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The following Circular of Major JAMES COCHRAN to his late Constituents on our present Political Situation, contains so much useful information and good sense, and is written in a style so well adapted to the understandings of the People at large, that we think we shall be rendering public service by giving it a place in the Register.

ADDRESS

TO THE

Freemen of Caswell, Guilford, Randolph, Rockingham and Person Counties.

Washington, March 1, 1813.

GENTLEMEN,

AT a crisis portentous and alarming, when engaged in war with a powerful Nation for the preservation of our essential rights, I deem it my duty, without apology, to lay before you, a brief sketch of the causes which have led to that state of things; together with such information as I possess, and which the compass of a letter will permit.

It would have been to me, fellow-citizens, a source of pleasurable reflection, could I have communicated to you, that the enemy, sensible of his injustice towards us, had, at last, retraced his steps, and made reparation for the injuries and insults wantonly heaped upon us; but, on the contrary, I regret to state that, notwithstanding the pacific advances, on the part of our Government, his conduct has been essentially otherwise.

At the commencement of the war between the two great Powers of Europe, America, just recovered from her own Revolutionary Struggles, by which our glorious Independence was achieved, and at peace with the world, was reposing under the benign influence of a Government founded upon equal rights, and having for its object the happiness of man, administered by a Washington, the Father of his Country. Her growing commerce keeping pace with her industry, increased, in a few years, her commercial shipping beyond the demands of the real American trade, and was wafting her surplus products to every market, thereby affording to the Farmer and the Planter a fair price for his honest labour. Under circumstances thus auspicious, she was fast advancing to the fulfilment of her high destinies, which could have been arrested only by the wicked attempts of other Powers and their emissaries, to undermine her essential rights, sap the foundation of her liberties, and thereby jeopardize her peace and prosperity. In this situation, the U. States had important political and commercial relations with both France and England, who began to extend their belligerent pretensions to the destruction of our neutral commerce, a trade in which the people of this country were deeply interested.

Great-Britain early commenced her abominable practice of Impressment—a practice, which though affording just cause of war, was, for a series of years, only made the ground of remonstrance and negotiation. At length, the belligerent Powers of Europe, regardless of all National Law, and converting *force into right*, adopted their illegitimate Blockades and Orders and Decrees, which laid prostrate every Neutral Right, and swept from the highway of Nations nearly the whole of our Commerce. But the United States, sincerely disposed to preserve Peace with the whole World, still relying on negotiation and the justice of their claims, invariably maintained towards each an impartial Neutrality—and, whilst weeping over their folly, took no other interest in their wars and turmoils, than to avoid, if possible, falling into the vortex.

With these views, about the years 1807-8, when it was believed that our affairs with one or both of those Nations were owing to a crisis, our Government, in order to avert the impending storm, thought proper to resort to the embargo, which was succeeded by the Non-importation Law; thus retiring from the Ocean, and ceasing, for a time, to exercise an essential prerogative of sovereign power—a measure marked by a sacrifice, for extent and duration, without a parallel, and resorted to as the only alternative to avoid war or submission.

I was among those who thought the Embargo and restrictive system a proper course, and still believe that, if it could have been rigidly executed, it would have produced the desired effect. But, in certain parts of the United States, a spirit of hostility, not less acrimonious than implacable, was cherished against it, from the moment the act was signed until it was abandoned. Many public papers, and many public men, parasites of opposition, under whose influence these papers were conducted, openly condemned the Act, and the makers of it, from the first; and afterwards indulged in the habit of constantly abusing the Chief Magistrate who recommended it, personally, and very frequently in terms, the rancour of which was only equalled by their coarseness and malignity. Yet, it must have been obvious to all reflecting minds, that when the restrictive system should be abandoned, a choice would be left only between war and submission. It was, in substance, ultimately abandoned; and whilst we were negotiating, Great-Britain was plundering our property and enslaving our people—until, finally, all further attempts at Negotiation were pronounced by the President to be useless. Then the National Councils were left to choose between the two evils, war and submission; and the former being preferred to a base surrender of the essential rights of the Nation, it thenceforth became the duty of every American to unite in the cause of his beloved Country, and make the War as vigorous as possible, in order to obtain a speedy and honorable peace.

Although it would be as painful as humiliating to detail the numerous wrongs which we had experienced for a series of years, previous to this last resort, yet a rapid review of the most important incidents may be of use; it will demonstrate the ardor with which our Government had cherished peace—

its patience and long-suffering under injustice and oppression, and the imperious necessity which finally compelled it to appeal to arms, in defence of our essential rights.

