

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man.—Thomas Jefferson.

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POLITICAL.

(PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.)

From the Keystone.
PUBLIC LANDS.

Messrs. EDITORS:—I have not yet seen any good reasons why the public lands owned by the United States, should not be gradually sold and the proceeds distributed among the states. Those opposed to this course give no better reason than "because the United States Government might one day want them," and in the same breath say "that they cost more to dispose of them than they bring!" The United States Government has a legitimate means to pay her expenses without adopting one that is illegitimate. The duties of foreign articles in every government, carrying on an extensive foreign trade, should amount to a sum equal to the necessary expenses; and particularly in a government composed of separate and individual state governments. A government like ours can own no property which does not belong to the individual states, except that which is used for offence and defence, that being delegated to the general government by the constitution, for its sole use. The selling of the public lands, and appropriating their proceeds to the expenses of the general government, is unconstitutional as any other act ever attempted by this government.

When the constitution was formed, power was given to the general government, to levy a tariff, for the express purpose of raising a revenue to meet the expenses of that government. Every person knows that with the exception of two or three years the balance of trade has been in favor of foreigners, and that our country has been annually drained of large amounts of precious metals. If a tariff sufficient to defray the expenses of the general government existed we would at least derive that much benefit from those importations. This tariff would and ought to come off that class of people who indulge in the extravagant luxuries of life, and would not be felt by the industrious portion of the people.

I am even disposed to go so far as to say that the United States Government has no right whatever to use the proceeds of these lands to pay her current expenses. That the proceeds should be carefully preserved for the use of the individual states, until a law is created for their distribution.

If it is admitted that the general government has the sole right to these lands, how easy would it be for a sectional interest to unite with the north or the south, and enact such revenue laws as to prostrate the energies of a portion of the Union. The lands would be sold as wanted to meet the expenses of government, and that government could go on under such circumstances for centuries, as readily as for one year. It would be placing it beyond the reach of the states. Does any one desire this? This is precisely the position in which we might place ourselves if we admit that the ownership rests in the general government.

Or the other hand if the lands are gradually sold, and the proceeds distributed among the states, the whole country feels the value of them and receives the profit, whilst it keeps within control of the states the general government.

The 2d clause of the third section of the article four of the constitution is as follows: "Congress shall have power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this constitution shall be so construed, as to prejudice any claims of the United States or any particular state."

"Congress shall have the power to dispose of" our public lands. That is granted by every person; but what is to be done with the proceeds? Would it not be prejudicing the claim of "a particular state" to appropriate them to the use of the general government? The United States, as an agent, should if she has not already been paid, receive the amount drawn from her treasury to pay for these lands. Her claim to them would then be, or is now, liquidated. Then I would like to know what right she has to a dollar of the proceeds. She is the agent of the states, and Congress through her buys, receives and disposes of the lands, and other property. Who, then, is entitled to the money? The individual states.

Instead of the doctrine to distribute the proceeds of the sale of the public lands among the states being a federal doctrine, it is democratic to the core. It takes from the general government, a weapon which could be exercised against the states to place it beyond their reach to control. Let any man deny this who can. If we desire a consolidated form of government, all we have to do to prepare the way is to place the means of self-existence in the hands of the general government, and it will soon be accomplished. With the power to raise a fund of a million dollars at her disposal, what more could be desired in times of high party excitement by scheming and ambitious politicians! That there are men in our country who would not stop a moment to use this power for that purpose, and who may be situated at some future time to do so, can there be any doubt. As our government increases in age, so will disappointed, disaffected and ambitious men increase. They have their partisans who will not hesitate to follow in the accomplishment of any object. Is it wise policy to hold out so strong a temptation as these public lands?

PENNSYLVANIANS! Men who are willing to throw aside prejudice, and go for the good of the whole, LOOK AT THE POSITION IN WHICH WE NOW STAND. Are you willing, for the futile and weak reason that the general government may want, or does want, these lands to increase her revenue—to give up your interest to them—to give up THIRTY OR FORTY MILLIONS of dollars to oblige politicians, scheming for the Presidential chair and its leaves and fishes? What is party prejudice good for, if it operates against the welfare of the public. And what public is suffering at present more than that of Pennsylvania, from the want of money in her treasury.

Last week the Great Regulator, established by Ritner, Stevens, Penrose and their coadjutors, exploded, and our other banks, generally, followed. The Great Regulator is no doubt insolvent, but the other banks claim that they are sound. Why did they fail? To force the legislature to grant the issuing of small notes!! They know that Pennsylvania has undertaken the completion of her lines of improvement, and that the people interested, expect her to go on until they are finished. They also know that by suspending, they prevent the state from getting money to go on with these improvements. Thus reasoning, they seem determined to bring her down to such terms as they desire. What is it to relieve us from BANK RULE? From heavy TAXATION? The man of experience will at once say "THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PROCEEDS OF THE PUBLIC LANDS AMONG THE SEVERAL STATES."

