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Congress of the United States.

From the Philadelphia Register.  
SECRET DEBATE ON THE EMBARGO.  
CONTINUED.

Mr. Clay said those who voted for the former embargo, are bound now to vote for war. It ought to have succeeded the termination of that measure, which would have been the policy. He said he was at issue with the gentleman as to the public sentiment—That it is with us, is proved by the glowing and patriotic resolutions of fourteen legislatures. He said there were no divisions in the southern and western states—Federalists and Republicans were united for war.

Mr. Boyd, of New Jersey, said while he admired the fire and spirit of the honorable speaker, he thought we should do well to be considerate. He asked whether we are prepared to assail our enemy or repel her attacks? He asked, whether it is wise in an unarmed nation, as we are to commence hostilities against one so completely prepared?

Mr. Randolph then said he wished to state to the committee a detail of what happened before the committee of foreign relations in a conference with Mr. Monroe.

Mr. Widgery objected to it, as not in order, and the chairman said he thought it irrelevant.

Mr. Randolph, said his object was to shew that the proposition for this measure originally came from that committee, and was not intended as a war measure. He thought it relevant, as it was competent to shew that the ideas of the speaker are wrong.

Mr. Seybert said, that in voting for the several important measures which congress have agreed to this session, he felt himself pledged to go to war; that he was in favor of an embargo as a precautionary measure and precursor to war. When we voted for the 25,000 men, he supposed the executive intended war—but he has now such information from a friend in whom he confides, as leads him to believe that offensive operations are not meant. We ought to be better prepared before we engage in war. He had observed in the Baltimore papers, that the British have ordered a squadron, and 20 000 men for our coast.

Mr. Smilie expressed his surprise at the observations of his friend and colleague: He did not know from what quarter he had obtained his information, that the president does not mean war. Does he believe he has all this time been deceiving the legislature? He had heard but one sentiment from the president, which is, that we are at war unless Great Britain relents. The President had always supposed that embargo must precede war—the only difference has been as to the time, which has been finally compromised. The embargo is intended as a war measure. He would assure his colleague it was intended by both the executive and the committee of foreign relations. That being now up, he would observe, that at the beginning of the session, he was not so warm for war as many were, but he was for commercial restrictions. He was not for the 25 000 men; but as the house have determined otherwise, he would now go to war—if we now recede we shall be a reproach among all nations.

Mr. Randolph said, it will appear that the embargo is not preparatory to war, that is to say, it was not necessarily so, and of course not of the character which the speaker has considered it. From his minutes (among other facts) it appeared, that Mr. Monroe said to the committee, that the president thought we ought to declare war before we adjourn, unless Great Britain recedes, of which there was no prospect—that there was conversation about an embargo. Mr. Monroe was asked by some of the committee, whether the president would recommend it by message, he answered that he would, if he could be assured it would be acceptable to the house. He also said, Mr. Barlow had been instructed to represent to the French government our sense of the injuries received, and to press upon them our demands for reparation; that if she refused us justice, the embargo would leave the policy as respects France, and indeed of both countries, in our hands. He was asked if any essential alterations would be made within 60 days, in the defence of our maritime frontier or seaports? Mr. M. answered, that pretty considerable preparations would be made. He said, New-York was now in a respectable state of defence, but not such as to resist a formidable fleet—but, it was not to be expected that such a kind of war would be carried on. It was replied, that we must expect what commonly happens in wars. Mr. M. said that although a great distress and injury might take place in one part of the union, it would not essentially affect the population or resources or union at large. As to the prepared state of the country, he said, in case of a declaration of war, the president would not feel himself bound to take upon himself more than his share of the responsibility. Mr. M. said, the unprepared state of the country was the only reason why ulterior measures should be deferred.

Mr. Randolph then said, that the step we are about taking is too high a price to pay for the consistency of gentlemen, who think they have gone too far to recede; it is too expensive to bolster them up in this way. He asked what will be the situation of these people in sixty days? Put your note into the bank, and see how soon it will be out. What will be the condition of this unhappy, misguided country? What would it have been for 60, 120, 365 days past? He had hoped not to have seen the old story of the dog worrying the cat, &c. realized. Are the majority, in conse-

quence of having been goaded by the presses, to plunge the people into a war by bringing them first to the whipping post and then by exciting their spirit. He would assure the house the spirit of the people is not up to it at this time: if so, there would be no necessity of these provocatives to excite this false spirit—this kind of Dutch courage. If you mean war, if the spirit of the country is up to it, why have you been spending five months in idle debate.

