

BY DUFF GREEN.

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SPEECH OF MR. CROCKETT,

Of Tennessee, in reply to Mr. Strong of New York, on the sub-treasury bill, in committee of the whole on the state of the Union.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, June 16th, 1840.

I had not intended, Mr. Chairman, to trouble the committee with any remarks on this bill, until the honorable gentleman from New York (Mr. Strong) addressed the committee a few days since, and reminded me of the peculiarity of my position in relation to it.

Important as I regard it—destructive and ruinous in its consequences and tendencies, as I believe it to be, to the prosperity and happiness of those who have honored me with a seat on this floor, and of the whole country, I had determined to pursue my usual course of silence, and to manifest my opposition to it by simply recording my vote against it. And, sir, so much of our time has been consumed in speech-making—we have talked so much and done so little during the present session, that even now, though urged by an imperative sense of duty, I rise with unfeigned reluctance.

But, sir, as I have refrained, heretofore, from taking any part in the discussions which have engaged our attention, I feel encouraged to hope the committee will pardon the trespass I am about to commit upon their time and attention, in submitting some general views which govern me in my opposition to this measure.

Mr. Chairman, before I proceed to the discussion of the bill on your table, I have a prior obligation to perform. The legislature of the state which I have the honor in part to represent, thought proper, in the plenitude of their wisdom, at their last session, to resolve on electing the Senators, and requesting the Representatives from that state, among other things, to "vote for, and to use all fair and proper exertions to procure the passage of the measure brought forward in the Congress of the United States, commonly called the sub-treasury bill or independent treasury bill, as it is called upon your table."

Sir, for the honor of my state, I should be happy if I could discharge what I conceive to be my duty, without making further reference to these resolutions. But the respect which is due to the action of the legislature of a sovereign state, upon a subject so much magnitude, entitles me to insist, before I proceed, and I should feel that I had failed to discharge public duty, were I, under these circumstances, to be silent.

The honorable gentleman from New York (Mr. Strong) and myself, are somewhat similarly situated in respect to this bill; and I design to confine my remarks chiefly to a reply, or at least an attempt to reply, to some of the arguments of that honorable member, for whom, although I differ with him to a considerable extent, I entertain great respect.

In truth, Mr. Chairman, I deeply regret to find my friend from New York, on the wrong side in politics; for, really, sir, I set so high a value on his personal friendship, that I should not wish to differ with him. But, I feel authorized to hope, nay, more, I feel confident that when he comes to be convinced of the fact, as I think he soon must be, that he is acting with a party, and supporting an administration, whose democracy consists entirely in name and profession, and whose real character is that of a most ultra federal character, he will renounce and abandon them, and come over to the true old fashioned democratic republican faith, and be a good whig.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. Strong) will pardon me for one word in regard to the position he assumed on this subject, before I proceed to notice the resolutions adopted by the legislature of my own state.

Sir, the honorable member from New York, as it would appear from the resolutions of the Legislature of that State, which he caused to be read at the clerk's table, has advised in a very polite and friendly manner, I should say, that he will conform his action to the wishes and best interests of the people of his State by opposing this measure, which they characterize, as one fraught with many evils to the country.

But, sir, the gentleman has thought proper not only to disregard the resolutions of his State, but to assume some severe strictures upon the conduct and motives of those who gave it—in other words, the Whig portion of the Legislature of his State. He denounces the resolutions as "Janus-faced," and altogether "anomalous" in their character. And why? because, forsooth, they only express opinion, and require what he will call, as the people of that State are; and he wishes not to take the broad ground and in consequence do not and request her representatives to inform the gentleman and to call attention to the fact that they will conform their action thereto by opposing this measure.

