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CONGRESS.

SPEECH OF WILLIAM B. SHEPARD,
OF NORTH CAROLINA.

Delivered in the House of Representatives, Jan. 29th, 1833, on the motion of Mr. Huntington to strike out the 31st and 32d Sections of the Tariff Bill, imposing a duty on Tea and Coffee.

[CONCLUDED.]

That the revenue should be reduced to the wants of the government, is one of those plain and palpable truths which I suppose would be assented to on all sides. In fact this proposition has been admitted by several gentlemen who are opposed to all the provisions of this bill. I would therefore, observe to the gentlemen, that as they have the majority on this floor, if this bill is injudicious they ought to amend it in such a way as to reduce the revenue six millions of dollars, the surplus mentioned by the Secretary of the Treasury, with as little injury as possible to the revenue. For it never can be expected that the people of this country will consent to pay more money than is necessary for the ordinary wants of the government, either for the protection of manufactures, internal improvements, or any other purposes.

And yet, Sir, I would not narrow down the government to a mean and begrudging economy. That a duty on imports is necessarily a tax on any part of the community, although the converse of the proposition is paradoxical at first sight, I do not think has been satisfactorily maintained. Take, for example, the articles of salt, coffee and molasses; and on these three articles the Congress of the United States have been reducing the duties, with a view of reducing the price of them to the country; and yet such has not been the result. We find that when we took the duty off salt in this country, the articles rose in the West Indies; the truth is, the possession of the American market is so essential to the producers of these articles, that they are obliged to have it at all hazards; and consequently whenever Congress lays a heavy duty, their profits are reduced down to the lowest ebb that will sustain the business their situation compels them to follow.

And yet these facts, curious as they appear, are but fallacious grounds for a government to lay heavy duties; although the consumers of the country, as such, may be little interested in the matter, the commerce of the country is vitally interested. In proportion as we cultivate an intercourse with those nations who by position or by natural advantages in the production of such articles are necessary for our comfort or pleasure, are disposed to trade with us on fair terms of reciprocity, we promote the general welfare of society and give a stimulus to the commerce of the country, which, next to agriculture, should be the favourite of the nation. Should it be true, therefore, that the consumer of coffee would be no wise interested whether there is a duty on it or not, still, the ship owner who transports the article, the corn planter and the lumber getter whose productions are exchanged for it, are interested that the trade should be on the most liberal footing. I will not, therefore, as a representative of a portion of this interest, assist in laying a burden on it, not required by the policy of the government or essential to its revenue.

I have no doubt, Sir, this tariff matter can be adjusted, if we will approach it candidly and fairly, divesting it of its political bearings, without producing injury or showing unjust partiality towards any portion of the country. In laying a revenue duty so as to give incidental protection, let us select those manufactures whose interests are deeply rooted and widely spread throughout the country: viz. cottons, woollens and sugar.

It is said and admitted here generally, that we manufacture coarse cottons in this country, as cheaply as in any part of the world, the price being less than the duty; the duty, therefore, cannot possibly be a burden on any one. The memorial of the anti-tariff convention says, "the duty is nominal in reference to most of the goods under 15 cents, which not only are afforded as cheap by the American manufacturer as the foreign article, but compete with this in foreign markets." Why then disturb it? Is not the part of wisdom to let well enough alone?

