

Resolution to Close Debate on the Bill (H. R. 1) to Repeal the  
Silver-Purchasing Clause of the Act of 1890.

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S P E E C H

OF

H O N . W I L K I N S O N C A L L ,

OF FLORIDA,

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

*Saturday, September 23, 1893.*

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The Senate having under consideration the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That Rule IX of the Senate be amended by adding the following section:

"SEC. 2. Whenever any bill or resolution is pending before the Senate as unfinished business, the presiding officer shall, upon the written request of a majority of the Senators, fix a day and hour, and notify the Senate thereof, when general debate shall cease thereon, which time shall not be less than five days from the submission of such request; and he shall also fix a subsequent day and hour, and notify the Senate thereof, when the vote shall be taken on the bill or resolution, and any amendment thereto, without further debate; the time for taking the vote to be not more than two days later than the time when general debate is to cease; and in the interval between the closing of general debate and the taking of the vote, no Senator shall speak more than five minutes, nor more than once, upon the same proposition."

Mr. CALL said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: The resolution before the Senate for a change of the rules which have been observed in this body for a hundred years is made at a time when the public mind is inflamed; when it is full of apprehension; when opinions are greatly divided in reference to a public measure which is the subject of consideration here and throughout the country.

Whatever may be our views upon the subject of the pending bill, it can not be denied that to a large portion, I say a great majority of the people of the United States, it is regarded as the most important legislation which has been before the country perhaps during the whole period of its existence, if we except the single period of the great civil war. There is throughout the entire limits of our country a deep-seated feeling that the results of this legislation will be more disastrous to the great body of the people than any measure which has been presented to it.

Before I submit the few observations I wish to make upon the subject of this rule, I preface it with the statement that I am not of the number of those who find occasion for unfriendly criti-

cism of the President of the United States, or of his great and distinguished Secretary of the Treasury, or who charge upon them inconsistency or infidelity in adhering to the pledges of their political faith. I regard the President as a man of extraordinary intellect, of unquestionable patriotism, of sympathy with the great masses of the people. He it was who started the great waves of public reform, of changed legislation looking to the interest of the masses of the people of this country, the great tariff question, and there is nothing, in my judgment, to abate the confidence of the people in him or in the Secretary of the Treasury; nor with the distinguished Senator from Indiana [Mr. VOORHEES], who advocates this movement upon the floor of the Senate, can there be found any inconsistency with his previous declarations and his lifelong advocacy of every measure which looked toward the advancement and the welfare of the great masses of the people of this country.

The administration of a great public trust, Mr. President, and the duties of a deliberative body and a legislator are vastly different. Caution, conservatism, must be the guide of those who are charged with the execution of the law and the public policies which they find in existence; and I can well see that the Secretary of the Treasury and the President of the United States may not have in anywise changed their convictions because of their advocacy of measures which are here presented.

Who can doubt that the distinguished Senator from Georgia [Mr. GORDON], who has been the hero of many a triumphant battlefield, and been repeatedly the recipient of civic honors by his own State, is honest and sincere in his advocacy of measures of relief hereafter to be adopted by this body? Who can question the fidelity of the Senator from Indiana, who has shown so much courtesy and forbearance in the advocacy of this measure?

But these are not reasons for a submission on the part of those who have different opinions to the passage of this bill. The questions are of too great importance. They require deliberation; they are world-wide in their effects; they are connected with the revolutions which seem to impend over every country in Europe.

See the vast amount of public debt which the most careless observer perceives threatens bankruptcy and the possible result of civil war and social and political revolution. Who doubts that this vast mass of debt, increasing in an almost geometrical progression, accompanied by millions upon millions of paupers, people having scarcely the necessaries of life, and extending to our own country, presents questions of the most serious consideration to the statesman?

The simple question of the time when we shall debate these measures may press itself with force to one mind or to another. For myself I regard the pending proposition to change the rules as a proposition to forbid discussion, to forbid debate, to close the only avenues of intercourse between this body and the great mass of the people of the United States.

With the press in the control and ownership of the great moneyed interests of the country; with the power of money assailing every legislative body and every legislator; with rank

and position and distinction conferred upon those who submit to the will of the great moneyed interests of the country, this tribunal is the only one in the world where the free and open consideration of the people's wants, the interests of the great mass of the people can be had unaffected by those powerful causes. It is here alone in all the world that the people can be heard free from the influences and the solicitations of fortune and the power of wealth. It assails this body; it affects the elections of members here; but always there will be found here representatives, as the Senator from Indiana [Mr. TURPIE], who has just spoken, has said, who will be true to the people, who will represent their interests, who will maintain their honest convictions; and it may be said, and I believe it can be said, that it characterizes this body as a whole.