Now, sir, to say that the doctrines of the gentleman on this point are quite as novel and "anterior" as the resolutions of his State Legislature, seems to be his. He and his party profess to believe in the doctrine of instructions. They hold that the Legislature of a State has a right to instruct her senators, and the people their representatives, and the corresponding obligation of obedience on the part of those so instructed. And yet, sir, the honorable gentleman in this case, raises a quibble and puts his refusal to obey on the ground that he is not requested by the resolutions to oppose the bill, but merely informed that the will and wishes of the people of his State are in regard to it. He denounces this as an artifice of the Whig majority of the Legislature to induce the adoption of a measure, and to vote against this bill without committing themselves to the doctrines of instructions. But, sir, if I were to hazard a guess on the subject as to the motive of the New York Legislature in adopting the resolutions in question, I should not hesitate to say they did it to test the sincerity of those who profess this doctrine, but who take good care never to practice upon it, except when it can be made available for party purposes.

Sir, what do the gentleman and the party with which he acts, understand to be the object of instructions to public servants? Is it any thing more or less than to inform them of the will of their constituents? Surely, sir, this is all that is necessary to be known by those who honestly believe in the doctrine, and wish in good faith to carry it out in practice. But, passing strange as it would seem to an unsophisticated mind—one not given to quibbles and subtleties, the gentleman and his political friends seem wholly incapable of comprehending the wishes of their constituents, from a mere expression of them in a polite, decorous, and respectful manner. It seems that they require to be commanded, ordered, directed, literally kicked into it, like so many gaily slaves, before they can understand.

Why, Mr. Chairman, without intending any disrespect to the honorable member, I must be allowed to say that to refuse obedience to instructions upon such a shallow quibble, is trifling, contemptible and absurd to the extreme. Sir, I would respectfully submit to the gentleman to say, if a dog that has been well raised will not go out of the house when he is bidden, and will not wait to be kicked out.

Now, sir, the resolutions adopted by the Legislature of my own State, to which I have already referred, go much further than those of the Legislature of New York, of which the gentleman so laudably complains. They are much more extraordinary in their character, it would seem to me; and, from the tenor of the gentleman's remarks, I cannot doubt but they would suit his taste and that of his party precisely; for they not only instruct the senators of that State and request her representatives in Congress to vote for or against a particular measure, but all others, which have been or may hereafter be, recommended by the President! I repeat, sir, that I and my colleagues are not only requested to support in good faith the "Independent Treasury scheme" and all its concomitants, but all others which have been or may hereafter be introduced by the present chief magistrate—standing army and all!

Yes, sir—here is a measure, intended to operate as one of the adjuncts of this tremendous and fearful engine of power—the sub-treasury bill, which proposes to organize the militia of the United States into a grand and magnificent Standing Army of two hundred thousand men, to be at the beck and call of the President, recommended by the Secretary of War and endorsed by the President himself. This measure has been "brought forward" since the adoption of those resolutions. But, sir, it is so bold a movement—such an open and undisguised attempt to clothe the President with absolute power over almost one fifth of all the voters in the Union—it has produced so much consternation and alarm, and has become so odious and offensive to the people every where throughout the country, that even their own friends in Congress do not dare to give it countenance. It is so palpably unconstitutional that the most ultra and unscrupulous of the adherents of power in Congress will not venture to stand up in its defence. The Committees on the militia in both branches of Congress have reported against its adoption, and could do no more, even on the part of the friends of the administration, than to make a pitiful and beggarly attempt to whitewash it over and shield the administration from the odium which attaches to it, by showing that it resembles in some respects the plans heretofore proposed and adopted by the Legislature of the State of Tennessee. And yet, sir, the Senators from the State of Tennessee are instructed, and the representatives requested, unconditionally, to give it their support!

Now, Mr. Chairman, I submit, sir, to your candor to say, if ever you have known a set of men, in any circumstances, to place themselves in an attitude before the country, so supremely ridiculous? Do you believe, sir, that such an instance of consummate sycophancy, and base party servility is to be found in the annals of the world?

Sir, for those worthless, who composed the majority of the last Legislature of my State, should ever again have it in their power to instruct the representatives of that high-toned and independent people, of which thank God I apprehend there is but little danger, I should think it would be well for them to wait until they see whether the friends of the administration in Congress will support their own measure, before they instruct those opposed to them to do so in advance.

