

Please favor us with your paper

Independent Chronicle, P.

THE TRUE REPUBLICAN,

A M E R I C A N W H I G.

"THE TRUTH OUR GUIDE—THE PUBLIC GOOD OUR END."

Vol. I.]

WILMINGTON, (N. C.) TUESDAY, JANUARY 3, 1869.

[No. 1.]

MR. GILES' SPEECH.

Delivered in Senate of the United States, on Thursday, 24th November, 1868, on the resolution of Mr. Hillhouse, to repeal the Embargo Laws.

Mr. President—Having during the recess of Congress retired from the political world, and having little agency in the passing political scenes, living in a part of the country too, where there is little or no difference in political opinions and where the embargo laws are almost universally approved. I felt the real want of information upon the subject, now under discussion. I thought I knew something of the general objects of the embargo laws, and I had not been inattentive to their general operations upon society, as far as I had opportunities of observing thereupon.

When I arrived here, and found that this subject had excited to much sensibility in the minds of many gentlemen I met with, as to engross their whole thoughts, and I sought to know every other topic of conversation; I felt also a curiosity to know, what were the horrible effects of these laws in other parts of the country, and which had escaped my observation in the part of the country in which I reside. Of course, Sir, I have given to the gentlemen, who have favored us with their observations on both sides of the question under consideration, the most careful and respectful attention, and particularly to the gentlemen representing the eastern section of the union, where most of this sensibility had been excited. I always listen to gentlemen from that part of the United States, with pleasure, and generally with attention, I am reluctantly compelled to acknowledge, that I have received from them less satisfaction, and less information than usual; and still less conviction.

It was hardly to have been expected, Mr. President, that after so many angry and turbulent passions had been called into action, by the recent agitations throughout the whole United States, resulting from the elections by the people, to almost all the important offices within their gift; and particularly from the elections of electors for choosing the President and Vice President of the U. S. that gentlemen would have not here perfectly exempt from the feelings, which this state of things was natural, calculated to inspire;—much less was it to have been expected, Sir, that gentlemen who had once possessed the power of the nation, and who, from some cause or other, had lost it; (a loss, which they now tell us they but too well remember, and I fear, might have added, too deeply deplored,) gentlemen too, Sir, who at one time during the electioneering scene, had indulged the fond and delusive hope, that through the privations necessarily imposed upon our fellow citizens, by the unexampled aggressions of the belligerent powers, they might once more find their way to office and power, and who now find themselves disappointed in this darling expectation. It was not at all to be expected, Sir, that these gentlemen should now appear here, perfectly exempt from the unpleasant feelings, which so dreadful a disappointment must necessarily have produced. It was a demand upon human nature, for too great a sacrifice; and however desirable such an exemption might have been at the present moment, and however honorable it would have been to those gentlemen, it was not expected.

But, Sir, I had indulged a hope that the extraordinary dangers, and difficulties pressed upon us, by the aggressing belligerents; attended too, with so many circumstances of indignity & insult, would have awakened a sensibility in the bosom of every gentleman of this body, which would have wholly suppressed, or at least suspended, these unpleasant feelings, until some measures, consulting the general interests and welfare of the people, could have been devised, to meet, resist, and if possible, to subvert the

extraordinary crisis. But, Sir, even in this hope too, I have been totally disappointed. I was the more encouraged in this hope, when upon opening this debate the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Hillhouse) seemed sensible of the sacred obligation, imposed by the crisis, when he exhorted us in conducting our deliberations, utterly to discard the influence of party spirit. It would have given me great pleasure, Sir, if the gentleman had afforded us a magnanimous example of a peace, so admirably suited to the present state of things. But in this too, Sir, I have been unfortunately disappointed. That gentleman's observations consisted almost exclusively of retrospective animadversions upon the original objects and horrible effects of the embargo laws, without seeming to think it was worth his attention, to favor us with any reflections upon the prospective course of measures which the people's interests, the public safety, and general welfare so imperiously demand.

