

Committee History

Agriculture in the early 19th century was certainly intertwined with other great issues of commerce and the economy. Agricultural trade occupied an important segment of the American economy from the earliest colonial years. In fact, one reason for the colonization of the New World by Europeans had been to obtain a fresh source of raw materials and agricultural products, while developing new markets for manufactured goods.

Trade was integral to the growth of the American colonies and, as early as the 1770s, colonists were debating free versus protectionist trade policies. Though agriculture's place in the economy was not in dispute, in 1825 its potential place in the Senate's standing committee system was a matter of considerable debate.

The Committee on Agriculture was created during debate on dividing the Committee on Commerce and Manufactures. Senator William Findlay, a Republican from Pennsylvania, submitted a resolution providing for the creation of a standing Committee on Agriculture.

Senator Findlay pointed out that while commerce and manufacturing were two equal components of the American economy, like a three-legged stool, there was one other important segment being left out. He argued that agriculture was one of "three great branches of domestic industry" along with commerce and manufacturing. All three, he claimed, were equally entitled to the care and protection of the Government. He contended further that agricultural interests were distinct and not always best served when included with those of commerce.

December 9, 1825, the Senate, by a vote of 22-14, approved a resolution creating a standing Committee on Agriculture -- S.Doc 105-24 links to a Committee history on the U.S. Government Printing Office web site