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[1874]

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

SPEECH

OF

HON. WILLIAM H. LAMPORT,

OF

NEW YORK,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

MAY 8, 1874.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1874.

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SPEECH

OF

HON. WILLIAM H. LAMPORT.

The House having under consideration the bill, (H. R. No. 2162,) as follows:
A bill supplementary to the act entitled "An act to establish a Department of Agriculture," approved May 15, 1862.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Department of Agriculture, as it now exists under the provisions of the act of May 15, 1862, be, and the same is hereby, constituted an Executive Department of the United States, to be called the Department of Agriculture, the head of which shall be called the Secretary of Agriculture, who shall be appointed by the President of the United States, whenever a vacancy occurs, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, and who shall hold his office by the same tenure and receive the same salary as the Secretaries of the other Executive Departments, and who shall perform all the duties which now devolve upon the Commissioner of Agriculture by the act of May 15, 1862, to which this is a supplement, and such others as may be imposed upon him by the Congress of the United States.

SEC. 2. That there shall be prepared, under the direction of the Secretary of Agriculture, a common seal, with such device as will designate the Department to which it belongs, by which all the papers, documents, and records of said Department shall be authenticated, and to which full faith and credit shall be given, as is now provided for that of all the other Executive Departments of the United States—

Mr. LAMPORT said:

Mr. SPEAKER: I embrace this opportunity to express my approbation of the bill before the House, and give my reasons briefly for its approval; and lest I forget it I compliment my honorable friend from Iowa [Mr. WILSON] for his moral courage in introducing this bill, notwithstanding the antagonisms so palpably expressed by the action of the House against the Agricultural Department. I regard this bill a necessity to the life and perpetuity of this department. And I trust it will bring the question of life or death before the House to be disposed of on its merits, and either save the Agricultural Department with an honorable status, or wipe it out as unworthy of consideration by this Congress.

An act was passed and approved May 15, 1862, establishing at the seat of Government of the United States a Department of Agriculture, the general design and duties of which were to acquire and diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the general and comprehensive sense of the word, and to procure and propagate and distribute among the people new and valuable plants and seeds. This enactment was hailed by the farmers of the country as a new era in the advancement of agriculture, and received their hearty commendation. The question can now be propounded with propriety, was this enactment a wise one? And did the interest of this, the greatest and most important American industry, justify the measure with necessary expenditure? I answer, yes. And to enforce my

judgment I beg permission of the House to go somewhat into detail.

The Commissioner of Agriculture, in his report for 1872, says:

The minds of men all over the world are constantly employed in the search after human knowledge in all that concerns the fruitfulness of the earth, as well as the philosophical principles which govern its mysterious operations; and it is the province of this department to mark well the progress that is made and keep its constituents advised of its value and how they may avail themselves of advantages to be gained, with its immense and almost measureless extent of this country as a field of agricultural employment. We must not fail to watch, learn, and carefully examine whatever may promise to add to the sum of human happiness, which springs from the carefully cultivated earth.

When we call to remembrance the large proportion of the world's inhabitants who depend upon agricultural pursuits for their support in life, it gives us encouragement to believe that the work we do reaches further and strikes deeper into the interest of mankind than comes within the scope of any other human effort. It behooves this Government to be foremost in teaching those lessons of progressive, practical, and scientific agriculture in accordance with the measure of the great opportunities which we possess to learn them as they occur.

You will observe, Mr. Speaker, that this department in its organization sought to impress on the public mind this axiom in political economy, that the smaller products of a diversified industry are far more than an equivalent for a single result of organized labor, however absorbing or important; hence the genius of this organization was to *diffuse* among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture "in the general and comprehensive sense of the word." And herein is the reason for the universal demand for the report of the department, which is more generally read and appreciated than any document printed by Congress.

But, sir, can I maintain my assumption that the agricultural industries of this country are, and of right ought to be, estimated the most important and greatest?

Do not understand me as underrating the other great and important industries of the country; but great and vitally important as they are, they are in great part dependent on agriculture.

But, sir, to the facts and figures. I find by the census of 1870 that the farmers of this country have in use as improved lands 188,921,099 acres, valued in cash at \$9,262,803,861. These lands were cultivated by machinery at a cost of \$336,878,429. The total amount of wages paid during the year, including board, was \$310,286,285.

The total products of cereals, (consisting of wheat, Indian corn, oats, rye, buckwheat, and barley,) in all the States and Territories of the United States, amounted in the year—

	<i>Bushels.</i>
1840 to	615,535,077
1850 to	867,454,032
1860 to	1,238,138,947
1870 to	1,357,230,096

The aggregate cereal product of all the nations of Europe in 1868, with a total population of 296,128,293, was reported to the international statistical congress at the Hague, in 1869, to be 4,754,516,604 bushels, being 16 bushels to the head. The product in the United States in 1870, of 1,357,230,096 bushels, with a population of 38,558,371, was 35 bushels to the head.