That gentleman represented the embargo laws as mere acts of violation, impelled by no cause nor necessity; whilst the British orders, and French edicts, were scarcely glanced at, and certainly formed the least prominent feature of his observations. He represented these laws as a wanton and wicked attack upon commerce, with a view to its destruction, whilst he seemed scarcely to have recollected the extraordinary dangers and difficulties, which overspread the ocean—in deed, Sir, he described the ocean as perfectly free from dangers and difficulties, untroubled by any storms, and that we had nothing to do, but to unfurl our canvas to the wind, that it would be filled with prosperous gales, and wafted to the ports of

with open arms of friendship and hospitality. I wish, Sir, with all my heart, the gentleman could but realize those dreaming visions; their reality would act like a magic spell upon the embargo laws, and dissipate them in a moment! But alas, Sir, when we come to look at realities, when we turn our eyes upon the real dangers and difficulties which do overspread the ocean we shall find them so formidable, that the wisdom of our undivided councils, and the energy of our undivided action, will scarcely be sufficient to resist and conquer them. To my great regret, Sir, we now see, that the United States cannot even hope to be blessed with this union of mind and action, although certainly their dearest interests demand it.

Mr. President, perhaps the greatest inconvenience attending popular governments consists in this;—That whenever the union and energy of the people are most required to resist foreign aggressions, the pressure of these aggressions presents most temptations to distrusts and divisions.—Was there ever a stronger illustration of the truth and correctness of this observation than the recent efforts made under the pressure of the embargo laws?—The moment the privations, reluctantly but necessarily imposed by those laws, became to be felt, was the moment of signal to every political demagogue, who wished to find his way to office and to power, to excite the distrusts of the people, and then to separate them from the government of their choice, by every aggression, which ingenuity could devise, and every misrepresentation, which falsehood could invent; nothing was omitted, which it was conceived would have a tendency to effect this object. But Mr. President, the people of the U. States must learn the lesson now, and at all future times, of disrespecting the bold and disingenuous charges and insinuations of such aspiring demagogues.—They must learn to respect and rally round their own government, or they never can present a formidable front to a foreign aggressor.—Sir the people of the United States have already learnt this lesson.—They have recently given an honorable and glorious example of their knowledge in this respect. They have in their recent elections, demonstrated to the na-

tion, and to the world, that they possess too much good sense, to become the dupes of these delusive artifices, and too much patriotism to desert their government, when it stands most in need of their support and energy.

The gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Hillhouse) has made the most strict and I had almost said, uncharitable scrutiny into the objects and effects of the embargo laws, in the delusive hope, I presume of obtaining a triumph over his political adversaries. I propose to follow the gentleman, in a fair and candid comparison of information and opinions upon this subject; and I shall do so in the most perfect confidence, that, when a thorough examination of the objects and effects of the embargo laws shall be made known, and the merits of the measure fully understood, that there is not a man in the United States, who will not applaud and support the administration for its adoption, who has the uncontaminated heart of an American, throbbing within his bosom.

Mr. President, I have always understood that there were two objects contemplated by the embargo laws.—The first precautionary, operating upon ourselves.—The second, coercive, operating upon the aggressing belligerents. Precautionary, in saving our seamen, our ships and our merchandise from the plunder of our enemies, and avoiding the calamities of war. Coercive by addressing strong appeals to the interests of both the belligerents. The first object has been answered beyond my sanguine expectations. To make a fair & just estimate of this measure, reference should be had to our situation at the time of its adoption. At that time the aggressions of both the belligerents were such, as to leave the United States but a painful alternative in the choice of one of three measures, to wit, the embargo, war, or submission.—I know that this position has not been admitted, though but faintly denied in the discussion. I shall however proceed upon this hypothesis for the present, and in the course of my observations will prove its correctness by the statements of the gentlemen in favor of the resolution.

