

# THE JOURNAL.

"ONE COUNTRY, ONE CONSTITUTION, ONE DESTINY."

A. W. BENEDICT PUBLISHER AND PROPRIETOR.

HUNTINGDON, PENNSYLVANIA, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 1841.

[WHOLE No. 296.]

Vol. VI, No. 36.]

## TERMS

### HUNTINGDON JOURNAL

The "JOURNAL" will be published every Wednesday morning, at two dollars a year, if paid IN ADVANCE, and if not paid within six months, two dollars and a half. Every person who obtains five subscribers, and forwards price of subscription, shall be furnished with a sixth copy gratuitously for one year.

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## SPEECH

OF MR. IRVIN, of Pennsylvania, on the Revenue Bill, delivered in the House of Representatives, July, 1841.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Although I rise with the greatest reluctance and diffidence, being unaccustomed to public speaking, yet a sense of duty to my constituents requires me to make the attempt, and state my views on the bill now before this committee. It is one which my constituents have a deep interest in, and one which affects them as much if not more than any other district in this Union.

Sir, I represent two great and leading interests of the country, and which are intimately connected with each other, to wit—the agricultural and manufacturing, and any thing that is calculated to injure or affect the one, bears in an equal proportion upon the other. From the best information I have been able to collect, I believe that near one-fourth of all the wheat and flour exported from the State which I have the honor in part to represent, is sent from my district; and from the statistics furnished by the returns of the late census, it appears by a statement which I have prepared from the papers now in the State Department, that fully one-fourth of the whole amount of iron manufactured in Pennsylvania is produced from the ore in the four counties I have the honor to represent on this floor; and I presume there is no other district in Pennsylvania, with the same amount of population, which consumes a greater amount of those necessities of life which this bill proposes to lay a duty upon.

Sir, I agree with the honorable chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means that it is necessary to raise additional revenue; that the finances of the country require it; and I am as much in favor of providing ways and means to meet the current expenses of the Government, and also to provide for whatever deficiency now exists, as the honorable chairman or any other member now on this floor. But, sir, I differ in opinion from the committee who reported this bill, respecting the propriety, at this time, of levying a duty or tax on some of the articles contained in this bill.

Sir, I believe the true and correct policy of this Government is, to raise sufficient revenue by import taxes, as being the least onerous and burdensome to the people; but in doing so, we should select such articles in the first place, as come in competition with those produced by our own citizens, and if we cannot raise sufficient from them, then take articles of luxury or such as do not come into general use, and are not required or consumed by the great portion of the people; but it would only be in the last resort that I would consent to levy an onerous or burdensome tax upon articles that have come into general use in almost every family, whether rich or poor, throughout our whole country. Sir, I consider such a species of taxation impolitic, unwise, and unjust. Why, sir, is it not impolitic in an administration just coming into power, after professions of relieving the people from their difficulties, to propose a burdensome tax upon them, as one of their best measures? Why, sir, is it not derision to bring this measure upon the people at the present time? Why not wait until the regular session, when there would be time for a fair investigation into the tariff system, and such regulation made as might be necessary? It cannot be possible that the Treasury is in such a wretched situation that an able financier could not carry on the operations of government for a few months without this tax on coffee and tea. And is it not unjust to tax the poor man who labors for the support of his family, and earns from fifty to seventy-five cents per day, as much as the man who owns thousands? And I feel satisfied, if this bill shall become a law, that hundreds of poor families in my district will have to pay more of this tax than those who are comparatively rich. Sir, the articles of coffee and tea have become among all classes, but especially among those who live in towns, and at man-

ufacturing establishments, necessary articles of life, and substituted by a great many in place of milk, as being more easily obtained, and even cheaper. Then why should we oppress this class of people more than they are at present? Why increase their burdens? Does this bill hold out any relief to the laboring class of the community? None—none whatever.

Sir, it is well known to you and other honorable gentlemen on this floor, that, owing to the embarrassed and crippled condition of business, for the last two or three years particularly, it has been with great difficulty the manufacturing interests of the country have sustained themselves, and if it had not been for the bountiful crops with which our country has been blessed, and the cheapness of living, many that are yet struggling along, must have ceased to exist. But now, sir, just on the eve of another reduction of duties, which takes place at the close of this year, and which even now is operating in anticipation on the whole business of the country, you propose a tax to be levied on this suffering people of from one and a half to two millions of dollars.

Sir, for one, I cannot give it my support—I came here expecting to assist in carrying out measures calculated to relieve my constituents, not to burden them, and if I can not accomplish the former, I will not lend my aid to procure the latter.

