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## The Tarborough Press,

BY GEORGE HOWARD.

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## POLITICAL.



### THE PRESIDENCY.

The Indiana State Sentinel contains letters from Messrs. Calhoun, Johnson, Cass, 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.)

When the convention speak of a discriminating tariff for revenue, I understand them as referring to discriminations below the maximum rate of duties upon imported articles, not designed to increase the protection already afforded to domestic manufactures, but to carry out views of policy different in their character, and which may properly be embraced in such a measure.

Of the constitutional power to make discriminations, I have no doubt. Equally clear it is that the practice of making them has existed from the commencement of the Government, & constitutes a feature in every principal tariff bill which is to be found upon our statute-book. They are, indeed, indispensable to the successful operation of every revenue bill, whether the design be to guard against smuggling, on the one hand, where the nature of the article is such as to afford facilities for that practice; or, on the other, to prevent loss to the treasury, by the imposition of duties higher than the value of the article will bear, and thus prohibiting its introduction into the country. If it be at any time deemed necessary or conducive to the safety of the country to encourage the manufacture at home of the articles necessary to its defence in war, nothing can be more proper than to do so by a discrimination in favor of their domestic manufacture, inasmuch as the object in view is to promote the safety of all at the expense of all. Discrimination have constantly been made in favor of articles imported for the use of philosophical or literary societies, for the encouragement of the fine arts, or for the use of seminaries of learning, specimens in natural history, animals imported to breed, &c., &c., &c.—all founded on the same principle, in respect to the universality of the benefits designed to be secured at the common expense. But, above all, is the power to make them of inestimable importance, as the only means of relieving the poorer classes from the unequal operation of this mode of collecting the public revenues, and of partially realizing Mr. Jefferson's beautiful idea of a wise and frugal Government—one which "shall restrain men from injuring one another, and shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned." The man of wealth, when he pays a tax, in the form of impost, which enures incidentally to the advancement of a special interest in which he is not concerned, is in a degree reconciled by the reflection, that, if the amount paid was not collected in this form, it would be assessed upon him in another—by which the amount of his contribution, in comparison with those of his less affluent neighbors, would be materially enhanced. But to the poor man, no such consolation is afforded. The system which operates thus favorably to his more fortunate neighbor, increases his taxes in an inverse ratio to his ability to pay. Every additional mouth that he has to feed, adds to the contribution he is obliged to make for the support of Government. It is only by discriminations in favor of articles necessary to his comfort, that the injustice to which he is exposed can be mitigated. It is therefore a power, the constant and faithful exercise of which is in my judgment, demanded by considerations of justice, humanity, and sound policy.

I am satisfied with the veto power as it exists by the Constitution, and opposed to any modification which shall materially change the principle upon which it rests.

To frame an organic law for the establishment of one General Government for thirteen independent sovereignties already in existence, and accustomed to the use of power, with satisfactory provisions for the admission of new States, to be thereafter carved out of the national domain, was a work of great difficulty. To obstacles unavoidably attendant upon such an undertaking under circumstances the most favorable, were, in our case, to be added embarrassments of the gravest character. These consisted, among others, of diversities of climate, and consequently of staple productions—in the facilities for the prosecutions of foreign commerce, and other business pursuits, which belong to different portions of the country; and, to no inconsiderable extent, also to differences in their origin, and in the political preferences of the inhabitants of the respective States—preferences rendered inveterate by the severities of a bloody and protracted civil war.

The success with which this great work was notwithstanding accomplished by its immortal authors, has surpassed even their own most sanguine expectations, and elicited the admiration and applause of the friends of freedom throughout the world. It has given stability to republican principles, multiplied and strengthened the proofs of the capacity of man for self government, and disappointed the hopes of the enemies of free institutions. No instance of a written constitution is to be found, which has undergone so little change since it came from the hands of its framers, or which possesses in so eminent a degree the confidence, the respect, and, I may add, the reverence of those who are subject to its operation. It is from the general prevalence of such feelings on the part of our citizens, that the Constitution derives much, not to say most, of its efficiency; and it is by doing all in our power to increase and strengthen them, that we can alone hope to make its existence perpetual. Although successful beyond example, no one pretends that it is perfect. Perfection is an attribute which does not belong to the works of man. Defect must, therefore, be corrected as they show themselves in the practical working of the system. It is to such (and it might, perhaps be safely added, to such only) that the hand of reform can be usefully applied. That the provision of the Constitution under consideration can be more easily rendered obnoxious to prejudice than others, is undoubtedly true. There is, nevertheless, nothing in its structure inconsistent with the general scope of our peculiar system of government, or any thing which is calculated to lead to bad results. Altho' absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority is, in the language of Mr. Jefferson, a cardinal principle in republican government, it is yet to be remembered that it is to the will of the majority, expressed according to the forms of the Constitution, that he refers; and that there is no channel provided by our constitution through which the sense of the people of the United States, in the aggregate, may be taken. Such a provision was deemed incompatible with a full enjoyment by the States of the rights of sovereignty which they reserved to themselves, and with which it was neither the intention of the framers of that instrument, nor of the people who adopted it, to interfere. The qualifications of the power of the majority, and the restrictions upon the authority of the Federal Government, which pervade the Constitution, are doubtless to be traced to this source.