Three or four millions of dollars would very much relieve our fiscal affairs. This sum would fall to our share by the end of the year, if not sooner, if a law of sale and

distribution was enacted immediately by Congress.

Why should the democratic party or the federal party, or any other party in Pennsylvania, hesitate a moment in going for a certain income, from our own property, of several MILLIONS annually. Aye, why should there be any hesitation about calling for and receiving our own? Is not our state debt near FORTY MILLIONS? and went the people be compelled to pay taxes to pay these MILLIONS, unless we demand and receive our own in the shape of the proceeds of these lands?

Some cry out that if the public lands are sold and the money divided, that a direct tax for the United States will have to be levied. Suppose even that should be the case, what share would fall to Pennsylvania to pay? Would it in fifty years amount to our state debt? No, not in a hundred. But a direct tax will never be necessary for the support of the United States government, as long as our commerce exists. Let the duty on foreign goods pay the expenses of government. Our mechanics and our farmers will be benefited by it, and the money now sent abroad for foreign manufactures will remain at home in circulation. If it is once understood that the manufactures of the British and the French are no longer to be preferred to those of our own country, men will embark in the manufacture and raising of almost every necessary article of life. Our specie will remain at home. Our farmers will receive good prices for their produce. Our labourers and mechanics will find employment at good wages, and in the event of a war we will be independent of all foreign nations. We have the materials and the industry within ourselves—all that is wanting is encouragement in time of peace.

But again it will be said a tariff is indirect taxation. Admitted, and what then? Is it not optional with every man in a country like ours to use an article coming from a foreign country, such as would be necessary to tax? To be sure it is. Who would not rather pay this optional indirect tax than be compelled to pay a direct tax? The necessities of life would not be taxed. The luxuries should be.

Pennsylvania has done much to increase the value of lands in the west by her improvements opening a communication with the Ohio and the Mississippi, in doing which she has incurred the debt which now oppresses her citizens. Who can say aught against her demanding her share of the lands? Is it anti-democratic to call for our own?

Pennsylvanians are too much alive to their own interests to let the bug-bear cry of national debt, direct taxation for the United States, and other humbuggeries, deter them from asking for their rights.

A PENNSYLVANIAN.

Extracts from the Canal Commissioners' Report.
NORTH BRANCH DIVISION.

Navigation commenced on this line on the first of April, 1840, and was continued until the first of July, when the water was drawn off for the purpose of re-building the locks, and was not let in again until the first of October.

This division has received very heavy repairs during the past season. The Board stated in their last annual report, that contracts had been entered into "for re-building all the wooden locks on the North Branch Division, the aqueducts over Mill Creek and Lodge's Run, all the defective bridges, and for constructing a substantial towing path along the pool of the Nanticoke Dam." Owing to the lateness of the season at which the contracts were made, the difficulty of obtaining materials in consequence of the lowness of the water in the river, the uncertainty as to the time of procuring funds, and the abandonment of their jobs by several of the contractors, who had taken them at inadequate prices, it was determined not to commence the most important repairs during the last winter, if from the conviction that they could not be completed in time for the spring business. They were

accordingly deferred until that period of the year when but little inconvenience could be experienced from the suspension of navigation. Agreeably to previous notice, the water was drawn off on the first of July, and the repairs commenced.

By the most indefatigable exertions, the difficulties arising from a scarcity of hands, the shortness of the period allotted for the completions of the work, and the apprehensions of a deficiency in the appropriation, were overcome, and all the lift-locks from Northumberland to Nanticoke dam, and the aqueduct over Lodge's run, were so far completed as to permit a resumption of navigation on the first of October. The admiral manner in which this work has been constructed, and the short space of time in which it was accomplished, notwithstanding the many serious obstacles which were encountered, entitle the officers who superintended it, and contractors who executed it to the highest praise.

These locks are built upon the composite plan of stone lined with wood. Two of them are completed, the remainder have not received their coping, and like wise require the finishing of some of the masonry of their wings. The guard lock at Nanticoke Dam is nearly completed. It has been located on a new site, and will render the entrance to the canal of easier access than it has heretofore been in time of high water.

Three of the towing path sections along the pool of the Nanticoke Dam have been completed, the others are in progress.

