

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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CANAL COMMISSIONER'S BILL.

Concluded.

Now sir, I think the canal commissioners in the receipt of \$4 per day, might have done very well, without having brandy and loaf sugar thrown in. I think if the people knew this, they would not blame me for voting with my whig friends. And when we go home, and next fall submit our claims to the people those of us who want to be re-elected, will say, it is true we voted with the whigs to put out unworthy dignitaries, who, when they travelled did so in pleasure boats, the property of Biddle and company, and drank old Cogniac—well seasoned with lemons and loaf sugar! Sir, I would not be afraid to go before on that ground.—The gentleman who intend to vote against this bill will take care to defend themselves. Sir, I have learnt with satisfaction that there is an independent public press in Harrisburg, which is not under the gag, and that certain men are not being denounced. I have learned this within a few days past, but where, or how, I know not. But I know that incendiary articles which have been written against me, have not found a place in its columns. And I think, sir, the press throughout the country will take the same view of the case, and if the people will only read the debates which have taken place here during the last few days, I have no fear for the result. Why, as these charges are they not enough! I do not want to bring the Canal Commissioners before this bar, and go through all the forms of an impeachment. It would be waste of time. The importance of the subject is too trifling. Now sir, I want to know whether they been unworthy or not? They made some reforms, I grant, but they were reforms called for by the people. But there has not been anything expended in repairs during the last season. When the Canal Commissioners came into office the canals were in good repairs. Are they to claim all the benefits of this, and say that because they have made reforms in some respects, that they can bestow on their minions more than \$50,000 in a single operation, in one allotment, as were the case in the contract made with Cameron and Wilson for carrying the passengers. The gentleman from Northampton adverted to the lumber carried on the road without charge of toll—and if not the property of one of the board, it is conceded it belonged to his son!

Sir, it is only a circumstance that lumber was put on the rail road at Philadelphia, and taken up the county and put on ground belonging to the commonwealth—when the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. Brook] said that he had to pay some 40 cents per thousand feet for wharfage. It is conclusive enough that there is a great gain, to occupy the state canals free, and not connected with slight inconvenience of paying any thing for transportation! Sir, is the commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be the pack horse for speculators? When her treasury—[she has no treasury] is drained of the last red cent which is in the lowest drawer of till in the iron chest—gentleman must look about and see how they are voting—with the people or with office-holders. I wish gentleman to understand

that they have a settlement to make. Let the affidavit of Mr. McReynolds be circulated through Luzerne, Wyoming and Columbia, and I will venture to say that there will not be found a man in either of those counties will question his veracity. Suppose I were a candidate for the popular suffrage, and were to vote to keep a man in office; after an affidavit like this from Mr. McReynolds, how could I explain.—I have been in the habit now and then, of taking the stump in a political campaign; but I must confess I would be effectually stumped in attempting to explain away, why I voted in this half to keep men in office, surrounded by all these charges? [Laughter.]

But sir, the 'independent' press may clear the whole matter up when it makes its appearance and let me again repeat, the Johnson men will be denounced like the rest of us, unless they come under Captain Tyler. It is not in order to allude to any thing connected with the Senate Chamber, but I have a gentleman in my eye just now, sitting at the clerk desk,* who must take care they do not sell him. He will go to bed one these nights a Johnson man, as he is and wake up next morning a Cass man. [Laughter.] Why sir, the party that dispenses power can work miracles! Although I know my friend too well to suppose that he can operate upon by any fear or favor, yet he may be captured in some way or other.—There are spots in the sun, and strange things will come to pass! But there is one thing in the case that cannot be palliated—and that is, why did they not give the contract to George Lauman? Let us have the reason. This charge is brought home to the commissioners, and as yet we have heard no justification. There can be none! I ask what have gentlemen to say in defence of the canal commissioners on this point? Here stands Mr. LAUMAN himself, who declares that his bid never was withdrawn. Sir, that shows a state of facts that cannot be got over.

Sir, suppose a gentleman here desires a re-election who goes against this bill, and the charge is preferred against him for covering up corruption by his vote. What argument can the nicest specimen of special pleading put into his mouth? The man who goes to the Supreme tribunal of the people, cannot avail himself of the technical niceties of the law. The truth would only be a complete defence—and if told; in my opinion, could be no defence at all. I can fancy that there would be a mumbling of the words persecution—hardships—it is wrong to turn men out of office &c. But sir the reply would be—we elected you to expose corruptions—to carry out reform in the government—and to protect our rights and apply the monies rung from us in the shape of taxes, for the proper purposes of the government, and to discountenance public plunder. You were afraid to vote for a measure to give to us the election of the public agents—for fear of breaking up the party. Who that votes against this bill this day, can find a reason to answer the voice of his constituents.

The gentleman from Crawford, thinks he will—
not be a candidate next fall I am sure I shall not be, unless the office holders attempt to break me down, as they did in October last, and I may possibly under this state of facts, show them they have waked up the wrong passenger. They tried the game once, let them do it again. We in Luzerne can manage our own affair—we want no incendiaries in our camp from abroad—no spies on our posts.