The British practice of Impressment, their Blockades and Orders in Council, were the most prominent causes of the War which was declared to exist between the United States and Great-Britain, on the 18th day of June, 1812. Previous to that Declaration, Great-Britain was in reality, though not in name, actually at war upon the United States. We had seen from an official communication made to Congress, (a copy of which is now in my possession) that upwards of Six Thousand American Citizens had been impressed into British ships of war, and compelled to fight the battles of the British Nation; that they were frequently made the instruments of oppression to their friends and countrymen, and carried into distant service without any reasonable hope of returning to their friends or their country. At one time, under her Blockades and Orders, we beheld her insolently demanding all American vessels bound to any foreign port, other than her own or those of her allies, to call at a British port and pay a very heavy transit duty or tax, on the cargo of American produce, in order to be secured from capture by her own cruisers, and graciously permitted by His Majesty to proceed to trade with any other Nation—Finally, she simply prohibited our trade with other Nations altogether, under penalty of seizure and condemnation. Thus requiring that all American produce should be brought to her own markets, in order that she might buy it at her own price, and carry it herself to other powers where it was in demand and would bring a good price. Would submission to this be the way to protect the rights of the Farmer, the Planter or the Ploughman? Would it be more agreeable to the feelings of any American to pay a tax to Great-Britain for leave to carry his produce to the best market, than to pay it to his own Government, to protect, defend and preserve our essential rights? I think not; and every American that thinks with me, will rally around his own Government. We had seen from official documents laid before Congress, that 528 American vessels and cargoes had been captured previous to the 11th November, 1807, under the British Blockades, and 389 subsequent to that time, under the Orders in Council, making in the whole upwards of nine hundred. Thus all hope of a free and fair trade was blasted, and the Neutrality of America subverted: And finally, though Great-Britain had uniformly rested the justification of her unrighteous edicts upon the existence of the French Decrees; and though the latter had been so modified as to cease to operate upon the American trade from the 1st of November, 1810, she unblushingly persisted in maintaining them, notwithstanding her most solemn assurances to proceed *pari passu* in this repeal, with the extinction of her alleged cause for their production. See the Prince Regent's proclamation of the 21st of April, 1812, and the letter of the British Minister to the Secretary of State, dated the 10th of June, 1812, a few days before the war was declared, announcing the fixed purpose of that Government to persevere in the offensive course so long pursued towards this Country, though the French decrees were repealed so far as they respected the U. States. We had seen it in proof, from authentic documents laid before Congress, that she had employed a secret agent, and sent him into the bosom of our Country to light up the flames of discord and civil war, to destroy the Union of these States and the Government of our choice:—She had fired upon our coasters, and murdered our citizens:—She had tried an American as a deserter, and executed him:—She had attacked two of our national frigates, for one of which she had made no atonement for upwards of five years, and then, at a time, and in a manner, which proved it to have been the effect of a temporizing policy, rather than a sincere desire for peace:—She had recently furnished the Savages on our frontiers with arms and ammunition, and excited them to the actual and indiscriminate murder of our innocent men, women and children within our own territory.

In fact, the conduct of the British Government, from the close of the Revolution down to the present day, has been little other than a tissue of bad faith and aggression towards this country, evincive only of her ill-will excited by the issue of that important struggle—her jealousy of us as a rival in commerce, and her determination to injure and degrade us. After all this, we hear some of Lord Castlereagh's "Friends in Congress," declaring that the cause of War had ceased on the 23d of June last—because, forsooth, Great-Britain had intimated her willingness to suspend her Orders in Council, reserving to herself the right to revive them whenever she might think proper to do so—In fact, she modestly asked us to give up our opposition to that violation of our rights, by an acknowledgement that she should have the right to continue it at her pleasure. Thus, to use the words of an American patriot, "whilst she waved the temporary use of the rod, she suspended it in terror over our heads." But let her have credit for as much as it is worth, and then how stands the case, even supposing she had repealed her orders, which, by-the-by, I cannot admit? Every other cause of complaint still stands in full force. Yes—the enslavement of thousands of our people by her practice of impressment remains unatoned for and still persisted in. "When nations are engaged in war, those rights in controversy which are not acknowledged by the treaty of peace, are abandoned." And who is prepared to say that American Seamen shall be surrendered the victims of the British practice of impressment? No real American will say it. No Republican will avow it.

It is worthy of remark, that we have at no time been under the necessity of sending a Minister to Great-Britain, to apologize for any wrong that we had ever done to her; whilst, on the other hand, our best talents have been employed, for seven years and more, at the British Court, in pleading, remonstrating and supplicating, for the redress of wrongs and injuries imposed upon us by that unjust Nation, and all to no

purpose; for she counted so highly on her friends in this Country, that she did not believe we could be kicked into a war in defence of our rights.