Mr. Chairman, I believe I could propose a measure to this committee, (and have an amendment I may possibly offer) that, if adopted, would do as much, if not more, to relieve the country from its present embarrassment, than any of the measures that as yet have been proposed. You may charter a bank, you may restore a sound currency, both of which are very essential to our prosperity; but unless you adopt measures that will give employment to fair prices to the farmer, the mechanic and laborer, you will not relieve the difficulties we now labor under. The measure, in my opinion, at this time, that would contribute most to relieve our wants, and replenish our Treasury, would be to arrest the compromise act at once, so far as it affects the reduction of duties on articles that come in competition with the labor or production of our own citizens. Four reductions, or four-tenths of the excess over twenty per cent. have already taken place. They have reduced the prices of our own productions to a point that, to proceed any further, must prove inevitable destruction to three-fourths of all those concerned in four great interests of the country, the woolen, the cotton, the iron, and the coal. If you would arrest the law now in force at the present time, you would bring into your Treasury in the course of the present year at least \$500,000 more than will otherwise be received, and, besides, would infuse life and vigor into all branches of industry. What is the effect of the present law on the general business of the country? Are not the minds of all filled with doubt and uncertainty; not only the manufacturer, but also the importer and retail merchant?—Who is there so wise as to know how to calculate? Will any person import goods now, on which a reduction of duties takes place on the first of January next; or will there be any importations made in the face of a reduction of from ten to twenty per cent. until after the first of June next, that can possibly be avoided? Sir, I believe the Secretary of the treasury will be mistaken in realizing his estimates for the balance of this year, and the two first quarters of the next, unless he has made very liberal allowances, if the present compromise bill is continued until June, 1842, without amendment; but, if arrested in its operation previous to the first of January next, and we lay a duty on wines, silks, and some other articles of luxury, a sufficient amount would be produced to meet the demands on your Treasury. Sir, I may possibly be censured by some for saying any thing that would appear to interfere with the compromise act; but have we not been told by honorable gentlemen on both sides of the House, that they did not consider it as binding on this Congress.

The honorable gentleman from the city of New York, the other day, in his free trade and direct taxation speech, which upon sober second thoughts, he concluded had better not be published in the Globe, (for fear of its committing the party I presume,) told us, if I do not mistake, that he did not consider it binding on him, and that he would have no hesitation in reducing protected articles below twenty per cent. if he had the power; and, certainly, gentlemen on the opposite side have as good a right to arrest it in its injurious effects if they can; and if they do not they are not acting in good faith towards their constituents.

Sir, what was the history of that compromise act? Who that heard the description given by the honorable and venerable member from Massachusetts the other day of its concoction and execution, can consider it for one moment as binding on the representatives of the people of this Union? What was the language used by one of the high contracting parties, in a speech made in the other end of this building previous to the passage of the bill? I allude to Mr. Clay. This was his language: "he hoped that the manufacturers would go on and prosper, confident the abandonment of protection was never intended, and looking to more favorable means for a man considered the question

settled forever? or rather did he not consider it as a mere temporary arrangement, necessary to avert what appeared to be the secession of one of the States from this Union; and that long before the time expired, the good sense of the people would see the error that had been committed, and repair it? I well recollect with what indignation it was received by many in my district, and the denunciations heaped upon the authors of it; but, being rather a peaceable and well disposed kind of people, we thought it was better not to nullify, but to make the best of it, as it gave us a few years of grace, believing that it never will reach its final consummation—which I hope and pray it never will. We have tried it now for eight years. Has it been productive of any good to the country? I think it was shown clearly by the gentleman from Massachusetts that it has not, but has been the source of great evil. Why, then, persevere in it, when its conclusion must bring ruin and destruction to thousands of American citizens? It is an old saying, and I believe a true one, that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." If this be true in physic, as I believe it is, it will also hold good in political economy. Then why not adopt it; administer to your suffering constituents at once what would save them from utter ruin and destruction? It has been said by some, that with home valuation and cash duties, manufacturers could get along under the compromise act. So far as the iron manufacture is concerned, I am satisfied that they cannot; that it will prostrate every manufacturer of that kind, except some few whose locality gives them a home demand. This home valuation and cash duties, in my opinion will not turn out what many honorable gentlemen on this floor think it will. Why, sir, what is home valuation? Is it any thing more than the fair cost in Europe—insurance, freight, and exchange, and the twenty per cent. added? This constitutes the value of the article; and I know it is so understood by both importers and manufacturers that I have conversed with in Philadelphia and New York. And what is there in cash duties that is to work such wonders in favor of the home manufacturer? Is the difference of a six months' credit on \$10 or \$12, which would probably be the duty on a ton of iron, or paying that amount in cash, going to be much advantage? Why, sir, at the very extent, it would not amount to more than forty or fifty cents per ton. And is this amount sufficient to have any effect upon importations? For my part, I am satisfied that the anticipations of advantage to be derived from this clause in the bill by some gentlemen will be far from being realized.

