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## Mr. Benton's Speech.

In Senate U. S. Feb. 13.

Substance of Mr. Benton's reply to Mr. Calhoun's Report on Executive Patronage.—Concluded.

Such are the scenes which the two sessions present, and it is in vain to deny it; for the fatal speeches of that fatal session have gone forth to all the borders of the republic. They were printed here by the myriad; franked by members by the ton weight; freighted to all parts by a decreed and overwhelmed post office; and paid for! paid for! by whom? Thanks for one thing at least! The Report of the Finance Committee on the Bank (Mr. Tyler's Report) effected the exhumation of one mass, one mass of hidden and buried putridity; it was the printing account of the Bank of the United States for that session of Congress which will long live in the history of our country under the odious appellation of the PANIC session. That printing account has been dug up; it is the black vomit of the Bank! and he knew the medicine which could bring forth such vomits from the foul stomach of the old red harlot. It was a medicine of a Committee of Investigation, constituted upon parliamentary principles a committee composed, in its majority, of those who charged misconduct, and evinced a disposition to probe every charge to the bottom; such a committee as the Senate had appointed, at the same session, not for the Bank! but for the Post Office.

Yes, exclaimed Mr. B., not only the Treasury was to be bankrupt, but the currency was to be ruined. The trash in the Treasury, what little there was, was to be nothing but depreciated paper, the vile issues of insolvent pet banks. Silver, and United States Bank notes, and even good bills of exchange, were all to go off, all to be left, and make their mournful exit together; and gold! that was a trick unworthy of countenance; a gull to bamboozle the simple, and to insult the intelligent, until the fall elections were over. Ruin! ruin! ruin to the currency! was the lugubrious cry of the day, and the sorrowful burden of the speech for six long months. Now, on the contrary, it seems to be admitted that there is to be money, real gold money in the Treasury, such as the fiercest haters of the pet banks would wish to have; and that not a little, since 72 millions of surplus are proposed to be drawn from that same empty Treasury in the brief space of eight years. Not a word about ruined currency now. Not a word about the currency itself. The very word seems to be dropped, from the vocabulary of gentlemen. All lips closed tight,—all tongues hushed still,—all allusion avoided, to that dear phrase. The silver currency doubled in a year; four millions of gold coined in a half year; exchanges reduced to the lowest and most uniform rates—the whole expenses of Congress paid in gold; working people receiving gold and silver for their ordinary wages; such are the results which have confounded the prophets of woe, silenced the tongue of lamentation, expelled the word CURRENCY from our debates, and brought the People to question, if it cannot bring themselves to doubt, the future infallibility of those undaunted alarmists who still go forward with new and confident predictions, notwithstanding they have been so recently and so conspicuously deceived in their valuations of a ruined currency, a bankrupt treasury, and a beggared government.

But here we are, said Mr. B., actually engaged in a serious proposition to alter the constitution of the United States for the period of eight years, in order to get rid of surplus revenue; and a most dazzling, seductive, and fascinating scheme is presented; no less than nine millions a year for eight consecutive years. It took like wild fire, Mr. B. said, and he had seen a member,—no, that might seem too particular,—he had seen a gentleman who looked upon it as establishing a new era in the affairs of our America; establishing a new test for the formation of parties, bringing a new element into all our elections, State and Federal, and elevating the political salvation and elevation of all who supported it, to the immediate, utter and irretrievable political damnation of all who opposed it. But Mr. B. dissented from the novelty of the scheme. It was an old acquaintance of his, only now vaunted and furnished, for the present occasion. It is the same proposition, only to be accomplished in a different way, which was brought forward some years ago by a Senator from New Jersey, (Mr. Dickerson,) and which then received unmeasured condemnation, not merely for unconstitutionality, but for all its effects and consequences; the degradation of mendicant States, receiving their annual allowance from the bounty of the Federal Government; the debauchment of the public morals, when every citizen was to look to the federal treasury for money, and every candidate for office was to outbid his competitor in offering it; the consolidation of the States, thus resulting from a central supply of revenue; the folly of collecting with one hand, to pay back with the other, and both hands to be greased at the expense of the citizen who pays one man to collect the money from him, and another to bring it back to him, minus the interest and the cost of a double operation in fetching and carrying; and the eventual and inevitable progress of the scheme to the plunder of the weaker half of the Union by the stronger; when the stronger half would undoubtedly throw the whole burden of raising the money upon the weaker half, and then take the main portion to themselves. Such were the main objections uttered against this plan seven years ago, when a gallant son of South Carolina, (General Hayne,) stood by his Mr. B.'s side,—no, stood before him, and led him in the fight against that fatal and delusive scheme, now brought forward under a more seductive, dangerous, alarming, inexcusable, unjustifiable and demoralizing form.