The right of the President to suspend the operation of an act of Congress, by withholding his assent from it, and, in the absence of the requisite majority, to defeat it for the time being; is, therefore, in harmony with the spirit and design of the entire system. I say, for the time being; because all experience has shown that objections to a public measure on the part of any branch of the Government, are, in the end, always made to yield to the settled and well ascertained wishes of the people; in whatever mode they may be elicited; the effect of the interference of the Executive being to secure a fuller and more perfect reconsideration of the whole subject by the people. Nor was this power bestowed upon the Executive without adequate consideration, and a full view of the beneficial effects it was capable of producing in the administration of a Government in which such various, momentous, and not unfrequently contrary, interests were to be intrusted. The President is the only efficient officer and, with the single exception of the Vice President, the only one in the Federal Government, in the election of whom all the States, and the electors of each State, take part. All others are comparatively local, as well in respect to the constituencies by whom they are chosen, as to their immediate responsibilities. The President is the only efficient representative in the Federal system, between whom

and the whole Confederacy there exists that common sympathy which arises from the relation of elector and representative, and the obligation it imposes. It is to him, therefore, more than to any other functionary of the Federal Government, that the people of all the States look, and have a right to look, for an impartial attention to the interests of every section of our greatly extended Union. To enable him to perform his important duties, a portion of the powers necessary to good government is, by the Constitution, vested in the Executive department. The veto constitutes an important, and, in my opinion, a very useful part of those powers. It is a part, also, which can seldom, if ever, be employed by the incumbent of the presidential chair to promote personal objects. This consideration cannot be too highly appreciated. It is the liability of public trusts to be thus abused, that has been the canker of every public service. The occasion would be a rare one, indeed, upon which the President could, by the exercise of the veto power, minister to his private gratification, or to that of his friends, or even to the advancement of his political interests, except by means the most honorable, and through a channel in an eminent degree free from exception. By refusing his assent to a bill which has passed both Houses, he is sure to excite at the outset the formidable opposition of those influential bodies, to offend the particular interests which expect to be advanced by the measure, and to expose himself to the temporary odium of running counter to what is properly regarded as presumptive evidence of the will of the people. No public man will be apt to place himself in a position so trying, unless he is influenced by an irresistible conviction of right, and a firm confidence in the ultimate rectitude of that public opinion by which alone he can hope to be sustained. Our political system does not, therefore, clothe any of the agents it employs with authority which is more likely to be exerted from pure motives, and to patriotic ends. We have, in these considerations, the best of human securities that this negative power will be but seldom exercised, and never when there is not good reason to believe that the legislature has, for the moment, through inadvertence, error of opinion, or other causes, placed itself in opposition to the interests and wishes of the people. This inference is fully sustained by experience. The administration of the elder Adams, of Mr. Jefferson, and of that over which I had the honor to preside, did not, I believe, produce a single veto. The whole number since the establishment of the Government is very small; and those who make war upon the principle, may be safely challenged to produce a single instance in which the presidential veto failed to be sustained by the people.

The most important, by far, of the occasions upon which it has been interposed, were in regard to a national bank, and to internal improvements by the General Government. To repeat my own convictions of the dangerous character of such an institution, or the public evils which experience has shown to be inseparable from its existence, would be superfluous.

