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Congressional.

To the Citizens of the Thirtieth Congressional District of North Carolina.

Fellow Citizens,—Perhaps at no former period have more important measures been agitated, than at the present session of Congress. It will be recollecting that an attempt was made at the last session to repeal the laws imposing internal taxes. After considerable time had been employed discussing the measure, it was finally determined in the negative by a small majority. This decision was regarded as improper and not called for at that time, by the exigencies of the country. The revenue had been prosperous and productive, in a degree much beyond the statements exhibited by the Secretary of the Treasury. In the year 1846, it was calculated that the whole revenue would be something upwards of twenty-five millions of dollars. Instead of this, we had more than thirty-eight millions. Last year, it was estimated that the duty on imported goods would not exceed twelve millions of dollars; but it is found to be nearly twenty-two millions. This progressive accumulation of revenue, indicated the propriety of discontinuing the taxes at the last session; but the measure was then defeated. It has therefore been reserved for Congress to abolish at the present session, the whole of that obnoxious system, which pressed so heavily on many portions of the country. It could no longer be argued that the taxes were necessary, because, from the estimates furnished by the Treasury Department, it seems we shall have more money than can be advantageously employed, unless we adopt the novel and unprecedented scheme of purchasing the public debt at a price above its par value. No nation, it is believed, has ever done so under any circumstances; and when we reflect that many of the public creditors who started most at the time our necessities were greatest, any other course would appear to be preferable. It would be better the duties on imported goods should be lessened, than we should have a surplus revenue, to gratify still more the exorbitant demands of those who hold the public debt. The farmers and planters who are the great consumers, and who consequently pay nearly all the revenue from customs, would find a benefit in the course here suggested. It is an object with them to purchase commodities of every kind upon the cheapest terms, and rather than conduce to the further gratification of avaricious and stock-jobbers, by advancing a premium for the debt, I would reduce or repeal some of the duties on importations. A proposition has been made to repeal the duty on imported salt. This is an article of the first necessity, and if the revenue arising from it, is not absolutely wanted, the tax should be discontinued. Believing, as I was well convinced last session, that the estimates offered by the Treasury Department are too low, and knowing we shall not, under any probable circumstances, want the money, I am in favour of abolishing the duty on salt. But it is feared the proposition, like the attempt last year, to get rid of the internal taxes, may not be successful. In the course of another year, however, we may hope to effect the repeal of the salt tax, as we have already done of the internal taxes.

Permit me, fellow citizens to congratulate you, on the relief which must have been experienced by the repeal of the internal taxes. The system was unequal in its operation, was restrictive and vexatious in its provisions. It pressed heavily on those parts of the country distant from the market, while it was scarcely felt by those persons residing nearer the seaboard. The repeal also exhibits proof of the force and efficacy of our republican institutions. In most other countries the people are taxed without their consent; if oppressed, they are obliged to sustain the oppression, patiently as they can, and hopeless of relief, unless with the good pleasure and indulgence of their rulers; but here a different state of things exists. Although the people of the United States, will cheerfully submit to taxes when wanted for the support of government, yet they have always the power to be relieved from any thing of the sort, if not necessary. This consists in the essential difference between a Republic and any other form of government, and it cannot fail to secure our love for the one, but our distrust of the other.

Prosperous and happy as our present condition, measures have nevertheless been attempted, which, if they had succeeded, would probably lead to a very different state of things. It is mentioned to you at the close of the last session, that considerable interest had been excited in behalf of the South American Patriots. It may be affirmed, that there is not one of our citizens, who does not wish them success in their struggle for independence; but this is widely different from participating in their quarrels, and involving ourselves in difficulty. The people in choosing representatives of the Thirtieth Congress, did not expect they would

