

The Free Coinage Democratic Party Against the British Gold Standard Party.

THE LAST SHOT FIRED INTO THE RANKS OF THE BRITISH ALLIES.

SPEECH

OF

HON. JAMES L. PUGH,

OF ALABAMA,

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

Wednesday, October 25, 1893.

The Senate having under consideration the bill (H. R. 1) to repeal a part of an act, approved July 14, 1890, entitled "An act directing the purchase of silver bullion and the issue of Treasury notes thereon, and for other purposes"—

Mr. PUGH said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: The debate on the bill to repeal the provision of the act of 1890, known as the Sherman law, that requires the Secretary of the Treasury to purchase at the market price 4,500,000 ounces of silver bullion and to issue in payment therefor certificates redeemable in coin, is one of the most important and instructive debates ever had in the Congress of the United States, because it involves the whole question of finance—the use of gold and silver as money—the issue of paper as currency to represent gold and silver, whether issued by the Federal Government as the principal, or national banks as fiscal agents of the Government, and also whether States shall charter banks to aid in supplying currency.

These questions are conceded to be of world-wide importance, as they underlie and regulate all the material transactions of mankind, and especially at this time are they engaging the earnest attention and thoughtful consideration of financiers, politicians, statesmen, and people of all pursuits in Europe and America. Is it not a sad commentary to go down in history that the Senate of the United States, admitted to be the greatest lawmaking body in the world, while struggling with these momentous questions should be subjected to the use of the whip and spur applied from the outside by the reckless, unscrupulous, and irresponsible adventurers and speculators and conspirators against the general welfare employed in the service of money against labor and property to "hurry up and cease talking—debate is useless—the speeches are nonsense—nobody listens—nobody reads—the people want final action—the majority is ascertained and the majority must rule"? The wolves on Wall

street and their keepers are howling for blood. They think they smell the dead body of silver and they have become ravenous.

Newspapers everywhere, dailies and weeklies, subsidized in this ignominious service, have arraigned the Senate as a public nuisance, and what they call the small minority as obstructionists and filibusters, public enemies and criminals, deserving the most condign punishment.

Who are these accusers and whom do they represent? How much credibility and influence have they in the communities where they live and where their papers are published and circulated? To test their influence and the accuracy of their statements as to public sentiment, suppose a mass meeting were called of the people living in the town, city, or county where these papers are published, and where the editors reside, and that in such meeting the editor of the paper published there were to introduce a resolution declaratory of his financial opinions and policies and indorsing the House bill now pending in the Senate for the unconditional repeal of the only silver law now in existence, and condemning the action of the Senators who oppose the bill, how much influence would the editor have and exert upon such meeting in forming its opinion, and what weight would his statements that nearly all the people were clamoring for immediate and unconditional repeal of the only silver law have with his hearers?

I feel perfectly confident that there is not a town, city, or county in any State in the South where such an editor could be induced to call such a meeting or to offer such a resolution, or in favor of which he would exert any influence, or make or direct the opinion of a single man in the meeting, or where such a resolution could be passed. And yet all these editors are intelligent and worthy gentlemen. My colleague and myself, on our own knowledge of the people we represent and their practically unanimous opinion in favor of the free coinage of silver, and on letters and memorials coming from every county, town, and city in our State, from men we know to be representative men, well informed upon the subject of public opinion where they reside, and representing to us that nine-tenths of the people heartily approve our position and action on the repeal bill, do not believe that any mass meeting anywhere in Alabama, called on reasonable general notice, would pass such a resolution if all the editors in the State were to attend and urge its passage. We challenge them to try it in any county.

How the people stand on the questions involved in this repeal bill, and whether the Democratic party is to be enlisted into the service of the gold-standard advocates, will certainly be decided in the Congressional and Presidential elections in 1894 and 1896.

Mr. President, no debate the Congress has ever had has been more legitimate and orderly, none more necessary to inform the people about a matter of momentous importance to them and their posterity, and I do not believe that any debate has ever been of greater value and usefulness, and it will prove in the future more destructive of the aims of the enemies of the people. The debate has clearly marked the lines that separate the contending parties to this controversy. I do not mean the lines that locate the selfish, the unscrupulous, and greedy horde who push themselves to the front in this agitation, but I mean those who

are actuated by sincere and well-formed convictions and who are endeavoring to discharge to the best of their ability a great public duty in this mighty contention.

The immediate question before the Senate is, shall the silver-purchase part of the act of 1890 be unconditionally repealed—that is, repealed without any substitute? There can be no disagreement as to where silver will be left by such a repeal. Could another ounce of silver be purchased by the Government to be coined into money, or made the basis of any certificate to go into our present volume of currency? Could another ounce of silver be carried to any mint to be coined and stamped as money? Every Senator must answer no. Then it is indisputable that as to the future of silver for all increased money uses, it will be left precisely where it was by the odious law of 1873, which dropped silver from our coinage laws.

