

FOR THE FREE COINAGE OF SILVER AND
AGAINST THE UNCONDITIONAL REPEAL
OF THE SHERMAN LAW.

SPEECH

OF

HON. WM. T. CRAWFORD,
OF NORTH CAROLINA,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 1893.



WASHINGTON.

1893.

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The House 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. CRAWFORD said:

Mr. SPEAKER: Two men may differ and both be wrong. Our Democratic friends who propose to vote for the unconditional repeal of the Sherman law say that the financial disturbance of the country is solely due to the purchasing clause of that law. Our Republican friends who propose to cooperate with them in repealing that law say it is not so much due to the Sherman law as it is to the fear that the Democratic party may tamper with the tariff. I think both are wrong; so three men may differ and none be right. Now, I have a little sympathy for the Republican party in this fight. I am always sympathetic. They say that this House, by the rule which it has agreed upon in the consideration of the Wilson bill, has deposited them "in a cavity." That is not true. The people of this country deposited that side of the House "in a cavity" last November, and we found them there. That is all. [Laughter.]

Mr. Speaker, the great question before the House now is whether or not we shall sustain silver as one of the money metals of the country, or whether we propose to put the country absolutely on a gold basis and recognize nothing but gold. But gentlemen on the other side are trying to bring the tariff into this question in order to evade the true issue. I say to you that you will have enough of that before you get done with it later on. Why, Mr. McKinley submitted his tariff proposition to the people of this country three years ago and they repudiated it, and not only repudiated his proposition, but repudiated him as well. Last year your party put Mr. Harrison on the same platform, and I presume you all got on with him, and the whole thing was wiped out and you hardly had a minority left after that fight. Why, we could have elected two Presidents, and I think really we ought to have done it. [Laughter.]

Now, sir, I have only a few things to say right here in this connection. I want to say here and now in answer to the arguments that have been made and gone to the country trying to prove that there is such a thing as a 58-cent standard silver dollar between the two oceans, that there is no such dollar and you have never found it, nor has any other man ever found it, unless

it was mutilated—the life punched out of it. You pretend to say that you must have 20 or 24 as the ratio between the two metals. You tell us that that is necessary in order to preserve the parity; but yet you will not accept that, and say that silver can not be maintained at any ratio, and that 20 to 1 is no improvement.

We stand here ready and willing to offer you that ratio if you do not believe that 16 to 1 will sustain it, in accordance with your construction of the Democratic platform. But you know very well that you would not accept that or anything else we could offer you on that subject. You say that that is worse than 16 to 1, and that you will not vote for free coinage of silver on any ratio.

Now, sir, the country knows well, and you can not deceive them, that this is a refined argument. They know that it is political jugglery and learned nonsense, and nothing else. Experience teaches our people that gold and silver are on a parity, and should be; they know that this Government has declared that the silver dollar shall pay all debts, public and private, and is a tender for every conceivable debt in this country and pays them as readily as gold.

Mr. SNODGRASS. Will the gentleman allow me to ask him a question?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes.

Mr. SNODGRASS. I would like to ask the gentleman's opinion [cries of "Louder"] of the consistency of these people that say we must unconditionally repeal the Sherman act, which means a single gold standard, and yet declare themselves in favor of bimetallic coinage?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Those gentlemen who take that position can answer for themselves to their own constituents. I will not undertake to do so for them. I am not the keeper of their consciences and do not propose to construe platforms for them. I know that in my State the people thoroughly understand that the Democratic party stands now, as we have always stood, for bimetalism, the same position that we have occupied for one hundred years. [Applause.]

Now, gentlemen, what is the use of coming here and pretending to be bimetalists and at the same time profess to be late converts to the ideas that we have seen repudiated in the last election, which is a progressive step to the gold standard, sanctioned and advocated by the Republican party? Why you, the Republicans, do not want to have any more trials at the financial question, do you? You sit here and listen to the leaders of that side of the House, who insist that this is a 58-cent dollar. I heard the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. DALZELL] say that on yesterday. The Republican party has had the country for thirty years, and comes here and makes excuses now for that dollar of theirs. Sad commentary. We have never indorsed by a single vote a 58-cent dollar, and never will do it. We want honest money and plenty of it.

The SPEAKER. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HENDERSOON of North Carolina. I ask unanimous consent that my colleague have ten minutes longer.

There was no objection.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Now, sir, I disagree with these gentle-

men. When they claim that our silver coin is depreciated I say that it may be true that the legislation you have had in the past, considering the efforts put forth to reduce this country to a 58-cent dollar, would warrant the statement, and if the result had been commensurate with the effort you would have it reduced to a 25-cent dollar, although your effort has not been sustained, as you claim.

In spite of legislation, I say, in spite of discrimination the world over, silver, wherever it has been recognized by any government and made legal tender in payment of all debts, has sustained itself. Why, to me it is perfectly absurd, in my democratic way of viewing this question, to think for one moment that there is any danger here of a great inflation of the money of the country because of the coinage of silver.

It is not true. Examine the records of France and other countries in regard to silver, and you will find that the progress that we have made, great as it has been, it will take us another hundred years to give the people of the United States the same per capita of silver that France sustains to-day on par with gold. Then to say that this country, with her 3,000,000 of square miles, with the richest soil and the most progressive people on earth, can not sustain nine or ten dollars per capita in silver when France has \$17.95, is absurd, and I think it is a weakling who would contend for such a proposition.

