

Congress of the United States.

House of Representatives.

January 30.

In committee of the whole on Mr. Madison's resolutions.

Speech of Mr. Madison.

[CONTINUED.]

Resuming the train of his observations, he proceeded to explain the remedial operation of his propositions.

First. They will make the British nation sensible that we can, by just and pacific means, inflict consequences which will make it her interest, to pay a just regard to our rights and interests.

To enforce this tendency, he enlarged on the ideas he had formerly expressed in relation to the dependance of Great Britain on the commerce of the United States, and the obvious and essential dependance of the British West-Indies, on the supplies of the United States.

On the latter subject, he entered into a particular reply to the member from Massachusetts (Mr. Ames) who had argued that the British regulation of the trade between the United States and the West-Indies, was conformable to the principles of the colony system as established by the commercial nations of Europe, and could not therefore be reasonably complained of.

2d. That the West-Indies could obtain supplies from other quarters, and did not therefore depend on the United States; nay, that there was danger, by forcing these supplies into other channels, of our losing the branch of trade altogether.

3d. That the trade would hardly employ more than a dozen brigs, and was therefore not worth contending for.

In answer to the first argument of Mr. Ames, Mr. Madison undertook to shew, that Great Britain had not pursued, but violated the principle of the colony system. The true spirit of this system, he said, was to confine the trade between the parent country and the colony, to their own vessels, and to allow as little trade as possible, between the colony and foreign countries; but when a trade with a foreign country became necessary to the colony, to allow the foreign vessels the same carrying privileges allowed to their own. Colonies, he said, were to be considered as parts of a common empire. The trade between one part and another, as between London and Kingston in Jamaica, was to be considered, equally an internal trade with the coasting trade between London and Liverpool, or the trade between the different ports of the United States: and might, if deemed expedient, be equally restrained to domestic bottoms. But when a trade was opened between a colony and a foreign country, the case was changed: the foreign country became a party, and had a reciprocal claim to the use of its bottoms, as much in the trade with the colony, as with any other part of the empire, to which the colony belonged. In support of this doctrine, Mr. M. referred to the example of every nation in Europe, except that of Great Britain, which had American colonies. Denmark, Sweden, the United Netherlands, France, Spain and Portugal, had their colonies, as well as Great Britain: and some of them, rigorously attached to the principles of the colony system: yet not a single one of these nations had refused, whenever a trade was permitted, at all between the colonies and another country, to make the carriage common to the vessels of both the parties. Great Britain alone had attempted a monopoly in such cases for her own vessels. Her example therefore was an innovation on the colony system, as well as an infraction of the rights of reciprocity.

In answer to the 2d position of Mr. A. he denied that permanent supplies of provisions and lumber could be derived from any other part of the world than the United States: not from the northern parts of Europe, which either did not produce, or were too remote to send them: not from the southern parts of Europe, which depended themselves on the northern parts and on America: not from Great Britain, which imported bread, for her own use, amounting one year with another according to the report of the committee of the privy council, to the sum of near three hundred thousand pounds sterling, and was, certainly not an exporter of lumber: not from Ireland, which could not pretend to rival the United States in any article but that of salt provisions; and this was so much dearer, that a prohibition alone of

ours, could gain a market for hers. The gentleman had relied on the capacity of Ireland to extend her cultivation of wheat, so as to spare supplies of this article also. Such a revolution in her interior state was not very probable. But he ought at least to have remembered, that as the pasture lands of Ireland should be turned into wheat fields, her export of beef would decrease, in proportion as she might be enabled to export bread.

It was a waste of time, Mr. M. said, to disprove by minute enquiries, the possibility of supplying the British West Indies from the old continent, on terms that would not be worse than abandoning them altogether. The truth was that the gentleman (Mr. A.) had in this particular, gone beyond the most sanguine advocates of the British policy, Mr. Knox and Lord Sheffield themselves; who limited their ultimate hopes of supporting the West-Indies without the aid of the United States, to the remaining possessions of Great Britain on this continent. He would proceed, he said, to shew what foundation there was for the opinion of these gentlemen, and the gentleman from Massachusetts, in favor of this resource. And he was able to give the most full and decisive evidence in the case, by recurring to an authentic document of our own, from which it appeared, that the continental colonies of Great Britain, instead of being able to furnish the West India colonies, were themselves dependent for the very articles wanted there, on the supplies of the United States.

