



The Tarborough Press,

BY GEORGE HOWARD.

Is published weekly at Two Dollars and Fifty Cents per year, if paid in advance—or Three Dollars at the expiration of the subscription year. For any period less than a year, Twenty-five Cents per month. Subscribers are at liberty to discontinue at any time, on giving notice thereof and paying arrears—those residing at a distance, must invariably pay in advance, or give a responsible reference in this vicinity.

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POLITICAL.



THE PRESIDENCY.

The Indiana State Sentinel contains letters from Messrs. Calhoun, Johnson, C. S. Buchanan, and Van Buren, in reply to certain questions propounded to them by the Indiana Democratic Convention, touching the prominent political topics of the day, they are as follows.

REPLY OF MR. VAN BUREN.

(continued.)

To insure economy in public expenditures, it is indispensable that those by whom they are authorized should have some difficulty, and even serious responsibility, in obtaining the means of defraying them. In no other way can extravagance be prevented, since it is the nature of man to spend that heedlessly which he acquires without effort, and to think little of that which costs little trouble to gain.

I have dwelt more at length on that part of your inquiry which relates to a national bank than I might otherwise have done, from a belief that you look upon it as one of the most vital consequences to the public welfare. In this I entirely coincide with you, as well as to myself, to say, that in referring to the public declarations I have been in no degree influenced by any feelings of dissatisfaction at the repetition of these inquiries on the present occasion. So far from this, I most highly applaud the enlightened patriotism of the Democracy of Indiana, in seizing an occasion so appropriate as that of an approaching presidential election, to require new securities, that the principles they themselves cherish should be carried out to their fullest extent, and more especially on this all important question.

I am not one of those who believe that the long-cherished project of re-establishing a national bank is, or ever will be, abandoned by that party which always has been, still is, and ever will be, the advocate and supporter of such an institution. It may lie dormant for a season, from a conviction of its being inexpedient to revive it; but he must be blind to all indications of the future who, seeing that even at the very period when the old bank was infesting the very air we breathe with its corruptions, and when public indignation was most heavily weighing on its long series of delinquencies—at that very moment, a successful effort was made in both Houses of Congress to create a similar institution—should nevertheless lull his caution to sleep with the delusive idea that the project will ever be abandoned. Most assuredly, nothing but the stern vigilance of the Democracy will guard it against an institution which may thus be prostituted to the ruin of individuals, the disgrace of the country, and which, while so limited in its power to do good, is so potent for the perpetration of evil.

The tenacity with which our opponents adhere to the distribution of the proceeds of the public lands among the States, in the present condition of the treasury, is a political anomaly, which it is not a little difficult to explain, or to reconcile with a fair understanding of, or a proper regard for, the true interests of the country. If any apology for it can be made, it is to be traced to that unwillingness to abandon, in the face of their opponents, a position which has been assumed with confidence, and supported with earnestness—an indisposition from which but few political associations are altogether exempt. Whatever may have been expected from this measure by its authors, or however plausibly deceptive its theory may have been, at a period when the country was threatened with the evils incident to an overflowing treasury, subsequent experience in regard to the workings of our political and financial systems ought long since to have satisfied every reflecting mind, as well of its ut-

ter inutility as a means of relief to the States, as of its destructive tendency to the stability and welfare, of the Union. As the matter now stands, and has for years stood; it presents, in the former aspect, the simple question, whether the people of the States can possibly be benefited by receiving into the State treasury a certain sum of money annually, to be immediately re-collected from themselves in the shape of taxes upon what they eat, drink, and wear, with the addition of the expenses of collection. Every attempt to give the measure any other tenable aspect; has proved utterly unavailing. It is certainly paying but a poor compliment to the capacity of the people, to suppose, for a moment, that they could be brought, by any pretext, however plausible, to stultify themselves so far as to adopt a proposition so preposterous. Can any intelligent mind hesitate in giving to it a prompt negative? And can any patriotic one fail to regret that the character of our people for intelligence and sagacity, in the estimation of mankind, should be exposed to hazard by the grave and continued agitation of such a question before them?

I can, after this, and after what I have heretofore said upon the subject, be scarcely necessary to repeat that I am opposed to the distribution of the proceeds of the public lands among the States. The best evidence I can give of my present opinion in regard to the proper disposition of the public lands, is to refer you to those which were avowed and acted upon by me while in office and which were very fully stated in my first annual message to Congress, in December, 1837.

