

RALEIGH

REGISTER.



AND

NORTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE.

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

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DEBATE ON MANUFACTURES, In the House of Representatives, CONTINUED.

The bill "for the more effectual protection of Manufactures" being under consideration in Committee of the Whole—

Mr. HOLCOMBE, of New Jersey, rose, and addressed the House as follows:

I rise, Mr. Chairman, with peculiar embarrassment, to offer myself, for the first time, to the House, on a subject which has been so often discussed, not only upon this floor, but in every town, village, and city, throughout the Union, that the very name of Tariff has become odious to many ears—a term of reproach, and almost a by-word. But, notwithstanding these facts, it is a subject of the deepest interest; and is yet popular with a great majority of the American people. It is my intention to advocate the bill. And let it not be insinuated of me, as it heretofore has been of others, that interest stimulates the discussion. The feeble connection which I may once have had with manufacturing establishments is forever dissolved, and I now stand in my place as a common representative of the citizens of the United States, to defend one of the most interesting questions of national policy, as I conscientiously believe it to be, that can possibly be agitated at this time, upon this floor.

The true manufacturing question, or the policy of founding the commercial interests and permanent revenue of this country upon its manufacturing industry, is not novel. It is, indeed, coeval with the government. Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to call your attention, for a moment, to the early history of the tariff. Soon after the peace of '83 had recognized our right and rank as an independent nation, the creation of a revenue, adequate to the necessary expenditures of the government, became a subject of interesting inquiry to the politicians of that period. A resort to direct and indirect taxation was inadmissible, and, indeed impossible. The precious metals had deserted our country—a circulating medium was wanting. From customs alone, it was evident, the country was to derive its revenues. And the insufficiency of its customs, accruing from a commerce supported wholly by agriculture was already palpable. The wretched and ruinous state of our colonial commerce was yet vividly recollected; and the inferences from it were irresistible: And hence, in the numerous systems of revenue and tariff, which were projected at that period, the protection of manufacturing industry formed an essential—nay, an indispensable provision. The report of the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Hamilton, is still familiar to the public. And it cannot be questioned, had the principles of this celebrated paper (for the details were remarkably defective) been adopted into a system of permanent policy, we should have forever avoided the necessity of publishing to the world the degrading and extraordinary fact, that after a course of unexampled, and almost uninterrupted prosperity for thirty years, the commercial revenues of the most enterprising people in the world were sufficient to meet, in the time of profound peace, the necessary expenditures of the cheapest government upon earth—But the fact is notorious—it has become history.

It was my intention here Mr. Chairman, to have rapidly reviewed the history of the tariff from the commencement of the wars which grew out of the French revolution to the present period; and to have accounted for the bitterness and hostility which distinguish, otherwise, the most liberal and enlightened statesmen of our country on the subject of the tariff. But presuming that the committee is entirely familiar with the subject, and fearful of trespassing upon your patience, I shall call your attention immediately to the following propositions, which I mean to defend.

1st. The protection of manufacturing industry, by means of commercial restrictions, is indispensably necessary to develop and sustain the wealth and power of nations.

2. A further and liberal extension of the tariff (perhaps such as is contemplated by this bill) will enable the American manufacturer to supply, hereafter, not only domestic consumption, but to compete profitably with other nations, in foreign markets.

Upon these general principles I shall defend the bill. I do not profess to be familiar with its details. Nor is it particularly necessary, after the able and luminous exposition which they have received from the honorable gentleman who reported the bill. I wish, however, my opinions to be distinctly stated, and fully understood. The manufacturing interest of this country is no longer a subject of partial legislation and contingent protection; but constitutes, at this moment, one of its great interests, and is equally entitled with commerce and agriculture, to the most equal and permanent protection. And it further appears to me to be the obvious policy, as well as the imperative duty of the government, (in order to protect this great interest,) to commence, immediately, a system of prospective, but ultimately, a system of entire exclusion

from our shores of every article, of foreign fabric, the material of which we either possess or can abundantly create. My object is to award to our manufacturing interest the same certain and exclusive protection which we have long since awarded to our commerce and agriculture.

I will proceed to the consideration of the first proposition. That the protection of manufacturing industry, by means of commercial restrictions, is indispensably necessary to develop the resources and wealth of nations. The testimony of history, in sustaining this proposition, is ample, uniform, and conclusive. I now appeal to its strongest facts:

At an early period of modern Europe, several nations became wealthy and powerful, by introducing and protecting, within their respective territories, manufacturing establishments, as the basis and sources of an extensive and enterprising commerce. Of these, the most distinguished were Genoa and Florence, Venice and Holland, Venice, won from the waters of the Adriatic sea, became the mistress of the south of Europe. And Holland, reclaimed from the marshes of the German ocean, continued for centuries the pride and wonder of the north. Time and revolution, it is true, have swept away their former institutions, and merged in many instances, their very existence in the nations around them. But their examples will forever remain in history, as brilliant memorials of what the genius, industry, and enterprise, of free communities can effect, when studied and protected by enlightened legislation.

