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Patriotism and Cheese.

SPEECH  
OF  
HON. JOHN M. ALLEN,  
OF MISSISSIPPI,  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Wednesday, June 29, 1898.

The House having under consideration the bill (H. R. 10686) to increase the daily Army rations by adding one-quarter of a pound of American cheese thereto—

Mr. ALLEN said:

Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to discuss this proposition to make cheese a part of the regular ration for the Army if I can be permitted to do so without being charged with a want of patriotism. I want to say a few words about the patriots and what constitutes patriotism. The distinguished gentleman from Ohio, General GROSVENOR, in his speech before the Republican convention of Ohio the other day, in speaking of those who do not train with the Republican party in this House, said:

And if you will notice the passage of the fifty-million war-emergency bill in Congress, it marks the last echo of patriotism of nine out of every ten of those gentlemen. They were willing to gain some sort of popularity before the people of the country by shouting about the suffering reconcentrados of Cuba. But when the money has been asked for for the suffering soldiers of the Union, nine out of ten of them have voted "no" on every appropriation bill.

They were willing to demand that the President should send his Army and his ships to bombard Havana, but when they have been asked to raise the money to carry on the war, all but 6 of them in the House, and all but 8 of them in the Senate, voted "no" upon every proposition.

I have also noticed where the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. OVERSTREET], the secretary of the Republican Congressional committee, in a carefully prepared interview published in the Washington Post on the 29th of May, among other reflections on the political organization to which I belong, said:

The Democratic leaders in Congress, who were so loud in their declamation for war and seemingly so patriotic in their determination, were really prompted by a desire to take advantage of the situation to foist their financial fallacies upon the country. The people have noticed that while the Democrats in Congress claimed a willingness to lay aside all partisanship for the purpose of aiding the Administration in conducting war against Spain, when it came to the test and a vote was required, voted almost unanimously against the resolution which authorized the President to take the initiative in the war and insisted upon recognizing the independence of Cuba, an act which events have demonstrated would have been disastrous, and voted against the necessary provisions to raise funds with which to carry on the war. At each step, instead of manifesting their cordial sympathy, which they had for nearly a year proclaimed, they insisted in bringing to the front plans for the "coinage of the seigniorage" in the Treasury, and the issue of greenbacks and other fallacies of finance, which shows clearly that they are more interested in continuing the effort for the success of the free silver cause than in maintaining the national honor and driving the Spaniards from the Cuban Island.

QUOTAS OF DEMOCRATIC STATES.

When the \$50,000,000 appropriation was authorized a great number of Democrats took occasion to pledge the support of the people of their States for the aid of the nation, and in eloquent terms declare their intention to stand by the flag and furnish all the men necessary from their respective States. Our people have observed that in the call for volunteers there is

hardly a State where Democratic Representatives so eloquently pledged their people to the cause that has furnished its quota under the call.

Mr. Speaker, in my judgment, there was never a more unjust and baseless accusation brought against any political organization than the charge that the Democrats and Populists in this House had exhausted their patriotism when they voted for the first \$50,000,000 appropriation. If ever a set of men "marched up to the rack, fodder or no fodder," patronage or no patronage, cheese or no cheese, and gave their unstinted support to an Administration opposed to them in politics, the Democrats and Populists of this House have done so in their support of the Administration in the conduct of this war.

We have believed, Mr. Speaker, that when our country is engaged in a war with Spain or any other foreign country we should forget all partisanship—forget, so far as measures necessary to successful conduct of the war are concerned, whether we are Democrats or Republicans, and only remember that we are American citizens. [Applause.]

And thus believing, we have stood here recognizing William McKinley as the President of our common country, and have given him and his Administration everything asked for. I do not believe that the history of this or any other country will show money as lavishly appropriated, with as few restrictions on its use, and with as little opposition from the political opponents of the Administration that was to expend it; and we have voted almost without question for every measure asked for by the Administration in aid of the successful prosecution of the war.

It is true, Mr. Speaker, that most of us on this side of the House did vote against the proposition to issue bonds. There was more than \$100,000,000 of unnecessary surplus in the Treasury; there was a large amount of silver seigniorage lying idle in the Treasury uncoined. We favored utilizing these resources of the Government first, and then, if more money should be needed, we favored issuing greenbacks or Treasury notes to carry on the war, but it was our vote against the bond issue that, with most Republicans, stamps us as unpatriotic.