My views in relation to the protective system were also called for by the Shocco Springs meeting in 1832, and freely given. A conviction that the establishment of commercial regulations with a view to the encouragement of domestic interests, is within the constitutional power of Congress, was on that occasion distinctly avowed. But holding this opinion, I, at the same time, denied the propriety of exercising this power in a manner calculated to oppress any portion of my fellow-citizens, or to advance the interests of one section of the Union at the expense of another. I, on the contrary, affirmed it to be the duty of those who are intrusted with the administration of the Federal Government, to direct its operations in the manner best calculated to distribute as equally as possible its burdens and blessings among the several States and the people thereof. In addition to the declaration of these general views, I suggested more specific rules for the action of the Government in this particular, by the observance of which, I believed those views would be most likely to be carried into fair effect.

More than ten years have elapsed since that communication was made; and, during that entire period, the people of the United States have paid large amounts of duties avowedly imposed for the encouragement and protection of domestic manufactures, with gradual reductions, according to the provisions of the compromise act of 1833. The unbiased sentiment of the country in respect to what is, under such circumstances, the proper rule for legislative action upon this subject, has, I think, by the course of events and the progress of opinion, been brought to the conclusion, briefly expressed in one of the resolutions of your convention, viz: "a discriminating tariff for revenue purposes only, and which will incidentally protect American industry."

But, as experience has shown that the terms employed by your convention are not always used in the same sense, it is due as well to the subject and the occasion as to myself, that I should give you, without reserve, my own understanding of them.

Adequate revenue, for the support of all Governments, must be derived from some source. It has nowhere been found an easy task to preserve equality in raising it, and at the same time to overcome the general repugnance to the payment of taxes in any shape—a repugnance arising more from an apprehension that their avails will not be wisely applied, than from an unwillingness on the part of the people to sustain their Government by the necessary contributions. All must agree that taxes should be imposed with a fair and full reference to the advantages derived from the existence of good government by those who pay them. Those advantages may, in general terms, be justly described as resulting from ample security in the enjoyment of our personal rights, and rights of property, with adequate safeguards against internal commotion and foreign aggression. In respect to the immunities of the person, and civil and religious freedom, the interest as well as the immediate advantages of all are equal. Not so with the other privileges secured to us by our free Government.

The unavoidable disparity in the pecuniary condition of our citizens makes the degree of benefit they respectively derive from the maintenance of an efficient Government over property and the rights of property essentially different. The modes

of raising revenue allowed to and adopted by the State Governments, are generally graduated by this disparity. If the results are not always equitable, the fault, it is believed, will in most cases be found in their action upon the principle, rather than in the principle itself. The right to raise revenue for its support, by the imposition of duties in lieu of direct taxation, is by the Constitution subjected to the exclusive control of the Federal Government. This right, subject to the limitations imposed by the grant, was given to it for that purpose, and has been freely exerted by it since its establishment. It would afford me much pleasure to be able to say that the exercise of this power has borne as equally upon all classes of the people, however unequal in their pecuniary conditions, as the taxes imposed by the State Governments. But this cannot with truth be said. Nor is the inequality unavoidably resulting from the federal mode of collecting taxes a new discovery. It was foreseen and objected to when the power was conferred, as an evil inherent to the system, which could not fail to show itself in its operation, and the injustice of which no form of legislation, however it might be made to mitigate, could ever be able to remove. The advocates of the system were, notwithstanding, reconciled to it by a belief (no doubt sincerely entertained) that the inequalities which it was feared would result from the collection of duties upon imported articles, would be prevented by the fact that the consumption would be in proportion to the means of the consumer. It was upon this ground that the principle was defended. That this expectation has not been realized, is undeniably true. There are but few, if any, who cannot, in their immediate vicinity, point out numerous instances in which poor men with large families are actually obliged to pay more for the support of the Federal Government, than others who are in affluent circumstances, but are either without, or have smaller families; and few, if any, countervailing examples are to be found. At the same time, the great body of wealth invested in incorporated or associated companies, and in bonds and notes, entirely escape Federal taxation. The mass of the people seem, nevertheless, to prefer this mode of collecting the revenue. Paying their taxes in the form of an increased price upon the commodities they buy, their contribution loses, in their estimation, much of the odium that would be attached to it if severed from the price of the article, and converted into a tax by name, as it is in fact. It also wears the appearance of a voluntary contribution, altho' its payment is, for the most part, as unavoidable as a compulsory imposition would be. It is supported, too, by the odium which was attached to the imposition of direct taxes many years since, for purposes which were not approved by the people, and by the fact that, in most of the States, the taxes are direct—rendering it, for that reason, desirable to substitute some other mode of raising revenue for the Federal Government. These, and other considerations, have given to the impost a preference in the public mind, which would render the imposition of direct taxes in time of peace exceedingly odious, and have produced as great a degree of unanimity in favor of a tariff for revenue, as ever can be expected upon a public question. Of the great mass of opponents to a protective tariff, there is not so far as I know, a single State, or even district, that has taken ground against a revenue tariff.

