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Speech of
Hon. Joseph M. Belford

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1898

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FOR FREE CUBA.

SPEECH

OF

HON. JOSEPH M. BELFORD,

OF NEW YORK,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Thursday, March 31, 1893.

WASHINGTON.

1898.

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SPEECH

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HON. JOSEPH M. BELFORD

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and having under consideration the bill (H. R. 9378) making appropriations for the naval service for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1899, and for other purposes—

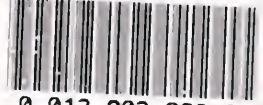
Mr. BELFORD said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I move to strike out the last word.

The question of liberal, aye, bounteous, appropriations for the increase of the United States Navy is one that addresses itself to every dictate of sound judgment and every impulse of lofty patriotism. Under the complex conditions of modern civilization and international intercourse it seems that the necessary condition of peace is a thorough and adequate equipment for war; and under circumstances such as those that now confront us, and in the solemn and momentous situation in which we find ourselves to-day, the voice of everyone, irrespective of political lines or political affinities, must favor the placing of the American Navy on such a footing as will enable it to successfully cope with any navy upon the broad expanse of the ocean. And it is probable that this proposition has never been more forcibly emphasized nor the attention of the country more sharply directed to this truth than at the present hour.

Conditions are such now with reference to our relations to the Government of Spain that at any moment we may either choose or be forced to make a test of our naval strength upon the high seas. But it must prove a source of universal gratification, Mr. Chairman, to the hearts of American people to know that if we do so choose, or are thus forced, it will be in one of the most righteous causes upon which the smile of God has ever rested. [Applause on the Democratic side.]

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The history of Cuba for fifty years has been the history of a people vainly struggling for freedom. I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that the hour is now here when Cuba must be free. [Applause.] The pledge of the American people, the will of God, decree this. [Applause.] You can no longer forestall this conclusion, gentlemen. And while I have been highly edified at the exalted exhibition of virtue and courage upon that side of the Chamber, I want to reassure you, gentlemen, as to the attitude of this side so far as I am individually concerned. You will see this question settled, see it settled by the Republican party, voicing the highest aspirations of the American people, see it settled as honor dictates, see it settled as the highest dictates of conscience and of manhood demand. [Applause.]

And in my humble judgment, Mr. Chairman, Cuba must be free, not by purchase, not by the payment of two hundred millions, or less or more, in gold, but free by the diviner right of having purchased her freedom by a higher price than gold—the blood of her patriotic sons, shed in the most cruel, the most inhuman, the most infamous war that has ever befouled the pages of history. If these results can be accomplished by peaceful negotiations, well and good; but accomplished they must be, or the voice of the American people go unheeded. And if to accomplish them there must be an appeal to the most solemn and terrible of all tribunals, as Longfellow sings of the Building of the Ship, so will the undivided voice of the American people say to our noble President and to our gallant Navy which he shall thus commission:

Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,—
 Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
 Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
 Are all with thee,—are all with thee!

[Applause.]

Mr. WILLIAMS of Mississippi. Through the action of Americans.

[Here the hammer fell.]

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