



"Ours are the plans of fair, delightful Peace,
"Unwar'd by party rage, to live like Brothers."

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1812.

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Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEBATE

On the 2nd Resolution reported by the Committee of Foreign Relations, viz. "That an additional force of 10,000 regular troops ought to be immediately raised, to serve for 3 years; and that a bounty in lands ought to be given to encourage enlistments."

Mr. STANFORD said, as the Resolution before the House contemplated an additional army, and from the avowal of its friends, involved the question of peace or war, he felt the desire to assign the reasons of his vote upon so important a subject. He was the more disposed to do so, as he should probably find himself in a very small minority upon the question. He was not flattered, he said, with using arguments which would convince others, but for himself, he felt their force strong enough to set his mind against the measure. If he were to vote, he said, for the proposed army, he should vote inconsistently with all his former opinions and principles upon the subject; and he could never think of acting a part inconsistent with himself—and that more especially when all his experience had gone to confirm his first impressions, his honest prejudices against standing armies. Such establishments had always proved the bane of free governments, and he could not see how we were to get along with them, and remain, as he believed we were, the freest and happiest people upon earth.

But, we are told, war is to be declared in certain events, and that the army proposed is to invade and take the Canadas. We are then to pass out of the limits of the United States, and wage a war of the foreign offensive kind! If such was the contemplated use of this army when raised, he was still the more opposed to the measure. He was against the war itself, and the policy of it, and could by no means yield his vote to bring it about. That there was sufficient cause of war, he was ready to acknowledge; and he was not disposed in the smallest degree to palliate the offences of G. Britain, or that of any other belligerent, committed on the persons or property of our citizens. All of them had deserved war at our hands—but we had, at no time, since the commencement of our present government, seen it our interest or policy to give into it in the open and declared form, nor that of any other form except that of a quasi character, which happened under Mr. Adams's administration. The question never had been, whether we had or had not cause of war—but whether the true interest of the U. States did not, under all circumstances, call aloud upon us to cherish peace, and to avoid war and its evils as the last of the alternatives before us; and this, Mr. Stanford said, he would be able to show, was the republican doctrine, as well in the old minority times, as since that minority grew into a majority.

The gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy) had made a direct appeal to the republican party, and endeavored to rally and unite them in this (to them at least) new doctrine of war. If the appeal of the gentleman had any reference to him, he would beg leave to deny some of his positions. He had himself had some small share to act in the political scenes of 1798 & 1799, and he was glad to find from the gentleman's declaration that he had joined in the "clamor" of the day, to pull down the then federal administration for the unjustifiable war which they had gone into with France. Mr. S. said, he knew he had joined in it most heartily. He believed he then acted right in all he did to supersede that administration, and he still believed he was right. The best interests of the country forbid the war, and so the people determined, when ultimately they came to decide the question. That party, thus ousted by the public voice, the present republican majority was bro't in upon their own professions of better principles, the love of peace and economy. But now forgetting our old professions under a French crisis, we had raised the cry of war under a British one, and nothing short of it was to save our honor. Mr. S. declared if there was any difference in the causes of war then and now, he thought it turned most decidedly in favor of the former period, since the more intolerable outrage in

the case of the Chesapeake had been at length atoned for. What were the facts? French decrees existed at that time against your rightful commerce: He spoke of the arrests or decrees of the French directory; these had the same practical effect on our maritime neutral rights that the British orders have now. French cruizers waylaid the mouths of your harbors, and captured your vessels; and the first successful act of the U. S. after the quasi war commenced, was the taking of one of these cruizers in the mouth of one of our harbors. He begged leave to read the decree itself; and there were others passed about the same time not less obnoxious.

"January 18, 1798—Art. 1. The character of vessels, in what concerns their quality, as neutral or enemy, shall be decided by their cargo; in consequence, every vessel found at sea laden, in whole or in part, with merchandize, coming from England or her possessions, shall be declared good prize, whoever may be the proprietor of their productions or merchandize."