But, Mr. Chairman, I will only detain the committee a few moments longer with this part of the subject—I can command no language sufficiently strong to express the sovereign and ineffable contempt I entertain for these resolutions, and their authors; and which every honest and independent man who breathes in this State must feel. I cannot speak of them, sir, without denouncing them as the offspring of a set of base and subservient party-slaves, who acted under the command of one of the most unprincipled of all the serfs and vassals of power; and as this would be rather unbecomingly disrespectful to the majority of the Legislature of my State, and the Government of my State, I will not do so.

I will only express my firm and decided belief that these resolutions, are not only not in conformity with the will of a majority of the people of Tennessee, but directly opposed to it; and that her enlightened and independent sons will never be content until they wipe off the deep disgrace and stain which has been cast upon her name. Nor will they fail to inflict condign punishment upon those political harpies who drove the illustrious and lamented White from their service, and that of the nation!

Sir, I need not say in this place how much that great and good man was beloved, honored and admired by the people of that State. He had been in their service for forty years, and had filled almost every office within their gift, with a fidelity and devotion to their interests and prosperity almost without a parallel in the history of this nation or of the world.—He was her noblest, purest—most consistent—most patriotic son. His character for honesty, integrity, firmness, and purity of intention, was unequalled as the driven snow.—The poisonous tongue of calumny and detraction was never able to fix the smallest stain upon his private or public character. Amidst all the vicissitudes and changes of party strife through which he passed during his long and eminently useful career, he was the same firm, inflexible and consistent Republican, and pursued the even tenor of his way, looking to no other end than the country's weal. With an enlightened and sound judgment, and an unwavering devotion to the Constitution he adhered to his political faith, "without variableness or shadow of turning" to the latest moment of his life. And he had been, "so clear in his great office, his virtues will plead like angels trumpet-tongued, against the deep damnation of his taking off; And pity, like a naked new-born babe, Striding blast—or Heaven's cherubim, horsed Upon the sightless courser of the air, Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye, That tears shall drown the wind!"

But, sir, because he would not abandon all his long-cherished principles and chain himself unconditionally to the car of power, because he refused to lend himself to a band of political pirates and plunderers, and aid them in perpetuating their power, regardless of every other consideration but the spoils of office—because he refused to follow them in their own abandonment of all their former principles, and join them in their mercenary and corrupt crusade against the credit, the currency, and every thing connected with the happiness and prosperity of the people; and because he refused to connive at their usurpations of power, and their attacks upon the public liberty, those tools and scavengers of a subsidized ussary of power, as soon as they became invested with "a little brief authority," marked him as the victim of their proscription. They determined to drive him from his station, and if possible to degrade him in the estimation of those whom he had so long and so faithfully served. They denounced him as a deserter and a traitor to his party. The ferocious bloodhounds of party were let loose upon him, and he was pursued with the most bitter and unceasing malvolence to the very brink of the grave.—They instructed him to do what they knew no

honorable man, situated as he was, could do.—The course he pursued is already known to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the country. As ever true to his principles, and preferring the private station with the conscience of an honest man, to the honors and emoluments of office, at the expense of principle, he resigned, and in the performance of that last duty of his mortal life, placed himself on more elevated ground, than he had ever occupied before.

But, Mr. Chairman, although that great and lamented statesman and patriot, of whom it may be said, that

"Nature formed him and then broke the mould," was thus ostracised and driven from the service of his State, and of the nation. Although he lost his life from the exposure incident to his pursuit, he is the most tremendous blessing of the year, and is now receiving the reward of his virtues in the eternal world, his friends draw consolation from the fact, that he yet lives and speaks to us by his noble example. The resolution of his Roman firmness and devotion to republican principles, is yet fresh in the memory of all. His name is inscribed high up in the Temple of Fame, and will endure as long as liberty, virtue, or patriotism, has a votary upon the earth. It will be transmitted to posterity on one of the brightest pages of his country's history, while the names of the authors of that foul dash and rubbish of the times, in which they lived, but no, sir, I am instructed by these great structing resolutions are upon the records of the State, and their names too must go down to posterity immortal in the annals of infamy and disgrace, and only to be execrated by every honest man.

