

tion, rivalry stands in the way of their combination, and as yet there is a degree of patriotism which to an extent controls those in the management of the railroads and the vast capital invested in them.

But, sir, it might come in the future; and while it is scarcely proper to expect such a calamity, there is a time when it is fair to object to a combination such as is presented in this bill enriching railroads with lands which should be taken back and given to actual settlers under the beneficent legislation of our country to soldiers who so gallantly served it in its great peril.

Why, Mr. Speaker, the 200,000,000 acres given to corporations would make seven States like Pennsylvania, and the gift of this vast domain to railroads can scarcely be said to make your country strong. I read in a newspaper that a syndicate of a railroad corporation had in the West 10,000 acres of wheat. I presume that two hundred men could put the seed in the ground and reap and garner it with the modern machinery used in husbandry. Ten or fifteen men could watch and care for this great farm during the winter; but what becomes of those not so employed? Where do they go? Their homes are not there, nor can they settle upon lands. Thrown out of employment they must become what are known in this country as "tramps," and the man who would work for a living if he could get employment is remitted to the highway and to want. Under the ragged clothes of a man called a tramp there may beat a heart as faithful to the government as yours, and no man with proper feeling will refuse a crust of bread to hungry humanity thrown out of work and cast upon cold charity, even though he be called by the opprobrious name of tramp. . . .

I cannot but think it will be better for this country to be

in the hands of small land-owners, especially when as at present power is so centralized in this federal city, and when the jurisdiction of the courts of the national government has been so extended that the people scarcely find a settlement of their rights of property and person in the State courts. Why, sir, I can remember when the American citizen no more felt the power of the federal courts than the air he breathed. When money is centralized in the hands of a few, when a few men dominate and control the business of the country, I tremble, sir, for its liberties and wonder if monopolists shall be allowed to shape its future.

The authorized permit of the government, by statute, and arbitrary assumption if enlarged will, in time, absorb the States and their sovereignty, and the pernicious anti-republican and despotic espionage, under which internal revenue is collected, may be extended to all departments of the government.

Twenty-five million acres of land were recently purchased by foreign people in one body, it is said, by some reports, by fraud. I learned last September in California that an English and Scotch company had purchased a vast tract of the red timber land of that State likely to become of great value and not too much of it to monopolize. I know full well, Mr. Speaker, that if you divide the property of this country it could not remain divided. Every one who has a sense of justice in his soul but would look with horror upon the division of property as an act of communism and socialism. To divide would place the idle and the vicious on a level with the intelligent and industrious. From the former it would soon pass away and the balance would be restored. In addition, the absence of all laws of primogeniture is the surest protection against the accumulation of vast landed estates.

To expect that every man should have a home of his own and a part of the land would be Utopian. It would be a dream, and such dreams would be dissipated by the waking senses which come to us in teaching the actual and not the ideal.

But there is a measure of conservatism which should protect the industrious pursuits of the masses of the world. Lands having been given to corporations, if they have not fulfilled their contracts, it is the highest duty of this Congress to forfeit their contracts and take the lands back and fulfil their pledges with the people, made long before the legislation which gave them these vast properties. The citizens of the United States should have these lands for homes, and the government should regard these as sacred trusts.

Mr. Speaker, I view the future of this country with hope, and I have never believed the corporations could control its destinies. As I have said, they cannot combine to control it; but no one can be insensible to the vast power in the hands of a privileged class, and of the influence they have in the legislation of Congress and of the States. It is an unfortunate fact that men are willing to do as a corporation what they would scorn to do as individuals, and they too often forget in the parlor of a corporation the code of morality that governs them as individuals.

At the beginning of the French revolution in 1790 there were issued 9,000,000,000 of assignats, founded upon the public domain, from which it may be estimated how much of that country was held by the governing classes.

The issue of the assignats was a financial experiment and failed. Then came the revolution, and from it the restoration of the land of the country from the State and church to the people by purchase, and from that time France has been divided into small properties. But two nations in the world

could have paid the exactions which were made on France at the end of the war with Germany. France is one; the United States is the other. England could not have paid it. England is owned by a small portion of her people. I have a sincere belief that France will remain a republic, and chiefly from the number of small proprietors.

Our government made these vast concessions, and has also covenants with the people, as it held these lands in trust for their use and benefit. A code of morality that applies to individuals which cannot be applied equally to the government is a fraud and a delusion.

But, sir, the government should be held strictly to the letter of the law, and the people will sustain any such legislation, but beyond that not one step. No part of the lands granted that have been forfeited by the failure to perform the covenants on the part of the companies should remain in their hands one day. And it must be considered as the settled policy of this government that no more of the public domain will be given to corporations.

My time is nearly exhausted, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps there is little more to say on this question. It cannot fail to be noticed with great satisfaction that at a recent national convention there was a declaration made against the importation of foreign laborers by corporations. How wonderfully elastic political opinion is in this country! Its views are as variable and changing as the colors of the kaleidoscope. Why, here in this book upon my desk is a statute passed in 1864, under which foreign labor could be imported, and which expressly provided that the imported man could be mortgaged and held in bondage for a year, and if he built a house his house and land could be sold by summary process on the contract made with him. At that time the war was

raging. To give more accommodation and encouragement to these people, it was declared that they should not be subject to military duty. That statute bears date the 4th of July. It is rather remarkable that the birthday of freedom and liberty and equality should be selected on which to sign such a law. That law was afterward repealed, and did not long disgrace our statute-book.