To the spoliations committed under decrees of this kind, which they have always refused to retribute and make good, they added a further indignity to the nation in the persons of its envoys. They refused to receive them in their character as such; but clandestinely met their subordinate agents to intrigue and tamper with them for bribes, and for a considerable time withheld the necessary passports for their return home. Wrongs and indignities like these, Mr. S. said, the republican minority of '98 and '99 did not consider of magnitude enough for the U. States to forego the great interests of peace and give into war, which was then made to redress them. How the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy) could avow himself the advocate of peace doctrines then and those of war now, would be for himself to reconcile. He felt that those interests were as omnipotent now, as they were then.

But, said Mr. S. the gentleman from S. Carolina (Mr. Calhoun) tells us it is a principle of honor in a nation, as in an individual, to resist a first insult. If such a doctrine is to be admitted, when should we have a moment's peace?—From one or the other of the belligerents of Europe, since their late wars commenced, we have never been without just complaints against them for some violation of our neutral rights, and of course must have taken an early share in their wars. The truth is, we cannot liken, nor will the similitude hold good between an individual's honor, or his sensibility to it, and that of a nation's. A single impressment or capture may be well admitted to form a ground of reprisal and war; but we should have been a ruined country long ere now, if under the existing circumstances of the world, and belligerent Europe, we had yielded to this quickness of sensibility, and had gone to war, for a first and single instance of aggression from either of the belligerents. The same gentleman argues that every thing now calls upon us to make a stand; that there was no danger to our liberties in a standing army of 20 or 30,000 men, and that as all admitted there was justifiable cause of war, and he believed it had now become necessary. This was declaiming, Mr. S. said, very handsomely upon the subject of war, he would agree; and he very well recollected we had heard the same doctrines precisely, and he thought he might be permitted to say, a strain of declamation, at least equally handsome upon the same subject, & from the same state, in 1798-9. Mr. S. contended as the then doctrines of war, (and it must be admitted, the causes of it were so alike in their character) it was fair to expect that in due time public opinion would come to be the same in both cases.

But, Mr. S. said, he could not perceive how the present of all others had become the necessary and accepted time for war with G. Britain. The attack on the Chesapeake frigate had been lately atoned for to the satisfaction of our government, and he trusted had not been so done as to aggravate the crisis of affairs between the two countries. If calculated to do so, our government would not have received it. The impressment of our seamen was a just complaint against the British government; but it commenced under the administration of General Washington, & no one would say he was less sensible to national honor and independence than ourselves. Under all the circumstances

* This allusion is supposed to be to Mr. Harper, then from S. Carolina.

of that cause of complaint, he did not think it a cause sufficient for him to depart from the neutral ground he had assumed—nor was the annoyance of our commerce less vexatious in his time than since. In like manner, under Mr. Adams' administration the same complaints existed, though in that of the latter, not perhaps to the same degree—and under the eight years of Mr. Jefferson's administration the same state of things continued, certainly with an increased degree of violence, to which was also added the more aggravating insult upon the Chesapeake. Mr. Jefferson had never been suspected of partiality for Great Britain, and then, indeed, the accepted time had come for a war with that government—all parties were united and pledged themselves to support him in the war. The pulse of the nation beat high for it. But he felt, because he knew, that peace was the best interest of his country and forebore to call Congress together. He had always admired the man; but upon that occasion he felt more than a sentiment of admiration towards him. When at length wrongs had thus accumulated and called for some system of counteraction & resistance, till negotiation could be farther tried, the embargo was resorted to in preference to war; and when that was done away a system of non-intercourse was substituted, and to that again succeeded the present alternative law of the same kind; the non importation system which has grown out of this with G. Britain has not been tried one whole year yet. If gentlemen will have it that this is the accepted time for War, how has it happened, that we have not had it before. Our councils may be presumed to have been as sensible to aggression, and as patriotic to redress it as we now are.

