

a matter of surprise that an attempt, which could do no good, should be made to do it away. They set there for little purpose, if they could not meddle with any thing old—if they were not to seek for amendment. If an evil existed, which like a stalking horse stared them in the face, were they to continue it because others had long done so before them? If they were to hold this language to their constituents, they would say "You are not the fit persons to represent us."

He ventured to state it as a fact that vast sums of money were annually squandered away upon the public printing, in a manner entirely unnecessary. If this fact then did stare the legislature in the face, he would ask whether it were not worthy of remedy? The best way to do this would be to determine what the business was worth, and no persons were so proper to do this, as the printers themselves. When they would hand in proposals for work, which they might have to do, they would take care to ascertain its worth with precision; but if they were to do it merely to fix a salary, they might say more than it was worth, or they might say less. When a man was making a proposition by which he himself was to be bound, he would sit down coolly and endeavor to ascertain the precise sum for which it could be done, and he could regulate his offer by that sum.

If he thought it necessary to obtain any information on the subject, he would agree to the amendment of the gentleman from Orange, (Mr. Mebane.) He was not opposed to an enquiry at any time. But he thought the plan contemplated by the original resolution, did away the necessity for the amendment.

Gen. Welborn said, that at the first blush of the resolution it appeared to be entirely inoffensive, but a little discernment would discover its object, although it was well wrapped up. On this question, to come at the truth, it would be necessary to take a very extensive view of the manner in which the printing business had been conducted for several years, and also to enquire when the new discovery was made, that the printer received an enormous salary for his services. When he was contending with professional characters, he was sensible of the disadvantages he labored under. He would not be able to meet all their ingenuity; but he trusted to the goodness of his ground.

The gentleman from Martin, (Mr. Slade) had said that this was a shameful waste of public money. When was it discovered that this was a shameful waste? Was it in the year '94? No. In '95? No. In '96? No. Was it when Hodge & Boylan were the printers? No. In the year '83 the salary of the printer was £500, and an allowance for extra printing, of £100 during the session. In 1786 the salary was made £600, with an allowance for extra printing. There were at that time about 1100 copies of the laws printed, and the printers had only to send them to the clerks of the superior courts. Now there are 2270 printed. It was not then presumed that the salary was too high. In 1798, Mr. Hall became a candidate and displaced Mr. Hodge. At this time nothing was said about the salary being too high. In 1799 Hodge and Boylan were elected, and instead of saying it was too high, they prayed for an increase of salary. All this time nothing was said about waste. But before this time, party showed its head. This was the cause of the change which was made in the public printer; and then it was found that the salary was too high. When a person was elected, whose politics were objected to, then it was a cry was made, that the salary was too high. The laws had then increased from 1100 to 2000. Still the outcry against the salary came from the very man, who had before profited by the increase of salary. He mentioned this to shew that saving was not the object of the introduction of the resolution; but because a man was in office whose politics were in favor of the country. And, because a person comes forward and offers to do the business for less, an outcry is raised against the extravagance of the salary. It was termed a shameful waste of public money; and had been resounded by a certain description of persons for several years. Gentlemen complained that so much noise was made about printing, which was a mere mechanical business. But would they be willing, if about to build a house, to employ a person, who like Sampson, would be likely to bring it over his own head and that of the family?

The gentlemen who opposed the amendment, differed in one particular. One said that every one was a competent judge of the value of printing; and the other said that no one but the printers were competent judges. The arguments used by these two gentlemen were not reconcilable; they were completely at variance. He was the same man now, that he was in '96, when the subject was under consideration; and he would never consent to give it up to any individual to appoint this, or that, or tother man.

We were unfortunate in this respect, that there was a party in this country, and by that party, which was completely at variance with the administration, was the present resolution brought forward. They would not only strike at the public printer, but against every one who was in favour of the present administration of government. He supposed they considered their measures as best calculated to promote the good of the federal party, and he considered them as honest men in other respects. But it was a maxim in republican governments, that majorities ought to govern, and he was not for giving the power out of his own hands. And when he looked at a late publication, in which it was asserted, "that the wise and good were on one side of the question, the wicked & mistaken on the other"—no wonder gentlemen would make wry faces, which he could discover in the house—when he found persons declaring "that they would endeavor to remove the shame and misery which the United States have suffered from a sad catalogue of errors, losses and disgrace," and that they were likely to be the lowest bidders for the public printing, he felt more unwilling to give up the power; he thought it caution enough to every one, who wished to retain the office at its proper value—not to put it out of the power of the legislature to elect the person who was to succeed the present printer.

He believed that the press had a very great influence on public sentiment; and would the le-

gislature give more celebrity to a man, as their servant, when his doctrines would poison the whole family! In doing this they certainly would not effect their wishes.

He was desirous of having the printing done at its real value. He was therefore willing that a committee should be appointed, who should report to the house the result of their deliberations; but he would not give up the right of appointment to any man. The majority should always have the man they wished; and if they thought proper to reduce the salary, he would not object if it was found to be too great. Having said this, he would sit down. He had wandered from the subject in his desultory way, and apologized for the time he had occupied. If he had said any thing personal, he regretted it; but he made it a rule to speak what he thought.

