

**PROCEEDINGS OF A  
CONVENTION OF IRON  
WORKERS,  
HELD AT ALBANY, N.Y., ON  
THE 12TH DAY OF DEC., 1849**

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Proceedings of a Convention of Iron Workers, Held at Albany, N.Y., on the 12th day of Dec.,  
1849 by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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## IRON WORKERS' STATE CONVENTION.

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In answer to a call for a State Convention of Iron Workers, a number of gentlemen from different parts of the State met in the Common Council Room, City Hall, at 11 o'clock, Wednesday morning.

Mr. WINSLOW, of Rensselaer, called the Convention to order, and on his motion, C. D. BARTON, Esq., of Essex, was called to the Chair, and JAMES T. HODGE, Esq., of New-York, appointed Secretary.

On taking his seat, Mr. Barton briefly stated that the Convention met pursuant to a call from a committee of gentlemen named at a meeting of iron manufacturers, held at Keesville, Essex county, on the 12th day of November. That this committee consisted of Messrs. Erastus Corning and Lewis Benedict, of Albany, and John F. Winslow and Joseph M. Warren, of Troy. That the object of the Convention is to take into consideration the iron interests of the State, and to adopt

such measures as may be deemed advisable, to give practical effect to the desire of the delegates to secure a modification of the existing Tariff. That the condition of this great interest is now alarmingly depressed, and without the speedy and favorable interposition of Congress, will soon result in disaster and ruin to those engaged in it, and he urged upon the delegates to deliberate upon it in a manner commensurate with its importance, and with a gravity suited to its real condition.

Delegates were present from all the counties directly interested in the objects of the Convention, and also gentlemen from Vermont, Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, Connecticut, Illinois, New-Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Delegates from other States, were, on Mr. Winslow's motion, invited to take seats in the Convention, and to participate in its deliberations.

Mr. Cannon, of Rensselaer, moved a committee of five to nominate the permanent officers of the Convention. Carried.

The Chair appointed the following gentlemen as such committee:—Messrs. L. G. B. Cannon, of Rensselaer; N. Gridley, Dutchess; Franklin Townsend, of Albany; Peter Townsend, of Orange, and James Sterling, of Jefferson.

Letters were read from F. R. Backus, Philadelphia; Mahlon Dickerson, New-Jersey; J. R. Anderson, Richmond, Va.; Messrs. Leavenworth, Hendrick & Co., Woolcott, Wayne County; Philip Ripley, Hartford; G. Parrish, Ogdensburg, and

Joseph Jackson, of New-Jersey, and are as follows:

ROSSIE IRON WORKS, }  
St. Lawrence Co., Dec. 3d, 1849. }

DEAR SIR:

I have received a circular, signed by you as one of a Committee, calling upon those engaged in the iron manufacture of this State, of which I am one, to meet in convention at Albany, 12th inst., for the purpose of uniting in a demonstration to Congress, with the view of obtaining increased protection, by a change in the existing duty upon imported iron. While I much regret my inability, personally to attend to this call, I feel not the less the urgent necessity of the intended movement, and beg that you will use my name, if required, in support of any expression of such views at the proposed convention, as shall meet with your approval.

I remain, dear sir,

Very sincerely yours,

G. PARRISH.

Erastus Corning, Esq., Albany.

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ROCKAWAY, 10th Dec., 1849.

Mr. John F. Winalow,

DEAR SIR:

The inclemency of the weather will prevent my being at Albany on the 12th inst.

I think it would be an important matter gained, if we could induce the House of Representatives to give the Committee on Manufactures power to send for persons and papers to give evidence as to the different industrial interests of the country, from the large iron, down to the tool maker, and cotton and wool spinner, &c., &c.

In 1828 this course was adopted, and quite a history of our country was made. Another one at this time would

show our capacity and enlargement. The census will undertake to make figures, but they will make nothing definite.

Respectfully yours,  
JOSEPH JACKSON.

*Hartford, Ct., 10th Dec., 1849.*

Messrs. Lewis Benedict, Erastus Corning, John F. Winslow, and Joseph M. Warren, Esqrs., at Albany.

DEAR SIRS :

You will please accept my thanks for your kind invitation to attend a meeting of iron masters at Albany, on the 12th inst. I regret a local engagement for that day will prevent my being present, much as I may sympathise with you, and with all the friends of home interests, in any reasonable effort to revise and reform the present system of our national revenue laws.

I would prefer to adopt and support a fair and moderate scale of entirely specific duties, of such average values as would give a light and *certain* advantage to the American manufacturer or producer over the foreigner; and the rates should be made up by practical men, with a fair and just estimate of the value of labor and cost of material, *at home and abroad*. And all manufactures should pay as high rate of duty as the raw material, with an equivalent advance as the value is increased by the additional skill and labor employed in producing a more finished article.