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Yes, said Mr. B., it is not only the revival of the same plan for the dividing surplus revenue, which received its condemnation on this floor seven or eight years ago, but it is the modification, and that in a form infinitely worse for the new States, of the famous land bill which now lies upon our table. It takes up the object of that bill, and runs away with it, giving nine millions where that gave three, and leaving the author of that bill out of sight behind; and can the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. Calhoun) be so short-sighted as not to see that somebody will play him the same prank, and come forward with propositions to raise and divide twenty, thirty, forty millions; and thus out-leap, out-jump, and out-run him in the race of popularity, just as far as he himself has now out-jumped, out-leaped, and out-run, the author of the Land Distribution Bill?

Yes, said Mr. B., this scheme for dividing surplus revenue is an old acquaintance on this floor; but never did it come upon this floor at a time so inauspicious,—under a form so questionable,—and upon assumptions so unfounded in fact, so delusive in argument. He would speak of the inauspiciousness of the time hereafter; at present he would take positions in direct contradiction to all the arguments of fact and reason upon which this monstrous scheme of distribution is erected and defended. Condensed into their essence, those arguments are:

1. That there will be a surplus of nine millions annually for eight years.
2. That there is no way to reduce the revenue.
3. That there is no object of general utility to which these surpluses can be applied.
4. That distribution is the only way to carry them off without poisoning and corrupting the whole body politic.

Mr. B. disputed the whole of those propositions, and would undertake to show each to be unfounded and erroneous.

1. The report says that the surplus will probably equal, on the average, for the next eight years, the sum of \$9,000,000 beyond the just wants of the Government; and in a subsequent part, it says, supposing the surplus to be distributed should average nine millions of dollars, annually, as estimated, it would give to each share \$30,495, which multiplied by the Senators and representatives of any State, would show the sum to which it would be entitled. The amendment which has been reported to carry this distribution into effect, is to take effect for the year 1835,—the present year,—and to continue till the first day of Jan. 1843; of course it is inclusive of 1842, and makes a period of eight years for the distribution to go on. The amendment contains a blank which is to be filled up with the sum which is to be left in the treasury every year to meet contingent and unexpected demands; and the report shows that this blank is to be filled with the sum of two millions of dollars. Here then is the totality of these surpluses, eleven millions a year for eight consecutive years, out of which nine millions are to be taken annually for distribution. Now nine times eight are seventy-two; so that here is a report setting forth the enormous sum of \$72,000,000 of mere surplus, after satisfying all the just wants of the Government, and leaving two millions in the treasury, to be held up for distribution, and to excite the people to clamor for their shares of such a great and dazzling prize. At the same time, Mr. B. said, there would be no such surplus. It was a delusive bait held out to whet the appetite of the people for the spoils of their country, and

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could never be realized even if the amendment for authorizing the distribution should now pass. The seventy-two millions could never be found; they would exist no where but in this report, in the author's imagination, and in the deluded hopes of an excited community. The seventy-two millions could never be found; they would turn out to be the "fellows in Kendal green and buckram suits," which figured so largely in the imagination of Sir John Falstaff—the two-and-fifty men in buckram, which the valiant old knight received upon his point thus! (extending his pencil in the attitude of defence.) The calculations of the author of the report were wild, delusive, astonishing, incredible. He (Mr. B.) could not limit himself to the epithet wild, for it was a clear case of hallucination.

Mr. B. then took up the Treasury Report of Mr. Secretary Woodbury, communicated at the commencement of the present session of Congress, and containing the estimate required by law of the expected income and expenditure for the present year, and also for the year 1836. At pages four and five are the estimates for the present year; the income estimated at \$20,000,000; the expenditures at \$19,863,540; being a difference of only some three-hundred thousand dollars between the income and the outlay; and such is the chance for nine millions taken out, and two left, the first year of the distribution. At pages 10, 14, 15, the revenue for 1836 is computed, and after going over all the heads of expense on which diminutions will probably be made, he computes the income and outlay of the year at about equal, or probably a little surplus to the amount of one million. These are the estimates, said Mr. B., formed upon data, and coming from an officer making reports upon his responsibility, and for the legislative guidance of Congress; and to which we are bound to give credence until they are shown to be incorrect. Here then are the two first years of the eight disposed of, and nothing found in them to divide; the two last years of the term could be despatched even more quickly, said Mr. B., for every body that understands the compromise act of March, 1833, must know that in the two last years of the operation of the act, there would be an actual deficit in the Treasury. Look at the terms of the act! It proceeds by slow and insensible degrees, making slight deductions once in two years, until the years 1841 and 1842, when it ceases crawling, and commences jumping, and leaps down, at two jumps, to twenty per centum on the value of the articles which pay duty, which articles are less than one-half of our importation. Twenty per centum upon the amount of goods which will then pay duty, will produce but little, say twelve or thirteen millions, upon the basis of sixty or seventy millions of dutiable articles imported then, which only amount to forty-seven millions now. Then there will be no surplus at all for one half the period of eight years, the first two and the last two. In the middle period of four years there will probably be a surplus of two or three millions; but Mr. B. took issue upon all the allegations with respect to it; as that there was no way to reduce the revenue, without disturbing the compromise act of March, 1833; that there was no object of general utility to which it could be applied; and that distribution was the only way to get rid of it.