Resistance, through the instrumentality of the veto, to the system devised for making internal improvements in the States, under the authority and at the expense of the Federal Government, was commenced by Mr. Madison on the occasion of his veto to the bonus bill—continued by Mr. Monroe on that of his veto to the bill for the collection of tolls on the Cumberland road; and the whole scheme, with the exception of limited appropriations for the improvement of certain harbors, and the removal of temporary obstructions in certain rivers, was finally overthrown under that of General Jackson, by his celebrated Maysville veto, and other acts of a kindred character. It would, with the mass of facts we have before us, all tending to the same conclusion, be but a poor compliment to the intelligence of the people to enlarge upon the benefits which the country has derived from the overthrow of this mischievous and dangerous policy. From the greater tendency of legislation by Congress, upon such subjects, to what is called log-rolling, than that of the States, it is quite certain that the two hundred millions of debt incurred by the latter for these and similar purposes, would have been vastly enhanced if such objects had been undertaken by the Federal Government. Indeed, there can be but little, if any doubt, in the mind of any calm and intelligent observer, that, but for the Maysville veto, and the subsequent adherence to its principles and policy, the General Government would at this moment have been saddled with a debt of some three or four hundred millions, without having even as much to show for it as have the embarrassed States. When our present condition, in these respects, is contrasted with what it would have been under the grinding operation of such a debt, and the corrupting and destructive operation of a national bank, we may form some idea of the advantages which the country has derived from the exercise of the Presi-

dential veto. The best effects have also followed its exercise in respect to its influence upon public opinion. Although that policy has now but few, if any, advocates, no one can have forgotten how deeply the public mind, in many parts of the country, was elicited in its favor.

The necessary limits to a communication of this character render it impossible to do justice to the various other aspects in which this power may be usefully employed in the administration of the Government. As a shield which may, in the exercise of a sound discretion, be thrown over a weaker department of the Government, or over the interests of a less powerful section of the Union, when they are, in the opinion of the Executive, unjustly invaded, it may become of the greatest importance. Political power, as it respects different portions of the republic, is constantly changing hands; and no particular party can count with safety upon its perpetual exemption from the effects of such alternations. When the Federal Constitution was adopted, Massachusetts and Virginia were decidedly the most powerful States in the confederacy. New York was classed among, and partook of the feelings which were common to, the small States; and the territory which now constitutes the Western States was, for the most part, the abode of savages. Although still strong in the virtue, spirit, enterprise, intelligence, and patriotism of their citizens, and respectable in all things, it is well known that those venerable States have already, in numerical strength, fallen behind some of their contemporaries; and the great West, if not already, is destined soon to become, the seat of Federal power. No portion of the Union can, therefore, assume with certainty that it may not, in the course of time and events, become useful, if not necessary to invoke the exercise of this salutary power for the protection of its rights and interests.

The control of the President over the dispensation of Federal patronage, presents a subject far more deserving of the watchful vigilance of the people, charged by the Constitution with the execution of the laws, it was altogether proper to confer upon him an important share in the selection of the agents through whose instrumentality that great duty is to be performed. The power which he possesses in this respect is also wisely restricted by the checks upon it which are placed in other branches of the Government, viz: in the Senate, by an absolute veto upon the most important of his selections; and in each branch of the Legislature, by an equally absolute negative upon the appropriations necessary to their compensation. It is, nevertheless true, that this control over the distribution of public patronage is, in its tendency, adverse to a pure administration of the important trusts which the people have committed to their agents. Experience has shown that there is a temptation in the possession of this power, to its abuse, which cannot be effectually guarded against by human laws, and against the influence of which even honest and patriotic men not unfrequently find it difficult to guard themselves. With all the restraints imposed upon its exercise, it may still be wielded by the Executive to influence widely the action of his associates in the public service, to secure and perpetuate his own authority, for the aggrandizement of his personal adherents, and to depress those who, though they may possess the strongest claim upon the public confidence, have not the good fortune to stand in that relation to the appointing power. It would be more honorable to human nature, if we could flatter ourselves with the belief that such have not been, or the hope that such will not in future be; the results of its exercise. But experience unfortunately teaches us a different lesson; and from the fallible nature of man, we are scarcely allowed to hope that it ever will be otherwise. To encourage an honest observance of sound political principles, by the dispensation of patronage, is, I fear, an advantage seldom, if ever, realized under any Government. Its tendencies, there is too much to apprehend, have been in general far otherwise. For this evil, (and a grave one it is,) there is but one effectual remedy. When we cannot dispense with the officers we must distribute, as widely as possible, the power of appointing them. To make this remedy more effectual, it is always wise to reserve the selection of public officers, as far as practicable and convenient, to people themselves. It is not an easy matter to keep individual action in public affairs wholly free from the influence in some form, of personal interest. That of the mass of the people is, on the contrary, almost invariably disinterested, and seldom, if ever, fails to come right in the end. As much power over appointments as is deemed really necessary to enable the Executive to perform his responsible duties, should be left to him. Of all beyond that, and which can be as well exercised by the people themselves, or otherwise he should, by constitutional means, be divested. The possession of the excess is decidedly