But the most extraordinary example which the world presents, of the policy and results of protecting manufacturing industry, is unquestionably that of England. I am fully aware, Mr. Chairman, that the example of England is tried on this subject, and revolving upon this floor. But I will detain you but a moment. And in hurrying you to the point which I have in contemplation, if I cannot carry you over this barren subject by new paths, I will at least remove from those already beaten, as far as I am able, every thing offensive and annoying. But of England. Never before existed a nation so wealthy and powerful—A comparatively barren island in the northern ocean, has become the garden of the world—A nation destitute of mines, by her admirable policy, has diverted to her shores the gold and silver, the wealth and tribute, of every climate and region under heaven. There is no sea but which is visited by her mariners. And the standard of her sovereignty waves in every quarter of the globe.—Never before on earth was swayed a sceptre like hers, so mighty and efficient, so fearful and tremendous. The genius of the great Napoleon, with Europe at his feet, sunk beneath its influences. And the power of the Roman empire in its proudest days, was feeble in comparison with it. And whence, Mr. Chairman, has this great supremacy among nations been derived? By what means or magic has it been achieved? Simply from the policy of protecting—effectually protecting the industry of her citizens from all foreign competition; of adopting since the days of her revolution the principles of the bill, which I have now the honor to advocate. Let me not be told of the vice and misery of her manufacturing districts—of her taxes—her poor houses, and paupers. These are all acknowledged. But they are the necessary, the unavoidable consequences of her ambitious and interminable wars—the immediate results of the operation of her national debt. Extinguish this, and you collect at this moment around the laboring population of England more of the comforts and necessities of life than have ever yet fallen to the lot of any other people, with the exception of our own citizens, in the world.

The policy of Spain, is the reverse of that of England. Here, the doctrines of the author of the Wealth of Nations, the unrestricted system, has been, for ages past, in full and free operation. And what has been the result? The finest country in Europe, into which the gold and silver of Mexico and Peru, and the wealth of both the Indies, have flowed in a full and uninterrupted stream for three centuries, has gradually sunk from the elevation of her imperial grandeur, below the level of the secondary powers of Europe, and at length into utter bankruptcy. Recollect, Mr. Chairman, that I speak with reproach only of her commercial system—of her wretched tariff. And I avail myself, with the highest satisfaction, of this opportunity of expressing, in the presence of the representatives of the American people, my admiration of the sublime and interesting spectacle, which the Spanish nation at this moment presents; and has been, for years, exhibiting to the world. At a period the most unexpected and unlooked for, the entire population of this extensive and beautiful region, arose at once, into new life, and bursting asunder the chains which the superstition and tyranny of ages had riveted around them, erected, on the ruins of the sternest and gloomiest despotism upon earth, a government of virtual representation and constitutional liberty. Imperishable be her institutions! and may the spirit of revolution, which was first enkindled upon our altars, and which has gone forth from her borders, be unextinguished, until eve-

rv despotism in Europe be overturned: and the rights and independence and happiness of every nation, and people, and kingdom, under Heaven, be established upon the only basis which the progress of enlightened opinion shall consent to regard as legitimate—the basis of liberty and equality!

But to return to the subject. Look for a moment beyond the Pyrenees. At the convention of Paris, France was exhibited to the world, fallen, degraded, and in chains, at the feet of the sovereigns of Europe. Her great chieftain in captivity—her armies beaten and dispersed—her pride and military spirit humbled in the dust. She seemed, forever struck from her commanding attitude in Europe; and to have retrograded, at least, half a century in the politics of Europe. And such indeed were the confident predictions of statesmen and essayists, particularly of the politicians of this country and Great-Britain.

Now mark the result. Before these very predictions had reached the extremities of the world—before the armies of their deliverers had ceased to outrage the presence of the French people, a system was already in operation, which instantaneously insured the generation of France. Embarrassment disappeared from every department of the state. A new army was organized; a formidable navy created; a splendid and experienced government and court established and supported; and the immense tribute of foreign indemnification extinguished with a celerity that appeared like the operation of magic. And in less than six years from the period of her signal overthrow, France arose again to her former elevated standing, the same great, efficient, and distinguished nation as before. And to what causes, Mr. Chairman, are we to attribute this sudden, this extraordinary regeneration? Was it because the vine covers their hills, or the olive her valleys? Was it because her soil was the richest—her climate the healthiest, or her population the most ingenious in Europe? No, sir! It is to her admirable commercial system, to which we are to look for the solution of the question. A system which protects the industry of France, and secures to her own citizens the distinguished blessings which the bounty of nature hath lavished upon them. A system, sir, an approach towards which, is indicated by the bill under consideration.