Sir, we have been told by honorable members on this floor that the encouragement of our own industry by legislative enactments is taxing the many for the benefit of the few, and of course an imposition on the people. Now, I deny this to be the case, and will endeavor to illustrate my position by a few plain, practical facts. I insist that a tariff or duty on foreign manufactures, sufficient to reasonably protect and encourage our own citizens engaged in that kind of business, is not merely calculated to benefit the few capitalists who are owners, as has been asserted, but diffuses its advantages through out the whole population of the country in a proportionate degree; and to state my case, I will endeavor to show the practical results in my own district. The principal manufacture that is carried on there is the manufacture of iron; there are many others of different kinds, but of rather minor importance, and I will at this time confine myself to the iron trade alone. According to the return of the census now in the State Department, that branch of industry is put down as follows, to wit: The number of furnaces now in operation is 33, producing 24,981 tons pig metal; number of forges and rolling mills 42, producing according to returns 25,466 tons blooms, and bar iron; but in this latter article there is evidently a mistake in the returns, and I set the quantity down from the best calculation I can make at about 20,000 tons, worth about \$1,300,000. The number of workmen employed is 3,072, mostly men with families, and according to an estimate I have made, and which I believe is very near correct, probably rather under than over the actual amount. There is annually consumed by those works, of the production of the farmer, 200,000 bushels of wheat, 400,000 bushels rye and corn, three millions pounds beef and pork, and other articles, such as potatoes, vegetables, butter, cheese, hay, straw, &c., to the amount of \$150,000, making in all, the sum of \$700,000 of the production of the farmer; then there is the necessary articles for wear, which are generally of northern and eastern manufacture, amounting to at least \$350,000, and for groceries, salt, tobacco, &c., a further sum of \$150,000—making in all, the actual amount of \$1,200,000, which sum has been scattered all over the country. Now does it appear

from this that only a few capitalists were benefited, or does it not show that the many have been the gainers? In the first place, there are upwards of 3,000 workmen, who are employed at better wages than they could have received at other labor; then there is the \$700,000 paid for agricultural articles, some of which are the produce of other States, as a great portion of our beef and pork comes from Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana; and I would say to the honorable gentleman from Kentucky, that we have furnished a pretty good market for the mules of his State for several years past; then add the \$350,000 paid to the North for their manufactures, (one half at least are cotton goods, the raw material of course from the Southern States,) and the \$150,000 for groceries and other articles paid to the merchant and foreign importer, and you find the advantages spread over the whole land, and a very small balance left to be divided among the hundred capitalists, as they are called. The truth is, that for the last year or two the receipts have scarcely met the expenditures.—There is one fact I would call the attention of the committee to—that we consume nearly, if not all, the coarser kinds of grain produced in the district, and generally at prices equal to the market in Baltimore, although two hundred miles in the interior, and I have known corn purchased in Philadelphia and boated up the Pennsylvania canal, and consumed by a manufacturer in Huntingdon county.—Sir, to carry it out farther, I will give you the statistics of the iron trade of Pennsylvania; they are as follows: 210 furnaces in operation, producing 98,350 tons pig metal, and forges and rolling mills, producing about 70,000 tons bar iron annually, employing 15,000 workmen, using one million cords of wood, and consuming annually upwards of one million bushels wheat, two millions of rye and corn, and twelve million pounds of beef and pork and other articles, the production of the farmer, the whole amounting to upwards of three millions, and over two millions of merchandise. The coal trade of Pennsylvania has been rapidly increasing and in 1840 is set down at 845,000 tons, which in value is probably quite equal to that of iron, and employs quite as many laborers, and the consumption of agricultural and other productions about the same, and will be equally and injuriously affected by the operations of the compromise act. To show the importance and value of the manufacturing interest throughout the United States, and the intimate and valuable influence they exert on the agricultural productions of the country, I would call the attention of the committee to the commercial statistics of the exports of wheat and flour from the United States, from 1790 up to 1840. They will there find in 1793, with a population under five millions, we exported about seven million bushels of wheat and flour, at an average price of \$5 90 per barrel; but for the last ten years, with a population from 12 to 17 millions, our exports only average between 4 and 5 million bushels, plainly showing that our increased production has been required by the manufacturing and other interests of the country. Now, sir, I would ask gentlemen of the grain-growing States of Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana, if they consider it of no importance to them, that Pennsylvania, that produced last year upwards of 13,000,000 bushels of wheat, and 40,000,000 bushels of coarser grain, consumes nearly all of it within her own borders? Are not they fully compensated for the small advance they have to pay on protected articles by the increased price they obtain for their wheat and other grain? But what is the consequence if you change the 50,000 manufacturers and miners, (I believe there are that many,) who are now consumers of produce, to become a great many of them producers? Would it not most seriously affect the value of your whole property, real and personal? Sir, I insist that it is to the advantage of the grain-growing States that they encourage Pennsylvania to go on with her manufactures, her boundless and inexhaustible amount of mineral coal, her millions of tons of iron ore, her vast and unimproved water power. The industry and enterprise of her citizens are a sure guaranty that, if wise and judicious legislation is pursued, in a few years she would require much more provisions of all kinds than she would produce. I might say the same to the gentlemen of the South. Is it to your advantage to destroy and break down the manufacturers of the North and Middle States? Would it not re-act upon you selves? If you make us so poor that we cannot buy, does it not affect your market? But is there no danger that you drive many that are now otherwise employed to become cotton growers, and produce more than there will be a demand for? But there is yet a more important and vital way in which your interests may be affected. Destroy the manufacturing establishments of the country, reduce the

