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## Congress.

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

January 30.

On raising the Embargo, and authorizing  
of Marqu and Reprisal—continued.

**Rhea.** (T.) With more embarrassment of mind I attempt to make some observations on the subject before the committee, at any time heretofore, when I have had honor of submitting any observations on the subject, during the present session of Congress. The reason is, that it is not desirable what measure shall be substituted in the embargo, if it shall be raised. It affords the great pleasure to hear the opinion of the gentleman from New Hampshire, (Mr. Duffin) positively contradicting an assertion which he read from a newspaper. What the gentleman said ought to be taken for a good reason, and that the few citizens in the Southern States, who have been disposed, however or other, not to pay proper respect to the laws, are returning to the principles of those principles of correctness on the safety of this nation doth depend. It is in unison with my own opinion regarding the citizens of that section of the country. Notwithstanding all that has been said in opposition and opposition to the laws to endanger the United States, I cannot myself to consider it in a serious point of view; positive facts must be proved to me, in my belief of such things shall be had. Confidence in the great body of citizens of the Eastern States is not done away, and I believe there is in the same state a sufficient force of force to suppress any attempts to be made against the union. And it comes to the point, there is reason to believe that patriotism similar to that which prevailed in the Western States, in the case of the embargo, will also influence our brothers of the East. My vote in this case shall not be influenced, nor is it influenced, by any thing that has been said to be done respecting the laws in any of the Eastern States; such influence is disavowed by me. In case and every other my vote shall be according to my understanding what is in the interest, and will best promote the rights and independence of the United States.

**Rhea** said, that for some days he had of opinion that a commercial non-intercourse between the United States and Great Britain and France and their dependencies, all other powers having in force orders and decrees violating the lawful commerce and rights of the United States, might have been the most proper measure to have adopted in the then state of things, in the case of the embargo; and that under that measure the United States some time might have glided along. But in the opinion of the gentleman from Connecticut, burying hath gone by; the opportunity for that system, it is apprehended is past. Let it be observed that a commercial intercourse system, is not a system of non-intercourse to the edicts of either Great Britain or France. Great Britain doth not command the United States to abandon the ocean, or to trade with her; no such thing. Great Britain declares her ports open to the vessels and produce of the United States; either for consumption, so far as it is necessary to supply her market, or for exportation. Great Britain declares that for that tribute or duty, call it what you will, shall be paid. France doth not command the United States to abandon the ocean, or not to trade with her. France declares American vessels, which have been visited by British armed vessels, or have been in British ports, or have British merchandise on board, shall be licensed to trade, shall be subject to capture and condemnation. Certainly then, in my opinion that a commercial non-intercourse between the United States and Great Britain and France, and their dependencies, all other powers having in force orders and decrees, violating the lawful commerce and rights of the United States would be submitted to Great Britain and France, is not founded.

Great respect ought to be paid to the observations of the gentleman from Virginia (Randolph) who was of opinion that the embargo ought to be raised forthwith; there is no doubt that if the embargo laws are repealed, the great quantity of produce which is said to have passed into Canada, and there detained for some time by the ice, that reason may not get to market as other produce shipped from the United States. Notwithstanding the force of these observations they do not contain a sufficient reason to repeal the embargo laws so far as it respects the ports of New York, Philadelphia and Philadelphia are by the rigor of the winter now locked up, and probably continue so for some time. In that case several other ports in the United

States be; if then the embargo laws are forthwith repealed, you will give a decided advantage to those ports which are open or continue always to be so, either in the Southern or Eastern States. This would be partial and unfair, and in operation unjust. If the embargo is raised, let it be at a day so distant, at least, that the merchants in every part of the United States may have notice; and not only so, but that the day on which the embargo shall be raised, may be so distant, that there may be every reason to conclude that the natural frozen embargo which now exists shall also be taken off from every port in the United States. If the merchants are to start their vessels as for a race, let them all have opportunity of a fair start, and let not some of them have time to run over half the course before others of them can get away from the starting place.

I will not vote (said Mr. Rhea) to fill up the blank with the words "the first day of June," for reasons to me cogent.—The embargo hath now continued for more than twelve months, and the great body of the citizens have with true magnanimity and patriotic love of country, bore up under and supported it notwithstanding its accompanying privations. An embargo of the same nature and extent, in all probability, would, in the term of six months, have shaken any other maritime nation to its centre. It was left and remained for the sovereign people of the United States in their neutral capacity to manifest to all other nations an hitherto unexperienced firmness under an embargo of such duration and extent. This embargo and the firmness with which it was supported, will be a grand landmark to future generations, by which to steer their political course.