Sir, before taking my leave of this subject, I must beg permission to call the attention of my friend from New York (Mr. Strong) to an authority on the subject of the duties and obligations of a representative in Congress, I must also beg the attention of "the party," generally, in this House, and especially their new friends from the South, as they seem to have forgotten the duties and obligations of the competence and force of which none of them will question, I am sure.

Mr. CROCKETT said:—

But, sir, I do this with great reluctance, because I know that it must be exceedingly painful to the gentleman to find that they have "departed from the path of duty," and that the great apostle of modern democracy to his disciples, but, sir, the case is so exactly in point, that I feel obliged to refer to it. And with the permission of the committee, I will read a short extract from Gen. Jackson's proclamation, in which, speaking of the powers of the government and of each department of it, he says:

"In the House of Representatives there is this difference, that the people of one State do not, as in the case of President and Vice President all vote for the same officers. The people of all the States do not vote for all the members, each State electing only its own representatives. But this creates no difficulty. The Representatives, when they are all representatives of the United States, not representatives of the particular States from which they come. They are paid by the United States, not by the States, nor are they accountable to them for any act done in the performance of their legislative functions."

Now, sir, I must beg gentlemen who are everlastingly prating about democracy, and who are in the daily habit of invading the sanctuary of the illustrious dead, to drag forth the memory of Alexander Hamilton, the brave companion in arms of Washington, a statesman and a patriot, and to denounce him as a monarchist and an enemy of liberty, and to reject his opinions in their own political creed. Here, sir, is the declaration put forth in the most solemn form, and in the most emphatic and unequivocal terms, by the late President, that the representative of the people in this body is not responsible to them "for any act done in the performance of his legislative functions."—And yet, sir, the Representatives of the State from which he comes, but of the U. States! What, sir, must be the inevitable result of carrying this doctrine into practice, but to consolidate all power in the general government, and reduce the States to mere subservient and dependent colonies? And, sir, what is this, but the very essence of the question, which I have already asked you, it is one of the leading articles in the political creed of the present self-styled "democratic party!" With all their professions of respect for public opinion, I assert, without the fear of successful contradiction, that in their practice they openly disregard it. I believe I hazard nothing in declaring, that at this moment we have the most "democratic" Legislature in the United States, faithfully represented on this floor, the bill on your table would, for the fourth time, be rejected by a decided majority. But, sir, the party in power, acting upon the principle laid down in the extract I have just read, namely, that the representative is independent of the people, their will is disregarded and treated with contempt.

Sir, this would not have passed for democratic or republican doctrine in 1788, and I for one, shall take this occasion to express my unqualified dissent from it now. At the same time, Mr. Chairman, that I deny to the Legislature of my State, the right to exercise any control over my knowledge myself, to be one of the representatives from the State of Tennessee; but more especially the representative of the 12th Congressional District of that State. I acknowledge, sir, with pleasure the right of a majority of the people of that district to control my actions. When I was before them, I gave them my views fully, frankly, and without reserve, in regard to the measure under consideration, and all others likely to engage the attention of Congress, during my term of service; and, sir, I was elected with express reference to the views I have just expressed. I bid I have always held, Mr. Chairman, before my constituents and elsewhere, to be the only true and practical mode of giving instructions to a representative. And, sir, according to this view of the subject, I have been instructed by a decided majority of those I have the honor to represent to vote all fair and honorable measures, and to defeat this bill. I shall obey their wishes with the greatest pleasure, not only on account of the obligation I owe them as their representative, but also because it is in accordance with my most deliberate judgment on the subject. There is no reasonable sacrifice I would not make, to see this bill annihilated by my constituents, upon whose good opinion I place so high an estimate. But, sir, if a majority of them were in favor of this bill, I could not vote for it; because I believe, as I have already intimated, that it will prove more desolating in its effects upon the prosperity of the people, than a pestilence, or any other form of government and free institutions. Rather, therefore, than give it my support, I would resign the trust committed to my hands.