I confess, Mr. Speaker, that in the minds of many gentlemen on that side of the House no man can be a patriot who does not stand for and vote for every proposition to issue bonds. Some gentlemen regard that as the very highest test of patriotism. Dewey, with his brave men, might be willing to go into what appeared to be the very jaws of death, as he did at Manila; or Hobson and his brave crew might exhibit their willingness to go to the bottom with the *Merrimac*; but neither of them would be patriots in the eyes of some people unless they favored every proposition to issue bonds.

I do not know, Mr. Speaker, whether the proposition to issue cheese will be made a test of loyalty or not, but I hesitate now to raise my voice against the addition of cheese to the regular army ration lest I be accused of a want of patriotism. But being an old and experienced soldier and having had much experience with rations and the want of them [laughter], I might be permitted to express some opinion on this subject. I want to say that my experience was with the rations issued to an army that, judged by its achievements, was as good as the world ever saw. And when I look over the bill of fare now issued as the rations to our soldiers, I can but think of what a banqueting feast it would have been to the soldiers who made such a reputation for soldierly qualities on both sides in this nation

thirty-five years ago. Just listen to this bill of fare. This is the daily ration now required by law to be furnished the soldiers:

THE RATION.

A ration is the allowance for subsistence of one person for one day, and consists of the meat, the bread, the vegetable, the coffee and sugar, the seasoning, and the soap and candle components. (Paragraph 1251, Army Regulations, 1895.) See also paragraph 1258, *ibid*:

Article.	Quantities per ration.		Quantities per 100 rations.		
	Ounces.	Gills.	Pounds.	Ounces.	Gallons.
<i>Meat components.</i>					
Fresh beef.....	20	-----	125	-----	-----
Or fresh mutton, when the cost does not exceed that of beef.....	20	-----	125	-----	-----
Or pork.....	12	-----	75	-----	-----
Or bacon.....	12	-----	75	-----	-----
Or salt beef.....	12	-----	137	2	-----
Or, when meat can not be furnished, dried fish.....	14	-----	87	2	-----
Or pickled fish.....	12	-----	112	2	-----
Or fresh fish.....	18	-----	112	2	-----
<i>Bread components.</i>					
Flour.....	18	-----	112	2	-----
Or soft bread.....	18	-----	112	2	-----
Or hard bread.....	16	-----	100	-----	-----
Or corn meal.....	20	-----	125	-----	-----
Baking powder for troops in the field, when necessary to enable them to bake their own bread.....	16	-----	4	-----	-----
<i>Vegetable components.</i>					
Beans.....	22	-----	15	-----	-----
Or pease.....	22	-----	15	-----	-----
Or rice.....	10	-----	10	-----	-----
Or hominy.....	10	-----	10	-----	-----
Potatoes.....	16	-----	100	-----	-----
Or potatoes, 12½ ounces, and onions, 3½ ounces.....	16	-----	100	-----	-----
Or potatoes, 11½ ounces, and canned tomatoes, 4½ ounces; or 4½ ounces of other fresh vegetables not canned, when they can be obtained in the vicinity of the post or transported in a wholesome condition from a distance.....	16	-----	100	-----	-----
<i>Coffee and sugar components.</i>					
Coffee, green.....	12	-----	10	-----	-----
Or roasted coffee.....	12	-----	8	-----	-----
Or tea, green or black.....	12	-----	12	-----	-----
Sugar.....	22	-----	15	-----	-----
Or molasses.....	16	-----	10	-----	2
Or cane sirup.....	16	-----	10	-----	2
<i>Seasoning components.</i>					
Vinegar.....	16	-----	2	-----	1
Salt.....	16	-----	4	-----	-----
Pepper, black.....	2	-----	-----	4	-----
<i>Soap and candle components.</i>					
Soap.....	16	-----	4	-----	-----
Candles (when illuminating oil is not furnished by the Quartermaster's Department).....	2	-----	1	8	-----

Why, Mr. Speaker, when I was a soldier, this ration cooked, as we knew how to cook, would have furnished a feast more tempting than any that could be set before me now by Delmonico. It is admitted the Commissary Department is opposed to adding the cheese ration. My understanding is the regular soldiers are well satisfied with the present ration. If there are complaints from the volunteers who are unaccustomed to the hardships of war, I think they will cease when they become inured to camp life.

