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National Intelligencer.

Copy of an address from a meeting of the citizens of the city of Washington, lately presented to the PRESIDENT, by a committee appointed for that purpose.

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON, Esq.
PRESIDENT
OF THE
UNITED STATES.

SIR,

At a time when the American people from distant and remote parts of the union are approaching you through the channels of public addresses, it is perhaps matter for self-reproach to us, your neighbors as well as fellow-countrymen, that we should thus long have withheld the expression of our sentiments and wishes upon the subject of your past administration and of the ensuing presidential election.

Upon this occasion we are involuntarily led into a slight review of the political history of our country; and thus our attention is naturally drawn to that period of your life which, alone, would have ranked you among the most prominent patriots of a glorious revolution:—and in tracing the progress of events, from that to the present day, we feel a constant admiration excited by the uniform tenor of your actions. But we most particularly state our satisfaction at the dissipation of those alarms and apprehensions with which your first elevation to your present dignified station agitated one part of the community:—that our anticipations of the general system of your subsequent public measures have been fully realised:—and that its happy effects, under the direction of a Divine Providence, are evident in our prosperity both at home and abroad.

The pursuits of private life would doubtless, after the expiration of the present term, be most agreeable to you. There your active, and enlightened mind would, perhaps, find the best field for its speculative operations. There your feelings, amidst the pleasing circumstances incident to such a situation, would indulge themselves in feasting on the reflection that you had spent the greatest portion of your life in the service of your country and humanity. But, Sir, the American people ask from you a still further sacrifice. The constitutional period of our presidential election—a period highly interesting to millions, is about to recur. Eminently entitled as you already are to our gratitude and thanks for many arduous and important services, we could, upon ordinary principles, have no further claim upon you:—but in the present case, trusting that you feel as you ought, the full force of the obligation resting on every individual to devote his life and talents to his country, we have a confidence that you will not yet retire from public employment. Permit us to remark that if it be laudable occasionally to relinquish and resume the labors of public life, according to the dictates of the public will; surely it cannot be otherwise to continue uninterruptedly engaged in them, under the sacred sanction of *that will*.—Apart from other considerations, you well know that the application of the human powers to the purposes of philanthropy and benevolence is, at all times, a pleasing and an useful task: and that application is always most effectual and extensive when made by, or under the auspices of those who have a distinguished influence in regulating the destinies of states.

The affairs of nations, however prosperous, as they are important, so also owing to their complicated combinations, are they always critical; and their management, therefore, requires the utmost prudence and wisdom. Your experience—your extensive knowledge, both theoretical and practical, and your tried political conduct are strong guarantees of the future welfare of our country—and deeply interested as we feel in that welfare, participating, as we must, in the general fortunes, though not in some of the most valuable privileges of the nation, we would act inconsistently if we did not raise our voice against your retirement. The American soil, indeed, is not barren of virtues and talents; but we prefer a certainty to an uncertainty. With you as a candidate, the probable event of a national election is obvious;—without you, we know not what may be the result of a contest. Ambition, intrigue, accident, may produce consequences disagreeable, if not dangerous, to the community. For these and a variety of other reasons unnecessary to detail, permit us, the constant spectators of your private, as well as public conduct, to hope that you will not withhold your name from the list of candidates at the approaching election.

FRESH GARDEN SEEDS, &c

THEOPHILUS HOLT respectfully informs his friends and the public that he has an extensive assortment of Fresh Garden and Flower seeds, Grass seeds, Garden tools &c for sale at his Nursery Garden Eastern Branch.

Washington city, Jan. 2—w3m

CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23.

DEBATE on fortifying ports and harbors, continued.

MR. MUMFORD'S motion to fill the blank in the first resolution with "500,000" under consideration.

MR. CLINTON. I do not rise to answer the arguments of the gentleman from Maryland, because I conceive them to be *unanswerable*. I can see no point in them. But I rise for information—to know of that gentleman whether he has received any estimate from the secretary of war of the sum required to fill up the blank. If the department of war be possessed of such information, and has formed the plans ascribed to it, I should wish them to be known that the representatives of the people may not incur that responsibility which otherwise might be attached to them. I do not, however, mean by this intimation to express the least doubt of the good conduct of that department of the government.

[The letter of the secretary of war was here read at the instance of Mr. Clinton.]