Let us now, for a moment look at the advantages which the manufacturing interest, above any other, derives from a tariff imposed for revenue only. The first tariff bill, passed in 1789, and all those that followed it between that period and the war, were, in fact, notwithstanding the recital, in some of them, revenue bills. The average amount of the imposts under them, commencing at 12 1/2 per cent., was gradually increased from that to 15, and up to 20 per cent. At the latter average it stood from 1800 to 1808, & until the commencement of preparations for war. Twenty per centum, upon an average, appears, in the judgment of those best acquainted with the subject, here and elsewhere, to be the rate best adapted for revenue. It is the amount, also, to which it was the design of the compromise act to reduce the tariff, and one which ought certainly not to be exceeded, except when absolutely necessary for revenue, and likely, from the state of the country, to effect this object. The rate to which all parties appear willing to go under the existing condition of the treasury, and to continue it until that condition is sufficiently improved to justify a reduction, is, I believe, an average of 25 per cent. To this duty are to be added the charges upon imported articles arising from the costs of transportation from Europe, consisting of freight, insurance, expenses of agencies, or profits to successive holders, and cash duties—which are estimated, by those who understand the matter better than I do, at not less than 10 per cent. making, if the average rate of duty is 25 per cent., an amount of charges upon imported

articles, before they are placed in our market upon a par with similar articles manufactured here, equal to 35 per cent.; and if the average duty is 20 per cent., to 30 per cent. If the foreign article is, notwithstanding, brought in, and a competition entered into with the home manufacturers, these duties and charges operate, whilst the competition lasts, as a protection to the domestic manufacturer, equal to their sum—giving him, by so much, the advantage in the sale of his commodities over the importer; and if the effect of these charges is to prevent the importation of such articles altogether, they then give him an entire monopoly of the home market. These are the direct advantages which result to the manufacturing interest from the raising of revenue by the imposition of duties upon imports, instead of direct taxation.

Let us next consider whether the other great interests of the country derive any, & if any, what direct advantages from this mode of collecting the public revenue. I do not profess to be as well acquainted with the progress and probable results of our fiscal operations upon trade & labor, as those who, by their pursuits in life, have enjoyed greater advantages for acquiring this kind of information. I give you, in answer to your inquiries, the best views that I am able to take of the subject. If I fall into any errors, they will certainly be unintentional, and as certainly be corrected by those who are better informed. And, first, as relates to the agricultural—that greatest of all interests—it is certainly true, that, in the formation of our tariff, duties varying in amount are also imposed on the same articles which constitute the staple productions of this country, when imported from abroad; but is it not equally true, that the effect of that imposition, in respect to the protection thereby afforded to the domestic production of them, is, for the most part, nominal? When we look at the comparatively small amount of duties received at the treasury upon the importation of the important articles, beef, pork, flour, various kinds of grain, cotton, rice, tobacco, wool, &c., &c., contrasted with that collected upon the importation of manufactured articles, we cannot but be sensible that this is so. The farmer and planter, it is true, enjoy, and to a great degree without competition with foreign producers, our own market for the sale of most of the fruits of their labor; but it is a security derived chiefly, if not altogether, from natural causes, for which nobody pays, and which derives but little aid from legislation. It is, on the contrary, to the nature of our climate, the enterprise and industry of our citizens, the character of our territory, with other facilities for the easier and cheaper growth of agricultural products here, that the agriculturist is chiefly indebted for his protection against foreign competition. To foster the interests of commerce and navigation, has been the object of the Federal Government; and much has certainly been done to accomplish it, through the instrumentality of salutary laws and treaty stipulations. Respect has also been very generally had to these interests, and more particularly that of navigation, even in our revenue bills by low duties, or exemption from duties, upon articles necessary and useful to them; but it will not, I believe, be contended in any quarter, that the prosperity of either of these great interests is essentially advanced by a protective or a revenue tariff. That the great body of the mechanics in every branch of business, whose welfare should be an object of unceasing solicitude on the part of every public man, have been the greatest sufferers by our high protective tariffs, and would continue so to be if that policy is persisted in, is, to my mind, too clear to require further elucidation.