I share not in the censures which have been passed upon the Senator from Ohio [Mr. SHERMAN]—distinguished in ability and an honor to his country, as I conceive him to be—for his opinions upon this subject; but, Mr. President, I regard this measure for the repeal of the Sherman act, whatever may be its specific effects, as but the vanguard of the great battle between the people for right, for justice, for comfort, for happiness in every home, and the great consolidated money powers of the world. Who can doubt that we are approaching a period when, if wise counsels do not prevail, there will be trouble more serious, more dreadful, than has ever occurred in this country?

If the predictions and the apparently well-founded opinions of many economists are true—and they are mine—that gradually the people of this country are becoming poorer and poorer; that the great forces of invention and progress are accompanied by increasing poverty, increasing want and destitution in the homes of the great masses of the people, and that it is because of the consolidation of the money power of the world; because of its control of the powers of taxation; because of the lease of the powers of taxation to great corporations; the monopoly of money, the concentration of the use of public credit in the hands of a few individuals, which is the effect of our national system, giving the nation's credit as a privilege to a few, a small portion of our people the exclusive right, the monopoly of banking, the use of the public credit, the issuance of bonds, which carry with them a lien upon the labor of every man within this country—if these propositions are true, we may well see, Mr. President, that in this contest between privilege and power and money and the great masses of the people, the American people will not submit; that they will require of their representatives that such policies and such measures shall be pursued as will remove the possibility of these great and powerful influences.

What then? Shall we close the power of debate here? Shall we give to a bare majority the right to suppress inquiry, investigation, and thought?

Mr. President, I regard the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, of which so much has been said in these days, when the public press belongs to the great moneyed interests of the country, when their agents are assailing every man who does not do their bidding—I regard the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, which is the faithful record of the people's servants, of their investigation of public

questions, of their analyses of the problems which are before the country and the world, as one of the most important instrumentalities within our power for the preservation of public liberty, and for the advancement of the happiness and welfare of the great masses of the people of this country.

Mr. President, throughout the entire length and breadth of this country there is want, there is poverty. In every home in the great agricultural regions of our country the pressure of the money power is felt; no money can be had. Crops are abundant, the earth is fruitful, lines of communication traverse every section and portion of our country, no public disaster has come upon the people, and yet there has been paralysis of trade. Bountiful nature has gone on and has furnished to the inhabitants of our country every means and resource of happiness, of abundance, and yet we find here, from some cause, that the whole system and conduct of exchange and commerce and the means of bringing comfort to the families of the people throughout the country is suspended, is changed, is paralyzed.

Is not that a question of importance enough to be discussed and considered from now until December? Is that a question upon which any man can speak *ex cathedra*, and say that the remedy for this is in any further concentration of the power of taxation, of money, of bonds, of liens upon the labor of the country, in the hands of a few individuals? Is not that what is proposed by the extension of the banking system and extension of the nation's credit to them? Is not that what we propose if there shall be no further legislation? Do we not declare that the power of issuing money, paper money, token money, shall be placed in the hands of selected individuals, who can control this scarce and rare and difficult product of gold?

If we are to stop here, if there is to be no free coinage of silver, if there is to be no change in the existing legislation of the country but the repeal of the Sherman act, are we not proposing to give to those people who control the gold of the world the power and the right to issue its necessary token substitute; and what is that? I read in the statistics given by Mulhall that in 1889 the debt of the principal nations of the world, including the United States, was £6,160,000,000. I see here that in the United States our private and public debts are estimated in the last census at \$19,000,000,000, an increase within the last ten years of a vast amount; and all the debts of the world, according to Mulhall, have increased tenfold in ninety-six years preceding this time.

Here is a tenfold increase of indebtedness in ninety-six years besides the annual tax levies upon the people of the world, to say nothing of the tax levies of municipal corporations, of railroad companies, and of the various forms of corporations which are to be found in our country. The increase in the taxation upon those people and our own is estimated at the great amount of the public national debt. Yet we find that the great nations of Europe are grasping gold and locking it up in their military chests for the support of the 23,000,000 armed men who are in hostile array against each other, threatening war every day. This great power, this golden treasure, is being withdrawn from the uses of trade, from the business of the country, and locked

up in the military chests of the nations of the earth. What does that mean? That means that there is no free and unrestricted use of the precious metal. That means that the laws of commerce are not applicable, but that they are suspended in their relations.