I am willing to do everything necessary for the good and comfort of our soldiers. But if you want good soldiers, you do not want to coddle them too much. You hear a great deal of talk about "hard-tack" and "sow belly," but I have not been real hungry since the war that I did not crave hard-tack and bacon.

Why, Mr. Speaker, a man with a good appetite who is really hungry, who can get some hard-tack or baker's bread and a piece of bacon, put a stick through it, hold it over the fire and broil it, and drip the grease on his bread and eat it has what is to me a very good repast, if he can get enough of it. When I get hungry, as I have many a time, I think much more about broiled or fried bacon and bread than I do about terrapin and champagne or lobster a la Newberger or punch a la Romaine. [Laughter and applause.]

Why, sir, last year I bought a few boxes of hard-tack and took them down to some of my old Confederate friends just as a reminder of old times. [Laughter.] I do not want our soldiers confined to hard-tack and bacon, but you see by this bill of fare they are not confined to it. You do not want to overdo this thing and get your ration too big. Our Army is not going out just for the purpose of eating. [Laughter and applause.] They have other business in hand to which they will properly attend if you will give them a reasonable amount of food and a chance to fight.

Look at the Regular Army, who have been furnished with the rations now prescribed by law. You will not see a finer, healthier, or hardier set of men anywhere. They have plenty of such things as experience has demonstrated were best for them. Let the Government see that the contractors do not swindle them in the quality of the food furnished. I doubt very much if this proposition to furnish cheese is made as much in the interest of the soldiers as it is in the interest of the people who have cheese for sale.

Mr. Speaker, so far as I am individually concerned and those who cooperate with me in this House, we want to give to the Administration every possible facility for the proper conduct of this war. I do not believe there will be found on either side of this House anyone voting to obstruct a successful prosecution of this war: it should not be a partisan war.

I do not believe any party would attempt, for partisan purposes, to hamper or impede the Administration in the conduct of this war, and I for one enter my protest against the efforts which have been or may hereafter be made to make political capital in favor of or against any political party, especially when there is no more ground for it than exists up to this time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to my Republican friends, let us lay aside our bickerings and contentions until we have "licked" the Spaniards [applause], and then we can resume our partisan quarrels and fight it out before the American people. [Applause.] In the face of a common enemy let us put efforts for partisan advantage behind us. I do not intend that any of you shall display any more patriotism than I or my people.

It will be seen that the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. OVERSTREET], who seems to have felt he had discharged his duty to the country when he delivered his interview against the Democratic party, and who, I believe, has ever since been absent from his seat, took occasion to reflect on the patriotism of some of our States by saying they had not at that time furnished their quota of troops. I think the States have been remarkably prompt in supplying the troops called for.

But I want to call attention to the fact that in most of our Southern States conditions are very different from those in which most of you reside. In my own State the majority of our population is colored. The call having been made in the States according to population, and no call for colored troops from the State, has left our quota to be filled from the whites. Besides, we have no surplus population. The war found our people all at work; most of them are farmers; they had commenced their crops, and it is a more serious problem for a man dependent on his work to give up his job or his crop than one who has nothing to do.

They doubted if their services would be needed, for they did not believe that with our 75,000,000 of the greatest people on the face of the earth, with our unlimited resources and unlimited credit, with our 4 per cent bonds worth \$1.20 on the dollar, that a nation like Spain, incomparably our inferior in numbers, in wealth, in intelligence, and in all the attributes that make good soldiers, with her 4 per cent bonds worth 30 cents on the dollar, one-fourth of what ours are worth—they did not think it could be much of a war, and that it would necessarily soon be over.

And if they did not go as readily as some others, under these conditions, our quotas have been filled reasonably fast, and you will find that when it comes to fighting, the troops from no State in this Union will show more courage or do better fighting than the Mississippians. They will go where ordered, and I am willing for the patriotism of my section to be tested by the way they discharge their duties as soldiers rather than by whether their Representative votes for or against bond issues or for or against the cheese ration. [Laughter.]