adverse to the healthful action of the department. No right-minded man, occupying the presidential chair, after he had had an opportunity to judge by experience of its effects, will desire to possess it. From this prolific source proceed most of the temptations which draw the ambitious politician from his duty to his constituents. While the veto is generally applied to questions exclusively of public concern, and is exercised under a personal responsibility which will not be incurred except with great reluctance, and in cases in which there is a strong reliance upon the public judgment for support, this power is peculiarly adapted to the sinister purposes of ambitious and selfish aspirants. It is, therefore, by diminishing this executive power, and not that of the veto—which is least liable to abuse, and has been thus far uniformly exercised for the public advantage—that our statesmen can render the most essential, and, I doubt not, the most acceptable service to the cause of the people. To accomplish this great and salutary object, presents a proper field for the patriotic exertions of all who think it wise, as I do, to keep a jealous eye upon executive authority, and particularly upon its administration of the public patronage. Placed at the head of the committee upon appointments in the convention for the amendment of the constitution of my own State, I took an active, and, I hope, not an ineffectual part, to carry out this principle, as far as, with the lights which experience then afforded, I thought we could safely go. As those lights multiplied, I united in giving it a still wider range; and I am well satisfied that a periodical review of the subject, by the Legislature and people, with views to its still greater extension, would be eminently useful, as well in the administration of the Federal as of the State Governments.

To your last interrogatory, I unhesitatingly answer, Yes. The Democracy of the Union will not fail (as I am sure they ought not) to adopt every proper precaution to secure, through the instrumentality of the convention they propose to hold, an honest and full expression of the wishes and opinions of a majority of their political associates. Bearing in mind the disreputable scenes of 1840; conscious of the effects which those scenes necessarily had in shaking the confidence of mankind in the fitness of the American people for free institutions; and actuated by a patriotic zeal to wipe off, now and forever, every injurious impression which was thus made upon the character of either,—they will not, I am certain, permit their noble efforts in so good a cause to be stained by a single act of indirection or unfairness. So believing, I hold it to be impossible that a selection can proceed from such a source which I could not cheerfully support; or a nominee be selected, in whose hands the interests of the country would not be entirely safe.

My name and pretensions, however subordinate in importance, shall never be at the disposal of any person whatever, for the purpose of creating distraction or division in the Democratic party. Every attempt to use them for such a purpose, whether and wherever made, shall be arrested by an interference on my part, alike prompt and decisive. I regard the Presidency as the highest and most honorable of political distinctions; yet it is only as the undoubted and free-will offering of the Democracy of the nation, that I could accept it; because it is in that aspect only that I could hope to render the discharge of its high duties either useful to the country, or honorable to myself.

I am, gentlemen,  
With sentiments of high regard,  
Your obedient servant,  
M. VAN BUREN.

To the Hon. Ethan A. Brown, chairman; and John Law, Nathaniel West, John Pettit, Jesse D. Bright, and A. C. Pepper, esquires, members of the committee.

**Gold**—The Asheville Messenger states, that the Gold mines lately discovered in Haywood and Macon counties, are probably the richest in the State. They yield from 3 to 5 dollars per day to the hand.

**Nag's Head**—The Elizabeth City North State of the 27th ult. says: Major Gwynn and Captain Graham returned from Nag's Head on Monday last. We understand they will report very favorably about opening an Inlet, and that they estimate the cost at half a million less than the former estimate of Major Gwynn. Their report, we suppose, will be presented to the next Congress.

**The Mexican Indemnity**—From Mexico we learn that Santa Anna has paid the first instalment of the debt due to citizens of the United States, amounting to \$270,000, and the United States brig Dolphin is to bring it over. She was to have left Vera Cruz on the 18th May. The sum was obtained by a forced loan from a number of rich capitalists of Mexico.—*Nat. Int.*