; I don't want to call names [looking at the Federal seats] they'll vote for these war measures, but when the question of war comes they'll flinch: and when asked why they'll plainly tell us that they only meant to encourage us, to give us rope, that we might get into difficulty, and be ruined in our political standing, and then they'll laugh at us. Well, I don't blame 'em; it is natural to parties—No, let us take up the Volunteer bill and depend on the militia, if you want to do any thing but make a show. And I would amend that bill: I would say. And be further enacted that every soldier who has been one month into actual service shall be entitled to one hundred acres of land; and if they are longer in service, give 'em two or three hundred, I don't care, there's enough of it, wild land in Canada; not the cultivated land; I would not take their farms from 'em, but say, keep your farm, brother Englishman, brother Canadian, we don't want it; we only want the wild land, and the jurisdiction of the soil—Yes, give 'em New-Englanders the land and they'll get it at once without your trouble. I can do it myself, I don't hesitate to say it, and there are many who know it, who believe it, in the house, though some don't, I know, but it is true: empower me and I'll see it done.

Mr. Boyd made a very plain good sense speech against the policy of going to war, but his voice did not admit of my hearing much.—We are, said he, to use a vast deal of money, much blood, and possibly our constitution. We have no money, and we shall destroy the means of getting money, the revenue.—We shall add no one knows how much to the public debt, and shall have no means of ever paying the interest.—When will the war end? What shall we gain by it? What must you not lose? If you get Canada, will that take off the Orders in Council? After the loss of Canada, will England be in a better humour so treat with us? What shall we gain on the ocean? Nothing but loss. No commerce, no revenue, no market for surplus produce.—How are we to get money to carry on the war? Oh, if we can borrow, how are we to pay the interest?—Suppose, while we are attacking them, an army lands in Florida or New-Orleans. How are they to be opposed? What can our few gun boats and larger vessels do with the British navy?

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7.

The 25,000 bill was called up yesterday a little after 12 o'clock. Mr. Stanford first addressed the chair.

Mr. Stanford apologized for having on Saturday expressed himself unintentionally in such manner as to be called to order. [He was called to order by Mr. Wright, for saying that he spoke, (according to the rule established by the House relative to the previous question,) by the courtesy of the majority.] The speaker however decided that he was in order. [He hoped he should not again be interrupted.] After a few observations not distinctly heard, Mr. Stanford spoke of the signs of the times, the heat and violence of party: a gentleman [Mr. Nelson] for only expressing his doubts whether he should support the committee, of foreign relations, in their ulterior measures, had gone through the ordeal of prescription from the Dan to the Beersheba of the south. He proved very conclusively that there had been formerly far greater cause for war than now.

After some other observations Mr. Stanford spoke in strong terms of the impropriety of the rule relative to the previous question, by which all debate could be ended at the call of one fifth of the house.

He declared that the decrees of France (arrete perhaps called) were in '99 far more outrageously monstrous than the present orders in council. [One of them he read to the House, by which vessels having any British goods on board were declared pirates; some others he read to prove that if honor demanded the resistance of war, there was formerly far greater cause for it.]

He took an extensive view of the conduct of the minority under the Feder. Administrations, and adverted to addresses of the Legislature of Virginia and their instructions to their senators and representatives in congress; to show how totally inconsistent with their present warlike sentiments and measures were their peace-loving opinions & pursuits in those days.

He said he was worn out with the constant repetition of the subject of impressments: and quoted some remarks of Mr. Monroe when minister at London, to show that the impressments were not so numerous as represented, and not affording us sufficient ground for war. He also quoted the last report of the secretary of state on that subject, which enumerated about 900, of which in fact many had never been in the United States, many were deserters, &c.

The gentleman from New-Hampshire (Harper) had said we must take the Bahama Islands. Mr. Stanford reprobated this ambitious and ruinous policy, this love of foreign conquest, that had made the nations of Europe miserable and would have the same effect here.

He said he believed that a consciousness, on the part of Great Britain that we could have taken Canada, had been the cause of our not being at war with her, for she otherwise certainly would not have borne our embargo and non-intercourse laws.—He thought Great Britain now, not struggling for conquest, but for her existence: against our non importation law, and the same excluding restrictive commercial system of the continent; and that instead of embarking in a ruinous war, we ought to depend on the continuance of the non-importation act.