This would expunge the absurdity of charging 30 per cent. duty on wool and "steel iron," and admitting blankets at 20 and steel at 15 per cent., thus openly giving a bounty of duties of 50 per cent. on blankets and 100 per cent. on steel, to encourage their production abroad. It would also augment the revenue, and give our mechanics a chance to compete with foreign labor, in changing the raw material into finished goods at home.

Mixed duties should be avoided, of specific and ad valorem rates. In all our former tariff laws, an excessive



high rate has been made on sheet, hoop, rod, and scroll iron, of extra small sizes, and only 25 to 30 per cent., ad valorem, required on all the heavy hardware goods made from these extra sizes of iron. *This was all wrong.* It prevented the manufacture of the goods in this country by the excessive *difference* of duty. Take small chains, bed-screws, and over 150 other articles of similar heavy hardware; and at 30 per cent. duty on the finished goods, and 2½ cts. per lb. on the raw stock, you could import a ton weight of the finished goods for 20 to 25 dollars *less* than a ton of the small iron from which the goods might be made, thus giving an extravagant, though undesigned bounty, on foreign labor in making the goods, depriving our own mechanics of the work, our iron masters of the sale of the raw stock, and the government of a large share of legitimate revenue.

Duties should be specific, and based upon some well-known and uniform standard, which could be well understood, and all fraud and confusion at the several ports of entry would be avoided.

Let all heavy goods be put into scales, and pay duty by the pound weight, instead of the "pound sterling," and all men could determine the amount of duty and cost of the goods. Officers of the customs would not be defrauded by false invoices or false oaths, the honest importer would be secure against *under valuation*, and the manufacturer would determine, by experience, all the improvements necessary to enable him to meet his foreign rival in our markets, or in the markets of foreign trade.

The system of ad valorem estimates, unhinges all the established principles of business, throws open the avenues for every species of fraud, acts in all its bearings against the government and the honest importer, and bids open defiance to the home producer or manufacturer of every article, product, or fabric where *labor* constitutes any leading portion of the cost.

Hence you find, during the past year, immense importations of lead and iron, of which Missouri and Pennsylvania could supply the wants of the globe, if not *under bid* by estimates of value, based upon the nominal cost of pauper labor abroad.

The downward sliding scale of these estimates, has reduced the price and *the duty* below any former precedent, and has placed our great national interest—the IRON TRADE, so essentially important to the wealth and independence of our country—below anything like remunerating returns for the immense amount of capital invested and labor employed, and beyond the possibility of a living existence, unless restored to health and vigor by an early and essential change in our revenue laws; and I most sincerely hope that the deliberations and efforts of your convention may aid in promoting such important and desirable results.

Very respectfully yours,

PHILIP RIPLEY.

OFFICE OF L. CRANE & Co.,  
Philadelphia, 5th Dec., 1849.

Messrs. Lewis Benedict, E. Corning, and others, *Committee, &c., Albany.*  
GENT.,

Your invitation, by circular, to attend a convention of the Iron trade was duly received. The majority of our Directors are gentlemen in advanced life, whom it would be difficult to induce to leave their home at this season of the year; and our officers are pretty fully occupied in closing up the business of the year. But we are at *work* at home, to bring about an alteration in the duty now existing on iron imported. We think there will be a meeting of the Iron trade here at about the same period. We are convinced a change must be effected, or most, if not all, of the furnaces and rolling-mills must quench their fires.

Yours truly,

F. R. BACKUS, *Treas.*

Lewis Benedict, Erastus Corning, John F. Winslow and Joseph M. Warren, Esquires:

GENTLEMEN,

I have received your invitation to attend a meeting, at the City Hall, in Albany, on the 12th inst., of Iron masters and those interested in the manufacture of Iron, for the purpose of devising a systematic appeal to Congress, for a change of our revenue laws in their application to foreign Iron, &c.

I am very glad such a convention is to take place, but it will not be in my power to attend it. I intend, however, if my health and strength will permit, to visit Washington about the middle of January, to take a part in promoting the objects of your convention, where I hope to meet with many gentlemen from New-York, Pennsylvania, New-Jersey, and other States, who may be there with the same objects in view.

A rigid inquiry should be made as to the practical operation of our miserable warehouse system, made to promote the interests of British merchants and British manufacturers, to the prejudice of our own: creating a host of useless officers, and introducing a system of frauds and perjuries.

With great respect, your obedient, humble servant,

MAHLON DICKERSON.

*Suckasunny, (N. J.) 7th Dec., 1849.*

—  
*Richmond, Dec. 5th. 1849.*

Messrs. Lewis Benedict, Erastus Corning and others:

GENTLEMEN:—

I acknowledge receipt of your circular inviting me to attend your State Convention, which has been called for the 12th of this month, to make an appeal to Congress to change the present tariff of duties upon Iron.

I regret that I cannot be with you, but I heartily concur in the object of your Convention, and have no doubt the