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CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEBATE ON THE NON-INTERCOURSE LAW.

Monday, June 26.

Mr. Bedinger said he desired it to stand on record that he had always been a friend to the non-importation law, and voted for it before the Hoyle. He intended to vote against both the amendments proposed to the bill. A gentleman (Mr. Mc. I.) said if any colleague who voted the first amendment (Mr. Quincy) had taken the view of this object which might have led to a proposition to his mind, he would not have found such cause as the course proposed to be pursued. He seemed to have taken another view, when by the clearest demonstration it might have been shown that the system pursued is one of favoritism to the belligerent powers of Europe. It will be recollected by gentlemen of this House, that at the time the decrees of French armed ships took place, it was proved by a gentleman of the British government, objected to come to an accommodation with us, because we excluded jurisprudence and decisions by assigned those of her enemy. On this ground I resolve to say that the decisions took place, and he was in time that it took place, it was considered a measure obviously favorable to British, and yet injuring French. It was a national prohibition of the entrance of our vessels. In the time of Adams there was not perhaps in the course of a year a single French public armed vessel in our harbors of this City. Have we any French fleets now in our seas? None. Will there any probability that there will be any? No, sir; for France having now lost her W. India Islands, if her navy should be freely admitted, it is probable that there would not, in the course of five years, be a single French vessel within the harbor waters. As the exclusion would be perfectly national, I would not stop any thing to prevent a settlement of our differences with France. I am not now inquire in my belief that we would settle our differences with her; for every one acquainted with the government knows, that it is not to be diverted from its object by any arrangement we may make. But I would do every thing possible justification that could be urged by France for not meeting our overtures for peace. The country would produce at home more union among our citizens, and, when our rights should be violated without a pretence of their infraction there can be but one sentiment in the nation. I have not yet determined to admit British vessels as Dean my vote would go; and should Hy House determine to admit French vessels I should still vote for the admission of English vessels, because that our exclusion is so obviously managed by the British government, and the doctrine has been so eagerly by the present in this country, as to give me to the most unjustifiable conduct ever pursued by one nation towards another, to take the idea advanced by the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. Lowndes) that we do not mean to take possession of our waters, they will take advantage of the privilege to be injurious in many opinion. It has no force with me, for this plain reason that although the gentleman should from our orders was not carried into execution, they should stop from, yet they did not enter our waters, which they might have done, in defiance of the proclamation. And well may we, sir, be deceived, I apprehend, that we do not derive more the indignation of this nation by an open violation of the laws of its rights.

It, sir, you wish to go the aforesaid tage of British affairs, take away every pretext for the violation of our rights. Let me ask if it be not better to attempt to do it? By so doing I give up a principle which does not be just you, and receive in a condition of physical strength by union at home. I do not say that every one will be satisfied, because I have no doubt England, the gentleman (Mr. Lowndes) in few in number as to be unworthy of notice. If O. Britain, on the other hand, attacks us when we have taken every possible ground of collision and we take her position, the people in a very partial one country will be satisfied that our delibrate objects to destroy our commerce. We shall convince no more of those party divisions which have distracted us for some months past.

It cannot be said that we are bound by our part of the negotiation to admit British vessels. I have been nothing of the kind, it exist; and I call for the proof in a parliament. Why do it then? It may be considered a concession; and certainly manifests that disposition we feel just now to settle all the points of difference in a liberal manner. And here I beg leave to remark that adopting the non-intercourse declarations of the British minister, you would not give the analysis unchanged by pursuing this course. On this subject Mr. Burrell quoted a speech of Mr. Canning, in the British Parliament. If we were to be governed by reference to impressions which prevailed in this country in a partiality to France, it did appear to him that this speech was entitled to great weight. Mr. Burrell mentioned the speech of the British minister, and stated a position which the British government admitted was what could be received from a trained sense. From this speech it appeared that France gave two belligerent on an equal footing was all that was required. Did not this be completely come to the ground wishes? Did it not intercede all trade with France under the most severe restrictions? Mr. Burrell said he did not wish it to be understood that he approved of the conduct by the ministry of the British minister; but sir he had been said that the bill was somewhat similar to the same, and that in the speech of a ministerial member to show that no such preference could be shown to France. Mr. Burrell said the speech also states, sir, that the reason why our orders in Council were repealed, was, that it had been accepted, such was the situation of the British, as France might always be carried on with the enemy; that through the ports in Europe her enemy might be efficiently supplied as if the embargo did not exist in relation to him. But, sir, what is the state of things? Will it be possible to operate on France by commercial restrictions, as we all know, but will not accomplish that object? Let me ask if an American vessel could be sent to France, and return? It not only cuts off direct intercourse, but prohibits the importation of the products of France, that she might to carry on a circuitous commerce will be ineffectual, inasmuch as the produce of the British islands would be carried to the ports of the United States.