An imaginary line separates the kingdom of France from the Netherlands.—But if the Andes had arisen, or oceans rolled between them, their respective boundaries could not have been more distinctly, or strongly, or palpably marked. On the one side is a population, active, industrious & happy—on the other, poor, indolent and wretched. France protects the industry of her citizens—Holland has departed from the system of her forefathers; and, by means of her new doctrines, paralyzed the energies of the most industrious people in Europe.

It is unnecessary to pursue such facts farther.—History, both ancient and modern, without a solitary exception, attests the truth of the proposition which I have attempted to illustrate, that the protection of manufacturing industry, by means of commercial restrictions, is indispensable, necessary to develop and sustain the wealth and power of nations.

Allow me now, Mr. Chairman, to call the attention of the committee, for a few moments, to the second proposition.

A further extension of the tariff (perhaps such as is contemplated by the bill upon the table) will enable the American manufacturer to supply not only the domestic consumption, but compete probably with other nations in foreign markets.

The manufacturing question is very different from what it was ten years ago. It then was, whether we should foster and promote our infant establishments. It now is, whether we shall sustain and extend our matured ones. It then was, whether we could manufacture any article as profitably as we could purchase it. It now is, whether we cannot, by additional protection, sell profitably abroad, as well as in the domestic market, the fabrics which we produce.

This may probably be regarded as a new, as it certainly is a very interesting view, which this great national question begins, legitimately, to present.

But, are its subjects, Mr. Chairman, visionary or unattainable? If the uniform testimony of every nation which has ever existed, be not entirely delusive, and the experience of a thousand establishments in our own country, which have struggled into existence in despite of every species of depression, be not utterly fallacious, they are already within our reach. Packagings of American goods are at this moment shipping to the South-American markets. The rise, indeed, and progress of these Southern Republics, may be regarded as particularly auspicious to the policy I am advocating. Commercial treaties will shortly be concluded between them and us; and from the precedence which we had taken in recognizing their independence, we shall constantly be entitled to the regard and privileges of the most highly favored nation. And, from the genius of their population, and the infinite variety of their productions, there is no question but that an extensive and

profitable market may be opened to our marine, if we will permit our merchants to adventure in it.

I am fully aware, Mr. Chairman, how lightly these remarks—speculations, if you please—are regarded by many, to whom they are addressed. But I recollect, and the House well remembers, when Congress was first petitioned to protect our cotton manufactures, with what keenness and derision the idea was contested, that we should ever be able, or at least for a long series of years, to manufacture such articles as profitably as we could purchase them. And yet, sir, in the shortest possible period, shorter, indeed, than the most sanguine friend of the tariff could have ventured to predict or imagine; the muslins of India disappeared, and our own fabrics, substantially better, cheaper, and equally abundant, forever superseded their use. And will not the same splendid results crown similar acts of legislation, for the protection of every article of legitimate manufacture in this country?

The progress which we have already made in manufactures, is a fact as surprising as it is congratulatory, if we regard, for a moment, the feeble protection which has been awarded them; and the difficulties which, at every step, they have had to oppose and vanquish. It is, seemingly, but yesterday—*ad, indeed, it is little more than thrice three years since*, when it was universally believed throughout our country, that we were as incapable of competing profitably with the foreign manufacturer, as of combating successfully the Mistress of the Ocean, upon her own element. The success of Waltham, however, and unnumbered other establishments, which adorn the valleys and villages of our country, have dissipated, effectually dissipated, the one delusion; and the gallant Hull, triumphant over all his enemies, has forever buried the other, with the wreck of the *Guerriere*, in the depths of the Atlantic.

I will now, Mr. Chairman, briefly examine, or rather, I will glance over the principal objections which have been urged against the manufacturing system in this country: It has been denounced, and held up to public odium, as a system calculated to benefit the few at the expense of the many. Experience, in every country heretofore, and in this country, as far as the experiment has been made, has proclaimed, in the most unequivocal manner, the inconclusiveness of the objection.