MR. COOK observed that when a motion had been made for the increase of our small navy, they had been told that we were a land animal, and ought to adopt measures for our defence on our own terra firma. He said he should not have risen on this occasion but for the monstrous doctrine avowed by the gentleman from Maryland. Are we, said he, when an enemy attacks our towns, like the Indians of our country, to burn our wigwams and fly for safety. Mr. C. said this appeared to him a perversion of the true principles of justice, economy and policy. It appeared to him to be necessary to defend their sea ports in proportion to their magnitude and riches, and to the revenue derived from them. Now, it was a fact that nine tenths of the whole revenue of the U.S. was collected in or near the towns. The House had recently repealed the act laying a duty on salt, the consequence of which was that the remaining duties fell the heavier on the sea port towns.

What will the nations of Europe think of us, said Mr. Cook, if we pursue this conduct? If we shall be involved in war with either of them, what have they to do, but to send a few small schooners to attack our towns, under the assurance that we will make no resistance to their pillage and destruction. I hope this absurd sentiment is not entertained by many members. I hope the House will fill the blank with a liberal sum, with the sum of 500,000 dollars.

MR. MUMFORD. Sir, I was well aware the gentleman from Maryland would inform us what says the estimate from the secretary of war. Although I have as much respect for that officer as any man, and have the fullest confidence in his integrity, economy and distribution of the public money appropriated to that department, yet I presume he is not infallible, for my part I differ essentially with him in relation to the defenceless situation of our sea board from Maine to Georgia, which I consider as much exposed as the western or south western frontiers. When I am called upon to vote supplies for those exposed parts of the union, I have done it most cheerfully presuming the same measure would be dealt out to all the vulnerable points of exposure in the nation. According to the doctrine of some gentlemen it would appear that we soon shall have nothing to do but to assemble, and like the old parliaments of France enregister whatever edicts the heads of departments may please to present us. I am a plain republican, seeking neither office, nor courting popularity, firmly attached to the principles of freedom, and to what I conceive to be the true interest of my country, I shall exercise my own feeble judgment in pursuing such measures as I think may secure our common country against the inroads of foreign and domestic enemies, and viewing the importance of more effectually defending our sea shores, (ports and harbors,) & considering it equal in importance to other vulnerable parts of the union, especially in regard to our relations with Spain, for we cannot say how soon we may be called upon to defend our own fire sides. I cannot, I will not, any longer bear on my shoulders the burden of that high responsibility. I do therefore hope the committee will agree not to strike out.

MR. TRACY. There appears to be a very great difference of opinion in the minds of this committee respecting the sum with which this blank ought to be filled. The sum of 10,000 dollars and the sum of 1,000,000 dollars have been mentioned. Between wise men is it not extraordinary that such a difference should be discovered. I wish the blank to be filled with 500,000 dollars. The gentleman from Maryland has informed us, that an application has been made of only a part of the appropriation of last session. This is one reason why I wish a large sum appropriated at this time, I feel confident the money will not be squandered away, in a useless manner. It is that the President may have the money at command, if it becomes necessary to make use of it, and if there is no reason for applying all the appropriation, the money will lie safe in the treasury. Besides I really yet hope some amendment will be made in the report, similar to the one proposed by my colleague, by which the President will be enabled to arm, equip and keep in actual service, if necessary, all the gun boats and frigates. The circumstances of the nation are in many respects essentially altered since the last year, and at this important crisis we cannot exactly ascertain how great a sum will be necessary to meet the exigencies of the year ensuing. The gentleman from Maryland has very cautiously informed us, that the city of New-York cannot be fortified, unless at an enormous expense, that the very attempt would be to set a trap for our own troops, therefore if an enemy should come, it would be better to retreat into the country. In answer to the gentleman, I would inform him that we do not expect the U. S. to fortify New-York with walls of brass and brazen gates like Babylon. But the citizens of this important commercial city feel that they have a just right to claim from the government some protection, some kind of fortifications which will serve to obstruct the approach of a naval force for a time, that they may have at least a few hours to collect and carry with them their most valuable property in their flight. The property at this moment exposed is valued at more than one hundred millions of dollars. So great wealth was never before by any nation, left unprotected. If the members of this house are determined to withhold the defence of the citizens, and of the property of the citizens of New-York, merely as private property, then I call on them to defend their own property. Yes, Mr. Chairman, the property of the U. S. to a great amount is exposed, and on the representatives devolves the duty of making such appropriations as will enable the executive to preserve the wealth and resources of the nation. The property of the U. S. in the city of New-York is calculated from four to six millions of dollars. This amount of public property is exposed, for if the property of individuals, who owe the government is taken from them or destroyed, they cannot fulfil their engagements with the public. The very circumstance of leaving so much wealth in the defenceless situation in which we now find it, seems to invite aggression. It is a lure to any naval power to attack us. The quantity of specie in the banks of N. York and other sea port place, at all times, is an inducement to the freebooters of the Ocean, of any nation, to fall upon such places and lay them under contribution, or rifle the banks. I would call the attention of this committee to the situation of New Orleans. Here we find the conspirators in our own country calculating upon the money in the banks to enable them to carry on their enterprize. Had they succeeded in seizing the bank of New-Orleans, is it not probable that these same conspirators might have fixed out an armament sufficient to have laid New York under contribution? Considering the imminent danger of many of our sea ports in their defenceless situation, I sincerely hope the committee will consent to fill the blank with 500,000 dollars.