It, according to the ideas of the British government itself, this state of things, which is so injurious to France, let me ask of gentlemen how they can infer a partiality to France. Will gentlemen, sir, be so strange as to exclude the armed vessels of France, though it may display a disposition to injure France? Is any gentleman to show that it can be the smallest degree coerce or affect her. Let me call the speech of gentlemen to the present situation of Europe. If France lately had the ascendancy, it is not to be excluded from the trade of the continent? Is it not known that all the ports of the continent of Europe and this country finds its rent on the continent of Europe? Is it not known that of the whole of our tobacco seven out of eight parts are consumed on the continent? Is it not known at least, the Bill finds its market there? Does not Bonaparte great proposed an embargo on the British Islands? This cannot be denied.—Then let me ask of gentlemen whether it be so good to our advantage to carry on the trades, and, if not why we should take a step which can do France so injury, for which may not probably would be made a pretext for coming to so unjust a part of our trade? With respect to partiality to France, let me ask upon the gentlemen from Virginia or any other to show if from the conduct of the United States any such thing can be inferred. Look at our relative situation, the commercial intercourse with us without a sacrifice of a single right. I have thought that we were rather disposed to yield rights of importance for the sake of accommodation. You have given up various claims; and yet, when we were struggling for the abandonment of the orders in council and nothing else she had the art to make a great portion of the people of this country believe that we were struggling to destroy her very existence. She has now given up more than we have asked and yet not surrendered one iota of her just rights, but merely abolished from the proclamation a principle which, if carried into effect, would have reduced us to the most desperate state of condition. My first intention was to been to prevent the existence of any point of etiquette to prevent a settlement. I was sadly mistaken in the point of etiquette prevented a settlement with England. Sir, whenever we have complained to us, we have done on grounds on which it is impossible for a friendship to exist. I am content that we ought to try it it is not possible by faithfully disentangling the points of difference, and maintaining a correct position, to keep peace with France and with England.

I do hope, from what I have said, that no one will suppose that I should be prepared to my conduct in the policy of England or France. I wish to be governed by a liberal and just policy. If England deserves an injury let us resent it. If France does wrong let us resent it. I hope, sir, considering the subject in this point of view, I am not much inclined to peace, but I am not so because I am afraid that the policy of France is already decided on.

Another law has suggested itself to my mind which I think merits consideration. Let it be recollected, sir, by gentlemen whose authority it is to relate to, that the shipments of cotton and tobacco to France are prohibited. Where can it have been? Nowhere, sir, but in this House, because there it is as plentiful as here. Must then have gone to the Continent of Europe, or to Amsterdam, or to Amsterdam. The insurance against his risk is 3 per cent in consideration of this risk is put down to a liberal dividend insurance of 7 per cent. Now, sir, would you not do extreme injustice to the merchants and shipping offices by taking a step which would prohibit the shipment of the produce of all your property? I ask whether it would not be injuring them materially, inasmuch as the British ports under a state of things very different from that which it is proposed to create; and by adopting the law it will infallibly cause the loss of all this property. At this time it is probable that the shipment of cotton and tobacco then they were on the 13th of March, the merchants, finding the market produce prices here (for, unless they can find a foreign market for it, it will consequently fall) have taken it off in Europe rather than risk the total loss of it by keeping it.