The Speaker (Mr. Clay) called Mr. Randolph to order, for charging the house with spending five months in idle debate.

The Chairman decided that the expression was not out of order.

Mr. Wright appealed. The decision of the chairman was confirmed—ayes 50, noes 49.

Mr. Randolph proceeded, and said he would inform gentlemen in this house, that he had known gentlemen not inferior in gallantry, in wisdom, in experience, in the talents of a statesman, to any upon this floor, who have been consigned to oblivion for advocating a war against the public sentiment. Did we not then say to those gentlemen, the war they advocated was against the public sentiment? In two years from this time, the people will tell you that you rated your consistency at more than it was worth, more than we are willing to pay for it—that your disgrace is not our disgrace.

What said the people to the projected war twelve years ago? That they would not pay their money and sacrifice their property for your consistency. If it would not discover a want of decorum, he would ask what has become of the licence bill against trading under licences to France, a measure which was recommended in the President's message at the beginning of the session? He said, he understood the ship Hannibal, which was lately captured by the British, sailed under one of those licences. He does not mean to palliate that capture; but it is strange that Great Britain should capture our vessels, when we have notified her that we are about invading her terra firma. He believed the way war will happen, if it does happen, will be by Great Britain attacking and perhaps destroying some of our seaports, which it is calculated will render it popular in this country. The plan is now to lay an embargo—and the reason is, we have had one, and it has failed. This appears to him to be a non sequitur.

Messrs. Grundy and Calhoun said they were not impressed with a recollection of the facts which occurred before the committee of foreign relations, in the same manner as had been stated by Mr. Randolph. They did not recollect that Mr. Monroe said the embargo would leave the policy, as respects both belligerents, in our hands.

Mr. Porter said he was in favour of an embargo, as a measure which ought to precede war; but it is very important that we should be prepared before we commence the war.—He did not believe it was possible to commence it with safety within four months from this time. Such a measure as an embargo would be of immense injury to the state of New-York, on account of their flour which had not gone to market.

The committee rose and reported the bill without amendment, and the question was, shall it be engrossed for a third reading?

Mr. Snow then expressed his alarm and astonishment at the course we were taking. He said the country was wholly unprepared to enter into a war within the time which had been mentioned. He warned gentlemen of their danger, and the ruin which threatened our defenceless towns. The authority which he had cited ought to have more weight than the hearsays of some young members in this house.—The elections of the maritime parts of the country will put your places into the possession of your political adversaries. You may be assured you tread on deceitful ground. The intelligent part of the community at the north are against the war. There is no calculating the injury it will be to the state of New-York.

Mr. Bassett spoke in favour of the measure, and respecting the injuries we have received from Great Britain.

The question then was, On what day shall it be read?

Mr. Grundy moved it be read immediately.

Mr. Macon proposed to read.

Mr. Quincy said, (it then being half past 7 o'clock in the evening) he had not been able to take any part in the debate; that the measure which had been thus hurried, was extremely interesting to his immediate constituents, and he was very anxious to express his sentiments upon it—but he was so fatigued with the tedious sitting, that he was unable to do it this evening, and hoped the house would indulge him until to-morrow. He would not condescend to debate such a question in the present state of the house, and he asked for the ayes and noes on Mr. Macon's motion, which were agreed to be taken.

Mr. D. R. Williams said he was desirous to grant the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts. It was in his opinion a very reasonable one. The department of the other side of the house, had, during the whole of the session, been very gentlemanly towards the majority—and Sir, said he, will you now refuse to give them an opportunity to express their sentiments upon a measure, which, in their view, is so important? He said that policy on the part of the majority ought to dictate the indulgence asked for. The majority now stand on high ground—what will be said, and what will be the consequence of a refusal?—We shall lose the ground on which we now stand.

Mr. Macon was of the same opinion—he thought

the minority had acted with more propriety than he ever knew in a minority.

Mr. Wright objected, although he was willing to acknowledge the minority had conducted with propriety.