In the official statement of our exports for the year as late as 1791, most of the articles sent to the British continental colonies, were of a sort and an amount so directly to the point, that he hoped the committee would excuse him for repeating them in detail. He stated them as follows:

Bread-Stuffs and Roots.	
Wheat,	3,125 bushels
Rye,	2,201
Barley,	32
Indian corn,	80,734
Oats,	314
Buckwheat,	26
Peas and beans,	1,418
Rice,	84 tierces
Flour,	27,197 barrels
Ship-stuff,	2,515
Rye meal,	1,774
Indian meal,	2,396
Buckwheat, do.	353
Bread,	29,290
Crackers,	364 kegs
Potatoes,	20 bushels
Onions,	525
Meats, &c.	
Beef,	284 barrels
Pork,	352
Bacon,	881 lb
Fresh Pork,	29,334
— Beef,	92,269
Mutton,	561 carcasses
Tongues,	30 barrels
Butter,	33 firkins
Lard,	5,720 lb
Cheese,	1,826
Live Stock.	
Horned Cattle,	312
Horses,	39
Sheep,	1,517
Hogs,	178
Poultry,	361 dozens
Wood.	
Shingles,	43,000
Staves and heading,	128,000
Handspikes,	2
Hoops,	3,000
Laths,	3,000
Blocks,	100
Oar-rafters,	857
Trunnels,	1,500
Oak Planks and Boards,	14,267
Pine, do.	17,0000
Maple and beach, do.	7,5000

The total of the exports, including a few articles under other heads, amounted to two hundred, seventy thousand, two hundred fifty and nine dollars.

Here then, it is seen, that not only in the bread stuffs, and meats of every sort, but in the articles of lumber and live stock, for which, by universal acknowledgment, the West Indies must depend either on the United States, or the British Continental colonies; the latter are so far from being a rival to us, or a resource to the West Indies, that they continue, at this day, to supply their own deficiencies from our market.

Mr. M. said, that he should not have employed so much of the time of the committee on this head, if the gentleman,

(Mr. Ames) had not attempted to revive the arguments with respect to Canada and Nova Scotia, which had misled Great Britain in her political calculations and present views.

He had heard the language of the gentleman on this subject, with astonishment. That Mr. Knox and Lord Sheffield, British subjects, viewing the prospect with British eyes, at the distance of three thousand miles, in the year 1783, when little enquiry and no experiment could assist them, should have run into the error, was perhaps not so marvellous. But, that an enlightened citizen of America, seeing with American eyes, living in the neighborhood as it were of the scene, in a state whose wharves afford proofs of the daily dependance of the British Continental colonies for the necessities of life, on the market of the United States, should, in the year 1794 adopt the opinion that those colonies could supply the Islands, after a trial of nine years had probably forced the authors of the opinion, Knox and Sheffield themselves, to abandon it, could not be heard without some surprize; and must be considered at least as the fullest proof, that the gentleman had not given sufficient attention to the present subject, to claim that weight which was in general due to his observations.

Mr. M. said he was not less surprized at the 3d position of the gentleman from Massachusetts, viz. that the West-India trade could be carried on by a dozen brigs; and consequently, was not an object worth our pursuit. The plain answer to this argument was, to state the fact, that the shipping entered in one year from the British West-Indies, was not a dozen brigs, but 107,759 tons.

Besides the immediate importance of this auxiliary resource for our navigation, he remarked, that there were two considerations which enhanced the value of the object: one, that as the West-India articles could be brought cheaper in American vessels, they would come cheaper to American consumers; the other, that as our supplies would at the same time be carried cheaper to the West-Indies, the people there could afford to consume the more of them.