But, sir, I advocate this question as a great question of radical reform, which has been called for from day to day, by the people of Pennsylvania. I do not stand here to pour out my griefs. This bill is but the entering wedge. If the people had taken the election of Canal Commissioners upon themselves years ago; they now, instead of having a debt of 40 millions

*Mr. GIBONS, of Lehigh.

would not have one of twenty. And, sir, are we to go on from year to year, squandering away millions and millions of dollars and yet when it is proposed to bring about reforms it is objected to because the whigs are favorable to it. What a shallow pretext! How vain to raise the issue! It sinks under the weight of its own delusion! Gentle men may think as they please, who oppose this measure, but they will find that they will have a settlement to make with their constituents. Now, that the people of this Commonwealth are groaning under a debt of 40 millions, and not the means to pay a fraction of the interest, even—taxation laid on till the very substance of the people is consumed, and still cover up this waste of money. Why not change the system? Why not elect men who have the ability to act and the integrity and honesty to attempt, at least, to promote the public welfare, in lieu of squandering the public money on their favorites.

I believe, sir, I shall vote for the amendment of the gentleman from Bradford, and then I shall vote for an amendment to give the election to the legislature for the present until the people elect next fall. As to the reforms in the bill, what are they? I stated the other day that the Clerk hire in the canal commissioners room amounted to \$2,700 a year. \$4 a day to each of them. What hard working farmer is there that gets \$4 a day? Why, sir, he may toll from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, and if he realises fifty cents, or seventy five cents, he is content; and yet that man's means, the labor of his hands is devoted to clerk hire in the canal commissioners office, in the employment of 2 clerks at \$4 a day—when I have heard good and responsible men say that they would do the whole at \$500 a year.

Sir, when the last cent is wrung from the people, are we to oppose reform, because some gentlemen are in possession of Persecution! What mechanic is there in a workshop in my part of the country, or in your's Mr. Speaker, (Mr. Hancock, was in the chair) who gets \$4 a day by the sweat of his brow, and the labor of honest industry. And yet, you see here daily, a stripping—who is running to and fro, and taking command of a presidential canvass—receiving from the public treasury \$4 a day, and probably does not work four hours a day. Now; sir I want to give my opinions and let the people know that we are in earnest in our efforts to bring about a radical reform in the government. I do not expect to convince gentlemen and bring them into my measures. But I wish to place myself right before the people; and when the independent Tyler press is established here to denounce members who dare do their duty, that the people may know why they are denounced! And the gentleman from Northampton proposes to cut down the sum of \$2,300 to \$1,000, and that sir, is \$500 to much. The canal commissioners receive \$4 a day! I said when the House had indulged me before, that some of those canal commissioners were, to my certain knowledge, a good portion of their time at home. Did their pay stop? No sir! Why, get \$4 a day for attending to their private affairs? And yet any man who gets up in his place, and kicks and shuffles from his feet, is to be denounced and vilified.

Mr. LOWRY explained—I wish to know: Mr Speaker, whether the amendment, the gentlemen advocates, cuts of a single dollar.

Mr. WRIGHT. I am talking of the bill the whole bill, and nothing else. I was talking on the score of expenditure. Now when I took the floor the other day on this subject, my daily pay was referred to, which is guaranteed to me by the laws of the Commonwealth. It was said that I received \$4 a day, and I was asked why I did not divide it with the starving, squallid children that are running about the streets and crying for bread. I would do it as cheerfully as the gentleman from Crawford; and if the House chooses to reduce my wages to a

dollar a day, I trust I have patriotism enough not to murmur at it. But when you reduce my pay. I hope it will afford a little relief about Crawford, (a laugh) and about the region, all along to the lakes. Sir I will vote for the gentleman's amendment, and I will also vote for the amendment of the gentleman from the county, to reduce our pay to one dollar per day,—for a good Spanish dollar is worth something now-a-days. I will go for the gentleman's reform Sir, I regard the measure before the House, as the stepping stone which leads to the great temple of reform, and I do not believe the gentleman from Crawford would ever have called up his bill for the reduction of daily pay, but to defeat the passage of this bill. Members of this House get no pay but when in the service of the state.

Mr. LOWRY: He cannot get off in that way.