The amount of cotton made in the United States, in the year ending in October, 1831, was 375,925,303 pounds, in 1819—87,397,845 pounds, there is now manufactured in this country more than one-fifth of the whole production, about one-third of what Great Britain manufactures at the present time. The manufacture of cotton has increased 100 per cent. in the last four years, an increase greater than ever took place in Great Britain in the same space of time; these facts manifest beyond all doubt, that this country is well adapted both by situation and capacity to sustain such a manufacture, as well as any other country; and therefore it deserves the attention of the legislature. We now produce 150,000,000 pounds more of cotton than Great Britain consumes of all sorts. Where is this large surplus to find a purchaser? Shall we prefer to build up the manufactures of all countries to our own? I think when it is so very convenient and advantageous to ourselves, there is no great sin in permitting charity to begin at home. The cotton manufactured in this country, amounts to about 214,882 bales, capital employed \$14,914,984, annual value \$32,056,760, aggregate of wages of hands employed \$12,155,723; employing about 50,000 men and women. Does not this benefit the grower of cotton? I have heard it so vehemently denied, that I am disposed to hazard any opinion of my own; I will, therefore, quote one that will be respected by all parties. During the summer of 1831, a convention was held in Philadelphia of persons opposed to the tariff; that convention was composed principally of Southern men; they appointed a committee to draft a memorial to Congress, pointing out the burdens of the tariff laws. That memorial was written by Mr. Gallatin, and as might be expected, is incomparably the ablest exposition of the evils of the tariff these very prolific times have produced. In it are these words:—"Whatever impulse may have been given to the production of American cotton by the domestic manufacturers of that material is therefore a clear gain to the community. This, for the very reason that the amount cannot be calculated with precision, has undoubtedly been greatly exaggerated. But it cannot be doubted that the consumption of cotton goods in the United States has, to a certain extent, been increased by the establishment of domestic manufactures, and that the fluctuations of price are lessened by having a greater number of markets, in this case one nearer, and so considerable, even though the aggregate of sales was not materially increased." The cause of the fall of the price of raw cotton is thus accounted for: "the reduction of the price of the raw material was solely due to the increased supply compared with the demand." These admissions of the convention are very ungenerous, they are the unkindest cuts of all. The greatest of known rebukes is, "out of their own mouth will I condemn them." If therefore we are to believe the cotton planters' memorial, and not their advocates on this floor, they are decidedly benefited by the tariff. It is not the least curious part of this matter that whilst this house was listening day after day to the most pathetic descriptions of the miseries and sufferings of the cotton planters, from the tariff, a memorial was lying on our tables emanating almost exclusively from this interest, admitting themselves

benefited.

Let us now examine that claim the article of sugar has to a slow death. When Louisiana was purchased from France, the cultivation of sugar had commenced in that country; common justice requires that we should not unnecessarily cause the planter to regret that he had ever exchanged the yoke of the Spanish or French monarchies, for the free government in America.

At the close of the war in 1816, Congress added half a cent to the duty as a part of the general system, which duty has given a great stimulus to the cultivation of Sugar in Louisiana; which country now produces two-thirds of the sugar consumed in the United States. I presume it will not be doubted that the duty is essential to the prosperity of the plantations, and without it the cultivation of sugar must cease. The present price of sugar is about 5 1-2 cents per pound in New Orleans; the whole expense of producing sugar, I am informed, is about 3 1-2 cents per pound; leaving about 2 cents profit to the planter; which two cents are his means to purchase slaves and increase his cultivation; if, therefore, you diminish his profits one half cent, you diminish his capacity to purchase one fourth. The consumption of sugar in the United States amounts to about 1,000,000 hogsheads, the crop of Louisiana about 100,000. An increase, therefore, of one half the present number of slaves in that country must take place before the domestic consumption of sugar can be supplied. And when we take into consideration the astonishing increase, both in numbers and the means of consumption of the northern, middle and western States, it is but fair to suppose that Louisiana will for many years to come furnish a market for the surplus slave labor of the South. The present number of slaves in the United States, is about 2,153,370, worth \$430,674,000, the destruction of the sugar cultivation would undoubtedly depress the price of slaves in proportion as the impetus it has hitherto given has increased it, which has been estimated, and I think very moderately, at 50 dollars a head. An enormous depression of the value of property for no conceivable benefit; the bill on the table does not propose to reduce the revenue by it, for it proposes to take a half cent off sugar, and put a penny on coffee; now if the revenue is really wanting why make this absurd exchange; if not, it must share the fate of every thing. There is no state in this Union whose prosperity is so closely interwoven with the welfare of the others, as Louisiana; she is a great consumer for the rest, her labor is drawn from the old Southern States to cultivate her fields, her clothing from the north, and her food from the west. It is worthy of attention, to remark the gradual reduction in the price of sugar, even under the duty of 3 cents per pound; during the last twelve years, sugar has been gradually declining in price, until it has reached a depression somewhat below half its price in 1819 and 1820. nor is it altogether certain, that if the duty were entirely removed, the consumer would derive any immediate benefit, although ultimately, the article would be cheaper. The price of an article is regulated by the proportion of supply to demand; unquestionably, therefore, if the duty were suddenly removed, prudence would dictate to the Louisiana planter, to contract immediately his operations, in order to avoid ultimate ruin; unless, therefore, the reduction of supply at home were relieved by the increase from abroad, the price would rise, which state of things would at all events produce great fluctuations in the market. The production of sugar is not like that of cotton or woolen goods; this article is annually produced in a limited section of country, and cannot be increased or diminished at will: the winds and the rains of Heaven must be consulted.