table living to penury and want, and let once the fact be understood by them, that it is all brought on them by the slaveholders of the South, and that they are even on this floor called, by honorable members of the South, the white slaves of the North—let this idea once take possession of the minds of the laboring classes of the North and Middle States, and you bring down upon you the indignation of thousands that are now your friends.

Sir, my opinion is, that the more we can diversify labor in this country, the more we increase the prosperity and welfare of our citizens. Our soil, our climate, our population, and our free institutions—all conspire to make us a great and powerful people, unless we ourselves, by unwise legislation, produce a contrary effect. For this view of the subject I have the authority of Gov. McDuffie. In an address delivered at Columbia, on the 26th November, 1840, he said: "The greatest, most prevailing, and most pernicious of all the practices which distinguish and deform the agriculture of this and the other cotton-planting States, is the almost exclusive direction of the whole available labor of the plantation to the production of our greatest market staple, and the consequent neglect of all the other commodities which the soil is capable of producing or sustaining, and which are essential to supply the wants of the establishment. No scheme of reform or improvement can produce any great and salutary results, which does not lay the axe to the root of this radical vice in our husbandry. If I could now reveal a process by which our common soil could be made to produce two bales of cotton to the acre, I should have great doubts whether the revolution would be a blessing or a curse to that great interest;" and he most strenuously urges upon the planters of the South the necessity of growing their own corn, and making their own pork or bacon; of raising their own horses, hogs, and mules; and points out the way in which, in his opinion, and from his own experience, this may be done. Sir, I hope that the honorable gentleman over the way, [Mr. DAWSON] in his first annual address to the people of Georgia, which, if I live, I hope to have the pleasure of reading next winter, will not only recommend the above views of Gov. McDuffie to be carried out, but will improve on them by urging their surplus water-power and labor to be used in spinning and weaving their own cotton, and supplying not only themselves but other States; and as I understand they have plenty of iron ore, build iron works, make their own iron, and then, if we lay a duty upon foreign manufactures, their own citizens will receive the benefit of it. But, sir, it would appear, from Gov. McDuffie's remarks, they intend raising their own horses, hogs, and mules. This would be likely to interfere with this Western trade, that has been spoken of in those articles. I would then say to the honorable member from Kentucky that he must turn his attention to the iron establishments of Pennsylvania, as they will furnish an outlet for a part at least of their surplus.

Sir, the gentleman from the city of New York, who addressed the House a few days since, talked about the enormous amount that had been collected by indirect taxation within the last fifty years, upwards of \$600,000,000, and made a great flourish about extravagance in expenditures from this mode of taxation, and that if our taxes were levied and collected directly, a much more economical administration of the Government would be the consequence. Now, sir, would this be the fact? I, for one, very much doubt it. Are not our county and city taxes levied in that way? And is there more economy made use of in most of our cities and counties than there has been in the General Government, at least some years ago? I appeal to my honorable colleague from Philadelphia [Mr. INGRAMSOLL] whether, from his experience, he believed it to be the case. [Here Mr. INGRAMSOLL rose and said: "One thing he knew, that their taxes in Philadelphia were very heavy." Yes, sir, I have no doubt of it; from information I have had at different times I have understood that to be the fact; but even admit that there was a difference in favor of the former mode, would it make up for the difference in the manner of collection? Sir, what does Professor George Tucker, of the University of Virginia, who, I presume, is perfectly orthodox, say on this subject? It is this: "But if direct taxes could be more cheaply collected, they would be less eligible than taxes on consumption. The last compel the prodigal, the ostentatious, the luxurious, the unthrifty of every description, who lessen the amount of the national wealth by wasting their own, to pay a part of what they spend into the public Treasury, and they leave to the prudent and industrious their capital unimpaired. Thus every man pays his public contributions in the easiest way and at the most convenient time. He pays it when it suits him, and as it suits him—a little this month and a little