MR. MUMFORD then moved to fill the blank with '400,000.'

This motion was likewise disagreed to—Ayes 37—Noes 66.

MR. MUMFORD then proposed '300,000—Disagreed to—Ayes 36—Noes 58.

MR. COOK proposed '250,000.'

MR. SMILIE said he sincerely wished the gentlemen would inform the House what kind of defence they desired. Last session a large sum had been appropriated for building gun-boats. He still considered this species of defence the most consistent with their means; and that the money granted for the fortification of ports on the present plan would be so much money thrown away. He believed all that they could do at present was to increase the number of gun boats.

The question was then taken on filling the blank with '250,000,' which was disagreed to—Ayes 37—Noes 69.

MR. THOMAS moved to fill the blank with '100,000.'

MR. THOMAS said, he rose to move that the blank be filled with one hundred thousand dollars, and he hoped the committee would consent to fill it with that sum. He had not voted for the large appropriations which had been moved by several gentlemen, because he thought it was asking too much at this time, it was also unnecessary, because it was much more than could be expended to advantage, in one year, but he did hope that the committee would agree to fill the blank with one hundred thousand dollars. He said the port of New York was, confessedly, the most important port in the Union, and it was by far the most vulnerable—it was therefore at this point, no doubt, the greatest part of any appropriation which should be made would be expended.—It has been urged as an objection to appropriating any considerable sum for this object at this time, that there is a large unexpended balance of the appropriation made at the last session, but the reason why a greater sum was not expended at that port, during the last summer, must be obvious to every one who had enquired into the subject. It was midsummer before the secretary of war was able to compleat a contract with an engineer and workmen, after which it was found necessary for the contractors to erect temporary buildings, which they were allowed to do on the public ground, for themselves and workmen to live in while they were at work, before this was done the greater part of the season was spent; but every thing is now ready to progress with permanent fortifications there, provided we afford the means—there is no question but that much more money will be expended to advantage, at that place, the next summer, than the unexpended balance of the former appropriation, if we authorize it, and he trusted we should—that the appropriation of this reasonable sum would not be refused—there has been, said he, several plans for defending that port, presented to the public, by sundry engineers, and which, he understood, were also submitted to the executive, with estimates of the expence, some of which do not exceed 300,000 dollars—provided we afford the means of progressing with works for the effectual defence of that port, there is no doubt but that the head of the war department will adopt some of those plans, or form one from the whole, and proceed upon it, besides there can be no possible disadvantage resulting from an appropriation a little larger than would be expended in one year, we all know that the unexpended balance of any appropriation after a given period passes to the surplus fund, while on the other hand a real inconvenience may result from an appropriation too small; in that case the workmen must be discharged perhaps in the middle of the season, every thing stopped, and any contract, however advantageous, which may be entered into, given up.

Mr. Chairman, said Mr. T. we have heard great complaints, from the citizens of the city of New York, on this subject, and we have heard, both out of doors and in the House, the present Congress charged with illiberality, and a want of a due regard to the interests of the people of that city—I am far from joining in this charge—I think it an unjust one—I find, on examination, that the whole amount expended on fortifications, at that port, by the general government, previous to the last session, to be 100,023 dollars. Although we were threatened with a war in 94—95 by England, and were threatened, or were actually in a state of war, with France in 98—99, notwithstanding this state of things, this sum was the whole that was allowed to put that port in a state of defence,——while the present Congress, at the last session, did appropriate 150,000 dollars, the greater part of which was intended, and is in a train of expenditure, in fortifications, at that port—but while I am willing to allow you full credit for the liberal appropriation made at the last session for this object, I do hope and trust that you will continue to merit the same approbation, from all candid and impartial men, by filling this blank with one hundred thousand dollars.

MR. HOLLAND said he felt no hostility to New-York, or any other city of the U. S. He had, however, voted against filling the blanks with the sums that had been proposed from the impression that they were not susceptible of fortification from the attacks which might be made from without. On this ground he was against going to any great expence for the fortification of this or any other port, and he should therefore vote against the present motion.