Those Democrats who favor unconditional repeal claim that it can be done safely and in accordance with the Democratic platform, which they urge condemns the Sherman law and demands its immediate repeal, and that those parts of the platform following this condemnation and demand, that pledge the party to the use of both gold and silver as standard money and to the coinage of both without discrimination in favor of either metal and that each dollar coined shall be equal in intrinsic value and purchasing power, and that the ratio of the number of grains in each dollar shall be adjusted by international agreement or by Congressional legislation, are separable from and independent of the demand for the repeal of the Sherman law.

On the other hand those Democrats who oppose unconditional repeal of the Sherman law as provided in the bill reported from the Finance Committee do so for the reason, among many others of greater importance, that the Democratic platform could not have been intended to pledge the party to the support of a separate and independent bill containing no other provision than a single repealing section without enacting in the same bill the necessary and rightful law to establish and carry out the financial system and policy declared to be the true system and policy in the platform. If it be a sound system why delay its benefits to the people?

It looks suspicious when action is delayed without any just or plausible reason. Our ability to adopt the platform system of currency will surely be greatly impaired by unconditional repeal.

The plain reason why such could not have been the intention and meaning of the platform is that the party in national convention made a declaration of its principles, policies, and measures which the President and the members of Congress to be elected by the party in the election in November, 1892, were pledged to carry out by laws which were to be enacted in the place of those which the platform specifies and condemns. The McKinley tariff laws are condemned and the kind of tariff laws to be enacted in their stead is defined in the platform. The Sherman law is condemned and the kind of currency laws to be enacted in its place is defined in the platform.

The repeal of the 10 per cent tax on the issue of State banks is demanded, and what law shall be enacted on the subject of State banks is left to the States.

The Federal election laws are condemned and their repeal demanded, and what laws to be enacted in their place is left ex-

clusively with the States. So that it is manifest that when the platform condemns an existing Federal law and demands its repeal, it imposes a duty upon the Congress and the President to be elected on it of substituting in the place of the law to be repealed the better laws which the platform approves. Besides, it is manifest that the unconditional repeal of the Sherman law is demanded, and no substitute proposed, and no compromise permissible by the President and those who support his position for reasons and purposes which have been completely uncovered in this debate, leaving the friends of silver without the possibility of getting any silver law as good as the Sherman law while Mr. Cleveland is President.

The Senator from Delaware [Mr. GRAY] is no timeserver, he is no trimmer, he is perfectly honest in his convictions, and fearless in expressing and enforcing them. I regard him as a fair exponent and representative of the best element of the Eastern Democracy to the fullest extent that the intelligent, well-to-do members of the Democratic party who are not bankers, importers, or money-lenders favor bimetallism—that is, what use is to be made of silver and how such use is to be secured with the aid and assistance of the Eastern Democracy, of which the Senator from Delaware is a true type and representative. We will take the Democratic platform adopted at Chicago in 1892 for illustration of the position and difference of the two wings of the national Democratic party on the question of the use and coinage of gold and silver as made manifest by and pending the present debate.

The Senator declared in his able and interesting speech in the Senate on the 22d ultimo (CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, page 1608), in speaking of the platform—

It was intended by that language in the Democratic platform, if we can argue at all from language, that it should be broad enough to hold every Democrat who believed in bimetallism, whether by international agreement or by legislative enactment. It did not intend to read me out of the party because I honestly believe that the bimetallism aimed at in that platform can only be obtained efficiently, obtained usefully, obtained for the benefit of the great masses of the people of this country, by an international agreement.

I think I can safely affirm that there are not a half dozen Senators who intend to support the House bill now pending for unconditional repeal who have not expressed, or will not express, the opinion that bimetallism, on the basis of unlimited free coinage of both gold and silver, established by Congressional enactment independent of an international agreement, is an utter impossibility. The same opinion has been expressed by President Cleveland without equivocation, ambiguity, or the affectation of misunderstanding.

I have explained the unmistakable position of the Eastern Democracy, of which President Cleveland is the exponent and representative, and that is that there can be no equal use of gold and silver as standard money; there can be no coinage of both gold and silver without discriminating against either metal; there can be no holding on to such bimetallism by the Democratic party without an international agreement; that it is impossible by Congressional legislation independent of concurrent and joint action by the United States and foreign nations.