He would beg leave to turn to a vote of this House at the last session of the tenth Congress, when Mr. Jefferson was still President. The embargo was about to be repealed, and such gentlemen as felt themselves disappointed in its effects were disposed to substitute a more energetic system than that of non-intercourse, and proposed the following amendment to the bill "and to cause (meaning the President) to be issued under suitable pledges and precautions, letters of marque and reprisal against the nation, thereafter continuing in force its unlawful edicts against the commerce of the U. States." This was considered, as indeed it was, a question of war, and the vote stands only 33 to 74. The fair of the Chesapeake then hung over us, and all the circumstances under which we found ourselves called more imperiously for redress than they ever had done before or since, and still a different view of what was the true interest of the country prevailed. Again, he would turn to the second session of the eleventh Congress under the present administration, and still we should find that a large majority in this House were determined not to abandon the peace of the nation. They were disposed to countervail the Belligerent Edicts by commercial restrictions, and to adopt any thing in that way short of war; but nothing which should endanger the peace of the country. A bill, however, was introduced "authorising the President of the U. States to employ the public armed vessels, and permitting the merchant vessels to arm for the defence of American commerce." The fate of this measure was similar to that of the preceding Congress, and appears to have been negatived by a vote of 67 to 47.—This too was at a time when we were about to repeal the non-intercourse Law, which was done, and the nonimportation system substituted—no warlike substitute could be carried at any of these periods, and so far it has not appeared to have been the accepted time for war, and he trusted that time had not yet come.

If, said Mr. S. the proposed war was to be of the defensive kind, a war which had become necessary to defend ourselves at home, there would be no hesitation about the cost or difficulties to be encountered; but it is avowed to be for conquest. We are to take the Canadas to insure respect to our maritime rights; that we should be able to take them he would not pretend to doubt; but it would probably be at the expence of much blood and treasure, and still perhaps without coming any nearer to the object of it, that of securing respect to those rights. To a nation, young, growing and prospering, as we were, the burthens and expences of a foreign

war was no small consideration, with him. In '98-9, it was fashionable to count the cost, and look at the taxes to follow; that doctrine now, however, was forgotten; but he would take the liberty to read, before he sat down, a passage or two from a pamphlet of Mr. Nicholas's, of Kentucky, who is now no more, but who was at that time considered orthodox in all the republican doctrines of the day. "In a war like the present (says Mr. Nicholas) which we have now made an offensive one, every thing of this kind (speaking of the taxes) ought to be taken into consideration, although it would be improper to do so if our country was really attacked by a foreign power; because we ought then to hazard every thing rather than become subjects to any foreign power." Again, "If the lasting preservation of the honor, liberty and independence of America is our real object, we should carefully avoid war during the infant state of our country. Such premature efforts bring on a state of imbecility in the political as well as in the human body, and prevent either from attaining that degree of strength which they would otherwise certainly arrive at. Twenty years more of peace, would leave America fully competent to defend all her just rights against any nation. Five years war at this time would probably, put it out of her power to do it with effect for one hundred years to come."

Mr. S. further added, that as the U. States was the only portion of the civilized world which enjoyed any share of the blessings of peace, he had trusted the present state of Europe would form an argument better than any he could use, and a lesson complete against our having any thing to do with their unhappy conflicts and wars.

But, Mr. Speaker, said Mr. S. opposed as he was to the idea of the United States becoming one of the belligerent nations—to the linking our destinies with those of the European powers; to the taking any share in their present conflicts, if his country once determined upon it, he would not then hesitate to vote any force, or other means to bring it to as speedy and as happy an issue as possible; till then he should preserve his own consistency; and contribute in no way to bring about that state of things which he believed would prove most ruinous to his country.

Mr. KING (from N. C.)—Mr. Speaker, I should not have troubled this house with any remarks of mine, had it not been for the observations which have just fallen from my colleague from North Carolina, Mr. Stanford. I shall not attempt, sir, to follow that gentleman in the history which he has given of the progress of party in this country, but shall content myself with stating, that in our sentiments, we entirely differ: His is the doctrine of submission; yes, sir, the most abject submission—mine I trust is not. I am in favor of the resolution now on your table. I am aware, sir, of the many important considerations which will naturally suggest themselves to the mind of every real friend of his country, when he views the consequences which may result from the adoption of the measure now contemplated. When, sir, the habits of a nation, ingrafted as it were, in its very nature, are about to be departed from; when the destinies of the country are about to be launched on an untried ocean, and when the doubt is about to be solved, whether our republican government is alike calculated to support us through the trials and difficulties of war, and guide us in safety down the gentle current of peace, I am aware, sir, that we should pause and ponder well the subject; that we should divest ourselves of those warm feelings which most generally take possession of our minds on viewing the unjust prostration of the rights of our country. Sir, that interest which I feel in common with others, on the decision of a question of such magnitude and importance, will I trust induce this House to bear with me a moment, whilst in a few words I explain the motives by which I am actuated in giving my decided approbation to the resolution now under consideration. If, sir, I were merely to turn my attention to the local situation of that portion of the country, which I have the honor particularly to represent; its extensive and exposed sea coast, combined with its present commercial advantages, I should without hesitation give my vote to the proposed measure. But, sir, as in my individual