I will endeavor to impress the House more perfectly by bringing to your notice the amount and value of a few of those products that may be termed staples, for time would fail me to go into detail. The farmers of this country produced, as per census of 1870, 287,745,626 bushels of wheat, 760,944,540 bushels of Indian corn, 3,011,996 bales of cotton, 100,102,357 pounds of wool, 514,092,683 pounds of butter, 53,492,153 pounds of cheese, orchard products valued at to \$47,335,189,

market-garden products \$20,719,229. But I must content myself in passing over the vast number and amount of items that go to make up the value and importance of this great industry. The question very properly arises *how* do these products directly affect the *substantial* interests of the country?

I invite your attention for a moment, while I attempt to solve this problem.

The export of agricultural products for the year ending June 30, 1873, are as follows: 39,204,285 bushels wheat, value \$51,452,204; 2,562,086 barrels wheat flour, value \$19,381,664; 38,541,930 bushels Indian corn, value \$23,794,694; corn meal, value \$1,474,827; 482,410 bushels barley, value \$323,187; rye and rye flour, value \$515,676; oats 714,072 bushels, value 290,575; 2,609,254 bales cotton, value \$227,243,069, to which should be added a considerable amount of manufactured cotton.

You will observe I have omitted a large amount of products for fear I should weary the House.

But I have approximated my object, and have given you the figures of the few staple productions for the year 1870, and some of the products exported during the year ending June 30, 1873. Again, sir, this great industry affects the substantial interests of the country by not only producing bread, meat, and clothing, but it furnishes the basis of transportation. The honorable gentleman from Iowa, [Mr. WILSON,] in his speech on interstate commerce, declares from his standpoint that "the want of proper facilities to transport four hundred million bushels of grain is the main object sought;" but in addition to that five hundred thousand tons of pork have been packed in this locality during the last year, and as many tons of live hogs are moved easterly each year, and nearly all the surplus beef and mutton, 510,025 head of cattle and 145,016 head of sheep having been shipped by rail from Chicago during the year ending June 30, 1873. Again, sir, the vast amount of agricultural products necessitates the employment and support of thousands of men termed dealers and middle-men. These products become the great commodities of commerce; in fact railroads, rivers, lakes, canals, and the ocean are dependencies on the productions of the farmer.

These statements, which are very meager, show something of the real and substantial acquisitions of the country. Commerce and trade, invaluable in themselves, are in fact ideal; exchange of commodities is not an acquisition in fact; money passing from one man's pocket to another's is not a real accumulation, but agricultural products are real, substantial accumulations. "Grain," says Adam Smith, "is the regulating commodity by which all commodities are fairly measured and determined." How impressive this principle of political economy as developed in the late panic. Panics are the financial epidemics that test the financial ability of men. They challenge confidence, and not unfrequently shake financial marts to their very center. During the late panic it was reported that in Wall street, New York, which is reputed to be the great financial *ménagerie*, where *bulls* and *bears* hold undisputed sway, not unfrequently the paper of the great railroad king, who is estimated to be worth from fifty to one hundred million dollars, was hawked about the streets with strong collaterals without negotiation. Trust companies, bankers, brokers, and money-shavers were in a perfect frenzy; a dark and portentous cloud seemed to lower over the whole country; a financial paralysis was the result. Then commenced that fearful process, *shrinkage*, and fortunes withered as new-mown grass before

the noonday sun. It was said by my honorable colleague, [Mr. MERRIAM,] in his speech on banking and currency, that a millionaire of New Jersey "disclaiming forever his vast possessions, assumed the attitude of injured innocence exiled from his hard-earned many millions, stood before us a confessed pauper," a victim of the panic. What avail then were bank balances, bonds, stocks, promises to pay?

But, sir, there was a silver lining to that fearful cloud. The granges who hold the granaries of the world came to the rescue; they threw their granary-doors open; British gold came to us by the million. For what? For bread. The agricultural products of the country were then appreciated; the balance of trade began to turn in our favor. *Grain was indeed a reality*; confidence founded on real balances began to return; the panic was appeased, the country was saved—and by what? By agricultural products. And but for this reality our country might now be humiliated in bankruptcy. Sir, agriculturists ask no gratitude; but ought not the Congress of this great nation to manifest some considerations of respect and interest, and be willing to foster this great industry upon which the country depends so much? And yet, sir, when the representatives of the farmer ask the mere pittance of a report containing valuable information, stimulating industry and advising economy and frugality, gentlemen array themselves in all their powers of "*tutored*" eloquence, and lift their hands in holy horror at the awful prodigality of the friends of the farmer who propose to print and distribute two hundred and fifty thousand copies of the report on agriculture at the expense of the Government.