And now, sir, waking after a long period of inexcusable indifference, the convention at Chicago has declared against any such legislation — in fact for the enactment of such legislation as is necessary to prevent it. During the last Congress the passage of the Chinese bill was steadily resisted upon this floor. The bill first passed was sent back with a veto by the President, and it is a notorious fact that every voice raised on this floor and every vote cast against the bill of this session to make that law effectual was by Republican members, whose convention declares for the policy they have opposed; and who, sir, knows what will be the fate of that bill in the august chamber at the other end of the Capitol, controlled as it is by the political friends of the gentlemen on the other side?

It was my good fortune to be here when the first Chinese bill was passed; and it was my privilege to raise my voice and cast my vote for it; and doubtless the convention soon to meet at Chicago will speak with no uncertain sound on this important question. Too many have already been imported, too many are here now; they interfere with the labor of the American citizen.

Mr. Speaker, what becomes of your tariff and revenue laws? They are questions that can be settled in the future; if they are not correct they can be corrected, and the wisdom is here to do it. They are questions that can be settled in

accordance with the constant change of industrial conditions and require legislation adapted to these conditions. There is no man of sufficient wisdom to anticipate what the economical and financial necessities of this great people will require. Congress is here to attend to that; to legislate for their interests and their wants.

But the question of giving away the lands, the inheritance of the people, cannot be decided by the platform of a national convention. We have the right in this country now, or if not now in the near future, to say who shall come to this country and who shall not come, and we will not permit corporate wealth and power, either foreign or domestic, to control this country and dominate its destinies by the importation of such labor as has been imported within the last two or three years. In the district I have the honor to represent large numbers of Italians, Hungarians, and Bulgarians have been imported. They do not assimilate with our people, and never can any more than the Chinese. They interfere with our own citizens who labor, native and naturalized, and take from them their legitimate employment.

There is no question that should appeal more strongly to the statesman, philanthropist, and patriot than the condition of the laborers of this country. The wonderful skill and ingenuity of the American people has wrought such marvellous improvement in labor-saving machinery, that it, in a large measure, does the work of man, until the hand of the skilled mechanic is rarely found, and there is an overproduction, and there can scarcely be said to be employment for the labor of this country; if not now that time can be anticipated in the near future. Now, if there is any power for us to legislate so as to protect American labor, it is a duty we owe to the people to do so. And we can do it on this ques-

tion, for, I cannot but believe that if the public lands had been reserved for the purpose for which they were intended, and that the crowded population of the east could go west and find homes there; great good would be done. We are growing in population, and the lands now illegally held by corporations under grants that have been forfeited or being acquired in vast tracts by foreign capitalists, would afford in the future, homes for millions of American freemen.

Let us return, then, to the original condition of things, before that terrible war separated us, making the South poor, and blistering the morality of the North; let us return to the principles of the founders of this government; let us accept the constitution and laws, and live up to them; let us keep our covenant and require the fulfilment of the covenant with us; let us be faithful to our trust; and above all things let liberty and justice, equality, concord, and fraternity prevail.

JOHN A. BINGHAM



JOHN A. BINGHAM, American politician, diplomat, orator, and judge, was born at Mercer, Pa., of Scotch-Irish stock, Jan. 21, 1815, and died at Cadiz, O., March 19, 1900. He graduated at Franklin College, and, after being admitted to the Bar, removed in 1840 to Cadiz, O. In 1854, he was elected to Congress, where he served with the intermission of one term for eighteen years. In 1864, he was appointed judge-advocate-general, and shortly after became solicitor of the United States court of claims. On the assassination of Lincoln, whose personal friend he was, Judge Bingham was summoned to Washington to investigate that crime, and immediately opened an office and concerted plans which led to the arrest, trial, and conviction of the conspirators. President Johnson appointed him special judge-advocate, and the work of examining and cross-examining the witnesses fell largely to his share. His argument for the prosecution occupied nine hours in delivery. He was a member of the committee that drew up the articles of impeachment of President Johnson, and, as chairman, made the closing argument before the Senate, which held a large audience for three successive days. His most important work, during his thirty years of public service, was the preparing and introducing of the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution. He won his chief fame as an orator, his most famous speeches advocating respect for national honor and national justice. From 1873 to 1885 he was United States Minister at Tokio, Japan.

SPEECH ON THE SECTIONAL PARTY

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, APRIL 24, 1860

MR. CHAIRMAN,—The annual message of the President of the United States, which has been referred to this committee for its consideration, should not be passed over lightly. It contains much that, in my judgment, is offensive to the people and injurious to their interests, and which should not be allowed to go to the country unchallenged. It is my purpose, sir, to speak of this paper with all the respect that is due to the distinguished position of its author, but with the utmost freedom and candor. I speak to-day as a representative of the people and for the people;