

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 1892.

## UNITED STATES BANK.

The following resolution presented by Mr. CLAYTON, was again taken up.

*Resolved,* That a Select Committee be appointed to examine into the affairs of the Bank of the Uni-

ted State, with power to send for persons and papers and to report the result of their enquiries to this House.

Mr. MITCHELL, of South Carolina, went into a full discussion of the necessity of the enquiry, and refutation of the arguments that had been urged against it. He contended, from the acts of the Stockholders, that no immediate necessity for acting on the bill, was, by them, thought to exist, as to prevent this enquiry for want of time. On the other hand, at their late triennial meeting, the whole matter was left to the discretion of the Directors, without any expression of opinion as to this necessity. This application, at this time, was a mere political movement, made by this corporation, which wielded a capital of 60 millions of dollars, with which it was intended to influence this House and the country. From the experience of the transactions of 1819, which he stated at length, Mr. M. contended that a full investigation of the affairs of the Bank was necessary. Without such investigation the House had no evidence but its own statement. Whatever confidence might be reposed in the officers of the institution as private individuals, this House, as guardians of the rights of the people, ought not to be thus easily satisfied.— The Bank should not be the only judge of its own case. The vail of mystery which had enveloped its transactions should be drawn aside, and its affairs exposed to the House when they asked an extension of their monopoly for 20 years longer.

Mr. DENNY next addressed the House against the resolution. He contended its object was unnecessary, and the delay it would occasion extremely prejudicial to the Bank and to the country. Mr. D. said the gentlemen friendly to the resolution, were hostile to the Bank, and let it come out of the investigation in triumph, still they would vote against the bill for rechartering it. Their object was something beyond mere enquiry. It was to defeat the measure by delay. Any abuses that might be feared could be amply guarded against by modifications of the charter. He hoped the resolution would not be adopted.

Mr. WATMOUGH said, that having moved the vote to be taken on the consideration of the resolution, he was the only person to whom the charge of smothering enquiry could in any degree apply. The course of the debate had shewn the propriety of the proposition he had originally submitted. As the debate had given the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. McDuffie) an opportunity of refuting the charges that had been urged, he did not regret it. To show that he had no wish to smother enquiry but to facilitate it—so it might be made promptly and with effect, he submitted the following amendment: strike out all after the word "*Resolved*" and insert—

“That the Committee of Ways and Means be instructed to inquire whether the Directors of the Bank of the United States, or of its branches have, in any case, demanded or received usurious interest, either by issuing the notes of broken Banks or by disguised loans, or bills of exchange; also, whether the said Directors have permitted the Trustees of foreign stockholders, in any case, to vote for directors; also, whether any understanding has existed between the Bank and Brokers, to job in stocks, contrary to the charter; and whether the government deposits have been used to enhance its own debts; also, whether any subsidies or loans have been given, directly or indirectly, to printers, editors, and lawyers, for purposes other than the regular business of the Bank; also, whether any distinction has been made in favor of any particular merchants in selling bills of exchange; also, whether any practices have been used with the State Banks, to induce them to apply for a renewal of the charter of the United States Bank; and also, whether the issues of the Bank are excessive, and whether the means of the Bank are adequate to meet their engagements; and that the said Committee have authority to send for persons and papers and to examine witnesses on oath.”

Mr. MITCHELL, of South Carolina, said, the Directors should be brought to answer on oath. He moved the following amendment to the amendment: After the word "engagements," to insert the following:—

"And to inquire of the Directors, if they have, in any manner or form, acted dishonorably, unjustly, or contrary to law."

Mr. **CAMBRELENG** said, he considered the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. Watmough,] as an evasion of all proper and just enquiry—a mere pretext to get rid of the necessity for investigation. After the course taken by a majority of the Committee of Ways and Means—after the Chairman of that Committee has stated his belief that the charges are destitute of foundation, shall they be sent to that Committee for scrutiny? Those gentlemen who thought proper to take that course, should take the responsibility of it upon themselves. It was unprecedented in Parliamentary inquiry, that those opposed to investigation should have the management of it. If any enquiry be made, it was due to the Bank and its officers, as well as to the country, that it be thorough, and be made by those whose feelings will make it so. An enquiry like that now proposed, will satisfy nobody, but those who are already satisfied.

Mr. **ELLSWORTH** did not think that

Mr. **ELLSWORTH** did not think that any sentiment prevailed in the country or in the House that the officers of the Bank had conducted unfairly or corruptly. He thought the proposition to incorporate the matters suggested for enquiry into a definite shape would facilitate the investigation. In the range presented in its original state, it might have lasted beyond the present session. The friends of the Bank did not wish to evade enquiry but they thought if the charter was not granted the present session, it was gone forever.

Mr. **FOSTER** said the committee



Mr. FOSTER said the argument against a full investigation of the affairs of the Bank that it would take up time, never came with less grace than from the gentlemen by whom it has been urged. He would appeal to the recollection of all who had been in the last Congress on this subject. Two years ago the President introduced the subject of the Bank to the attention of the House in his message. It was referred to the Committee of Ways and Means. A report displaying the highest ability in favor of the Bank, was then made to the House. A year ago the President again noticed the subject of the Bank. One of his colleagues (Mr. Wayne) then moved to refer the subject to a Select Committee. The friends of the Bank resisted the proposition,

and it was overruled—at the commencement of this session the reference to a Select Committee was again refused. After waiting six weeks from the commencement of the session the memorial of the Bank for its recharter was presented. The same gentleman moved to refer that to a Select Committee. That motion was also overruled and it was referred to the Committee of Ways and Means. For two years past there have been continual endeavors to obtain an investigation of the affairs of the Bank without success. Now when a bill has been reported to perpetuate its monopoly for twenty years longer, it was first said by the gentleman from South Carolina, (Mr. McDuffie,) you have come a month too late—but the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Watmough) now says, in effect, we can trust none but the pledged friends of the Bank with this enquiry—the investigation of its enemies will destroy it. Sir, if this course is pursued with

an institution of such magnitude, wielding such immense influence, and controlling the property of such a vast number of people, is it not time for alarm? Is this corporation so sacred that we are not to be permitted to look into its concerns—but are bound to recharter it on faith? It was only by the intervention of a postponement, that the members of the House had been permitted even to speak on the subject. The House recollect the attempt made to stifle all debate. As to the pretence of delay, if the Committee of Ways and Means are intended to discharge their duty, will they not require as much time as any other Committee? The refusal of a Select Committee was to be regarded as a distinct determination to stifle the enquiries of those who felt interested in making them; and the

friends of the Bank must take the consequences.—  
There was one subject of enquiry which he would  
add in a more definite form than was contained in the  
amendment. It might explain the course of certain  
leading newspapers. He wished to add an enquiry  
into the names of the Editors and printers of news-  
papers who have been accommodated by the Bank,  
or its branches, with loans above the sum of 5,000  
dollars.

Mr. McDUFFIE said he had changed no opinion he had before expressed--on the other hand, his impressions had been confirmed. The charges against the Bank had vanished into thin air. Though he believed there was not a shadow of foundation for the enquiry, he had come to the conclusion that the only effectual mode of putting an end to the false clamor on the subject was to permit the enquiry to go forward in any form that those opposed to the