I was amused and interested by the remarks of the honorable gentleman from New Jersey, [Mr. PHELPS,] who caught this anti-agricultural spirit of enomy and made this notable declaration as the prelude to his deliverance, which was uttered with tutored eloquence. He says: "I believe that a privilege for the few is an injustice to the many." This was wondrous strange to me, a declaration that demands qualification; for in its literal application it contravenes the great principles of charity and Christian benevolence. The American Government recognizes no such contracted principle of faction, but, on the contrary, its very genius is to obtain that best of all evidence of a good government, the comfort, the happiness, the thrift of the masses, even at the *apparent* expense of the favored few, and the result of such action has been munificent, but not unjust.

But who did the gentleman mean by the few and who by the many? By the census of 1870 we have 5,863,707 farmers, planters, and agricultural laborers. I understand that farmers constitute three-fourths of the voters, and by far the largest number of the tax-payers of the country. I notice a statement in the Bulletin in which Iowa is reported to have 60.07 per cent. farmers; Kansas, 59 per cent.; Minnesota, 56.65 per cent.; Wisconsin, 54.53 per cent.; Nebraska, 52.73 per cent.; Missouri, 52.20 per cent.; Illinois, 50.32 per cent.; Michigan, 46.39 per cent.; New York, 25 per cent.; Pennsylvania, 24.03 per cent.; Connecticut, 22.56 per cent., and the manufacturing States generally less.

But, sir, I make great allowance for this masterly effort of the gentleman as touching this "ghost" that so haunts him—two hundred and fifty thousand copies of the Agricultural Report to be given to the farmers of the country! That would be a tax *per capita* of say five mills. Was it strange that this ghost would not down at his bidding? He said, "not twenty-five hundred, not five thousand, but two hundred and fifty thousand!" His mind was greatly exercised; shocking enough to wake up any millionaire of the country. Not only

was he horrified, but he expressed his admiration of the "audacity" of the gentleman from Iowa who reported the resolution to print. Audacious wretch! And he calls up his "indefatigable friend" from Maine for his infidelity to economy. Surely *he* has not been delinquent. And more; he arraigns the "father of the House," because he "utterly refused to prophesy." But mark, he lifts the cloud from the brow of the "brave and eloquent" gentleman from New York, my distinguished colleague, [Mr. WOODFORD,] much to my delight. But now he apprehends the "inexplicable decision;" it was the grangers; and he serves up a delectable dish to the grangers of New Jersey. He says: "Who wants the franking privilege? I pause for reply. The grangers want it. I am not a granger; I do not want to give them what they want. I say it very boldly. I do not like granger principles."

Sir, that settles the question between the gentleman and the grangers of New Jersey, and I understand there are not a few in that State. But henceforth there will not be found a granger in that State so poor as to do him reverence.

But what are the principles of the grangers, that so nauseate and disgust the gentleman? It is due the grangers, that are so roughly handled, to inquire; therefore, I read from their platform, to wit:

To develop a better and higher manhood and womanhood among ourselves to enhance the comforts and attractions of our homes and strengthen our attachment to our pursuits; to foster mutual understanding and co-operation; to maintain inviolate our laws, and to emulate each other in labor; to diversify our crops, and crop no more than we can cultivate; to systematize our work and calculate intelligently on probabilities; to discountenance the credit system, the fashion system, and every other system tending to prodigality and bankruptcy.

What awful declarations! How they grate on the ear of the highly cultivated and sensitive mind!

Mr. Speaker, these are the avowed principles that brought the honorable gentleman to his feet to "boldly" express his disgust. But, sir, I differ with the gentleman, and with "untutored" eloquence shall approve, advocate, and sustain this platform as worthy of all commendation. I know nothing of the detail of this organization, but, coming from the farm and expecting to return to it, these declarations meet my hearty approval; and for their furtherance I ask this House to pass the bill under consideration, as conducive to the advancement and success of the greatest and most important industry in the country. I deprecate the necessity that justifies organizations whose province it is to foster special industries; but, sir, the necessity seems to have arisen when the farmers of this country are called upon to protect themselves.

There is manifestly a disposition in this Congress to *undervalue* the importance of agriculture. As I have said before, *forty-three* gentlemen of the House have put themselves on record in favor of a resolution, "without unnecessary delay to wind up, discontinue, and abolish the Department of Agriculture by the 1st day of July, 1875." This was frank, open, and manly; far more so, in my estimation, than to withhold the printing and prevent the free distribution of reports, seeds, &c., which is the peculiar province of this department, and without which it becomes valueless. The genius of this Government permits no such stinted measure. Education, commerce, manufactures, railroads, mining, and internal improvements generally have received liberally of the Government. What has been the result? *These* aids "to the few have not proven an injustice to the many," but have resulted in developments and successes that make ours the noblest, the freest, and the best Government on earth, and if

continued will yet crown us the almoners of the civilized world. Shall the agriculturist be ignored? I trust not. Let us have an Executive Department of Agriculture and Industry; bring into that Department all kindred interests—public lands, labor in its relation to education and capital, transportation of agricultural products, economic plants, preservation of timber, prevention of cruelty to animals, fish culture, and the many interests appropriately connected therewith. But, sir, I must hope against hope, unless there comes a change over not a few who now grace the Halls of Congress.