Notwithstanding the declaration of the war, the sword had scarcely been unsheathed, before the President did, with a view to procure peace, and put an end to the contest so reluctantly engaged in, make proposals to the British Government for an armistice, upon terms, the justice of which it would seem no nation could have refused to accept. These are contained in the letters of instruction from the Secretary of State, of the 26th of June and 27th July, 1812, to Mr. Russell, our Charges d'Affaires at London, wherein he says: "If the Orders in Council are repealed, and no illegal Blockades are substituted to them, and orders are given to discontinue the impressment of our seamen from our vessels, and to restore those already impressed, there is no reason why hostilities should not immediately cease: Indemnities for injuries received under the Orders in Council, and other edicts violating our rights, seems to be incident to their repeal. But the President is willing that the consideration of that claim should not be pressed at this time, so as to interfere with the preliminary arrangement alluded to. As an inducement to the British Government to discontinue the practice of impressment from our vessels, by which alone our seamen can be made secure, you are authorised to stipulate a prohibition by law, to be reciprocal, of the employment of British seamen in the public or commercial service of the United States."

Was the delivery of Canada made a condition? Certainly not. Then how is it that gentlemen in the opposition can endeavour to mislead the people, by persuading them to believe that we are fighting for Canada, and for the conquest; as they say, of foreign territory. The fact is not so. Was Hull's treacherous surrender of an army, in Canada? No—it was in our own territory. Was the battle at Brownstown, in Canada? No—it was in our own territory. Was Gen. Winchester's engagement, in Canada? No—it was also on this side the line. Was the battle with Capt. Forsyth at Ogdensburg, on the Canada side? No—it was in one of the old thirteen United States. Was the capture of Fort Michilimackinac by the British, and their red allies, previous to a knowledge of the war at that Fort, in Canada? No—it was also within our territory. How, then, is it that some people can lie so abominably in saying that we are in no danger of being invaded, when the fact is, that we are invaded, and Fort Michilimackinac was taken before news of the war reached that place—and when, too, almost every battle has been fought on this side the Canada line? And yet some men, who wish to be promoted to the honorable station of one of the Guardians of the Nation's Rights, have uniformly voted against every thing having in view the raising of either men or money to carry on the war, and to prepare us to defend ourselves. The proposition made by the President to the British Government, fair and reasonable as it is, was rejected with contempt. Now, after the rejection of a proposition to arrest the calamities of the war, what motive can be ascribed to the British Government for its continuance? And what is more extraordinary, let me ask, what motive should be ascribed to an American legislator for opposing the ways and means for our own defence in such a situation? Can this be the way to get peace? No. It is the way to degrade and sink our own Government, in order that the opposition party may ride triumphantly into power.

For upwards of thirty years, we have seen that Americans can govern themselves, spurn then the idea of those Politicians who say, that free Governments are not calculated or designed to defend the rights of the nation by war. What say all the people concerning the Revolutionary War? It was just, is the universal reply. Had our fathers paused, and entered into those cold and paralyzing calculations of shillings and pence, and the reverses mingled in the contest, we might have been to this day the vassals of a nation, whose overgrown enormities have well nigh shaken her existence to its very foundation. Yes, fellow-citizens, our offspring, tender and beloved, would have been the game of wicked Tyrants, whilst our purses would have been drained to support an established Religion, and the luxury and corruption of a venal Court. But, happy for us, they determined otherwise. They sacrificed their own personal happiness—left their homes, and every thing that was dear, and reared for us the Temple of Liberty. It is this Temple we now inhabit; and it is with us to determine, whether our children shall possess it after us, or whether we will forge the chains for their future thralldom.

I believe the American People may conscientiously appeal to Him who holds the destinies of Nations, that their Government has not sought this war; that it has been resorted to only in defence of their just rights, and that it ought to be vigorously prosecuted, until that haughty Tyrant of the Ocean shall abandon the impressment and slavery of our people and the plunder of our property.

It is to be regretted, at all times, that party-spirit should prevail so much in this country, and particularly so when we are engaged in war with a powerful nation, whose Government has counted more upon our dissensions, and her own intrigues, for success, than by the valour of her arms. Altho', in matters of internal policy, men may differ as to the means best calculated to promote the general good; yet, in a dispute between this Nation and a Foreign Government, with whom we are at war in defence of our essential rights, honor and independence, there can be no just cause for such division and opposition to our Government. It cannot fail to produce the most deleterious effects. How degrading to the American character, and particularly to Members of her Public Councils, who, by their opposition to their own Government, have induced the British Minister to claim them as his friends!

(Continued in our next.)