go crusading in defence of the liberties of the world. It was expected on the contrary, that we would remain at home & guard vigilantly our own interest. We have but just recovered from the taxes & other embarrassments growing out of the late war, and it would be worse than folly, to do any act which might tend to their renewal. The proposition, therefore, which was made to send a Minister to certain provinces in South America, could not but be viewed with distrust and apprehension. If we were thus to interfere in that contest, Spain would probably consider it a cause for war. We should then either have all Europe combined against us, or if England should remain neutral, while Spain and the United States were at war, our commerce must be annihilated. British Privateers, sailing under Spanish colours, would add greatly to the insurance upon American tonnage, and thereby destroy the carrying trade. A war under such circumstances, would probably be not less destructive, than the late conflict with England—but why relinquish the advantages of our present situation why forego the blessings of peace? The answer generally has been that the people of South America are struggling for their independence, and the government of the United States, being the only Republic on earth, should thus far co-operate with them in that work, so consecrated to our feelings and dear to our interests. To this it may be replied, that as we are the only Republic, so we should be the most prudent and circumspect of all other people, lest we forfeit the valuable inheritance. War is not the natural element of Republics; the despotism of an army and prodigal expenditures attending it, must render a war hostile to the genius of free government. Other nations would have cause to deride us, if we should become the slaves of tyranny and taxation, in order to give liberty and independence to the Spaniards. As to any commercial advantages we might expect to enjoy, they would be very inconsiderable. The people of South America are exclusively agriculturalists, and must continue so for ages. Their country as well as our own is too new to engage in manufacturing establishments. Corn, cotton and tobacco, the great articles of our trade, are also furnished in superabundance by them, and not as our planters and farmers should become manufacturers, a change to be deprecated rather than desired, we could have nothing in which to carry on extensive commerce with those people. We have therefore, only a moral interest in their cause, the same that we should feel for the rights and happiness of mankind in general. The President in his message to Congress at the beginning of the session, observed that the contest between Spain and her colonies, was regarded by the United States, as a civil war, in which both parties had equal claims to our respect and neutrality. It is believed after the most mature deliberation which can be given to the question, the people of our country will fully concur in the view, which has been taken of it by the President and Congress. The Marquis De La Fayette, said "that for a nation to be free, it is sufficient that she wills it." The colonies of Spain have not yet willed their independence; they are distracted and divided among themselves, and if they have not union of design, or combination of effort enough, to become disengaged from the yoke of Old Spain, they would be unable to maintain their cause after it should have been established for them by the intervention of a third power. In order to render any assistance effectual, we must aid them with fleets and armies, as well to support as to gain their independence. Peace assuredly is most conducive to our interests, and we should ill deserve the blessings we enjoy, were we to engage in an enterprise so hazardous, if not enervating.

The message from the President to Congress, on the fourteenth of March last, discloses the fact that our affairs with the Government of Old Spain, are very critically situated. We have cause for war against Spain directly, and if it must ensue, it is better it should come on in this way, than we should attack her through the medium of the colonies. If an attack be made through the colonies, a sentiment no doubt will exist in Europe to the prejudice of the United States. It is the duty of a nation about to commence hostilities, to be satisfied that the cause is just, and to conduct in such manner as to have the good wishes of the world. In a just cause our own countrymen would feel that buoyant spirit, which have never failed to give them ultimate triumph. But a war with Spain notwithstanding the justice of our cause, would be impolitic in the existing state of the world. Were we to engage in behalf of the colonies, the combined power of Europe would be drawn out against us, or it would remain neutral; in either of which events the commerce of the United States must be swept from the ocean. If we attack Spain directly, the same disastrous consequences may follow, not from any resistance which she could make, but from that course of policy which the other nations of Europe might find it convenient or practicable to pursue. A few years more of peace and prosperity will place us in a situation to bid defiance to any combination of enemies which may assail us. It is true, the injuries offered by Spain have been tolerated for some time, but it is prudent to wait yet a while longer before we proceed to the last resort. The power of Spain is lessening daily, while that of the United States is rapidly augmenting. On this ground then, no apprehensions can be entertained. These views have deter-

mined me to oppose any measure which might tend directly or indirectly to bring on war. In doing so, I believed I was pursuing the real interest of the country. It is for those whom I have the honor to represent, to pronounce whether such sentiments are in accordance with their own.