Mr. Chairman, I owe an apology to the committee, for consuming so much time upon this subject. I had not intended to say so much, and will endeavor to condense my remarks on the bill as far as possible.

Sir, if I had been left to choose my own course in the discussion of this measure, I should probably have taken a different one from that which I shall be compelled to take in attempting to reply to the gentleman from New York (Mr. Strong). The honorable member used to look to refute the several objections urged against this measure by the legislature of his State, to

which I have already referred. And, sir, his argument was so brilliant, profound, and overwhelming, that I confess I feel great diffidence in attempting to open my feeble batteries against the impregnable citadel of defence which he threw around this great question.

But, sir, I remember that "David the son of Jesse," but a shepherd boy, armed with a sling and a few stones from the brook, but in a righteous cause, met and slew Goliath of Gath, the mighty giant of the Philistines. And, sir, relying, like David, more on the justice of my cause, than my own feeble strength and power of argument, I will proceed with the discussion. I shall endeavor to show that the objections of this bill, which my friends from New York undertake to refute, were well taken; and that his own arguments in its defence, plausible and ingenious as they appeared to be, were sophistical and unsound; and the positions he assumed entirely untenable.

The people I represent, although highly intelligent and well informed, are not a class of intellectual people, not given to arid subtleties and metaphysical abstractions. I shall, therefore, leave all such arguments in connection with this important subject, to those who are better qualified by the peculiarity of their genius for such an undertaking. By New York, I shall endeavor to take a plain, practical, and common sense view of the subject; and in considering the disastrous effects of this scheme, upon the credit, commerce, and business of the people in all the ramifications of society, and in all the various pursuits and avocations of life; and the tendency to overthrow and destroy our present happy system of government, and establish on its ruins a monarchy and a despotism; I shall rely on the experience, observation, and sound judgment of those who hear me, and more especially of my constituents, to prove the correctness of my arguments.

The gentleman's first essay was to overthrow the objection, against this bill, that it will establish one currency for the government and another, and an inferior one, for the people. And how did he undertake to do that? Why, sir, his whole argument on that point may be condensed into one sentence. His luminous and convincing refutation of this objection, consisted in the simple declaration, "It is a mere assumption, that it could be so! and that nobody believed it, those deeply imbued with Hamiltonian federalism, bankites, and aristocrats!"

Amazing, and overpowering as this argument is, Mr. Chairman, I shall attempt to answer it. I shall endeavor to show, that this bill does not have unintentionally, no doubt, but substantially admitted the truth and validity of this objection. I assert that if they be sincere in their professions, in regard to the effects of the measure upon the currency, in the language of the honorable gentleman, it is impossible in the nature of things, that it could be so! and that nobody believed it, those deeply imbued with Hamiltonian federalism, bankites, and aristocrats!"

The States, soon after the adoption of the Constitution, assumed the power of chartering banks; whether rightfully or wrongfully it is unnecessary to enquire. This power was exercised by the General Government, while those who assisted in framing the government were engaged in its administration. It has now become a part of the settled policy of the country.—Every one at all acquainted with the structure of our system of government must, therefore, be sensible that it is impossible ever to abandon the paper system in this country, even if it were desirable, without changing the Government.—The States cannot be prohibited from creating banks, but by an amendment of the Constitution, depriving them of that power. Would the States be willing to submit to this? Would they ratify such an amendment? I imagine they would not. I will not dwell on this point. I deem it unnecessary to refer to it, but a few authorities which sustain me in the position I am contending for, to the fullest extent, and the competency of which I am sure will not be questioned by any of the friends of this bill. The first witness which I will call to the stand, is the present Chief Justice of the United States, the Honorable Roger Taney. In his report as Secretary of the Treasury, in 1834, I find a few passages which, with the permission of the committee, I will read:—"It will be seen," he says, "from this statement, that it is no part of the proposed plan to dispense with the state banks. It obviously is not in the power of Congress to unconditionally prohibit the States from creating banks, without an amendment of the Constitution, depriving them of the power of chartering banking companies."