**Mr. Rhea** said, it had been his opinion, that the embargo if it had been universally regarded which it ought to have been, would have operated as an impenetrable wall of defence to the United States, under those days of trouble, in which the nations in Europe appear to be executing vengeance on each other, had passed over. It certainly would have had that effect, if patriotism and love of country had universally prevailed over love of money. The United States are a new nation, composed either originally or personally, of emigrants from almost every European nation. This nation doth not owe its origin to any one European nation, and neither of these nations hath any right for that cause, to claim or demand any peculiar favor. The United States are three thousand miles distant, far removed in the depths of the wilderness, from the bloody wars of Europe, it might therefore have been most proper, and most consistent with their safety to have been contented at home, and patiently endured the privation of foreign superfluities, even without the constraint of an embargo, for some time longer; and if possible, until those days of European affliction had passed over.

There is now on hand, it is presumed, a vast quantity of produce. The agricultural interest hath, to its great disadvantage, endured for a sufficient length of time, great depression in the price of produce; if then the embargo is designed to be raised in time for the produce to get to market, it ought not to be delayed until the first of June. On the fourth day of March next let the embargo be raised. There will be sufficient time for the merchants in every part of the United States to be informed of that event. On that day, there is reason to believe, the natural embargo by freezing, which now exists, will be taken off. On the 4th day of March next, another administration will come into power and it may be most proper and convenient that that administration shall commence its career with a new order of things. The United States have abstained from navigating the ocean a considerable length of time. Lest, then, it may be believed, that there is an intention to abandon it altogether, on the fourth day of March next, let the navigation of the ocean be resumed, and on that day, and forever after, let the United States assert and maintain their right to navigate the ocean, the great common highway of nations, freely, and agreeably to the laws of public reason.

When I contemplate, said Mr. R., the great danger to which the seafaring citizens and commerce of the United States will be exposed on the ocean, it is with great reluctance indeed I agree to raise the embargo. Great Britain with steady policy for centuries past hath been endeavoring to acquire the dominion of the ocean and monopoly of commerce. To these two idols, dominion of the ocean and monopoly of commerce, an immense profusion of human blood hath been poured out in libation, and the commerce of every maritime nation hath been sacrificed. Great Britain after various efforts, and struggles, hath at last acquired the fictitious object; in other words hath by main force seized upon and usurped the dominion of the ocean, the common property of all nations, and by her laws hath virtually declared that no nation shall buy or sell unless the property or mer-

chandize shall be stamped with her mark. The decrees of France are also arrayed against the commerce of the United States and threaten destruction to every part of it that shall come within their grasp. In this state of things, if the embargo be raised, there can be but one opinion as to merchant vessels, and that is, that if they may be designed to put to sea, they shall be authorized in the first instance, to arm. On the subject of war, nothing hitherto hath by me been said. I desire to avoid war if possible and therefore will not take war into consideration at this time, and why shall the United States forbear longer than the fourth of March next to resume the navigation of the ocean? Hath not all navigation with Great Britain and France failed? With Great Britain it hath run down to a mere dispute about words. It appears by the late dispatches from the minister of the United States at Great Britain, that the question of negotiation now is whether such words were spoken, and if spoken with what understanding; this certainly is descending into the abyss of humiliation. I cannot forbear, (said Mr. R.) expressing a wish that our ministers were on their way home although they might experience severe weather on their passage.

We have been told that the British fleet is a barrier; it is admitted that it is a barrier, a barrier against the freedom of the ocean against the freedom of commerce, and against the commercial rights of nations.

We have been told that Great Britain is fighting for her existence in what manner doth that respect the United States? The United States cannot be charged with the cause of her quarrel. But Great Britain is contending against a power, who appears to desire the dominion of the continent of Europe. Let it be so, that will not avail or help the position, some of the greatest, best, and most honorable and patriotic men of Great Britain, have said, that if the power of France is arrived to transcendent greatness, Great Britain may thank herself for pushing France to that state of greatness. Let Great Britain restore the many thousand seamen, citizens of the United States whom she holds in slavery, to their country. Let Great Britain indemnify for the many millions worth of property of citizens of the United States, by her unjustly captured and condemned. Let Great Britain rescind and repeal all her edicts, proclamations and laws which violate the lawful commerce and rights of the United States. Let Great Britain declare that the ocean shall be free, and that the commerce of the United States shall travel unmolested on the highway of nations.

Let Great Britain make reparation for her many violations of the sovereignty of the United States, and after these things are all performed, and justice done to the United States, then let gentlemen tell us that Great Britain is fighting for her existence.

There was a time when Great Britain had it in her power to have conciliated and secured to herself the friendship and affection of the U. States; a time, when after the fire of the revolutionary war had been extinguished, the U. States were blooming into commercial existence, then was the time for Great Britain to have taken the Hercules in her arms, and to have cherished him as a brother; by so doing she might have had a brother, indeed who would have stood by her in the day of trouble. On the contrary Great Britain hath been studiously, anxiously, and industriously careful to alienate the friendship and affections of the U. States. Let the whole conduct of Great Britain towards the U. States since the treaty of peace, be attended to, and then let the unpassioned and impartial observer say whether Great Britain hath not been industriously careful to alienate the friendship and affection of the U. States from herself.