Now, Mr. President, in this condition of public opinion, allowing what we may for a difference of opinion, as shown by controversy, allowing for the opinion of those of us who see in the future nothing but greater poverty, greater want, greater oppression, and the advance of monopoly in every form which must necessarily be accompanied by the want and poverty and the degradation of the masses of the people of this country—admitting the possible error of opinion that we may have, is this a time to propose a resolution that shall close free and fair discussion in this body, that shall suppress here, when here alone the people can be heard, the voice of inquiry, of protestation, and of continued examination?

Mr. President, we have survived the perils of our great civil war, with all its emergencies and all its demands for instantaneous action, we have passed through every peril and every circumstance and condition of national life for a hundred years without any other power in this body than the force of public opinion. Shall we now, in the interest of those who believe that gold alone is the proper basis for monetary transactions—shall we, in the interest of those great bankers of Europe, the Rothschilds, who deal in the public securities of nations and who obtain their wealth alone from the great crushing public debts—shall we, at this time, in the interest of theories, be they correct or incorrect, give it into the power of a majority to close debate in this body?

I do not distrust the President of the United States. I believe that he will sign any bill for free coinage, or otherwise, that is demanded by the great majority of the people of the United States. But I have no idea that he or others will have the power when this proposed repeal bill is passed, until a great political revolution shall have occurred, until perhaps a social revolution shall have occurred—to meet the combined wealth of the world which depends for its further aggrandizement upon this action in the United States.

Mr. President, I do not distrust the distinguished Senator from Indiana [Mr. VOORHEES] nor the distinguished Senator from Georgia [Mr. GORDON]. They are as sincere as I am; they can be relied upon as far as I or others can be relied on in the defense of the views and interests of the people and their pledges in favor of free and unrestricted coinage of the precious metals; but they will not have the power when this action shall be accomplished to successfully cope with the forces, the vanguard of which is now here fighting for supremacy in the transfer of power from the people of the whole of this country.

In my judgment there can be no doubt of the fact that this is the contest for republican government, however others may view it. There will have to be a new start and a new organization of forces. Thomas Jefferson, the founder of this great Democratic party to which we belong, and in which I have confidence, declared that there was no rightful power in one generation to bind

another in the imposition of national indebtedness. Under our Constitution the provision in respect to the national debt has been made obligatory since the conclusion of the war, yet as the great Archbishop Walsh, of Ireland, has recently demonstrated beyond the possibility of a doubt, the confinement of the business of the world to a single metal, gold, has doubled the public and private indebtedness of the country.

There can be no question when you have transmitted this vast load of public and private obligation into one single metal and doubled it, that you threaten the stability of the whole of this great fabric of debt. I, for one, with whatever ability I possess, am decidedly of the opinion and judgment that the change into the single gold standard and the transfer of the power of issuing token money, paper money substitutes, to the great bankers of the world will increase the indebtedness of the whole world twofold. This transfer into their hands will be the necessary result of the power of taxation and will create an increase of the want and poverty and the price of money throughout the whole of this country.

Why, in my State, Florida, the people can get no money. Even in ordinary times they pay for the use of money in their homes and in their business affairs from 8 to 20 per cent. They are poor. Whatever treasures the earth may disclose, they fail to receive the benefit therefrom. Extend your lines of corporations, and still they draw to the great central point, New York, and to Europe, all the money, all the results of labor, and leave those people in a condition of poverty and want.

Now, Mr. President, in that condition of things, when we are called upon for mature deliberation, when the highest forces of the human mind are demanded for the consideration of these problems, when we can well afford to spend months in careful study and investigation; in these times, when the pressure of want is felt in every household in every city, when it is estimated with reasonable certainty that there are a million of unemployed men begging for work in order to be able to live, when they are to be seen in the streets of our cities begging for employment that they may obtain the bread of life—in these times, when we are required to examine into some measure of relief, for one I should be willing to advance such public works everywhere as could be properly utilized; for one I should be willing to commence the construction of intercontinental railroads and canals through the two Americas. For one, I should prefer to consider a proposition for a conference with the great silver-using nations of the world in order that we might combine our resources towards securing the benefits of free coinage of silver and gold and open the mints of these countries to both metals.