Don Vincente Pazos, who signed himself the agent of the provinces of Venezuela, New Granada, and Mexico, presented a memorial to Congress on the first of March, complaining of the occupation of Amelia Island, and asking indemnification for certain property alleged to have been taken at the capture of that place by the United States. He stated that he had petitioned the President, but not having obtained satisfaction, he was induced to appeal to Congress, in the hope that he would get from them the justice denied to him by the executive. Nothing for impudence or insult has equalled this memorial, since the establishment of our government. Genet, the French Minister, once threatened to appeal from the decision of Washington, to the people. The people galled by that sense of patriotism, which will ever animate their bosoms, indignantly repelled the idea of their uniting with any foreigner against their own government. The threat of the Frenchman was therefore no sooner made, than he was denounced and universally reprobated. The conduct of Pazos was worse than that of Genet, for he actually appealed from the President to Congress. Congress treated it as it deserved, by refusing to hear the petition. What kind of figure should we make to ourselves, and to the world, if we permit any foreigner, either Spaniard, Frenchman or Englishman, to sow the seeds of discord between the President and the people or their representatives. Whatever dissensions may exist among ourselves, we should present an undivided and solid phalanx to all foreigners and foreign governments. Such was the view taken of the memorial, and the house by an overwhelming majority, decided that they would not receive it.

Contrary to my expectations Congress have ascertained the rate of compensation to members at eight dollars a day and the same for every twenty miles travelling. On this occasion my voice and my vote have been uniformly in the negative.

A general system of bankruptcy was proposed and elaborately discussed in the House. The constitution gives Congress the power to pass uniform laws on this subject, but it has never been exercised except in one instance. In 1800 a bankrupt law was passed to continue in force five years, but it was repealed in 1803 before the time expired. This fact operated more on my mind than the volume of theoretical reasoning. It was found on experiment that the law did not answer the purposes which had been intended. Instead of relieving only the honest and unfortunate debtor, it proved to be the source of many fraudulent and corrupt transactions, by which unsuspecting creditors were cheated out of their just demands. A system of bankruptcy would differ from the common insolvent laws principally in this, that by the former the person and property of the debtor, who had availed himself of it, would forever afterwards be free from responsibility to his creditors. Whereas by the insolvent laws, although the body of a debtor may be discharged from imprisonment yet his property is always liable to the payment of his debts. Another provision of the bill was, that merchants only should be entitled to its benefits. While the merchant then could be discharged from his creditors on the payment of two shillings or less in the pound, the farmers and planters would be held liable to pay to the uttermost farthing. Exclusive privileges of this kind ought not to be conferred on any portion of the community however respectable it may be. The merchants are indeed a deserving and meritorious part of our society. By the aid of their talents, industry and enterprise, the character of the nation has been promoted and its wealth increased. Our splendid naval victories during the war, and abundant revenue since the peace are so many evidences of the importance and value of commercial pursuits. But if yielding this tribute of respect to one class we should not forget our obligations and duties to another, more numerous and consequently more interesting to the country—I mean the cultivators of our soil. This proposition was finally rejected.

A bill has been passed for the relief of such officers and soldiers of the revolution as may be in indigent circumstances. The law and the rules to be observed in making applications for relief, will be published in the principal newspapers, throughout the United States, for the benefit of those who may be interested in the information.

A bill on the subject of expatriation has been before Congress. It proposed that any citizen of the United States might go before a judge and renounce his country. It appeared to me the measure was replete with evil. No law should be passed by which the people of this or any other country could in that way renounce their allegiance; throw off all the wholesome restraints of law; turn pirates or otherwise offend against the peace of the world without fear of any suitable punishment. Such I conceived would be the effects of the measure, though certainly not designed by the gentleman who proposed it.

Many bills of importance are now pending, such as a bill to organize the militia; to regulate intercourse with the British West India Islands; to lay a further duty on imported iron, &c. It is uncertain what will be their fate. The protracted duration and expense of the

war against the Seminole Indians is a subject of infinite surprise and regret. Much of the delay and perhaps not a little of the bloodshed are imputable to the existing system of furnishing provisions to the army by contract. A bill has passed the Senate and is now before the House of Representatives proposing to change this system into a commissariat. It is to be hoped it will pass; for any state of things is preferable to the present.