Mr. WRIGHT: The gentleman from Luzerne will vote for one dollar, or fifty cents a day if necessary, because these are the times when we must look about and see where we can abridge our expenses. And, sir, I care not whether it touches William Overfield, Levi Reynolds, or any body else. I care not where the pruning knife strikes. I go for a change in managing the public works; and I say that it is high time we had it. Why, at this time, with our resources we are prostrated, the credit of the State is gone; our foreign stock holders do not get their interest, and the very men who laid the rails on your rail roads, and excavated your canals, do not receive any thing, either interest or principal. And sir, I say, if ever there was a time when reform was required, it is now, I would begin with that room up there [pointing to the ceiling] where the Cass handbills were put up by the clerks and hangers on, who receive \$2,700 a year out of our impoverished treasury. By doing this, we should

ple, some of which it seemed, was expended in travelling excursions, and drinking brandy, sweetened with loaf sugar? There, sir, I would go and I would make their knees tremble and their heads swim on this subject. I would make them feel the hand of power, were it in my grasp. That is the spot to commence the work. Three commissioners, at \$4 00 a day 365 days—(Sundays too) if my addition is correct, is \$4,380. Two clerks at a salary of \$2,700 How many messengers—how much postage? Not less sir, that \$8,000 is wasted and consumed in that office, in a single year. Look at it, you farmers and hard working mechanics, who pay the taxes to support and maintain them! And to correct these abuses is whig doctrine, say the gentlemen! Be it so! Such whig doctrine as this I support, and am not to be driven from my position! Your independent Tyler press can't do it; and I will go before the people and tell them why I voted to put these men out. And let men get on the stump and talk of being persecuted, if they please, may I be permitted to make the replication. How many thousand poor and unfortunate men are persecuted daily, and did the information ever reach the capitol? did their prayers, I repeat, ever reach the capitol? No, sir, there is an abundance of poverty and affliction staring us in the face and persecution too. But you hear nothing about it. Sir, touch your public functionaries only, and what do you hear? Official patronage fills men's mouths with arguments—that you are violating your oath—that you are violating the constitution and that you are putting the political barque upon the ocean without compass, without rudder, and without sail. These party pleas do not touch me, and while I am a member of this House; I will preserve my independence. Sir, I do not say that others do not act with independence—let the vote on this bill tell. But, sir; I speak of what I do know with regard to charges—and I speak in my place this day, the opinions and views of those who sent me here, and I can show my credentials. Sir look at the letters on that desk—there are my inap-

ptions. Now, sir, there is no departure from principle in putting one democrat out and another in his place who is qualified to do the duties of a canal commissioner! If there is, I hope to be informed wherein and how! But, because we propose to elect these men ourselves, it is said we attack the administration—we are opposing the administration! Sir, I should think the Governor would regard it as a high favor to have the power of appointing the canal commissioners disconnected from his duties—for it is a drag on any administration.—Let the people—the sovereigns of the State have the control of it, of their representatives. Talk about bargain and sale, and the legislature not having the power of removal. How can they be removed under the present law? They may commit the greatest fraud, and there is no power that can reach them. But, in this bill we provide for it. I am, sir, not generally in favor of trying experiments; but, in regard to this I must say that I am in favor of it. Why, if you permit things to go on in this way—if you permit millions upon millions to be squandered—how long will it be before this Commonwealth is in the same condition as ancient Rome, when the Paterian guards put her up for sale in the public market place? Sir, the same state of things is advancing gradually into our state, as entered the gates of imperial Rome! When our credit is gone—our people impoverished—our treasury empty—the public confidence quailing under new levies and new impositions, can we expect sir, that an indignant and insulted constituency will always endure it. To believe it, gives the lie to all past experience. I say, sir, there is a mighty change coming over the people and when you find them rising up in the majesty of their strength, and demanding reformation and reform at our hands, men here must not suffer them, or by any other circumstance or influence that may be brought to bear upon them. But let the legislature—this the popular branch, composed as it is of the representatives of the people; make the move and they will be most nobly sustained. My word for it; sir, the cry of persecution will not find a resting place beyond these walls.

And when sir, men talk against removing the Canal Commissioners, and proclaim "Oh the party will be destroyed." I heed it not, for I am of the opinion that the only way to save the party is, to purge it of its impurity—to cut off the excrescences, and you will give it renewed strength and renewed vigor. What sir, do you think of the bill under consideration.

Mr. HANCOCK, who occupied the Chair temporarily, instantly replied—"I think it a good one." [Laughter.]

Mr. WRIGHT: I agree with you in opinion, sir; and I apprehend that you entertain the same view in regard to the amendment, that I do myself. Let us adopt it, and then add another section, which I understand the gentleman from the county, (Mr. Roumfort) has ready to offer, and we will have done the state some service! But sir, let me say to you, and to the representatives in this House, that if you kill this bill, that there will be an end to reform.—Why, it will be said did you not make it a question of reform to remove the canal commissioners, on the charge of not having the public confidence, and of squandering the public money? And did you not debate the subject for five days, and then vote the bill down? Why occupy more of the time of this House in relation to reform? For myself, I confess that I have occupied more time than I intended to do, and yet I have not said one half that I intended to say when I arose; but I have not talked it to entertain this House, nor do I suppose that I have edified it. But I have made remarks in order that the people might know my sentiments and opinions upon this important subject. And why, sir; I ask, do I support the passage of this bill? Because it is a great question of national reform; and although I admit it is wrong in principle, for