Equally delusive and profoundly erroneous was the gentleman's idea of the surplus which could be taken out of the appropriations. True that operation could be performed once, and but once. The run of our Treasury payments show that about one quarter of the year's expenditure are not paid within the year, but the first quarter of the next year, and thus could be paid out of the revenue received in the first quarter of the next year, even if the revenue of the last quarter of the preceding year was thrown away. But this was a thing which could only be done once. You might rely upon the first quarter, but you could not upon the second, third and fourth. There would not be a dollar in the Treasury at the end of four years, if you deducted a quarter's amount four times successively. It was a case if a homely adage might be allowed, which would well apply—you could not eat the cake and have it too. Mr. B. submitted it then to the Senate, that on the first point of objection to the report, his issue was maintained. There was no such surplus as nine millions a year for eight years, as had been assumed; nor any thing near it; and this assumption being the corner stone of the whole edifice of the scheme of distribution, it was sufficient to show the fallacy of that data to blow the whole scheme into the empty air.

Mr. B. admonished the Senate to beware of ridicule. To pass a solemn vote for amending the constitution, for the purpose of enabling Congress to make distribution of surpluses of revenue, and then find no surplus to distribute, might lessen the dignity, and diminish the weight of so grave a body. It might expose it to ridicule; and that was a hard thing for public bodies and public men to stand. The Senate had stood much in its time; much in the latter part of

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Mr. Monroe's administration, when the Washington Republican habitually denounced it as a faction, and displayed many brilliant essays, written by no mean hand, to prove that the epithet was well applied, though applied to a majority. It had stood much also during the four years of the second Mr. Adams' administration; as the surviving pages of the defunct National Journal could still attest, but in all that time it stood clear of ridicule; it did nothing up which saucy wit could lay its lash. Let it beware now! for the passage of this amendment may expose it to untold peril; the peril of song and caricature. And woe to the Senate, farewell to its dignity, if it once gets into the windows of the print shop, and becomes the burthen of the ballads which the milk maids sing to their cows.

2. Mr. B. took up his second head of objections. The report affirmed that there was no way to reduce the revenue before the end of the year 1842, without violating the terms of the compromise act of March, 1833. Mr. B. said he had opposed that act when it was on its passage, and had then stated his objection to it. It was certainly an extraordinary act, a sort of new constitution for nine years, as he had heard it facetiously called. It was made in an unusual manner, not precisely by three men on an island on the coast of Italy, but by two in some room of a boarding house in this city, and then pushed through Congress under a press of sail, and a dressee of feeling, under the factitious cry of a dissolution of the Union, raised by those who had been declaring, on one hand that the tariff could not be reduced without dissolving the Union, and on the other, that it could not be kept up without dissolving the same Union. The value of all such cries, Mr. B. said, would be appreciated in future, when it was seen with how much facility certain persons who had stood under the opposite poles of the earth, as it were, on the subject of the tariff, had come together to compromise their opinions, and to lay the tariff on the shelf for nine years! a period which covered two presidential elections! That act was no favorite of his, but he would let it alone; and thus leaving it to work out its design for nine years, he would say there were ways to reduce the revenue, very sensibly, without affecting the terms or the spirit of that act. And here he would speak upon *data*. He had the authority of the Secretary of the Treasury (Mr. Woodbury) to declare that he believed he could reduce the revenue in this way, and upon imports, to the amount of five hundred thousand dollars; and he, Mr. B., should submit a resolution\* calling upon the Secretary to furnish the detail of this reduction to the Senate at the commencement of the next stated session, that Congress might act upon it. Further Mr. B. would say, that it appeared to him that the whole list of articles in the fifth section of the act, amounting to thirty or forty in number, and which by that section are to be free of duty in 1842, and which in his opinion might be made free this day, and that not only without injury to the manufacturers, but with such manifest advantage to them, that as an equivalent for it, and for the sake of obtaining it, they ought to come forward of themselves, and make a voluntary concession of reductions on some other points, especially on some classes of woolen goods.