It is due to you, fellow citizens as well as to myself, to mention a disgusting occurrence: A person called col. John Anderson came on from the Michigan Territory having in his own and charged with others to a considerable amount. It became my duty, from the official station which I held on the committee, to examine particularly into the nature of these claims, and report facts to the House. For the purpose no doubt of operating undue influence on my mind, he presented me with a letter, promising to give me, when he should get the money from the Treasury, the sum of five hundred dollars as compensation for extra trouble. The offer was repelled in a manner, I hope, as consistent with my duty to you, as a proper regard for my own character.

This letter is already extended to a length I did not anticipate. To give a view of all questions which have been agitated would perhaps be tedious and unprofitable. An immense mass of business has been before Congress and I have only touched some of the most leading and interesting topics. The duties of a laborious committee constantly pressing upon me during the Session, have rendered it impossible to correspond so often with the citizens of the district as I could have wished. It is hoped nothing will be seen in this but an increased regard for the good of those whom I have the honor to represent. Attention to their interests, it may be said, required that the business immediately before me should not be neglected.

Your friend, and fellow citizen,
LEWIS WILLIAMS.
Washington, April 7th, 1848.

MR. STEWART'S CIRCULAR.

WASHINGTON, APRIL 13th, 1848.

I take it to be the duty of a Representative in Congress, after the close of the session, to render to his own Constituents as soon as practicable a brief account of such transactions as may be most interesting to them; together with a candid statement of some, at least of the reasons which may have influenced his own conduct in relation to the votes given on the most important questions. Such information, however limited may be somewhat gratifying if not important to those who, from their local situation may not have frequent access to the public prints; and it is for them principally this communication is intended. The present session of Congress was far advanced before I had the honor of a seat in the National Legislature. This circumstance must have placed me under some peculiar embarrassments. It is not to be understood that by being here, at the commencement of the session it was my intention to take any part in the public debates—I am no orator, nor is it perhaps necessary; there will always be found in that house a sufficient number both able and willing to avail themselves of the frequent opportunities afforded for a display of eloquence; but it was desirable in order to obtain a correct view of the matters in agitation and keep pace with the progress of Legislative business. Perhaps there was no session of Congress, since the adoption of the federal constitution, in which so little was apparently done in the same length of time. This peculiarity is striking, but is susceptible of satisfactory explanation. A great proportion of the members were new, and it was necessary for many to become acquainted with each others views to a certain extent—the vast accumulation of business necessarily resulting from the late war, in addition to many claims not yet settled since the revolution; and the investigation and discussion of certain constitutional questions of an abstract nature—these with some other circumstances, conspired to prolong the session, and retard the dispatch of public business.

But independently of these incidental circumstances and disquisitions which will always more or less occur, the growing state of our national affairs will hereafter require an adequate term for deliberation and decision. The rapid increase of our population; the extension of our commerce, agriculture and manufactures, and the acquisition of territory made within a few years past, and still progressing, will enlarge the sphere of legislative operations, and increase the labors of the different departments of our government in a manner equally co-extensive. It must be gratifying to us all that the present state of our finances appears to be such as to justify a repeal of the internal duties. This makes a reduction in our taxes of two and a half millions of dollars. The first bill of importance that arrested my attention was that on the subject of bankruptcy. As the constitution vested in Congress the power to establish uniform laws on the subject of bankruptcy throughout the U. States, it was inferred by some that the power should not lie dormant; and that this circumstance points to the utility if not the necessity of making some regulations on the subject. But this like all general rules must have some exceptions. The situation and circumstances of the country, may render at one time, certain laws and regulations, salutary and expedient, which at another would be quite the reverse. Congress has the power to declare war, impose direct taxes and internal duties; but these powers ought never to be exercised. (Continued on fourth page.)