Before the recommendation of this measure, the laudable and provident circumspection of the administration, had obtained tolerably correct estimates of the amount and value of the ships and merchandise belonging to the citizens of the U. States then afloat; and the amount and value of what was shortly expected to be afloat; together with a conjectural statement of the number of seamen employed in the navigation thereof.

It was found that merchandise to the value of one hundred millions of dollars was actually afloat, in vessels amounting in value to twenty millions more.—That an amount of merchandise and vessels equal to fifty millions more, was expected to be shortly put afloat and that it would require fifty thousand seamen to be employed in the navigation of this enormous amount of property.—The administration was informed of the hostile edicts of France previously issued, and then in a state of execution, and of an intention on the part of G. Britain to issue her orders, the character and object of which were also known. The object was, to sweep this valuable commerce from the ocean.—The situation of this commerce was as well known to G. Britain, as to ourselves, and her inordinate cupidity could not withstand the temptation of the rich booty, the vainly thought within her power. This was the state of information at the time this measure was recommended.

The President of the U. States ever watchful and anxious for the preservation of the persons and property of all our fellow citizens, but particularly of the merchants, whose property is most exposed to danger, and of the seamen whose persons

are also most exposed, recommended the embargo for the protection of both; and it has saved and protected both. Let us now suppose for a moment, that the President, possessed of this information had not apprised the merchants and seamen of their danger, and had recommended no measure for their safety and protection: would he not, in that case, have merited and received the reproaches which the ignorance or ingratitude of merchants and others have so unjustly heaped upon him, for his judicious and anxious attentions to their interests? It is admitted by all, that the embargo laws have saved this enormous amount of property, and this number of seamen, which, without them, would have forcibly gone into the hands of our enemies, to pamper their arrogance, stimulate their injustice, and increase their means of annoyance.

I should suppose, Mr. President, this saving worth some notice. But, Sir, we are told that instead of protecting our seamen, it has driven them out of the country, and into foreign service. I believe, Sir, that this fact is greatly exaggerated. But, Sir, suppose for a moment that it is so, the government has done all in this respect, it was bound to do. It placed these seamen in the bosoms of their friends and families, in a state of perfect security; and if they have since thought proper to abandon these blessings, and emigrate from their country, it was an act of choice, not of necessity. But what would have been the unhappy destiny of these brave tars, if they had been permitted to have been carried into captivity, and sent adrift on unfriendly and inhospitable shores? Why, Sir, in that case, they would have had no choice; necessity would have driven them into a hard and ignominious service, to fight the battles of the authors of their dreadful calamities, against a nation with which their country was at peace. And is the bold and generous American tar to be told, that he is to disrespect the administration for its anxious and effectual attentions to his interests? For relieving him from a dreadful captivity? Even under the hardships he does suffer, and which I sincerely regret, every generous feeling of his noble heart, would repel the base attempt with indignation. But, Sir, the American seamen have not deserted their country; foreign seamen may and probably have gone into foreign service; and, for one, I am glad of it. I hope they will never return; and I am willing to pass a law in favour of the true hearted American seamen, that these foreign seamen never should return. I would even prohibit them from being employed in merchant vessels. The American seamen have found employment in the country; and whenever the proper season shall arrive for employing them on their proper element, you will find them, like true birds of passage, hovering in clouds upon your shores.

Whilst considering this part of the subject, I cannot help expressing my regret, that at the time of passing our embargo laws, a proportion of our seamen was not taken into the public service; because, in my judgment, the nation required their services, and it would have been some alleviation to their hardships, which the measure peculiarly imposed upon them, as a class of citizens, by affecting their immediate occupation; and the other classes, as well as the public treasury, were able to contribute to their alleviation; and I am willing to do the same thing at this time. Indeed, its omission is the only regret I have ever felt, at the measures of the last Congress. I like the character—I like the open frankness, and the generous feelings of the honest American tar; and, whenever in my power, I am ready to give, and will with pleasure give him any protection and support. One of the most important and agreeable effects of the embargo laws, is giving these honest fellows a safe asylum. But, Sir, these are not the only good effects of the embargo. It has preserved our peace