Having given Mr. Woodbury's authority for a reduction of \$500,000 on imports, Mr. B. would show another source from which a much larger reduction could be made, and that without affecting this famous act of March, 1833, in another and a different quarter; it was in the Western quarter, the new States, the PUBLIC LANDS! This act of 1833, did not embrace this source of revenue, and Congress was free to act upon it, and to give the people of the new States the same relief on the purchase of the article on which they chiefly paid revenue, as it had done to the old States in the reduction of the Tariff. Mr. B. did not go into the worn out and exploded objection to the reduction of the price of the lands which the Report had gathered up from their old sleeping places, and presented again to the Senate. Speculators, monopolies, the fall in the price of real estate all over the Union—these were exploded fallacies, which he was sorry to see paraded here again, and which he should not detain the Senate to answer. Suffice it to say, that there is no application made now, made heretofore, or intended to be made, so far as he knew, to reduce the price of NEW LAND. One dollar and a quarter was low enough for the first choice of new lands; but it was not enough for the second, third, fourth and fifth choices! It was not low enough for the refuse which had been 5, 10, 20, 40 years in market; and which could find no purchaser at \$1 25, for the solid reason that they were worth but the half, the quarter, the tenth part of that sum. It was for such lands that reduction of price was sought, and had been sought for many years, and would continue to be sought until it was obtained; for it was impossible to

\*The resolution has been submitted.

believe that Congress would persevere in the flagrant injustice of forever refusing to reduce the price of refuse and unsaleable lands to their actual value. The policy of President Jackson, communicated in his message, Mr. B. said was the policy of wisdom and justice. He was for disposing of the lands more for the purpose of promoting settlements, and creating freeholders, than for the purpose of exacting revenue from the meritorious class of citizens who cultivate the soil. He would sell the lands at prices which would pay the expense of acquiring them from the Indians, and surveying and selling them,—and this system of moderate prices with donations, or nominal sales to actual settlers, would do justice to the new States and effect a sensible reduction in the revenue; enough to prevent the necessity of amending the Constitution to get rid of nine million surpluses! But whether the price of lands was reduced or not, Mr. B. said, the revenue from that source would soon be diminished. The revenue had been exorbitant from the sale of lands for three or four years past. And why? precisely because immense bodies of new lands, and much of it in the States adapted to the production of the great staples which now bear so high a price, have, within the period, come into market; but these fresh lands must soon be exhausted, the old and refuse only will remain for sale; and the revenue from that source will sink down to its former usual amount, instead of remaining at three millions a year for nine years, as the Report assumes.

3. When he had thus shown that a diminution of revenue could be effected both on imports and on refuse and unsaleable lands, Mr. B. took up the third issue which he had joined with the report; namely, the possibility of finding an object of general utility on which the surpluses could be expended. The report affirmed there was no such object, he, on the contrary, affirmed that there were such, not one, but several, not only useful, but necessary, not merely necessary, but exigent, not exigent only, but in the highest possible degree indispensable and essential. He alluded to the whole class of measures connected with the general and permanent defence of the Union! In peace, prepare for war! is the admonition of wisdom in all ages and in all nations; and sorely and grievously has our America heretofore paid for the neglect of that admonition. She has paid for it in blood, in money, and in shame. Are we prepared now? And is there any reason why we should not prepare now? Look at your maritime coast, from Passamaquoddy Bay to Florida Point; your gulf coast, from Florida Point to the Sabine; your lake frontier, in its whole extent! What is the picture? Almost destitute of forts, and it might be said, quite destitute of armament. Look at your armories and arsenals—too few and too empty—and the west almost destitute! Look at your militia; many of them mustering with corn stalks; the states deficient in arms, especially in field artillery, and in swords and pistols for their cavalry! Look at our navy: slowly increasing under an annual appropriation of half a million a year, instead of a whole million, at which it was fixed soon after the late war, and from which it was reduced some years ago, when money ran low in the Treasury! Look at your dock-yards and navy-yards; thinly dotted along the maritime coast, and hardly seen at all on the gulf coast, where the whole south, and the great west, so imperiously demands naval protection! See the picture; such the state of our country at its state! this time, when even the *defence* it should see something to *defence*! such is the state *defence*! now, with which, oh! strange and *defence*! contradiction! the administration is now taunted, reproached, reviled, flouted; and taunted by those who go for distribution, and turn their backs on defence! and who complain of the President for leaving us in this condition, when five years ago, in the year 1829, he recommended the annual sum of \$250,000 for arming the fortifications, (which Congress refused to give), and who now are for taking the money out of the Treasury, to be divided among the people, instead of turning it all to the great object of the general and permanent defence of the Union, for which they were so solicitous, so clamorous, so feelingly alive, and patriotically sensitive, even one short month ago.

Does not the present state of the country said Mr. B., call for the defence, and is not this the propitious time for putting it in defence, and will not that object absorb every dollar real of surplus that can be found in the treasury for those eight years of plenty, during which we are to be afflicted with seventy-two millions of surplus! Let us see. Let us take one single branch of the general system of defence, and how it stands, and what it would cost to put it in the condition which the safety and honor of the country demanded. He spoke of the fortifications, and selected that branch because he had data to go upon; data to which the Senator from South Carolina, the author of this report, could not object.