Repeal the Sherman law, wipe out every Congressional silver enactment, plant us on the gold basis, and on that leverage the

repealers promise to strike for an international agreement as the last hope for silver and gold bimetalism, and failing to obtain it we must accept our destiny with foreign nations on the gold basis, and adapt ourselves, as best we can, to the government of gold, with gold, and for gold. The absolute dependence of bimetalism on an international agreement, and the hopelessness and absurdity of reviving the free coinage of silver by any law of the United States without the concurrence and support of foreign nations in a joint agreement is explicitly declared in his late message to the present Congress, and that construction of his message is fully verified by the President's letter written the 25th ultimo to Governor Northen, of Georgia.

After stating the usual platitudes about honest money, which can not exist in the opinion of the President without being able to stand the crucial test of equal purchasing and debt-paying power with gold in all the markets of the world, he proceeds to sum up the substance of the whole letter in one sentence, as follows:

I am therefore opposed to the free and unlimited coinage of silver by this country alone and independently; and I am in favor of the immediate and unconditional repeal of the purchasing clause of the so-called Sherman law.

In order to bring this matter squarely before the Senate and the country I will suppose that the quotation I have made from the President's letter had been offered in the Chicago convention as the financial plank in the Democratic platform. It would have read as follows:

The Democratic party is opposed to the free and unlimited coinage of silver by this country alone and independently; and in favor of the immediate and unconditional repeal of the purchasing clause of the so-called Sherman law.

How many States in the West and South would have voted for such a declaration in the platform? I am sure it would not have received the support of a single Southern State.

I do not believe that a single delegate from any Southern State can be found who will say that it was his understanding or that of any other delegates in the convention, or that such an understanding was suggested in the convention, that the platform as adopted could possibly be construed to mean or that it could be perverted or distorted to mean that the Democratic party was opposed to the free and unlimited coinage of silver on any ratio between the two metals by this country alone and independently of any agreement with foreign nations. The platform as adopted expressly declared for the equal use of both gold and silver as standard money and not the use of one as standard and the other as subsidiary money—pin money in the retail trade—and the free coinage of both without discrimination on a ratio to be determined by an international agreement or by this country alone and independently by Congressional legislation.

The demand for the unconditional repeal of the purchasing clause of the so-called Sherman law for the purpose publicly avowed by the President in his message and his Northern letter, and repeated by 90 per cent of his Democratic supporters and all of his Republican friends, of closing the door to any more expansion of our silver currency by this country alone and independently unless we can in the indefinite future restore silver to coinage in the mints of Europe as well as in the United States

by some international agreement, is an interpolation which materially changes the Democratic platform by striking out the only provision in it which secured the support of the Democrats of the South and the West, and that is the plain declaration that the bimetallism defined in the platform could and would be secured in one of two ways—international agreement or by Congressional legislation by this country alone and independently of any agreement with foreign nations.

But now the Southern and Western Democracy are informed for the first time, after they have put Mr. Cleveland and the Eastern Democracy in power, that there must be an immediate repeal of the Sherman law and no more coinage of silver by this country alone and independently, and that we must wait and depend upon European nations for any more expansion of our silver currency.

And yet the President expresses his "astonishment at the opposition in the Senate to such prompt action as would relieve the present unfortunate situation." Action demanded alone by the bankers and bondholders and money-lenders of New York and Boston and the editors and correspondents in their service; action that would relieve the situation by the assurance and guaranty that there was to be no more "silver coinage by this country alone and independently" and only by an international agreement which Wall street money kings would have an influential part in formulating.

I am satisfied that nine-tenths of the unconditional repealers do not desire free coinage or any coinage of silver by an international agreement, and I do not believe that President Cleveland desires it, or will make any earnest effort to secure it. He has never said he expected or desired any international agreement. My opinion is that the President entertains the sincere conviction that we now have as much silver as we can possibly utilize in our circulation, in accordance with his gold-standard opinions, and that we can go no further in silver coinage without crossing the danger line that separates us from silver monometallism. That is the opinion of the President and the Eastern Democrats and Republicans on the question of the expansion of our silver currency and the undertaking to hold on to both silver and gold as standard money, and the coinage of both gold and silver without discrimination against either metal.

It is this opinion of the President and the East that unites them in making the persistent and uncompromising demand for the unconditional repeal of the purchasing clause of the so-called Sherman law; and it is this clearly defined line of radical difference that separates the President and the Democracy of the East from the Democratic platform and the Western and Southern Democracy, who constitute 80 or 90 per cent of the elective power of the Democratic party.

Mr. President, the plain reason for the difference between the East and the South and the West on the currency question is the undisputed fact that the East is the creditor section, just as England is the creditor nation, and the South and the West are the debtor sections. And this fact also explains why the East, in the United States, and England agree in opinion and are in hearty coöperation in the undertaking to force this country to the gold basis. Lombard street, in London, and Wall street, in New York, are the money centers in these countries, and it is

there that the magazines are located that furnish all the ammunition in the war on silver.