I notice the gentleman from Ohio, General GROSVENOR, when called down by an editorial in the Washington Post about his speech, to which I have already referred, in a card in answer to that editorial threatened at some later day to furnish a catalogue of the crimes or votes of the Democrats as evidencing their want of patriotism in connection with the prosecution of the war. I suppose these charges will be chucked into the RECORD just about time of adjournment to be used for campaign purposes, and I suppose those of us who vote against this proposition to furnish a market for the cheese makers will be held up as obstructing the successful prosecution of the war, and it may be that the secretary of the Congressional Republican committee will supplement his charges against the Democratic party with this accusation. But, Mr. Speaker, I am going now to make a proposition that I think is a better test of fervent patriotism than a vote for or against bonds or a vote for or against cheese, and I make it in the most perfect good faith. It is understood we are going to adjourn in a few days. I am willing to head the list of a company of Congressmen to be commanded by General GROSVENOR [applause] to start from here and go down to Cuba and join Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders right at the front. [Applause.]

A MEMBER (on the Democratic side). Cheese or no cheese.

Mr. ALLEN. Cheese or no cheese, and I will tell you another thing I will engage to do, notwithstanding there are a great many more Republicans here than Democrats. I will take my stand and let them form on me, and for every Republican on that side of the House that you will get to march up and take his stand beside me to go in that company I will furnish a Democrat from over here. [Applause.] And I tell you when they see us coming, and when they see the gentleman from Ohio heading this band of gallant Congressmen who helped to bring on this war, then the war will soon be over and we will not have much more use for cheese. [Laughter.]

That proposition is made in perfect good faith. I am ready to go, and I am ready to go from here; and, so far as I am concerned, I do not want any commission. I want to occupy the same high and distinguished position in the next war that I occupied in the last one, and I want to show "Old Glory" that I can do just as good fighting under her as I did when I fought against her as a private soldier. [Applause.]

Mr. BAIRD. Do you think the Spanish could stand cheese and Congressmen both?

Mr. ALLEN. I do not know how the Spanish are on cheese. I wanted to discuss this matter of patriotism. I was not much in favor of war. I was not so anxious for a fight. I was one of the people over here who thought that, with the idea of liberty that had been instilled into us from our earliest youth and of which we had talked so much and prized so highly, we had taught the Cubans to aspire to it and try for it—that in their attempts to throw off the yoke of a very bad Government and be free it was a shame that our Government should be spending millions in helping Spain and keeping people who wanted to help the struggling Cubans in their effort to obtain independence from doing so. [Applause.]

I wanted a long time ago to acknowledge their belligerency. I wanted to acknowledge their independence. I was not anxious for war, but if the war is properly conducted it may not be a bad thing to put a war in which we are all together between us and the terrible war in which we were against each other. But this war has been a godsend to the Republican party. It has let you out of the trouble you were in over the failure of the Dingley bill to produce sufficient revenue, and has made the people for the present forget many of your other shortcomings.

Mr. Speaker, I am a member of that great committee of this House that reports the bills that appropriates the money for the conduct of this war, and I appeal to the chairman to know if any Democrat on that committee has ever shown any disposition to withhold from this Administration anything that was asked for in aid of the successful prosecution of this war. [Applause.] Then when that committee has discharged its duty and its bills have been brought into the House, I say, for the members of the Democratic party, that if the Administration conducting this war had been their own, they could not have shown more disposition to intrust that Administration with unlimited sums of money to be expended in the discretion of the Administration than we have done here.

I do not want to criticise anybody now. There are many things being done that do not meet my approval, and I have felt like criticising them; but, just as I said a while ago, while we are doing up Spain let us not be trying to do up each other.

I do not want to make any capital off of anybody, but I do appeal to this Administration, while we are exhibiting this confidence, while we are placing in its hands unlimited amounts of money—I do appeal to the Administration and appeal to the Committee on Military Affairs in charge of bills here affecting this war to see that our confidence is not abused; to see that all parts of this country have a fair showing; to see that nothing is done as a matter of favoritism, but that all that is done is done in the interest of the whole people of our common country.