The spirit of enterprise, this thirst for territory and dominion, this wish to extend our government to Hudson's Bay, the Gulph of California and the Pacific Ocean, would, he believed, change the very nature of our republican institutions and habits of the people; would be entering on a system of pursuits that would not merely be injurious but must be ruinous. He would adhere to the sound republican principles by which the present majority and former minority had been governed.

In the course of his remarks Mr. Stanford said there was a project meditated by the French government for sending a force to this country in 1812. When Mr. S. had done speaking Mr. Blount said something which I could not distinctly hear on account of the noise in the house, but disputing the correctness of Mr. Stanford's declaration respecting this project. Mr. Stanford again declared he knew the fact from the most unquestionable authority; and appealed to Mr. Randolph for confirmation. Mr. Randolph declared that such information had come to his knowledge from as good authority, as creditable as any in the world: and that if perchance the debate on this subject at this time should escape mutilation and perversion and go fairly to the public, it would occasion the production of the complete evidence of the fact. Mr. Blount said he had heard these things said before but had never regarded them as amounting to proof, nor could he now.

[Whether this information came from Mr. Geary, Mr. Davis, or a French agent here, I do not know. It is certainly important that such a fact should go to the public with unequivocal proof. The assertions so solemnly made by Mr. Stanford and Mr. Randolph are sufficient authority of themselves; but if accompanied by that evidence from which the most unbelieving cannot fly, it cannot be without its effect on the public mind. The project of sending an army to join the democrats in 1812 to overthrow the federal administration, was, to be sure, a mad plan; but it shows the disposition of the French government, by which it is doubtless still actuated, and which would spur it even now to the execution of similar plans, were not the state of Europe such as to forbid the "Arch Fiends" turning any thing but his "baleful eyes" to this country.]

Mr. Boyd and Mr. Stow made each a short but pertinent speech against the bill.

Mr. Williams considered this decision on the bill as decisive of the question of war or peace. There were, he said, some objectionable parts in the bill, but as he agreed to the principle of the bill he should vote for it; and especially as he considered it the first step of a war against Great Britain. He considered the conduct of Great Britain towards the United States as amounting in substance to an invasion of our territory.

Mr. Williams replied to the greater part of the speech of Mr. Sheffield on Friday, and spoke about an hour and a half, with great vehemence, yet not without some ingenuity.

The question was then taken on the final passage of the bill: Ayes 94, Noes 34.

CIRCULAR.

To the Stockholders of the Bank of the U. States, resident in England.

London, May, 1811.

No. 8. Bishopsgate Street.

The refusal of the congress of the U. States of America to renew the expired Charter of the National Bank places the European Proprietors of the Stock of that Institution in a situation of much perplexity and difficulty. From our long connexion with those Proprietors we have felt it to be our duty to make an offer on this occasion, of our advice and assistance, which has only been delayed by our doubt and embarrassment what to advise on such an occasion. It becomes, however, very necessary to do something; and that the Proprietors may have all the information which we possess, not only of the facts of this case, but of the opinions entertained in America, we must request their perusal of the annexed copy of a letter from a house of the first respectability in Philadelphia, one of the partners of which is one of the Trustees of the liquidation of the Bank's concerns.

You will perceive that the Trustees are authorized to apply again to Congress at their next session for a renewal of their Charter; and, in case of failure, to the several legislatures of the Northern States where the popular opinion has been more generally in favor of the renewal. What success may attend these applications, it is impossible to conjecture; but in the mean time, it is essential that the proprietors should empower some person to act for them, either for the renewal of the old shares towards a new Bank, or should both these projects fail to receive and remit the proceeds of the liquidation of the concern.

You must be aware that such a power must be attended with a confidence in the parties in America almost unlimited: but for this, under all the circumstances of the case, we see no remedy. To relieve the British Proprietors, however from a part of this risk, we have determined to submit to them the following alternative proposals for their choice:—If they will transmit to us their certificates with blank powers of Attorney, we will send them out to proper persons in America; and each Proprietor, in sending his Shares, will state in his letter to us, whether he empowers our Agent to act generally for him to the best of his judgment, or merely to receive and remit the proceeds of his Share of the liquidation of the old bank; or whether he chuses to abide (supposing that he has a choice) by the decision of the majority of the Stockholders.—The charges we propose making for Agency will be as follows, viz.

