



AND

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Ons are the plans of fair and lawful peace,
Unwar'd by party rage, to live like brothers.

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DISPUTE with G. BRITAIN.

Debate on

MR. GREGG'S RESOLUTION,

(Continued.)

MR. G. W. CAMPBELL SPEECH.

I am not disposed, Mr. Chairman, to pursue measures that will crimson the American fields with the blood of her citizens, any more than other gentlemen who have spoken on this subject; nor am I willing that thousands of innocent persons should suffer distress and ruin, for the benefit of a few individuals, a few merchants which, it has been stated, will be the effect of the measure before you; neither, Sir, will I ever give my vote for any measures that shall appear to me calculated to sacrifice the agricultural interest of this nation to that of commerce, or have a tendency to enhance the latter at the expense of the former; and so far as the resolution before you appears to me likely to produce this effect, I shall oppose it. The people, whom I have the honor to represent are chiefly agriculturalists, and it will always be my wish and my pride, to support their interests and to cherish and promote the agricultural interest of this country in general, so far as it may be in my power. But I am not, at the same time, prepared to see the nation suffer, without resistance, every indignity with which G. Britain may choose to treat her, and submit patiently to every aggression and outrage her cruisers, under her authority, may choose to commit on our citizens & on our commerce. I conceive it our duty to take such measures as will prove to the world, a determination on our part to resist injuries and maintain our rights. In regard to the commercial relations of this country with foreign powers, I deem it proper on this occasion to declare it as my opinion, which I have always entertained, that it would have been better for the American people, if government had never given protection to commerce out of sight of our own territory, or beyond the reach of our cannon from our shores. It would have been well for us, Sir, if the American flag had never floated on the ocean, under the authority of government, to wait to this country the luxuries and vices of European nations, that effeminate and corrupt our people, to excite the jealousies and cupidity of those powers whose existence, in a great degree, depends on commerce, and to court, as it were, their aggressions, and embroil us in their unjust and bloody contests. If we had guarded against those pending evils by leaving commerce to seek her own protection, except within the limits of our own jurisdiction, we should have had a fair prospect of continuing to flourish a free, independent and happy nation, much longer than I fear it will be our destiny to do, if we continue to become more & more entangled in European politics and intrigues, to be subject to feel the effects of European convulsions, and national contests, in consequence of being deeply engaged in commercial relations with European powers. If we had adopted this policy, foreign nations would have vied with each other for our commerce and our friendship, would convey the surplus productions of our country from our store-houses, and furnish us in return with those articles and manufactures of their countries which our necessities or convenience might require, and we might then behold the collisions of the great powers on the continent of Europe, and their jarring interests contending for superiority, without endangering our peace or our happiness, and with no other inconvenience than the regret we might feel for the miseries and sufferings of that portion of the human family, with whom, however, we had no immediate connections.

But, Mr. Chairman, we have assumed the character of a commercial nation, abroad as well as at home. Our government has, in some degree, pledged the nation to protect commerce, and under this impression our citizens have embarked largely in trade, and made considerable progress therein. The enterprising spirit of our merchants has raised this nation to rank, in regard to commerce, the second in the world, and from this source also, our revenue is chiefly derived. Under these circumstances, I am not prepared to say, this is the propitious moment to retrace our steps, and without even giving notice of our intentions to do so, abandon our merchants and their property to the rapacity of a foreign nation. I conceive, on the contrary, it is our duty to afford them such protection as the resources of our country, and the prospects we have heretofore held out, would authorize them to expect.

In examining this subject, the first important enquiry that presents itself, is in regard to the grounds of complaint, which have occasioned the resolution before you to be proposed. These are two. First, the impressment of our seamen, and secondly, the unjust, and as we believe unauthorized aggressions committed on our commerce, by the cruisers of Great Britain. If you look at the documents on your table, you will see that our seamen have been impressed by that nation for years past without the color of right, and in a manner, which is not pretended, on this floor, is authorized by justice, or sanctioned by the laws or usages of nations. They have been treated in the most inhuman manner, if information is to be relied upon, compelled to perform the hardest duty in her ships of war, and forced against their will to fight her enemies, who were at the same time on terms of friendship with us. They have been taken from sea to sea; and from place to place, from one country or island to another, shifted from ship to ship, and often sent to distant parts of the world, so as to place them beyond the reach of their friends or their country, and put it out of the power of either to reclaim them, by producing the proofs required of their citizenship to obtain their liberation. It has been stated that Great Britain has always been willing to deliver up such impressed seamen as were proved to be bona fide American citizens. But this is a falacious pretext on her part, from which little or no benefit can arise to us. She impresses our people, without enquiring in regard to their citizenship, or paying the least regard to their protections. Their friends know not where to find them, the government cannot ascertain where they are, and years sometimes pass before it is known whether they have been carried. It has, therefore, in most cases, been found impossible to procure their release, and restore them to their friends and their country & there are at this moment, unjustly detained by that nation, between two and three thousand of our seamen, who have been impressed without any other pretext than that they spoke the English language, or resembled in their persons, the inhabitants of the British empire. Our government has in vain, remonstrated, time after time on this subject to the court of St. James'. No satisfactory arrangements could be obtained, nor is there any fair ground to expect a change in the conduct of that government in this respect. Complaints have been made and repeated in every quarter of the union on this subject. The outrages committed on our citizens have made an impression upon the public mind, that demands on our part the adoption of some decisive measures to correct the growing evil. It has, indeed, been said by some gentlemen on this floor, that there exists a prospect of the fair adjustment of our differences with Great Britain on this subject. I would ask those gentlemen, upon what information this opinion is founded? For myself, Mr. Chairman, I know of no just ground to authorize such expectation. The documents on your table do not justify a belief, that there is at this time the least prospect of adjustment. They inform us, there was once such a prospect, but that it has long since vanished, and so far as we can collect information, from those documents, as well as from other sources, there is not