capacity I feel at all times willing to make not only pecuniary sacrifices, but to expose my person in vindicating the rights and interests of my country, in my representative capacity, I will undertake to say, that my constituents will do no less. Sir, the demon Avarice which benumbs every warm emotion of the soul, has not yet gained the ascendancy in the south; the love of country animates every breast, and burns with unextinguishable ardor; sir, they feel in common, I trust with a great majority of every portion of this Union, the degradation of our country in submitting for a moment longer to the dishonorable terms proposed directly or indirectly by the British government.—Mr. Speaker, I hold it to be correct, that in discussing a subject of such importance, a view of the various matters necessarily connected with it, will not be considered irrelevant; but, sir, I will not weary the patience of this house with a detail of injuries unparalleled in the history of former times, wantonly inflicted on a nation which manifested to the whole World her sincere desire to support the neutral stand which had been taken at the earliest period of her government and most tenaciously adhered to. We have restricted ourselves in the full enjoyment of our rights, lest by strictly enforcing them, we might produce a collision with any nation, however little her conduct might be guided by the principles of equity. Sir, we have borne with injury till, in the language of your committee, forbearance has ceased to be a virtue. We have remonstrated, we have appealed to the justice, to the interest of the two great contending powers of Europe—every effort proved abortive, our calls for justice were drowned in the declaration that their measures were merely retaliatory, and not intended to interfere with neutral rights—thus, sir, the matter rested when pacific propositions were submitted to each—yes, sir, by an act which has placed the impartiality of our country beyond the reach of suspicion, we demanded of each the revocation of her obnoxious edicts as the only means of preserving our friendship. We all know what has been the consequence: France has met our advances, has embraced our propositions; Great-Britain not only refuses a repeal on her part, but while she affixes to lament the effects produced on neutral rights, takes the most effectual methods to render them perpetual. Sir, blindness and ignorance itself can no longer be deceived by British policy.

We have been told, sir, that this will be a war for the support of the carrying trade; let me here remark, and wish to be distinctly understood as avowing my determination never to give a vote, so long as I have the honor of a seat on this floor, which will involve this country in a war for the recovery or support of this execrable species of commerce. I believe I shall not be incorrect when I assert, that nine tenths of this country never did and never will, derive the smallest benefit from it. But, sir, the right to carry in our ships, the produce of our own country to any quarter, not thereby violating the laws of nations, or contravening legitimate municipal regulations, is one which I never will yield; for, sir, in so doing we paralyze the industry of our citizens, we give a fatal blow to the best interests of our country—yes, sir, we yield the principle, we invite to farther encroachments. Our country, sir, is agricultural, but so intimately blended with commerce, that he one cannot long exist unaided by the other. Sir, I will not yield an inch of ground, when by so doing I destroy an essential right of my country, or sap the foundation of that independence cemented by the blood of our fathers.—We were told by a gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Randolph) a few days since, that we have a sufficient cause for war. I ask you then, sir, why do we hesitate? Shall we always yield? Shall we always shrink from the contest? The adoption of this resolution is the touchstone—by it we rise or fall.—We have been asked, Mr. Speaker, why not lay upon the table a proposition to go to war? 'Tis there, sir, 'tis contained in this resolution—the moment we give it our sanction we declare our fixed resolve to render effective the force contemplated to be raised. Yes, sir, unless Great Britain manifests a disposition speedily to do us justice—by her acts, not by her words. The gentleman from Virginia calls upon the represen-