1. Should Congress renew the Old Charter, the Certificates shall be returned to the Shareholders here, and the American House shall be allowed one half per cent. on the Capital for their trouble.

2. Should the present Shareholders be incorporated into a New Bank, the American House shall be allowed for their Commission, on such an operation, one per cent.

In neither of the above cases shall we make any charge, excepting such as we may actually incur for postages, &c. unless our responsibility is desired for the American house, which we shall consent to give for one half per cent.

3. Should the old Bank be liquidated, and the capital remitted, the American house shall charge one per cent; to which we shall add, for receiving and paying here one half per cent.

—In this case the risk, both of agency and of bills remitted, will of course, be for the proprietors: or we shall be ready, for a single commission of two and a half per cent. to make ourselves responsible for both risks, and for all charges.

Our agents in America will be persons entitled to entire confidence, or we should not offer our guarantee; but we make these different proposals, that the proprietors may have a choice, and not be compelled to rely on persons not known to them. Our guarantee applies, of course, to the due application of any monies or securities our agents may receive, and not for any error in judgment, in deciding a case of so much difficulty, still less for any political consequences.

Should you therefore, think proper to avail yourself of our agency, you will please to transmit to us the certificates of your shares, with the usual power of attorney in blank, stating distinctly, in your letter to us, whether you leave to our agent full power to decide for you, or merely to attend to the receipt and remittance of the liquidation of your capital: and secondly, whether you prefer to have our responsibility, or not, on the terms proposed.

We beg leave to add, that it is indifferent to us which choice you may think proper to make. We offer an alternative, to render the business less complicated to the stockholder: but should any of them prefer to act through other channels in America, without our intermediate agency, we shall be happy to give them our advice and assistance for this purpose; it being our principal wish to give to persons, with whom we have been so long and so satisfactorily connected, the aid which the present unexpected state of their property appears to require.

We have the honor to be,

Your obedient servants,

BARING, BROTHERS & Co.

Extract of a letter, dated Philadelphia March 14 1811.

Congress having risen without renewing the charter of the Bank of the United States, that institution has become dissolved, and the settlement of its concerns committed by the stockholders to eighteen trustees, taken from the last direction, namely—

David Lenox, late President of the Bank, Elias Boudinot, Samuel Coates, Joseph Sims, James C. Fisher, George Fox, Henry Pratt, Thomas M. Willing, Robert Smith, Paschal Hollingsworth, Horace Binney, George Harrison, John Stytle, Archibald McCall, Paul Siemen—all Philadelphia: Wm. Bayard, Oliver Walcott and Abijah Hammond—all New-York.

These gentlemen are authorised to collect all the debts due to the bank and to discharge all its engagements, as soon as practicable. The first dividend to be paid the Stockholders, is to take place on the first day of June, 1812, and the trustees are directed to divide whenever there is 10 per cent on hand. We presume, however, that at least two years will elapse before the capital can be reimbursed to the stockholders, after which the surplus will be for a final dividend.

From the best information we can collect on this business, more than a return of your capital, say 400 for each share, with interest at 5 per cent. till paid, cannot be expected. The trustees have authority again to apply to congress for a charter, or to each state legislature, as they think proper, in the event of a refusal by congress. It is contemplated to ask of Pennsylvania, New-York, and Massachusetts, charters to embrace the whole capital of \$10,000,000; the charter, however, not to be obligatory, unless a majority of the stockholders think it advisable to accept one or all of them. It would certainly render the stock more valuable, to concentrate the bank in the commercial states of Pennsylvania, New-York and Massachusetts, where habits of punctuality are established, and where the strength of the population of this country exists.

The late census, taken by direction of the government, exhibits in the northern and middle sections of the United States, that is, in the Atlantic states, to the northward of the Potomac, a population of four millions, of which a small fraction in Maryland is black. In the district above described, the operations of the State Bank, would operate with perfect safety, and great benefit to the proprietors; at any rate, the value of your stock would be increased above par, which would enable you to close your concern by a beneficial sale, if you thought proper.

Having acted as your agents, heretofore, we now offer to you our service either for the purpose of receiving from the trustees your dividend of capital when paid, or of subscribing into the new institution, under the charters, as contemplated.