If there is any part of the tariff system more peculiarly unjust and indefensible, it is the duty on iron: this is an article absolutely indispensable to every class in society, and yet it is more highly taxed by this bill than any thing else, and without a corresponding benefit. Upon rolled iron, the duty is 76 per cent., on sheet and hoop iron 93 per cent. Were I disposed to appeal to the meanness and basest passion that actuates the human mind—the passion of avarice—a passion that regards its personal wants, its personal appetites as every thing—the sufferings of others, the glory and independence of the country as nothing, it would be an easy matter to produce an excitement against this unjust preference of one interest to another. There is no article in the whole catalogue of human wants, so essential to man as iron, nor one that so immediately contributes to his well-being; its use marks the first step from barbarity to civilization, and yet is more highly favored by this bill than any thing else. Why is this? Has Pennsylvania deserved a better fate than any other State in the Union? Did she bring to the South in 1828, in her utmost need, one solitary vote? No! She went in a solid phalanx for the "bill of abominations," and she is to be spared; the lightning glances over her, illuminates, but never touches her; happy Pennsylvania! she has thirty electoral votes, and no candidate for the Presidency.

It is said by Mr. Gallatin, that "the iron works of west Pennsylvania were, and still continue to be protected against foreign iron, and that made within one hundred miles of the sea shore, by the expense of transportation which is still fifty dollars a ton." There certainly then, can be no propriety in taxing so greatly the whole sea board from Maine to Louisiana, to sustain a manufacture which cannot flourish under these natural advantages. The mountains of North Carolina are full of iron ore, and yet no reasonable man would think the government justifiable in placing a duty upon iron, sufficient to compensate the owners of those mines for making rail roads and canals to bring their iron to market. Sir, I believe if the duties on iron and hemp were removed, the much abused tariff of 1832 is preferable to the bill on your table.

I require, it has been said by an ingenious writer, a great deal of philosophy to observe that which is seen a great day; if this were not true, it would be impossible to account for the discrepancy of opinions upon the practical results of this protective system. Every one sees that the country is generally prosperous, for which different causes are assigned. I do not think the prosperity of the people of this country dependent upon the action of the government, nor is it desirable that it should be. I believe there is an elasticity and vigor in the American character, that will adapt itself to any system, the wisdom or folly of this House may adopt; that the tariff compels the consumers of many articles to pay more for them, than they otherwise would be true, but that it produces one half of the evils or benefits charged to it, is a position that has no existence except in the heated imaginations of the partisans.

It is said, all this may be true, but by some ledger-man not yet explained, although we have heard repeated attempts, the whole burden is thrown upon the south, the tax paying south. It is extraordinary that any section of the country should claim the peculiar privilege of paying the taxes of the government, the idea results from a species of egotism as absurd as that of an astrologer, mentioned I think, in the Spectator, who had studied the aspect of the heavens with such intensity of zeal, that he at length believed himself master of the winds; and would very graciously, and with extreme condescension, offer to a friend going a journey, any wind he might have a fancy for. There is, however, we are told, a theory, a self-evident proposition, that explains the matter: it has been said, (Report of the Committee of Ways and Means by Mr. McDuffie) as the restrictions imposed upon the productions of the southern industry, are affected by the agency of indirect taxes, the burdens imposed upon the planting States by the protective system, are not very inaccurately measured by the amount of taxes levied upon articles exchanged for those productions; or in other words, a duty on imports is equivalent to a duty upon exports. I regard this as the most pernicious dogma that ever has been started in this country; its direct and inevitable tendency is a destruction of the Union; for if their position be true, collect what amount of revenue you may, whether twelve per cent. or fifty per cent. the greater part of the revenue must be paid by that portion of the country producing articles best adapted to foreign markets. I will not say, as was said by a gentleman from South Carolina, (Mr. Davis) during the last session, "be doubted whether any government except