If they will do that for us, I want to say to you, my friends, that as an American citizen no man on your side of the House will applaud President McKinley and his Administration more heartily than I when he conducts this war to a successful termination with just as little stealing as is absolutely necessary. [Laughter.] We expect some, of course. We do not expect to get through without some. What I want is, gentlemen, that it shall be done with absolutely as little as possible. I want the stealing and jobs kept out of it, if it can be done; we want to be loyal supporters of the Administration that does it. We may differ about methods of raising revenue to do it, but we will not differ about any method when it becomes necessary, and it is shown that that method is necessary to a successful prosecution of this war.

I have felt, Mr. Speaker, that it was not improper for some Democrat to say this much in behalf of our party. I am right with you, shoulder to shoulder, in this struggle. We may differ about whether cheese is necessary or not. That is a mere matter of detail. You know in these matters of detail the greatest latitude is permitted when you agree on the general proposition.

Now the question of cheese or no cheese, with that sort of bill of fare already in existence, is a mere matter of detail, and not a test of patriotism one way or the other. If it is necessary to the soldiers, give it to them. If it is necessary to raise the price of cheese and give a good market to the cheese interests, why, let us postpone taking care of the cheese makers until we take care of Spain and not mix it with war measures.

But I want to be understood about my proposition to make up this company of Congressmen to go to Cuba. I will tell you what is the truth. The American people would spare a company of Congressmen as readily as any company that has ever gone to the front. [Great laughter.] There has been some complaint that there was too much talking and not enough disposition to fight up here. Now, I say I do not doubt that the people will look with much complacency after the battle on the list of dead Congressmen, especially those who want our places.

But I make that proposition in good faith, and I will join a company of Congressmen. We will not ask any pay, we will not even ask cheese; we will just ask the Government to give us this ration, and will stand on our Congressional salaries. [Great laughter.] That is better than the other boys down there get. [Renewed laughter.] We will not ask any increase—just the Congressional salary. The Government gives us this ration, and we will go down there, and I tell you what is the fact—I know if they can get a full company of such men as I am, it will not take us long to bring this thing to a termination. [Great laughter.]

Just think about a company of such men as I am being led by the gentleman from Ohio, charging the enemy. Why, gentlemen,



the flag would soon float over Morro Castle. I want to say one more word about that ration. I went into the Confederate army weighing about 100 pounds. I was a sickly boy. You never would have thought I would have come to be what I am if you had seen me then. [Great laughter.]

You never would have expected it. When I went into the army and got to eating rations from a commissary that was very poorly supplied, I fattened on it; I grew on it. With a very much inferior ration to this, I came out an able-bodied man without any necessity, even if I had been on the successful side, for a pension.

I want to test my patriotism by the side of some of you patriots, and I want to do it in the usual way, by fighting. I am not a great fighter. I have fought some. I never went in without fear; always scared; but still I went, feeling like the fellow that addressed the rabbit when he was running from the battlefield, when he said that if he did not have any more reputation at stake than the rabbit, he would have been going too. [Laughter.]

I never got over this fear. After the war, for thirty years I used to be punished in my dreams by the yankees being after me. I would see the bluecoats all around me and not much chance to get away. But now I see people who were with me then. I see Butler and WHEELER and Fitzhugh Lee and Oates and Rosser and a great many others who were there fighting the bluecoats and who are now wearing them. [Applause.]

I have not the same fear that one old Confederate expressed to a gentleman when writing a letter not long ago. He wrote to know if he was going to the war. The Confederate said no; he did not believe he would go. He had been thinking of it right smart, and he would not mind to go, but he did not believe he would go. He said he wouldn't mind to go, and he thought he could make it all right with the boys who were living, but the thing that troubled him was that if he were to wake up at the day of judgment with a blue uniform on, what the boys who were dead and didn't know anything about this war would say. [Laughter.] He said they would look up and see him with a blue uniform on, and they would say, "Deserted, damn him." [Laughter.]

Now, I am not afraid of that; I am not afraid of not being able to make it all right with the boys already dead; I am not afraid of the blue uniform; but I tell you what I want is to stop all this business about what political party is going to fight this war. I say that all the troops you want from Mississippi you are going to get, and you are going to get them just as good as ever shot a gun. [Applause.] And you are going to get them from every other State represented here by Democrats, Republicans, and Populists.

Now, let us make a little armistice here to-day, and let us clean up Spain, and then I will give you all you want of Democratic and Republican politics. [Laughter and applause.]

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