Lodge's run aqueduct, which was brought into use on the first of October, at the same time with the locks, is nearly finished. It having been found impossible to complete the aqueduct over Mill creek in time for the resumption of navigation in October, the Engineer reports that a "temporary wooden trunk was thrown across, to feed the canal from this point to the outlet into the Nanticoke pool. It was not intended to last longer than the close of navigation this fall. The next spring flood will probably carry it away; and unless there should be an early appropriation to complete the aqueduct, there is every reason to believe there will be no navigation between Wilkesbarre and the head of the Nanticoke pool in the spring."

These repairs have necessarily involved a heavy expenditure beyond the amount which it was found expedient to allot to this line, from the appropriation of last year.—It was the only course, however, which could have been pursued consistently with a due regard to the public interests. Had the repairs been longer delayed, the navigation must have been entirely suspended, and the rich mineral regions bordering on the valley of the North Branch, from its mouth to the Lackawanna, would thereby have been thrown upon the precarious navigation of the river for an outlet for their valuable products. The day is not far distant when the local trade of this division must yield a handsome revenue to tolls.—The more successful experiments of making iron with anthracite coal, as fuel, have given a new impetus to that business, and we already find capitalists investing large sums on the North Branch in the purchase of coal and ore beds, and the erection of furnaces, &c., which give fair promise that this district must eventually become one of the principal seats for the manufacture of iron in the state. Although the navigation was suspended for three months the past season, the tolls received for the fiscal year equal those of the last.

The estimate of the sum required to pay the amount due contracts and for ordinary repairs, and to finish the work under contract, is as follows:

Amount due contractors and for ordinary repairs,	\$79,809 11
To finish work under contract,	44,771 88
Total,	\$124,580 94
In addition to this amount, the Engineer estimates that there will be required,	
To renew the defective bridges on the line,	\$3,870 00
To renew waste-weirs,	1,000 00

" water ways,	3,500 00
To complete shute at the Nanticoke dam,	500 00
For ordinary repairs,	9,500 00

For a more detailed statement on this line, and of the repairs required, reference is respectfully made to the accompanying report of the Engineer, A. B. Warford, Esq.

Nothing has been done to the Lackawanna feeder dam, no definite action having been taken by the legislature at its last session, on the proposition to rebuild it farther up the valley. The old dam was swept off by the flood in the spring of 1839, and the navigation has since been maintained by means of a brush dam. This from its frail character, is liable to be swept away. It must therefore be built in a more permanent manner. By reference to the report of last year, it will be seen that the estimated amount required to rebuild it about two miles higher up, on the site of the old forge dam, the point desired by the inhabitants of the Lackawanna valley, and extending the canal down to the present head of the feeder, is ninety-six thousand dollars, whilst the cost of rebuilding it at a location about one third of a mile above the old dam, would amount to eleven thousand seven hundred dollars. As this is a question in which the inhabitants of Lackawanna valley have expressed a deep interest, the Board have thought it proper to submit it once more to the decision of the legislature. The importance of keeping up the navigation on that portion of the line above the head of the Nanticoke pool, requires that early action should be had on this subject.

The cost of rebuilding this dam must be added to the fore going estimate for repairs. The amount drawn from the Treasury for repairs on this division, for the year ending the 30th November, 1840 is one hundred and nine thousand four hundred and ninety-one dollar and forty-seven cents.

A former Board, in their report of the 9th December, 1837, state that, "that part of the North Branch Division, comprised between the Nanticoke dam and Northumberland, (51 miles) is supplied from the Nanticoke dam. When the improvements open this branch shall be completed to the New York state line, and the business becomes more active, doubts are entertained whether this length of canal can be supplied fully from the Nanticoke dam. The proper engineer was therefore directed to make an examination in relation to the best means of creating a supply of water when needed, which resulted in recommending the introduction of Fishing creek. In this the Board concur, and respectfully urge upon the Legislature the propriety of conferring the proper authority to prevent any further improvements upon it by individuals, under the impression it will never be required by the State. This course may prevent additional expense in the item of damages."

The Bloomsburg Railroad Iron Company, who own a large portion of the water power of this creek, are about erecting expensive works upon it, which would be materially affected by hereafter taking in the stream as a feeder to the canal, and consequently, subject the State to heavy damages. It is therefore of importance both to the owners of the water power and the Commonwealth, that immediate action should be had on the subject. If the Legislature should determine that the feeder should be constructed, the authority to locate is all that will be required at this time.

Dog Population.—The dog population of the U. States is estimated at about two millions, and the expense of keeping them at upwards of \$10,000,000 per annum.—This fact accounts for the dogged character of our people, as well as for the quantity of doggerel produced by our national poets.

Tunnelling the Sea.—An English Engineer, now in France, has a plan of a tunnel from Dover to Calais, or across the English Channel, which is to cost more than a thousand million of francs. Egad! this is something like Munchausen's iron bridge from London to the centre of Africa!