the State government, was worth the taxes the people paid for it," but this I will say, that on those terms, or if this theory is true, the federal government never can sustain itself. Could I believe, by the inevitable acts of your legislation, I was made a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the rest of the Union, I should feel myself degraded, were I to come here to debate the matter, I should feel myself impelled by every principle that ever nerved the arm or swelled the bosom of an American freeman to resist such oppression; I am not therefore surprised that sections of our country are maddened almost to phrenzy under the operation of this doctrine. To have believed it, and borne it so long, is a proof of their great patriotism and most eminent discretion. This theory, however, confines its operation to the growers of rice, cotton and tobacco, it is of course of no importance to persons not connected with the productions of these articles, what the tariff may be, their portion of the burden being thrown upon their more substantial neighbours. I have shewn by an extract from the memorial of the cotton planters, that they conceive themselves benefited by the system in some measure; I shall therefore, trouble myself no more with the subject, than to make a few remarks upon a corollary that has been drawn from it. We have been told by the same document "that the fairest portion of this great confederacy, and of Heaven, the most favored region of the earth, is literally undergoing a silent but irresistible process of decay, produced by the gross perversion of the very power, which is under the highest of human obligations to prevent it." I admit that the south is not as flourishing as some portions of this confederacy; but I deny that its depression is to be attributed to the action of the general government, and I am much astonished that any person could overlook the plain and palpable causes, there existing, sufficient, (without stimulating the natural prejudices of the people against the general government) to account for all the horrors of even warmer imaginations.

The peculiar character of the emigration alone from the Southern States, an emigration which carries off both the labor and capital of the country, leaving nothing to supply its place, is sufficient to account for many of our miseries. Does not that labor find the tariff as grinding and oppressive in the south-west as in either of the Carolinas? Why then should it abandon its native soil to waste and desolation? Because fresher and more fertile soil invites it! There are two other causes operating unfavourably on the southern seaboard, one moral, the other a physical cause. I will not however, Sir, dilate on this subject; to me it is an unpleasant one. I love the South with all her misfortunes—I love her—"tis my own, my native land!" "teum vivere lænar, tecum obeam libens," it is from the affection I bear her, I am induced to speak thus plainly to her.

There is another cause operating to the serious disadvantage of the best portion of the South, and I admit, "of Heaven the most favored region," if we regard soil, climate and situation—I mean the interior of the southern country, particularly of North Carolina and Virginia. Why is it that this section is not as flourishing as the interior of New York and Pennsylvania? The climate is equally, if not more congenial to the constitution of the white man, and the soil is more productive in every thing that can contribute to the prosperity of the people. Why is it, that a silence, as of death, pervades their thousand hills—there we find no busy hum of men, no throng of flocks or herds; 'tis because the hostility of the South to the improvement of the country, leaves every thing to nature. We complain that the revenue of the country is collected at the South and expended to the North; if this is true, it is our own fault.—Is there a proposition made to remove a sand-bar or deepen a river in any part of this country, that does not encounter a solid phalanx of hostility, (with a few exceptions) from the whole southern delegation on this floor? During the last session an honourable friend of mine [Mr. Carson] when the annual appropriation bill, for the improvement of the harbors of the country was before the House, proclaimed it an imposition on the people.

Does any one propose to appropriate a few thousand dollars from an abundant treasury, to open a road thro' our beautiful interior, that it may communicate with the markets and civilization of the rest of the world, we are immediately told of violated constitutions, and all the slang which has been current on this floor for the last twenty years about State rights, is repeated "usque ad nauseam." It seems as if some gentlemen supposed every thing which is calculated to promote the prosperity, to enlarge the sphere of action of the mass of the people, was a violation of the Constitution.

At the last session of Congress a bill came to this House from the Senate, proposing to settle the policy of our public lands; a bill whose object was to prevent them from being given ultimately to the west; a bill to restore to the old Atlantic States some portion of the treasure they had so liberally spent in purchasing that vast region, and to remunerate them in some measure for the constant drain upon their resources, produced by emigration. Was that bill lost by Southern votes? Let your journals answer.