Mr. Nelson said it appeared to him, that according to the importance of subjects, so is our precipitancy. Is the minority thus to be dragged into this measure? For one, he wished to reflect upon it. The first intimation he had of this measure, was the Message. If it is intended as a precautionary measure, as the precursor to war, as some gentlemen have treated it, it is a question of doubt in his mind. He thought it better to arm our merchant-men—to grant letters of marque and reprisal—and repeal our non importation law. We have already suffered enough under our restrictive system. If we pass the bill to-night, it cannot be a law until the other branch act upon it. When we are going to war, it will be well to know that we have the spontaneous support of more than one half of the community.

Mr. Aston said he would have voted for the motion, if the gentleman had not asked for the ayes and noes; but as he appears desirous to marshal one side of the house against the other, he was not disposed to gratify him in his request.

Mr. Randolph made a few more remarks.

Mr. Widgery declared war to be inevitable, and ought not to be delayed—on this account he was against postponing the bill until to-morrow. If we do it at all, it ought to be speedily. It is not to be believed that argument will change a single vote. The responsibility is on the majority.

The question on reading to-morrow, was negatived, 74 to 54.

It was then read a third time—and on the question, Shall the bill pass; it was carried, ayes 70, noes 41.

Mr. Quincy expressed, in strong terms, his abhorrence of this measure. He said, that if he believed it to be a preparation for war, he should have a less indignant sense of the injury, than he felt now, as he deemed it a pure, unsophisticated, reinstated embargo. The limitation of sixty or ninety days, gave little consolation or hope to him; because he knew how easily the same power which originated could continue this oppressive measure.

He said that his objection was, that it was not what it pretended to be; and was, what it pretended not to be—that it was not embargo, preparatory to war. But that it was embargo as substitute for the question of declaring war. It was true that it was advocated as a step incipient to a state of war, and by way of preparation for it, by gentlemen whose sincerity he was yet bound to respect. He could not however yield the conviction of his senses and reflections to their asseverations; nor declare in compliance to any, let them be as respectable as they might, that he saw in this measure, more or less, than its features indicated.

Is this embargo what it pretends to be, preparation for war? In the first place, no sudden attack is expected from Great Britain. It is not suggested that we have a title of evidence, relative to any hostility of her temper, which is not possessed by the whole community. The president has not communicated to us one document, or reason for the measure. He only signifies his pleasure. An embargo, as preparatory to war, presupposes some new and hidden danger not known to the mercantile community. In such case, when the government see a danger, of which the merchant is unapprised, it may be wise to stay the departure of property, until the nature and extent of it be explained; but not a moment longer. For, let the state of things be that of war or peace, the principle is precisely the same; the interest which the community has, in the property of individuals, is best preserved by leaving its management to the interest of the immediate proprietor, after he is made acquainted with the circumstances of the times which have a tendency to increase its exposure.

The reason of an embargo, considered as an incipient step to war, is either to save our property from depredation abroad, or keep property which we want at home. Now it happens that the nature of the great mass of our exports is such that there is little danger of depredation from the enemy we pretend to fear abroad, and little want of the articles most likely to be exposed at home. The total export of the last year amounted, as appears by the report of the secretary of the treasury, to forty-five millions of dollars. It also appears by the report, that our exports to Great Britain and her dependencies, and also to those of Spain and Portugal, were thirty eight millions five hundred thousand dollars—nearly eight eighths in value of our whole exports have been, and continue to be, to the dominions of that very power from which so much is pretended to be apprehended. Now, it is well known that these articles are of very great necessity and importance to her, and whether even in the case of actual war between our countries, Great Britain would capture them, might be questionable. But that she would capture them, on the mere preparation, before and really hostile act was committed on our part, is not only unreasonable but absolutely absurd to expect. This very commerce, which, by the passing of this bill you indicate, it is her intention to prohibit or destroy, it is her obvious and undeniable policy to unite and cherish; besides, the articles are in a very great proportion perishable, which by this embargo are to be prohibited from going to market. Which is the best? To keep them at home, to a certain loss and probable ruin, or adventure them abroad to a possi-

ble loss and highly probable gain? Ask your merchant. Ask common sense.