If these views are correct, (and, in all essential particulars, I cannot doubt their being so,) it is apparent that the manufacturing interest derives an advantage from the collection of the revenues of the Federal Government through the custom-houses instead of their being obtained by the mode of taxation adopted by the States, incomparably greater than any other of the important interests of the country—indeed than all of them put together. That this advantage consists in a preference in the American market over their foreign competitors, of not less than 30 per cent., when the revenue standard is reduced to an average of 20 per cent., and liable to be increased as before stated; that it is enjoyed by virtue of a tariff, the collection of the duties imposed by which, whilst it subjects all to taxation, invariably, and almost inevitably, bears with unequal severity upon a very large, and, unhappily, in general, a necessitous portion of the people—a protection, the indirect advantages of which to other interests even under a tariff for protection, are as much the subject of doubt and disputation as they ever were, but for which those concerned in other pursuits have for a long series of years paid in advance, and received their equivalent in promises, of the performance of which they are not, and do not seem likely to be soon, satisfied. This advantage to the manufacturer is not, it is true, the object

of, but only incidental to, a tariff for revenue. Still it is not, on that account, the less beneficial to him.

The position assumed by your convention, and in which I fully concur, is, that the incidental protection thus derived is all the legislative favor which can at this day be conferred upon the manufacturer, without great injustice to other interests. The expediency of the adoption by Congress, at any time, of temporary measures of retaliation, when likely to be effectual in countering foreign legislation injurious to American interests, is a question involving different considerations.

We have it from quarters entitled to respect, that the most considerate of the domestic manufacturers are satisfied with this measure of protection; that, tired of having their peculiar interests embarked in political contests, resulting at one time in an excess of duties which tempts to an undue and ruinous increase of capital in their business, and, at others, under the deep and excited feelings which perpetual controversy engenders, in sudden and great reductions, equally injurious; that, conscious of the extent to which, for more than a quarter of a century, they have engrossed the time and attention of the National Legislature and of the people, and of the millions upon millions which have, during that time, been collected from the latter, avowedly to facilitate and give special advantages to the particular pursuit in which they are engaged, not only to the exclusion of, but at the immediate cost of those of others; and sensible, as the most observing amongst them must be, that the period has passed away when a tariff designed for protection can be kept up in this country, without doing more injury to every interest, by the convulsions and revolutions which it cannot fail to produce in public opinion, than it can confer benefit on theirs;—they would themselves prefer that the protection secured to them by the legislation of Congress should be confined to that which is incidentally derived from a revenue tariff. So far as certainty in their condition—a matter of inestimable importance—it is the only course by which even an approach to its accomplishment can be hoped for. To all present appearances, the acquiescence in a tariff for revenue, now so general, may, in the absence of special excitement, endure for a period as long as is commonly embraced in calculations of business. It cannot, however, have escaped the attention of the manufacturers, that although no State or district of country may yet have taken ground against this mode of raising revenue for the support of Government, there are not wanting thousand of vigorous intellects, in every section of our extended country, who, penetrated by a deep sense of the inequality and consequent injustice of its operation, are applying all the energies of their minds to the overthrow of the system itself. They cannot be ignorant, either, of the fact, that a prejudice against direct taxation, springing in some degree at least, from a supposed abuse of the power in times past, may yield to time and reflection, or may be supplanted by a newer and stronger antipathy. And what could be more likely to awaken popular aversion, than the sight of a great and affluent interest in the country, standing out amid the general gloom, pertinaciously exerting its influence in the councils of the nation, not only to save itself from the misfortunes which had overtaken all other classes, but to secure its own aggrandizement by new and unjust impositions on a community already borne to the earth by the adverse course of events. Individuals and their families may be (and in other countries are) permanently billeted on the public coffers; but all experience has shown that, with us at least, it is not in the power of the Government to secure permanent advantages to the business pursuits of one class over those of all others. The very patronage which is thus unduly received, has a tendency to relax the exertions, and to dissipate the prudence of its recipients; and if the spirit of monopoly is not in this way defeated, it is sure to be brought down, in the end, by the controlling power of an excited and enlightened public sentiment. I do, therefore, sincerely hope that the disposition which is attributed to a portion, at least, of the manufacturing interest, does in fact exist, and that it will soon become general. But whether it be so or not, the principle advanced by your convention is, without doubt, the true one for our future government.

(Remainder in our next.)

Poverty in the City of New York—A statistical account of the applications for alms at the Commissioners' office in New York, between the 1st of January and the 1st of April last, gives the number at 8,985. On examining the situation of these applicants, it appeared that they represented an average of four and one half, making a total of 40,432 persons who were compelled to lay their wants before the doors of public charity.

New York paper.