This government may spend millions upon millions on its army or its navy; it may pave the road of the Indian beyond the Mississippi with nuggets of gold, it may squander the enormous amount of our public lands, to purchase a little personal popularity in the west, and all is well—but if it attempts to spend one dollar of the public treasure for the public welfare, we are told of violated constitutions. Sir, should the South become, in the process of decay, what one portion of it has been threatened with, a "howling wilderness," there is scarcely a monument on its wide border, of the liberality of those who have governed it, to prove to the industrious antiquarian that it had ever been trod by the foot of civilized man. There might be found some barren and blasted fields, as if the Sirocco of the desert had passed over it, but there would be no Appian way resisting the efforts of the barbarian, or the decay of time. I did suppose, when I first entered these walls, something might be done to revive the stagnant and wasting energies of the South; but when I heard what on this floor are proclaimed as Southern doctrines and Southern principles, I felt that sickness of the soul which awaits on hope deferred. Perhaps it was the result of a retired life that led me to believe that some higher duty was assigned to a member on this floor, than a government officers, and bills to pay the salaries of a legislator should be, or could be, a benefactor of mankind. I am, however, now satisfied that a new generation of politicians must arise, after the present one has fretted its little hour upon the stage, before the Southern part of this Union can derive its full share of the benefits of the liberal institutions of the country.

It has often been asserted in the two houses of Congress, that the South in particular would be a gainer by the system of direct taxation, a false position, which has been too currently circulated through the country, although, there has been, during the frequent discussions upon this subject, a very satisfactory refutation of this notion. I take it for granted, that the only correct theory is, that the man who buys and consumes, ultimately the one upon whom the tax, if any exists, ultimately falls. It is said that in Louisiana, a planter who produces a crop of cotton worth about ten thousand dollars, consumes in the production of that crop, about two thousand eight hundred dollars worth of articles not made on the plantation. Of this consumption one-fourth, about seven or eight hundred dollars, is of taxed articles. This is a favorable calculation for all the planters north of Louisiana, as some have told us they do. Let us apply this rule to South Carolina. South Carolina exports a boat \$8,000,000 of produce. All the produce is labor, and all the plantations of South Carolina, are occupied in producing this \$8,000,000, one third of which sum, \$2,666,666 is the amount of articles consumed, and not produced by the plantations, one-fourth of which, viz. \$666,666 are articles upon which the Gen-

eral Government levies a revenue. Now supposing the duty constituted half of the price of an article, an extravagant supposition, the burden which is now weighing South Carolina to the dust, and to throw off which, she is convulsing this country, and placing in jeopardy all our institutions, is \$333,333.

Should the amount necessary for the support of the Government be levied by direct taxation, and the negroes of the south pay according to the ratio established in the Constitution, the proportion of South Carolina would be about \$900,000. I have selected the State of South Carolina to illustrate this proposition in preference to N. Carolina, because, from the nature of the situation of N. Carolina, it is impossible to estimate the amount of her exports. Our southern counties trade to Charleston, & our northern counties wagon such articles as will afford the transportation over bad roads, to Petersburg & Richmond, where they exchange their produce, not for State money, but for the money of the Union, & a peculiar manufacture, in which the latter town is said to be very skillful, called "state Rights," an article so cunningly contrived that it can be understood only by the makers, and of so little use elsewhere, that it is supposed to be made, like Pindar's razors, exclusively to trade with. Should North Carolina, however, become imbued with the doctrines of this new Philosophy, and the taxes of the government be directly levied, in stead of paying her portion of the revenue, upon such articles as are consumed within her borders and by the persons who do consume them, to the amount of some three or four hundred thousand dollars, she would be taxed, according to population, at least a million. Sir, let this government ever exchange the present simple, cheap and least oppressive mode of collecting revenue for its ordinary peace establishment, for the odious system of direct taxation, and it will hear a murmur, to which the present discontented like "the sweet south wind, breathing o'er a bank of violets."

When I first entered these walls some three years ago I did so, imbued with the doctrines of the free trade school; I admired them for their liberality, thought them sound in principle, and best adapted to a republic. Disposed to act upon these views I had hardly taken my seat before I discovered that a great political drama was about to be acted; called "the Tariff," that the characters were cast, the dresses provided, the speeches in rehearsal and even the homed thunder prepared; I found that the old armor of the party was to give place to one more brilliant, more calculated for effect; seeing this to be the state of things, I very coolly and deliberately took my seat in this very comfortable arm-chair, determined to observe in silence the contest, to see if it would prove a tragedy, or a farce.—"Equidum non invidio, miror magis," and here I should have sat contented, had I not discovered that there was no longer safety in inaction; there is no great divinity in Aye or No!