to be found in the conduct of the British ministers, the slightest foundation for a belief that they are disposed to relinquish the ground they have taken, unless it is rendered necessary by some effective measures on our part. I would then put it to gentlemen to say, if we are not at this time, to take any step whatever, towards vindicating our violated rights, when will be the proper time for us to act? Have we not patiently endured those injuries long enough? And if not, how much longer must we tamely submit to them? What time can be more favorable than the present to resist them? Will it be when Great Britain has gotten into her possession a greater number of our seamen? When instead of near three thousand she will have gotten, six, eight or ten thousand? Will it then be a more proper time to make a stand to call upon her by some efficient measure to do us justice, to treat us as an independent nation, or to tell her, that she will at least, cease to treat her as a friend? I presume not, Sir. I cannot conceive it proper that we should wait for such an event before we make a stand in defence of our rights. On the contrary, it is my opinion, there can be no time more like than the present, to render effectual any measures we may adopt. The present state of the war in Europe, which sufficiently occupies the great powers in that quarter, if properly considered, and its probable results, in regard to us, duly weighed, ought it appears to me, to convince any man of reflection, that this is the most favorable moment, to insist on finally adjusting our differences on this subject with Great Britain. The right of our seamen to protection, while they sail under our flag, is undeniable. It is a perfect right, as much as the right to be protected within our houses, or in our carriages on the highway. You ought, therefore never to abandon it, on any pretence whatever; nay, Sir, you cannot abandon it, in justice to your citizens, unless, indeed, you are willing to surrender your independence as a nation. The ocean is a highway for all nations, over which no one power has exclusive jurisdiction. If you resign this right now to Great Britain, what reason have you to believe she will not push her demands further, and urge you to resign another, that may be still more important? It is high time that this business was brought to a final close, for if your seamen are to be seized wherever they are found on the ocean, you had better strip your ships of every sail they carry, confine your citizens within the limits of your own jurisdiction, to fight your own battles, should it become necessary, rather than see them exposed against their will, in fighting the battles of a foreign nation.

The second ground of complaint is the aggressions committed on our commerce, contrary to the law of nations, and in violation of every principle of justice. G. Britain assumes to herself the right to interdict to neutral nations a commercial intercourse with the colonies of her enemies, except under such modification as she has been pleased to prescribe. She justifies the capture of your vessels on the ground of their being engaged in a commerce, during the war, that was not open to them in time of peace. If this principle be once admitted as correct, and carried to the full extent of which it is capable, it will be found in its consequences, almost wholly, to destroy, not only the commerce of this country, as a neutral, but that of every neutral nation in the world. You are told you must not in time of war, exceed your accustomed traffic in time of peace. What is the consequence? War in a great degree destroys the trade which you were accustomed to enjoy in time of peace, as a great part of it becomes contraband of war; and this new principle shuts up all the avenues of commerce that were opened, in consequence of, or even during the war. What commerce, then, let me ask, will be left to the neutral? None, Sir, that will deserve the name of commerce. But the reasons advanced in support of this principle, will

go still further to shew its destructive consequences. One of the reasons given why you must not carry on this trade, is, because it is beneficial to the enemies of G. Britain, as you thereby furnish them with provisions and other articles of merchandise, which relieve them from the pressure of the war, and prevent her from deriving all the benefits she otherwise would do, from her superiority at sea. If there is any solidity in this reasoning, it will go the whole length to prohibit you from carrying the productions of your own farms to any nation the enemy of G. Britain. Your provisions, breadstuffs, beef and pork, are surely as useful for carrying on war, as the produce of the West-India Islands. She has hitherto, it is true, applied this reasoning only to the productions of the colonies, but it will equally apply to those of your own country. Hence the injustice and absurdity of the principle must appear evident to every discerning and unprejudiced mind.