Sir, I think the farmers of this country have reason to complain. I have been not a little exercised in my mind on this subject. I charged the honorable gentleman from Indiana some days since with expressions of low estimate of the Agricultural Department by declaring an improvement to the building as unworthy and as a matter of "*mere fancy*." I will do him no injustice. He did favor agriculture. So does the honorable gentleman from Iowa, [Mr. KASSON,] and also the gentleman from New Jersey. *But it is to favor agriculture as it has been* rather than as it is and ought to be. It is in fact to honor us as worthy to labor and toil, and feed on hog and hominy. But when we assert that we are entitled to a place in the great army of progression; when we seek to make our homes cheerful and happy by the inspiration of the exquisite productions of nature, surrounding our homes with the beautiful flowers so refining and elevating, and desire to enable our wives and daughters to meet us, as we come from the field tired and toil-worn, with the beautiful smiles of heaven, the exquisite flowers to mingle with their smiles, the gentleman from Indiana cries out *mere fancy!* the gentleman from Iowa curls his lip and talks of morning-glories! and the gentleman from New Jersey goes into fits! And herein is the justice and burden of our complaints, it is the low estimate put upon our high vocation. Sir, if there is a man in the land entitled to the comforts, the pleasures, the luxuries of "*sweet home*," it is the farmer. If any ladies in the land are entitled to the enjoyment of the exquisite blandishments of home, it is the wives and daughters of the farmer. If there are young men in the land that the Government is more interested in than others, they are the sons of the farmers of America, born, reared, and employed in that vocation that points directly and constantly up to Him whose munificent benefactions lead them to a living faith in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. For surely "the laborer is worthy of his hire."

Sir, I have sometimes felt humiliated. An ex-member of Congress from Illinois [Mr. FARNSWORTH] openly stigmatized the Commissioner of Agriculture on this floor as a petty peculator, pilfering vegetables from the public gardens for his own table. The honorable gentleman from New York, [Mr. COX,] so noted for his pleasantry—and no one enjoys it more than I do—caricatured the whole fraternity of farmers and convulsed the House with laughter by holding up a woodcut of a choice breeding-sow from Maryland or Pennsylvania, when at the same time, probably, the gentleman's stomach was digesting a choice bit of bacon brought to market by some enterprising farmer. But so far as this gentleman is concerned I ought not to complain, for the farmers of the State of New York settled the account with the gentleman last November much to their gratification if not to his satisfaction. His effort proved to be what the gentleman would call a political "boomerang."

The last Congress refused to print the Agricultural Report, notwithstanding it was prepared at great cost and labor. The present

Congress refuses to distribute the report, and therefore there is no propriety in printing. For some unknown reason to me, communications from members of Congress were published in the papers before the convening of the present session, charging that the printing and distributing of the Agricultural Report would be gross prodigality. I read nothing about the cost of the Medical and Surgical History of the War, and other valuable documents; and I do not make this mention because I am opposed to the printing and distribution of these valuable documents, for I am in favor of the Government printing and distributing reports and scientific works that cannot be so well obtained otherwise, and which may prove a public benefit.

But, sir, I must close my remarks. I only regret my inability to do justice to the farmers of the country in presenting the claims of agriculture, which need not shrink from comparison with any other industry in the country. The farmers as a class must be regarded as the great conservative political power of the nation; no communes, no mobocrats, no strikers, no corner-jobbers, or Black-Friday miscreants are to be found among the farmers. Sir, elevate the agriculturists of the country, and you contribute to the country's safety, to its patriotism, to its stability, to its honor. In conclusion, I quote a few words from the pen of an able writer, which I commend for consideration:

The modest reserve and quiet independence of our rural population have heretofore barred the great interests of agriculture from its proper prominence in the country, while other interests more active and clamorous, with the advantage of association, abundant means, and concentrated effort, have often secured special protection at the expense of the farmer. Unfortunately this disinclination to self-seeking and lack of ambition for public station result too generally in the selection from towns and cities of national legislators from other vocations, some of whom have little knowledge of the peculiar wants of the farming class, and many others may have connections with other interests that may be brought into antagonism with those of agriculture. Farmers are learning their power, and are beginning to exercise it in self-protection if not for their own advantage.

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