There is one point, Sir, before I take my seat that I am desirous of saying a few words upon, with no view of arguing the subject, but simply to express an opinion: I mean the constitutionality of our several revenue acts of 1824—25—32. I am more inclined to do so, because the members of the legislature of N. Carolina, lately acted on the subject, and although they forbore to express any opinions themselves, have asserted that a large part of the people believe these laws unconstitutional. I fully coincide with the general scope and tenor of those resolutions, and rejoice that the legislature of my native State has forborne to lend the sanction of its name to a temporary delusion. And I hope she will continue to pursue that course which honor and which duty points out, treating with contempt the silly and impudent jests and scoffs of idlers and stump orators, come they whence they may, or be they whom they may. It is with great diffidence that at any time I would differ from a large portion of the people upon a mere constitutional question, but the construction of the Constitution upon this subject has so long been settled by the concurrent sanction of every President, by the vast majority of the people and of the ablest jurists of the country; that to doubt now, that those laws are constitutional, is supposing the plainest and most obvious propositions in the Constitution, have for forty years been misunderstood. There is scarcely a public man of any character or standing, who for the last forty years has been before the people, that has not acquiesced in the exercise of this power, nor do I believe doubts upon the subject were entertained until it was found convenient to retreat behind that eternal source of disputation, the Constitution of the country.

For myself I have always regarded the constitution of our country, as a great charter of human liberty, a charter not wrested by the sword, from some ambitious tyrant, but a free offering of the American people upon the altar of liberty, an offering composed of their local passions, their local prejudices, and their local interests. Believing such to be its character, I have endeavored to approach its construction, not with the feeling of a mere carping attorney, but with that elevated philanthropy that would endeavor to construe the instrument with a spirit that engendered it. Where it was necessary to give the general government a power I believed it given fully and beneficially, when a power is denied, it is denied entirely.

Now Sir, with these principles of construction, can any rational man doubt the meaning of these expressions of the constitution? "Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises," &c. "To regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several States and with the Indian tribes. It is said the power to lay and collect duties and imposts, is a part of the taxing power, and was intended to supply the government with revenue alone; this is probably true, and very forcibly proves that the words "to regulate commerce" were intended to have a more large construction. The Constitution in saying "that no tax or duty shall be laid on articles exported from any State—No preference shall be given by any regulations of commerce or revenue to the ports of one State over those of another, nor shall vessels bound to, or from one State, be obliged to enter, clear, or pay duties in another," shews clearly that as regards commerce in all its various branches, we are one entire nation, and that the whole subject is surrendered to the federal government. That there is no clause in the constitution giving Congress the power to protect manufactures is certainly true; and it is likewise true that there is no clause in the constitution forbidding the legislature to regulate commerce by discriminating duties, tonnage duties, or in any other way which to them may seem meet and proper.

It is amusing to observe the inconsistencies in which "the States right gentlemen" involve themselves in arriving at the conclusion that the acts of 1824, '28, or '32, are unconstitutional. They tell us, when reasoning against the power of the general government to appropriate money for internal improvement, that the constitution must be construed strictly, that all constructive powers are dangerous to property, that it is inadvisable to seek out of the constitution the meaning of the constitution, that the general government may have the amount of the bond out nothing. How then do gentlemen discover these acts are unconstitutional? The power over the subject is expressly granted. Will they apply to the proceedings of the convention that framed the instrument, and the traditions of the times, to ascertain the meaning of the words "to regulate commerce"? Certainly not; their principles forbid it.

It is melancholy to see in the political discussions of the country, a constant disposition to reason from the expediency of a measure to its unconstitutionality; expediency and a law bears a little upon one side or another, a desire to pronounce it unconstitutional. Sir, the man who is not willing to bear a public burden for a public good, has the soul of a slave and is unworthy the name of a freeman. If this power does not rest with the general government, we exhibit the singular spectacle of twenty four republics, populous and energetic in themselves; yet self-immolated at the shrine of the avarice and extortion of the rest of the

world. I said that I merely intended to express an opinion, valueless as it may be, I would have been false to myself, false to every tie that binds me to the society in which I live, more than all I would have been false to those I represent, had I failed to do so.