The spirit of the bill is, and its ultimate operation must be, to destroy, (by multiplying rival establishments,) not sustain, monopoly; to lessen, (by promoting competition,) not increase, inordinate profits; to advance the interests, not of individuals, but of the community. And that such, indeed, will be its eventual operation, may be strongly, if not conclusively inferred, from the hostility manifested towards it, by the manufacturers themselves: By the proprietors of such establishments as have been enabled, by means of large capitals, to withstand the shock of European competition, and continue to realize profitable dividends. And in fact, objections like the one, under consideration, might be urged with as much force, and more propriety, against the navigation of the North, and the agriculture of the South, and every other great interest of this country, which depends upon the exclusive protection of the government. Yes, sir, in free communities, competition destroys monopoly, and profitable markets insure abundance. And were it possible at this moment to exclude from our shores every article of foreign fabric, the material of which we possess in abundance, there is scarcely a doubt, (such is the infinite industry, skill, and enterprise of our citizens,) that, in half a dozen years—nay, possibly, in a much shorter period—we should be as cheaply and as abundantly supplied as at present. But the more correct policy, unquestionably is, to obtain these ends by more progressive means.

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The costly bonnets of Italy, and the silks of France and China, find already an extensive market in our manufacturing districts. And the consumption of the ordinary necessities of Tea, Coffee and Sugar, are doubled and trebled in a community, whose expenditures may be always accurately rated, by their capacity to purchase. And thus, sir, the injury which the revenue sustains, by the lessened importation of one article, (the article manufactured at home,) is fally, if not more than repaired, by the increased consumption of others. And such is, and must forever continue to be, the obvious and necessary operation of every legitimate manufacturing establishment in our country.

Another objection to the manufacturing system (and this is the last one which I shall notice) is its alleged operation upon the morals of society, in inducing vice and misery.

Whatever truth this objection may have in its application to the limited extent of European countries, and the crowded and peculiar population of their cities, it is entirely lost in its bearing upon the manufacturing establishments of this country, which are scattered over an immense territory, and whose population bear, and will forever continue to bear, a small relative proportion to the rest of the community.

Manchesters and Birminghams, those theatres upon which fearful scenes of vice and misery have been exhibited, we have no right to apprehend will ever arise among us. Our immeasurable territory forms our everlasting protection. Oppression may reach, but not permanently, the American laborer. He is a freeman, who possesses the right and capacity of changing his residence and employment, whenever his disposition may lead him to pursue his happiness elsewhere. For him there is a land of promise and refuge blooming in the West.

The European, on the contrary, is a slave, who is chained by the severest fate, to a single spot, and compelled, by the sternest necessity, to pray for the wretched privilege of earning his daily and scanty subsistence. For him there is no transition, but from the work-shop to the poor-house—there is no refuge but the grave.

But, even in England, where this objection applies with its full force, and where man is exhibited in *masses of misery*, as the suffering population of her manufacturing districts have been apily & strongly termed—yet even here, (unexpected as the fact may be,) we are assured, by her ablest statists, that vice and pauperism characterize more certainly her agricultural than her manufacturing population. At any rate, it will not be denied, in our country, wherever such establishments have been successfully located, that, instead of vice and crime, and pauperism, gathering in their circles, the country has flourished around them, and the comforts and independence of the people been constantly advanced.

Why has the tide of emigration from New-England ceased to flow? Is independence no longer to be won in the wilderness of the West? Or is its frontier still swept and desolated by the savage? No, sir. The motive for emigration is extinguished. New England has become, or partly become, a manufacturing district—And the poor man has again found, around the home of his fathers, *constant employment and liberal wages*—those certain and inexhaustible sources of the happiness of individuals, and the glory and wealth of nations.

A few moments more, Mr. Chairman, and I will cease to trespass upon the indulgence of the committee.

The situation of our country is truly felicitous. Blessings, indeed, of every kind, surround us. Glory has crowned the past; and the future is glowing with the most brilliant destinies. Never were there institutions, in politics, more admirable than our own. They embrace the wisdom of every age, and the perfection of every system. And, independently of the blessings which we have created for ourselves, what has not the bounty of Nature lavished upon us?

Our mighty rivers, our capacious bays, our inland seas, indicate capacities for commerce which have never been surpassed, nor equalled. Our mountains abound with coal and iron—the agents and materials of our future manufacturing superiority. And the extent and variety of our soil, productive in all the greatest staples of commerce—aided too, by facilities for internal communication, which are as gratifying as they are unbounded, will forever distinguish our agriculture.

To promote the industry of this great nation—to develop its resources—to manufacture, sustain, and extend its existing interests and institutions, are the objects of the present bill.

Our manufacturing industry, let me repeat again, is no longer a subject of partial protection, or contingent legislation; but constitutes one of the great interests of the country, and is fully entitled to the most efficient and permanent protection. Let the bill, therefore, Mr. Chairman, pass—pass without embarrassment, or amendment. Go further: And resolve, from this moment, to exclude from your shores every species of foreign fabric