MR. N. WILLIAMS. When I look around me upon this floor and view the apathy and calm indifference that seems to pervade the representatives of the nation, my heart is filled with the deepest apprehensions. From the course the business before us has taken, sir, I apprehend that we shall never rise into action, until roused by some dreadful disaster. Nor indeed do these fears appear to be without foundation, when we have upon this subject, from various quarters of the House, such peculiar objections and extraordinary propositions. On the one hand the gentleman from Maryland tells us of the *expence* of defending our sea ports and towns; and proposes in order to avoid it, that we should retreat in case of danger with our families and valuables, back into the tobacco fields and behind the mountains!—While another on my right, tells us of the impossibility of erecting fortifications to defend New-York—and tells us also, that he will never consent to enter into measures of defence *in time of peace*.—When we hear opinions and propositions like these, coming from sources so highly respectable, let me ask, whether there is not some cause for alarm.—Would gentlemen consider seriously of the importance of the city of New-York, with respect only to wealth and commerce, and of its present exposed and defenceless situation, I am induced to believe that this subject would not be treated so lightly. When the gentleman from Maryland speaks of the measures of the last session upon the subject of fortifications, he seems to have fallen into a very great mistake. He supposes that Congress intended, by granting the pitiful sum of one hundred [illegible] thousand dollars towards fortifications, to adopt the plan of [illegible]. And then he observes [illegible] of war has not been [illegible] pend more than [illegible] appropriated; and [illegible] be folly to grant more [illegible] cannot be expended. It will be recollected, however, by all who were present, when the appropriation was made last year, that it was expressly avowed by the honorable chairman of the committee, (Mr. Dawson) which reported the bill, that they had nothing in view but the reparation of old works, and to provide arms and ammunition for whatever place they might be wanted. This is probably the reason why no more of the money appropriated is not expended. On any other grounds it is to me accountable.

But, sir, it seems that whenever a plan of this kind is proposed in this House, we are to be met constantly with the cry of *expence*. And now when the sum to be granted is whittled down to almost nothing, the same plea is presented to us, of *expence*. It appears from a report presented to this House by the Secretary of the Treasury, that after paying the usual sum of about 8,000,000 of dollars for the interest and towards the principal of the national debt, and leaving an ample sum for the current expences of the government, we shall have not far from two millions of dollars in the treasury at our disposal. Instead of devising new and extraordinary ways and means for getting rid of the public money, to me it would appear better I confess, and more to the honor of the nation, to apply it in placing our cities and sea-port towns in a state of safety—in defending them at least from the assaults of the most insignificant squadrons that sail upon the ocean. Here too we are met by the gentleman on my right (Mr. Smilie) with a most formidable objection. Expend what you will, according to his opinion, it is *impossible* to erect fortifications that shall prove sufficient to defend the harbor and city of New York. He calls upon us for a plan, and tells us, that if it can be defended, to produce our plan. I do not pretend, sir, to be very wise upon this subject myself; but I have been told that the ablest engineers have examined the position, and have given it as their opinion that an effective mode of defence is practicable. But if defence is impossible, I call upon the gentleman to shew wherein the peculiarity of the situation of that place consists, to render it so. For surely the pretence of impossibility would not be made use of here, unless the city and harbor of New York were different from from all other places in the world that were ever defended. But have we no plan? I trust the gentlemen who urges this against us, will call to mind upon reflection, that a plan has been presented and laid upon his table, drawn up as we are told by a reputable citizen of New York—according to which, that city and harbor may be defended at an expence not to exceed 200,000 dollars. The truth is, that there seems to be an hostility against the adoption of any plan. Suppose, however, it should be conceded, that no plan can be devised, to render New York perfectly secure against the hostile assaults of an enemy is it therefore certain that nothing can be done to render the lives and property of its citizens more secure? Can nothing be done, better to enable some of the citizens to arrest the assaults of an enemy, while others with the women and children and a few moveables, are running away to the mountains? There are two or three excellent regiments of artillery in the city of New York; these men would do their duty no doubt in case of an assault—but I ask what they can be expected to do, without breast works or batteries behind which to carry on repulsive operations? There is not a single battery or other work of defence on either side of the city—Nothing to prevent ships of war from anchoring deliberately on either side, and firing upon the town and throwing in hot bombs for its destruction. If in works of this kind, we should expend two or three hundred thousand dollars, and thereby enable the citizens to arrest the progress of an attack, while they are securing their wives and children, and eight or ten millions of property, I should think the money well laid out. As it is, resistance would be vain.

The same hon. gentleman tells you, sir, that he does not see the cause of such *anxiety* at present, and has adopted this extraordinary language—that we