TO THE FREEMEN OF
The Counties of Johnston, Wayne, Greene, Lenoir, Jones, Craven and Carteret,
COMPOSING THE
FOURTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA.

FELLOW CITIZENS,
On the fourth of March next, the political connection which exists between us will cease by the termination of the period for which I was chosen to represent you in the Congress of the United States. At a moment like the present, when the public mind is agitated from one end of the continent to the other by an excitement unparalleled in our political history, growing out of events familiar to you all, I should be unworthy of the trust you have reposed in me were I to withhold the expression of my frank opinion upon all questions of public interest—more especially those occurrences of the first moment which have transpired in a neighboring State.

Notwithstanding these domestic inquietudes, of which it will be my duty to speak hereafter, we are enjoying, as a nation, a state of unexampled prosperity. Profound peace with all foreign nations, a wise administration of public affairs at home, an overflowing treasury, a public debt dwindled to comparatively nothing, and about to be entirely extinguished; thus leaving to the representatives of the people a task unexampled in the history of nations, that of contriving means for reducing the revenue, and keeping out the flood of wealth which is pouring into the public coffers; abundant harvests rewarding the toils of the husbandman, and rich gains crowning the labours of industry and enterprise. These are blessings of deep consolation to the heart of the patriot in the midst of political dissensions; and for which our renewed thankfulness is due to the great and good Disposer of human events.

On the first day of January last the whole funded debt of the United States was discharged. There remains, however, of the unfunded debt nearly \$7,000,000, a part of which is strictly not redeemable until January 1834, and the balance in January 1835. But, as the commissioners of the sinking fund are authorized by law to buy up the debt at the market price, and the means in the treasury being amply sufficient, we may hope that during the present year the whole will be discharged. It now only remains for the Federal Government to circumscribe its operations within the bounds prescribed by the constitution, so that, while nothing is wanting for the protection of the citizen in life, liberty and property, no more shall be taken from the pockets of the people than these legitimate purposes require. This, and this only, is the sum and substance of good government—that every man shall be secure in the enjoyment of the fruits of his own labor, and the pursuit of his own desires, restrained only so far as is necessary for national defence, and the administration of justice. The final extinguishment of the public debt leaves no further pretext for violating the obvious principles of the constitution by the continuance, in favor of the manufacturers, of high taxes on the necessities of life.

You are no doubt well aware that the act of July last, to reduce the revenue, does not go into operation before the fourth of March next. The reduction which it will produce in the revenue is confidently estimated at \$5,000,000; under that estimate the whole revenue from customs, during the next year, will not be far from \$17,000,000; a sum at least seven millions beyond what is necessary to be derived from customs for the support of Government. It will therefore become the duty of the next Congress, which will come in under the new census, and in which we may expect a full expression of the popular will, so to modify and further reduce the tariff so as to bring down the revenue to the wants of the Government. My own opinion has been frequently declared, that \$7,000,000 from imposts, and \$3,000,000 from the public lands is all the money which ought to go into the treasury. Ten millions are amply sufficient for all the legitimate demands of Government. But, as Congress have in their wisdom established a splendid pension system, amounting to something like an annual expenditure of \$5,000,000, owing to the imperfections of which, every toady as well as whig of the revolution may get his support out of the public chest, it is impossible to limit the expenditures of the Government to the amount I have stated. I shall, therefore, assume as the quantum of revenue necessary to be collected, the sum of \$14,000,000; \$11,000,000 to be raised from the customs, and \$3,000,000 from the public lands, thus showing that a further reduction of at least \$6,000,000 may with perfect safety be effected by the next Congress.

The President of the United States, in his message to congress, at the commencement of the present session, recommended a further reduction so as to bring the revenue down to the wants of the government. In reference to this consideration, the Committee of Ways and Means reported a bill, the consideration of which has consumed a great part of the session, without the remotest probability of effecting a desirable result. Although I believe, most conscientiously, that the whole tariff system is radically wrong and oppressive, and would most eagerly seize upon any occasion to assist in removing it from the country, and thereby relieving the industry of the whole people from most unjust unnatural, and pernicious restrictions, yet there are demands of public faith, in the settlement and obligations of public faith, in the settlement of the question, to which I cannot be insensible. Interests created, and large capitals invested,