Mr. President, we have heard the cry that the majority must rule; that the Senate must exercise the power of self-government. That is all right. The majority ought to rule, but the majority have long ago decided how it must rule. The Constitution—the paramount law—the law unalterable by Congress, and that all of us have sworn to support, has expressly secured to as small a minority as one-fifth of the Senators present the power of deciding how the majority shall rule, and in this case it can rule by agreeing to a reasonable compromise. The rule of the majority is oftentimes the rule of tyranny—destructive of liberty—and I defy the naming of a single instance when the minority by the exercise of its extraordinary powers and methods ever defeated the rule of the majority against the will of the people.

I have no more doubt than I have of my existence that a larger majority of the people of the United States are against the unconditional repeal of the Sherman law than there ever was against the passage of the force bill or any other iniquitous measure that was ever defeated by the minority by the use of authorized methods. Ah, but it is claimed that there is a majority for unconditional repeal in both Houses of Congress. If that be true, how and when was the majority obtained? How did the Senate and House stand when they were elected, and how were they expected to stand by their pledges?

How did the Senate and House stand when President Cleveland was inaugurated? How did the Senate and House stand when Congress met in extra session, and before they received the President's message? Oh, that I had the power of having those questions investigated and answered. I do not believe I can be mistaken in the fact that when the Senate and House were elected, when the President was inaugurated, and when Congress met in extra session, there was a majority of both Houses against the unconditional repeal of the Sherman law.

If that majority has been changed it has not been done in accordance with the theory and practice of rightful representation. It is the will of the majority of the people that the theory and principles of our Government require to find expression in legislation. Those Senators who oppose the unconditional repeal of the Sherman law believe it to be their sworn duty as Senators to act on their own convictions and in accordance with what they believe to be a large majority of their own constituents and of the whole people.

With these convictions of duty to ourselves and the good people we represent, after instructing them and employing all our ability in this protracted debate to satisfy them that the unconditional repeal of the Sherman law will surely leave the country on the gold basis, and put silver out of the reach of use with gold as standard money, and without any more coinage except on an international agreement, and that existing indebtedness will be doubled and the means of payment reduced one-half, and other manifold consequences of the most ruinous character will follow unconditional repeal, how can such results be permitted as long as the power exists to prevent them? But it is said the people want the question settled. Certainly they do; but can it be possible that they are willing to accept a settlement that we

have assured them and that they believe will result in their ruin? Is ruin preferable to the delay and the resistance that will save them from the dire consequences we have assured them will follow inevitably from the passage of the repeal bill?

Mr. President, knowing the anxiety of the people to see the Senate come to some reasonable and fairly just compromise that would secure a final vote of the majority, Democratic Senators, feeling their responsibility for legislation, united in the spirit of compromise and concession and fidelity to the Democratic party and selected an equal number of Senators from those friendly to unconditional repeal, and those opposed to unconditional repeal, and after a long time spent in consultation and with the full knowledge of President Cleveland and Secretary Carlisle that such effort was being made to bring Democratic Senators together upon some common ground that could be enacted into a law, accomplished their laudable undertaking so far as to agree upon a compromise that secured the signature of every Democratic Senator but six, and the fact is not considered doubtful that forty-three Democratic Senators would have sanctioned the compromise had not President Cleveland interposed his objection and demanded unconditional repeal at all hazards. Whatever others may say or believe, I am satisfied that all effort at compromise that would bring Democratic Senators together has failed solely on account of President Cleveland and his Secretary of the Treasury. Their will has been as potential and has served the same purpose as the cloture rule.

The resistance to unconditional repeal is not to be continued, although the justification has increased.

The debate is about exhausted, and to make further opposition successful it would necessarily require a resort to extreme methods, which I believe to be constitutional and above the power of the Senate to override in making any change in its rules, but I have satisfied myself that I can not get a sufficient number of Senators to join me in the use of what is characterized as filibustering practice, and I am forced to record my vote against this diabolical measure and appeal to the people to organize their forces for the great battle of the future.

I am still willing, if I had sufficient support, to resort to any and all means left to defeat this iniquitous bill. It might be called filibustering, but filibustering beat two force bills and defeated what was called the Mahone coalition. Was the majority in favor of the two force bills any less entitled to rule than the majority claimed for unconditional repeal? Was the majority for the execution of the Mahone coalition any less a majority with less right to rule than the alleged majority for the repeal bill? And yet all these majorities were prevented from ruling by filibustering, and in each instance filibustering was approved by the people.

Mr. President, I am proud of being called a filibuster in defeating a conspiracy equal in the ruinous consequences of its success to war, pestilence, and famine. I had rather be called a filibuster by the conspirators and lick-spittles of the gold kings than to be called a traitor or a faithless representative by the State and people who honored me with their trust and confidence. As for myself, I shall do my duty as a Senator as I understand it and leave consequences to God and my country.