But she has already, in carrying into effect her new principle, gone further than merely to prohibit neutrals from carrying colonial produce directly to the ports of her enemies. She has laid the ground work to prevent you from carrying to those ports your own productions. Your vessels are seized and condemned for being engaged in carrying to her enemies colonial produce, which have been fairly purchased and paid for by your citizens, brought to this country, and according to your revenue laws, made a part of the common stock of the nation. If there is a shade of difference in principle between this case, and that in which the produce of your own farms should be captured on its way to the same enemies ports, it is as flimsy as can be conceived to exist. When your people have purchased the productions of other countries, and fairly paid for them, brought them into your own, and complied with your municipal regulations respecting them, they become neutralized, and as much apart of the common stock of the nation as if they had been raised on your farms, and the same principle that would inhibit you from carrying these to the ports of a belligerent, would by parity of reasoning prevent you from carrying to the same ports the productions of your own farms.

But, Mr. Chairman, let us for a moment enquire, whence G. Britain derives the right according to any known principle of law or justice, to seize and condemn colonial produce, the property of a neutral, in consequence of its being destined for the ports of the parent state, her enemy? Strangers can acquire no rights against each other, in consequence of the domestic regulations relative to commerce, which a power independent of them, may choose to establish. Suppose, France by law, in time of peace, should prohibit the importation of colonial produce to her ports, on the continent, except in her own vessels, G. Britain could have no right to capture an American vessel engaged in such trade. France alone could rightfully seize and condemn such vessel for the infraction of her laws, but no other power could have such right. Suppose such prohibition is removed by France, during a war, and the trade declared lawful, could G. Britain thereby acquire a right to capture such vessel for being engaged in a trade now declared lawful, which she could not do, when it was unlawful? Certainly she could not. Such doctrine would be contrary to the plainest dictates of reason and common sense. She had no right to capture such vessel, while the prohibition continued, and she could not certainly acquire the right by such prohibition being removed. The intervention of war cannot alter the case, for the rights of neutrals, except as to contraband, remain the same in time of war, as they were during peace. I must therefore, consider this principle assumed by G. Britain as a flagrant violation of the law of nations, contrary to every principle of justice, and such as ought not to be sanctioned by this or any other independent nation. If you tamely submit in this instance, she

will assuredly push her aggressions still further, encroach on your rights step by step, as her convenience and interest may require, until she has effectually destroyed your commerce, and monopolized to herself the whole of its profits. That part of our commerce, that becomes immediately subject to the operation of this new principle has been stated as very unimportant, and under the name of the carrying trade has been ridiculed as not meriting the notice of government. A very few remarks, however, will, I apprehend, shew that it is not so insignificant as it has been represented. In our trade with Great Britain there is a balance in her favour of nearly twelve millions of dollars. This balance must be paid out of the proceeds of the exports of the United States to other countries. Many of those countries that consume a great portion of our produce cannot give us specie in return, our merchants must therefore, in such cases, take in return, the produce and manufactures of such countries instead of specie, and as the quantity of foreign produce and goods thus received, exceeds the amount necessary to supply the demands for consumption in this country; it becomes important that this surplus should be carried to other markets, where there is a demand for it, and where specie can be obtained in return. This has hitherto been done by our merchants, by first importing such foreign produce into our own country, and then re-exporting the same for a market and by means of this trade alone have they been enabled to discharge the balance against us in our trade with Great Britain. The annual value of imports into the United States, amounts to about seventy five millions of dollars, of this, twenty eight millions are re-exported to all parts of the world, and of that amount, eighteen millions go to the dominions of Holland, France, Spain and Italy. The greater part of which is subjected to capture by the new principle of the law of nations acted upon by G. Britain. This is the carrying trade, Sir, which gentlemen have considered so unimportant, as not to merit the attention of government. Instead of estimating this trade at 850,000 dollars as gentlemen have done, being the net revenue derived therefrom, (and which is not considered as paid by citizens of the United States) it may fairly be estimated at nearly eighteen millions, or about one fourth of the whole of your exports, nearly in the proportion of eighteen millions to seventy-five. For if your merchants are not permitted to re-export the surplus foreign produce to those markets where there is a demand for it, it will remain on their hands, and rot in their store houses. This would also sink the price of your own produce, as there could not be a sufficient demand for it, because your merchants would not receive in return foreign produce. Your trade must, therefore, be diminished nearly in the proportion before stated. I ask gentlemen if this trade is cut off, how your merchants are to get specie to meet the balance in favor of Great Britain of twelve millions of dollars? If this cannot be done, your imports must diminish in proportion as the means of remittance fail, and your revenue must also feel the shock and lessen in the same proportion as your importations are lessened. This is a view of the subject, which I presume deserves, at least the serious consideration of gentlemen, and I beg of them to pause before they relinquish without a struggle this portion of our national rights. For if you submit in this instance to the interdiction imposed by G. Britain of carrying colonial produce to the ports of her enemies, she will assuredly advance her pretensions as already stated, still further, and insist on the right to prohibit you from supplying them with your own; and it may fairly be asked, on the ground she has taken, where is the difference, between sending colonial produce to her enemies and sending your own produce? The quantum of injury to her, and of benefit to them, will be the same, and she will have nearly the same right to prohibit in the

same right to prohibit in the