As I before said, I have always been in favor of admitting British vessels; for I would have peace with that nation if possible. I have been disposed to act subject, because I wish to take every every possible pretext for war. If she is disposed to do us justice, I am not disposed to prevent. If all our wealth and property were confined within the walls of any particular town, the admission of armed vessels might be a matter of serious doubt. Let it be recollected that we have an immense extent of coast and innumerable inlets, which, sir, we might attack; and I never would prevent any adjustment by a measure which can do of no real efficacy and which may do a very deal of harm. I would not do the smallest injury to any power, any more than I would against with France to please England. If we proposed step by step, however, all the property which has left this country for the ports on the continent since the 13th March has, as certainly confiscated as it has reached Great Britain.

Mr. Lowndes wished gentlemen to confine themselves to the point in debate. For what purpose were odd remarks made, he thought, sir? For what purpose did gentlemen say that Britain was misled? I thought say the same of France, and of the Government. But I could not probably convince the gentlemen of the same. The real question is, sir, to be the last amendment proposed, which appears to have for its object to get rid of the motion of the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Sheffey.) The meaning of the amendment I take to be that there has not been a satisfactory adjustment of our differences with G. Britain; whatever it be considered, in that or any other point of view I cannot admit it. I contend that, as the two countries stand in relation to each other, we are at peace; and whether an envoy is or is not sent to England, it is not to be prevent by the law of nations. Still it should be a peace. Now as I said the transcript, I am not for adopting whether the bill which came from the Senate be adopted or not; in his measure which the majority may think proper to shoulders. A gentleman from Southern Carolina (Mr. Lowndes) that is the opinion of the Executive, I believe, sir, that this sen is correct. If I knew this to be the opinion of the Executive, sir, my opinion on the subject for if peace be preserved, I can see no what we have already done, for aught I should offend other France.

A great deal has been said about its being our interest to keep peace with Europe. I feel as much as any one, and if peace can be preserved I am certainly only to do it. But I feel it, sir, in a strong not because I wish for peace.

Deliberations made on the floor of Parliament, sir, I have seen, which I see authority. I must, observe, whilst gentlemen imagine that they would be the cause of a war, I wish to call on the House for the fact. And to what did the gentleman (Mr. Lowndes) refer? To the exclusion in one branch of security. But, considering the whole system, I think it is not so much to be considered. Sir, combinedly with good faith and with the true line which they ought to pursue, or to the interests of the Britain or what the best right to exclude the other side of the ship, sir, tion more than another? I believe that the restrictions to the decrees and orders in council, the first instance be intention of public ships; and, secondly, the intention of commerce, the intention of the British government do not point out expressly that the intention shall cease, yet I contend that as to good faith, it was intended it should cease with the renewal of intercourse.

As to the negotiations carrying on with France, I wish to know whether it is not the opinion of gentlemen to France to interdict her private ships as to interdict her public armed vessels? If the shipment of her armed vessels, will not did to her complaints, sir, the argument is urged that France know we are not to be treated the messenger sent out in the Mentor, sir, that the interdiction of her armed vessels now, before the return of the messenger, would essentially change the relations we now stand with each other. This argument would apply just as much to the whole nonintercourse bill as to the clause of it, and, if correct, would supercede this bill wholly; for, if we have no right to interdict armed vessels, France provisions which, do not extend to private vessels, we must let them come, because we cite by its provisions. When I contend for it simply which that this act was was a transgressor to the arbitrary decree of both nations when one has called its orders, should and the left in operation against the other.

Another argument has been urged against discriminating, viz. that it has no public sense; I think, sir, it is a very strong one. Gentlemen, sir, I for, if the discriminating provisions need not be so, and if the measure of the House of Representatives, we know, sir, that the Senate was all out of their power, to make the provisions and other grounds against the subjects of Great Britain. In an American, sir, vessel, the property on board of it has been seized by the British cruiser; a French public armed vessel