It had been urged that the proposed restrictions on the trade with Great-Britain would produce clamors here as well as there, and that Congress might be obliged to recede, before the British government would be under the necessity of doing so. To this Mr. M. replied, that he was under no such apprehension. He thought more favorably of the good sense as well as virtue of his fellow-citizens. On the side of Great-Britain it had been shewn there would be the greatest distress, and the least ability to bear it. The people there were not accustomed, like the people of the United States, to self-denying regulations. They would not have the same confidence in the justice of their cause. And it was particularly worthy of remark, that the people of Great-Britain would be disheartened, and the government alarmed, by reflecting, that their losses from the shifting of commerce into other channels, and not only of their manufactures, but manufacturers, to other places, would be permanent and irretrievable; whereas on our side, they would be temporary sacrifices for durable and valuable acquisitions.

Secondly. The resolutions would have the effect of increasing our marine, and thereby at once cheapening and securing the carriage of our productions, and providing for our safety. These advantages having been already sufficiently explained, need not, he said, be again developed.

It had been remarked by a member from Massachusetts, (Mr. Ames) that if, as stated by a report of Mr. Jefferson, Great-Britain was so often at war, her wars, by depriving us of her shipping, would soon have the wished effect, of replacing it with American shipping. This reasoning Mr. M. said, supposed what was contrary to prudence and probability. What merchants would build ships, which a peace, always more or less in prospect, would throw out of employment; unless it were for special purposes, where the momentary gain might outweigh the eventual sacrifice.

It had been said that our tonnage was proved by the official returns to be increasing with an unexampled rapidity. To this Mr. M. answered; that the increase ought not to be compared with other examples, but with our own natural faculties, and reasonable expectations—that the increase of our population required an annual increase of at least five per

cent; that an assumption by foreigners of American names, had probably increased the apparent quantity of our shipping; that the war or preparations for it, by withdrawing foreign shipping, had probably also had some little temporary effect; that the principal cause of the increase, was the extension of our trade with the French dominions, which some members seemed so little inclined to secure and foster, by measures which appeared to him best fitted for the purpose.

He reminded the committee of an argument, which had, on former occasions, been much pressed by several mercantile members, for encouraging our own navigation; to wit: that American vessels, from a spirit of enterprize, and a union between private and public interests, would explore new fields of commerce, and new markets for our produce, which foreign carriers would leave unattempted. The trade to China opened by American vessels, had been often ascribed to this cause. Mr. M. said the argument seemed to be countenanced also, by the present state of our mediterranean trade; which had, since our independence, been confined by the Barbary corsairs to foreign bottoms. Previous to the revolution, when American vessels could be the carriers, the trade was very considerable. Since the exclusion of our vessels, though the carriage of our produce is safe to British, and several other foreign vessels, yet this branch of trade had withered as much as most others have grown. In 1790, the exports cleared for the mediterranean, were but 31,726 dollars; and in the year following, the imports no more than 11,522 dollars.

Thirdly. Another effect incident to the proposed measure, would be an additional encouragement to domestic manufactures.

A gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Dexter) had said, he could read no such tendency in the propositions. Mr. M. thought it impossible to read the propositions with attention, and not perceive, that they must have the like tendency with the other means, by which manufactures had been promoted. If the duties already laid, were calculated to produce this effect, an increase of those duties in any instance, must have a tendency to increase the effect. In answer to the objection that, a change in the policy of Great-Britain, might put an end to the additional duties, and ensnare those who should proceed under the influence of them, he remarked, 1. That the same might be said in some degree of the regulations now in force. A treaty with Great-Britain might stipulate changes which would affect our manufacturers. But as there was a just confidence, that the interests of this class of citizens would in this case be attended to by the government; it might be expected, that equal attention would be paid to them, in any other case. 2. The progress of things in this country, and the probable accession of foreign manufacturers, might be relied on to support whatever undertakings shall have once got a footing.

(Speech to be continued.)

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March 8. *35t