next. But a direct tax must be collected all at once, and may be called for when the taxed party is least prepared to pay it. If any adverse change has taken place in his circumstances since the assessment he cannot, by any voluntary retrenchment of his expenses, as in the case of indirect taxes, make any proportional abatement of his contribution to the Government." It is on account of these and the like considerations that Adam Smith and other writers on political economy have been in favor of taxes on consumption, and that one of the latest of them, Mr. McCulloch, says: "Direct taxes on property have been the curse of every country into which they have been introduced." He adds: "Such taxes are, besides, most unpopular as well from their requiring an odious, though ineffectual, inquisition into the affairs of individuals, as from their being direct. So much is this case, that we are well convinced that the raising of eighteen or twenty millions by direct taxes would be felt to be a much greater burden, and would really be far more injurious, than the raising of fifty or sixty millions by our present taxes." So much for what Mr. McCulloch says. But Professor Tucker says further: "Nor does there seem to be more force in the political reason which supposes that indirect taxes are favorable to a lavish expenditure of the public money. Without doubt the greater facility with which money is raised by indirect taxes, and the smaller discount they cause among the people, enable Governments to raise a much larger revenue than would be practicable by direct taxation. But this is an evil or a good, according to the use that is made of the money. If the quicker sensibility of the people to direct taxation would sometimes prove a salutary check on waste and extravagance, it might, on the other hand, with equal propriety, be insisted that it would yet oftener prove a mischievous restriction on expenditures that ought to be incurred. The people, thus rendered sore by the tax-gatherer, may object to preparing for the national defence; to give adequate salaries to their public servants; to require past services by pensions; to discharge just claims; to say nothing of those national establishments whose benefits are remote, or not obvious to the mass of the people. If, even now, some of these items of proper expense afford plausible topics to the popular sympathant, and tempt him to sacrifice the claims of justice and sound policy to a false economy, how much more would it be the case under the pressure of direct taxation? On this supposition, too, the evil would greatly exceed the good—for every liberal minded man will admit that it is far better for a nation to spend some money uselessly than to refuse to spend that which the justice or the interests of the nation requires that it would be less evil to have some superfluous pensioners than to have none at all; to pay some unfounded claims than to refuse to pay honest debts; and to have several fortifications too many than one too few." "But the advocates of direct taxation object that "taxes on consumption are so disguised by being mixed up with the price, that the people pay them without knowing it," as if that was not one of their recommendations, and we were not always endeavoring to cheat life of some of its disagreeableness by semblances and disguises from the gilded pill to the illusions of hope and the courtesies of politeness. The feelings of a people will always be regarded by a wise legislature as their interests; and in imposing taxes, which are an evil at best, though a necessary one, it will make them as little unpalatable as they can. If it can prevent the people from feeling the burden at all, so much the better. Surely where knowledge would make us more unhappy, 'tis folly to be wise.'" "On all these accounts, I should be disposed to go yet farther than Mr. McCulloch, and say, that in this country it would be easier to raise twenty millions by direct taxes." Now, sir, this is what Professor Tucker and Mr. McCulloch, both, I believe, state rights and to some extent free trade men say, on the object of direct taxation. Whether shall we agree with their views on the subject, or the very learned and wise legislators, and political economists, Mr. McKeon of New York, and his coadjutor, or rather his portotype Mr. Rhett, of South Carolina. For my part I agree with Messrs. Tucker and McCulloch, and I am perfectly willing to have it submitted to the people.

But, sir, the honorable member from New York, not satisfied with direct taxation, as though that was not far enough for any reasonable man to go in this country, must have free trade with it, and equality and all that sort of thing, and talk about Switzerland and Germany, and how prosperous they were, and that there was no protection there; but he did not tell us about mechanics and laborers working for sixpence per day, and living upon black bread and rye-bread, and eating meat once or twice a month, probably less. No, sir, he forgot that part of the story,