But, Mr. President, I mention these things with respect and deference to the President of the United States. For him I have the highest opinion. I am willing to trust him again with the Presidency of the United States. His sympathies, I believe, are as much with the people as are those of any public man in our midst. I am willing to trust his distinguished Secretary of the Treasury, whom I vindicate from even inconsistency with the celebrated speech which he made in the House, but who is now con-

fronted with measures of Treasury administration. I would speak with respect of the distinguished Senator from Ohio [Mr. SHERMAN], against whom are made so many imputations, but whose opinion as a great statesman I respect. But we have differences of opinion between them and ourselves and, I think, the great majority of our people.

Consider the able declarations and arguments that have been made by the distinguished Archbishop Walsh, of Ireland, showing the condition of the Irish people under the land-settlement act, so beneficent, passed under the leadership of Mr. Gladstone. The evils to which that act was addressed have grown to a greater burden than they were before the passage of the act. What is true of Ireland is true of the United States by demonstration. The debt will be a double burden upon the people and the taxpayers, in my judgment, if we repeal this law, unless there shall be some additional legislation accompanying it.

Mr. President, it was said by the Senator from Kentucky [Mr. LINDSAY] that those who opposed this bill must necessarily distrust the President of the United States and the Secretary of the Treasury and the promises which have been made here by distinguished Senators. I do not distrust them. I believe to-day that they will vote, after this repeal bill shall have been disposed of, for a free-coinage law, and that the President will approve it, and that the Secretary of the Treasury himself will also, with perhaps some reserve, because of his character as an administrator of the Treasury, give his assent to it. But they will have no power to do it.

The public press will be unanimously in the charge of this great consolidated money power, which obtains its profits of banking from the public. The representatives of the people here alone will stand unaffected by this tremendous money power. A great many people will be sincerely of the opinion that gold, and gold alone, is the safe basis for the conduct of the public and private business affairs of the world. These arguments which are now so forcibly made will then be far more forcibly made, will aid the triumph in this controversy of the people who have accumulated wealth, and will give them tenfold more power and strength.

Mr. President, I concur with the Senator from Indiana [Mr. TURPIE] who spoke this morning, in the proposition that unrestricted debate here in this body is the hope of freedom, the hope of legislation for the people of the wide world. Here are no standing armies, no kings, no despots, seeking to control the sole basis of money transactions. The power of public opinion must control. If so be, it is voluntary. If the money power is allowed control it will be by the conviction of the judgment of these Senators, and, as against them, is the great rushing tide of public opinion. So that here in this body the right of unrestricted debate and discussion is the last refuge of freedom.

If we are to advance along the lines of progress and invention and these mighty forces which have been so often alluded to in the learned debate which has been had here; if we are to make the people happy, and bring joy and abundance into every household, as it is possible to do, why here is the place for that judgment and consideration. We must open wide the access to the

waves of public thought and feeling which reach this body. We must deliberate long, carefully, and thoughtfully, accepting the best judgment, the best thought, and the best opinion of the world to guide us in our path of deliberation..

For that reason, Mr. President, while I yield to those who differ from me the same patriotism, the same devotion to the interests of the people, and the same hope of future progress and happiness of the people as I myself have; while I recognize their distinguished ability; while I maintain that neither as Republicans nor as Democrats is there need for ostracism of those who differ from us; while I recognize the paramount ability of the President of the United States and of his great Secretary of the Treasury, and honor them for the courage of their convictions; while I recognize in the distinguished Senator from Indiana [Mr. VOORHEES] the fact that he has given a lifelong service to the interests of the people and of freedom, and the fact that he is still as faithful to them as he ever was; while I recognize the fact that he regards this as an appropriate thing to do without change, or substitute, or modification; still I differ from them. We are fighting the battle of freedom. This is the vanguard of the great forces about to meet to not only fight for the repeal of this bill, but to fight for the control of the world.

In my judgment, if a cloture resolution shall be imposed upon this body, if the despotism of restraint of discussion and thought is brought here, we shall be placed at a disadvantage, which will require a reorganization of the great forces which are fighting the people's battles, and we shall have to commence anew our journey in the path of progress and reform which President Cleveland in his great message first advocated. Let us give heed to the public opinion which protests against this proposed action. Let us give pause to action and consider long and with earnest solicitude the eventualities of the action which we shall take.