But, it is said "we must protect our merchant." Heaven help our merchants from embargo protection! It is said that "the present condition of things has been brought upon the country by the merchants—that it was their clamour in 1805 and '6. which first put congress upon this system of coercive restriction, of which they now so much complain." It is true that in those years the merchants did petition, not for an embargo—not for commercial embarrassments and annihilation, but for protection. They at that time really thought that this national government was formed for protection of all the great interests of the country. If "it was a grievous fault," grievously have the merchants answered it." They asked for relief, and you sent them embarrassment. They asked for defence, and you imposed embargo. They asked "bread," and you gave them a "stone." They asked a "fish," and you gave a "serpent." Grant that the fault was great: suppose that they did mistake the nature and character of the government; is the penalty they incurred by this error never to be remitted? Permit them once to escape, and my word for it they will never again give you an apology for this destructive protection. If they do, they will richly deserve all the misery, which, under the name of protection, you can find means to visit upon them. Your tender mercies are cruelities. The merchants hate and spurn this ruinous defence.

Mr. Quincy then took notice of an intimation which had been thrown out in relation to an express sent off on the day preceding the message of the President, giving information that an embargo would be proposed the ensuing day. He said that there was no necessity of speaking of that matter, by distant allusion, as if there was any thing that sought concealment. This is not an affair, said Mr. Q. that shuns the light. I had the honour and the happiness, in conjunction with another member of this house, from New-York, (Mr. Emott), and a senator from Massachusetts, (Mr. Lloyd), to transmit that intelligence to Philadelphia, New-York and Boston, by an express which started on Tuesday afternoon. In doing this we violated no obligation, even of the most remote and delicate kind. The fact that the committee of foreign relations had decided that an embargo should be proposed on Wednesday, was openly avowed here on Tuesday by various members of this house—Among others, I was informed of it.—I shall always be grateful to the gentlemen who gave me that information. Indeed the whole mercantile community are under great obligations to the members of the committee of foreign relations, for their feeling and patriotism in resolving on that disclosure. It enabled us, by anticipating the mail, to give an opportunity for great masses of property to escape from the ruin our cabinet was meditating for them. Yes, sir—To escape into the jaws of the British lion, or of the French tyger, which are places of refuge, of joy and delight, when compared with the snare and lang of this Hyena, embargo.—What was the effect of this information? When it reached Philadelphia, the whole mercantile class was in motion, and all that had it in their power were flying in all directions from the coming mischief, as tho' it were a plague and a pestilence. Look at the moment on the river below Alexandria. The seamen towing down their vessels, against wind and tide, anxious only to escape from a country which destroys under the mask of preparing for war.

It is said that the embargo is "a mere notice to the merchant. If this were the case, why all these pains and penalties? Why these previous bonds, imposed on our consoling trade? If you really intend war, if this measure is merely preparation and not a substitute for it, lay your embargo—But let it be mere general prohibition, without penalty. You will then have done your duty. If they go and are captured, they have no cause of complaint. But it is said, "shall we feed our enemies?" That question unravels the whole plot. It is an embargo for coercion, and not for preparation. In reply, I say yes. Feed your enemies. If they are in no danger of being reduced by famine, and if the article of food you do not want, and it will perish without a market.

The gentlemen who advocate this bill seem to be much offended that some of us do not believe that it is their intention to declare war at the end of the time limited. They treat the suggestion as a reflection on their personal veracity. I question not either the sincerity or veracity of the gentlemen who make these declarations. But those gentlemen must excuse me, if I prefer to reason concerning future events, rather from the nature of things, than from the state of their minds. I make no suggestion concerning the intentions of the gentleman on this floor; concerning the intentions of our cabinet, and concerning the ability, in relation to actual war, I shall not hesitate both to make suggestions & urge reasonings. And I shall not deem myself precluded from the use of my understanding concerning the result of measures, because my calculations contradict any man's declared intentions. The public has little concern about what you intend. It has much in what you can execute.

I then say, distinctly, I do not believe that this embargo is a preparation for war; but I do believe that it is a refuge from the question of declaring war. My reason tells me that war is not intended, because of your want of preparation, and of your neglect of it. If war were intended, would the men at helm have employed the five months in a way so utterly inefficient and inconsistent with such an  
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