Now, the contention is, Mr. Speaker, that on account of the great discoveries of silver there is danger of inflation. Is that true? Let me give you what Mr. Mulhall, the London statistician, says. In 1600 the ratio of silver to gold in production was 40 tons to 1. In 1700 it was 41 tons to 1. In 1880 it was 15 tons of silver to 1 ton of gold; and yet you stand up here, three hundred years after that time, and say there is danger of an overproduction of silver, when, in comparison with gold, it has fallen off more than 200 per cent in production. I say that silver has not fluctuated in the markets of the world, and the increase here has not been so uncertain as that of gold. Gold fluctuates from nothing to 96 per cent per annum, and silver at no time has ever increased more than 10 per cent per annum. That is the situation exactly.

Oh, yes; there is danger in this 58-cent silver dollar. The danger is that we have not got enough of them; and you pretend that the Sherman law is responsible for the panic. The sole responsibility is with the banks of the country and others who have built up a credit system until it has got so large that the money in reserve will not support their business, and when the people got scared, after the banks began to cry panic! they wanted their money; not gold, but any sort of money. They thought that if the New York Clearing-house Association could not rediscount the collaterals of the banks throughout the country, that they could not pay their debts, and they stepped up to the counters and demanded their own money; and that is the reason the financial crisis has come, and it is not because of lack of confidence on the part of the people in the money of the country, for they are hoarding silver as well as gold.

If it were so, why would not our national bonds, that are going to-day at a premium, be affected? and they are payable in silver as

well as in gold. Nobody has doubted the power of silver when the Government has declared that it will pay these debts, and no man can go behind the law and refuse to take it. Now, I say for my people that I think the supreme object of this legislation should be to give our own American people the money with which to transact their business and pay off their debts, and let England, Russia, and Germany, and the balance of the world take care of themselves. I say that we never have had to pay England, or Germany, or France, or any other foreign country, a single dollar of silver at a discount—not one—and we never will have to do it so long as we do our duty here as American representatives legislating for our own people. That is my idea.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have not enough of this silver. Why, it is already admitted by Secretary Carlisle that men have gone to the Treasury and offered gold in exchange for silver dollar for dollar, and he told them that he did not have it to let them have. Yet there are four thousand tons of silver piled up there in the Treasury and no demand upon it. I think we had better put it into circulation. In 1881 and 1882 \$81,000,000 were exchanged for silver at the Treasury, and that continued to be the case until the Secretary of the Treasury refused to receive it.

Now, you see there is nothing in intrinsic value in the sense claimed by gentlemen. It is the debt-paying and purchasing power of money which is important. President Cleveland said in his letter of acceptance that all dollars must be of intrinsic value, of exchangeable purchasing power, and he uses intrinsic and purchasing power interchangeably. Purchasing power and debt-paying power is what we want, and we propose to protect our money and our credit. We want no cheap dollars, we want no depreciated money, and we have not had it.

Now, the only cheap money you have got, and what you are talking about now as a 58-cent dollar is this bullion that has been refused admittance to the mint, and which can find no market anywhere on the face of the earth, and for which there is no demand. But open the mints and let it be coined, and let our Government declare it to be a legal tender, and that it will pay the debts which are burdening the people for lack of money to pay, and there will be no difficulty.

The people have need for more money. Mortgages are piled upon mortgages all over the country, with no hope of relief, nothing in sight, and the Democratic party and the Republican party are juggling together to strike down half the money supply for the future. I mean elements of the two parties. I want to say here that I do not believe the Democratic party is going to do this thing. I believe when the vote is recorded that the record will show that a majority of the Democrats in this House have stood firm and true to the history of their party for a hundred years. If this bill passes it will be by a combination of a minority of Democrats with a majority of Republicans.

I believe that when it comes to a vote in the Senate of the United States, these men who want an unconditional repeal of the Sherman law, and who want to carry us back to where the Republicans started with us in 1873, will find that a majority of the Republican Senators and a minority of the Democrats have joined together there to carry out the pledges of the Democratic

party. Why, gentlemen, this is the first opportunity that the Democratic party has had to make a record within the last thirty-three years; the first opportunity to establish the principles and financial system of the Democratic party for thirty years. Here we are struggling and trying to adjust this legislation to a panic, trying to quell a panic. Wait until the panic passes away, and let us legislate so as to prevent panics. That is my theory, and I believe the people of this country will still stand by this idea. Let others do as they will, and let men construe away by refined argument their platform as they may, but you will see silver still hold its place in this country as a money metal. The fight is on.

Mr. Speaker, until times become easier than they are now no party dare to go to the people upon a gold-standard platform. No party has done it in the past, and you all will be too cowardly to do it in the future.

I can not vote for the repeal of the Sherman law without a substitute looking to the free coinage of silver for the simple reason that it gives us \$50,000,000 every year and prevents the contraction of the currency, which must necessarily come about by going to a gold standard and a contraction which would result by the calling in of national bonds.

This \$50,000,000 is as good as any money that ever left the mints or came from the Treasury in this country, because these notes when issued are construed to be redeemable in gold, and therefore are as good as gold to transact the business of the country. They get into the hands of the people to pay their debts, and never again will they be presented to the Secretary of the Treasury to be redeemed in gold. After these coin Treasury notes have been redeemed they are reissued and become available as Treasury assets to meet the demands of the Government. If you stop the issue of this \$50,000,000 per annum you give it into the hands of the banks to control the volume of currency, and a demand will be made for a new issue of bonds for this purpose; and I will say to you there will be hard times, pressure, stringency, and panics in the money markets just so long as we depend upon this system for a money supply. [Loud applause.]