Again, he says in the same report, "If there were no State banks, the profitable business of banking and exchange would be monopolized by the general government."

And still speaking of the State banks, he further says, "They are convenient and useful for the purposes of commerce. This cannot be obtained without the aid of paper circulation, founded on credit."

Sir, I might multiply these authorities to a great extent; but I will only mention one or two more. In the speech of a distinguished Senator from Pennsylvania, (Mr. Buchanan) in the other branch of Congress, in support of this very bill, "I find this unequivocal language, on this point. 'I know,'" says the Senator, "that the existence of banks, and the circulation of bank paper, are so identified with the habits of the people, that they cannot be abolished, even if this were desirable.—To reform, and not to destroy, is my motto."

Sir, it is said that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." Now, in order to comply with this rule, I will introduce one or two witnesses. I beg to call the attention of the committee to the opinion of the President of the United States, as expressed in his message of Decr. 4th, 1838. Speaking of the State banks, he says: "Though always opposed to their creation in the form of exclusive privileges, as a State magistrate, aiming by appropriate legislation, to secure the community against the consequences of their occasional mismanagement, I have ever wished to see them protected in the exercise of rights conferred by law, and have never doubted their utility when properly managed, in promoting the interests of trade, and through that channel the other interests of community."

Now, sir, I have said thus much on this point to establish the utility and absurdity of the attempts which the late and present administrations have pretended to make, towards giving to the people of this country a gold and silver currency exclusively, and that all their promises as to that effect have been merely for the purpose of humbugging the people and obtaining their votes. They knew from the beginning,

that such a thing was impossible; for, sir, if they were to succeed in destroying the banks now in existence, as is supposed by some to be their real design, in a single year as many more would be created. In the face of these undeniable facts, can any reasonable man believe for one moment, that the use of paper money will ever be abandoned in this country? Certainly not.—Then, sir, I have established the important fact, that, under the operation of this bill, we are still to have, as I have heretofore had, two kinds of currency; that is to say, specie and bank paper, the representative of specie. Well, I presume the gentleman from New York (Mr. Strong) will deny, nor can any friend of this bill, deny, that the people are to use this bank paper, which is still to circulate as part of the currency, in the transaction of their business. I repeat, sir, the people are to use bank notes as currency in conducting their affairs. This cannot be denied by any body; and the President and his leading friends, unless to have infidelity to the state banks. Just stick a pin there, if you please. Whether these professions be sincere or hypocritical, it is all the same.

Now, sir, what does this bill propose? The 16th section of the bill provides, that after the 30th of June, 1843, all sums accruing, or becoming payable to the United States, for duties, taxes, sales of public lands, or other debts, and also all sums due for postages, or otherwise to the General Post Office Department, shall be paid in gold and silver only." Thus we see that after three years, the people are required by this bill, although, as we have seen, they must of necessity receive and pay out bank paper in their dealings with each other, to pay all their duties, taxes, payments for the public lands, and other debts to the government, and also all sums due for postages to the post office department, in gold and silver only. And, sir, why do they demand that the banks be closed, and that they must of necessity receive and pay out bank paper in their dealings with each other, to pay all their duties, taxes, payments for the public lands, and other debts to the government, and also all sums due for postages to the post office department, in gold and silver only. And, sir, why do they demand that the banks be closed, and that they must of necessity receive and pay out bank paper in their dealings with each other, to pay all their duties, taxes, payments for the public lands, and other debts to the government, and also all sums due for postages to the post office department, in gold and silver only. 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