Let the impartial witness judge in this cause, and he will pronounce sentence against Great Britain. Great Britain by violence, hath rent asunder those bonds of social friendship which might have connected her and the United States forever. But, sir, we are asked, why shall we arm? Who is our enemy? These questions may be answered by asking two other questions, viz.—Why shall we not arm? Who is our friend? Sir, it appears as if the whole world was arrayed against the U. States. Let any gentleman take the map of the world, and put his finger on the spot, designating the place, where dwells a nation the avowed friend of the United States. It will give me great pleasure indeed, to be so informed. And here, said, Mr. Rhea—I will take the liberty to observe, that it is time, and it is right for the United States to look over the world, and if possible, ascertain the fact, whether there be that nation, and if that nation can be found, I shall have no hesitation to take him in my arms, to call him friend and brother, and to make with him a treaty of everlasting amity, love and friendship.

**Mr. Cook.**—Mr. Chairman, I am opposed to filling the blank for repealing the embargo on the first day of June next, and to issue letters of Marque and Reprisal at that time; be-

cause, sir, this is a government of the people, and their voice is not at present for war. You have too long, interposed the embargo as a shield to our citizens against British deprivations—they have lost their war-pulse—they must again suffer, to again wind them up to their former spirit. This being a government of, and from the people, whose servants we are, it is our duty to advance their interests and to enforce the general will of the nation. Not, sir, that the embargo laws cannot be executed by the arm of this government. I unhesitatingly declare, that this government can be supported; and your laws can, by the strong arm of government, be enforced. But, sir, is it true policy to enforce these laws? I do presume it is not, as it may produce a civil war, the worst of all wars. The embargo has been sufficiently tried, and the experiment has proved, that it is not sufficiently coercive to induce the belligerents to abandon their orders and decrees. Why then continue it to the injury of our own citizens, and especially those who are our best citizens, our friends who are most disposed to support the administration and our laws?

Sir, I lament that the public sentiment and opinion on the subject of foreign aggressions, is different in the different sections of our country. The south say, embargo or war—and the north and east say, no embargo, no war. I applaud the sentiment of the people of the south and highly revere their high sense of honor. I lament, that this difference of opinion exists; yet, as it does exist, we must take things as they are, and legislate accordingly. The genius and duty of republican governments, is to make laws to suit the people, and not to attempt to make the people suit the laws. In monarchies, the people are drilled to suit the laws flowing from the despot—but this never should be attempted in a republican government, the strength of which is the love and attachment of the citizens. Sir, you cannot make war which will promise a successful issue whilst the country is disunited. The people must, with one voice, unitedly call for war from every section and village of our country. Then, indeed, we may venture on war. The people must urge us into war; we cannot drive them into a successful contest. No, sir, you know the attempt is futile, it is idle. Sir, as I consider myself a representative of the people, I view it as my duty, at this eventful moment, to make known to you what I do conceive to be (not the universal) but the general opinion and wishes of your citizens of all politics in the northern states. I will not be answerable for the correctness of these opinions and wishes of the people. No, sir, I could, in some instances, wish they were more consistent and less governed by the cupidity of gain. Yet, sir, their opinions arise from their local situation. The nature of man is the same every where; surrounded by the same objects, their opinions, sentiments and conduct will be the same. Place the people of the south in the same situation and surrounded by the same temptations, and pressed with the same losses; and their conduct would be the same as those of the north. Sir, from the communications I have received from the north, and from other sources of information, I believe that I shall be able to state their opinions and some of the reasons on which their opinions are founded. To comply with their wishes, we must repeal the embargo laws at as early a day as will comport with justice to all the merchants of our country. Let all have an equal chance to be first in the foreign market, and perhaps the first of March will be as early a day as will comport with this necessary provision. As a substitute for the embargo, they mean not submission. Their voice is, "arm in defence of natural and national rights." They wish for liberty to arm and defend against an infraction of our indisputable rights on the ocean. This defensive arming they wish to see regulated in such manner as shall preserve peace, if possible, and to do away (as far as is honorable and politic) every unnecessary cause of collision with foreign powers. To do this, will it not be wise, considering France and England as equally offending us, to put our relations with them on exactly the same basis? Inhibit by law the exportation of all contraband goods from our country, and permit none but real citizens of the United States to navigate the vessels of the United States.

These restrictions which indeed would not injure our fair trade, but would expel from our country, the demoralizing dregs of jails and men of war, would serve in a great measure to prevent collisions, and to secure to our own citizens, the reward of their own enterprise. To resist in such a manner as to induce a change in our favor, let us increase, and perhaps, double the duties on all importations from the offending powers; and reduce the duties on goods from other quarters.

These, and other retaliatory measures may be adopted, expressly to be only a temporary acquiescence with the present partial system of the embargo. And, sir, if laws be necessary to prevent our citizens from sailing them-