Mr. Slade was sorry he had to make any observations, which would assist in dragging in the spirit of party, as it were, by the neck and heels. The gentleman from Wilkes, (Gen. Welborn) had made use of the term Party, in order to induce the house to support a man whose political opinions they liked. For himself, he believed that the friends of the resolution had nothing more in view than the interest of the public. It was not that Mr. Gales or Mr. Boylan should receive 1500 dollars; nor that a man in Richmond or a man in Philadelphia should receive it. But it was that, as servants of the public, they should discharge their trust as duty and honesty required. To use a metaphor, he could have wished the members of the house had drank of the waters of Lethe, before this subject had been entered upon. If they could have forgotten what had passed, he believed that no disagreement, as to the resolution, would have existed. He could not conceive how gentlemen could insist on making it a party question, unless it were from the effects of a too heated imagination. The gentleman from Wilkes, (Gen. Welborn) enquired with emphasis; when this important discovery was made. It was not, he said, in '95 or '96, but in 1804. But does he reflect upon the difference between the situation of the presses at that time and what it is now? The difference was great. When Mr. Hodge was employed, his establishment was at Halifax, he was therefore under the necessity of removing a press to Raleigh, with part of his types and the work men, whom he had to board at a high rate, and had to rent a house for the business. Perhaps he was the only man who could have done it; for there were then no printers in Raleigh, and probably only one or two in the state; but in 1804, and at the present time, there were established printers here who could do the business without much additional expence. Doing this would not prevent them from inculcating what political creed they pleased. There was no magic art in the printing of the public laws. It was immaterial who printed them. One might do it as well as another. If it were necessary for printers to keep alive party animosities, let those printers do it, whom the public paid for the support of their presses. As to printing the laws and journals of North-Carolina, it was immaterial whether it was done by a federalist or a republican.

It excited his surprise and astonishment to hear the gentleman from Wilkes say, that it was necessary to employ a person of particular political principles. Perhaps they would hereafter contend that their wood cutter ought to have a certain political creed. He would make but a few further remarks. As to the observation of the gentleman, that no man would employ another, to build a house, who, like Sampson might throw it down and destroy himself and family, he would only answer it by saying, that it was a strange position, an out of the way comparison. The men who undertake the printing, must be persons who were qualified; and if they should fail in their contract, they would forfeit their bonds, and be made to pay the penalty. What security had they for their faithful discharge of the business, from the officer of State? The Legislature elected him, and relied on his doing his duty; and should he neglect its performance, they could only have recourse to his bond as a remedy. If they employed any other person they would have the same remedy at hand, by compelling him to pay the penalty. Mr. S. concluded his remarks, by saying, that as the object of the amendment seemed to be, a defeat of the original resolution, he was therefore opposed to the former and in favor of the latter.

Gen. Welborn could not see how the gentleman could compare a wood cutter and a printer. He saw no comparison that could be made between the two. Would the gentleman endeavor to force this position on the house—that the office of public printer required no talents? that it was a mere mechanical business?—He did not wonder that the gentleman was willing to keep party out of view. It was a fact that persons would seldom cry out party, until they felt power in their hands. He recollected the time, when he was in the minority, that he was glad not to cry out party. Perhaps this was the way with the gentleman. The friends of the resolution must have expected that it would excite party spirit, and for that reason he was unwilling to have it brought before the house. The object of the resolution was no doubt to remove the present printer. If the object of gentlemen were economy alone, he could not see why they should oppose an examination? Why were they so much averse to this? Could they get no sort of information by the amendment? Were they so well informed on the subject? He believed there were gentlemen in Raleigh, unconnected with the printers, from whom information could be derived.

The gentleman last up thought it was of no consequence who was public printer. Unfortunately he thought differently. For his part he had no particular attachment to one printer more than another. But he contended that it would be wrong to appoint a person who would be always abusing republicans and republican institutions; and publishing the State Gazette, it would seem as if he did this by authority. It would give his opinions more celebrity and importance. It would tend to mislead the people, and was well calculated to have that effect.

Mr. Millan would make a few observations on the present question. On this occasion it would have been well to have laid party entirely

out of view. The gentleman from Wilkes, (Gen. W.) had said that the resolution before the house was intended to excite the spirit of party, and that it had been brought forward by a member of a particular party; true, it was by a member of a particular party, but certainly not of the federal party, but of the republican—a man of integrity and principle, the purity of whose intentions no man ever did or ever could doubt. He trusted such remarks would have no effect upon the house. They ought all to go for nothing. The senate did not come here to legislate for Mr. Gales, Mr. Boylan, or any other person. They came to legislate for their constituents. They boasted of their patriotism, their republicanism, their justice and consistency: and he would ask every one, if it was inconsistent with either of these to consult economy? Every gentleman would answer that it was not. The only great objection to the resolution appeared to be, that if it were adopted and the printing suffered to be done by any other person, than the present, it would probably give a federal tone to public sentiment. He thought that objection had been completely answered by the gentleman from Martin. The printing of the laws and journals, could certainly have no such effect. Would the mere circumstance of executing work for the public raise a printer higher in the estimation of any man? It was not inconsistent with the dignity of the legislature to let out the public printing to the lowest bidder. A similar plan was adopted by congress. There were many in the house who admired the acts of that body. The gentleman from Wilkes, himself, must approve of the measures of the general government. If then the national legislature did not think the plan derogatory to their dignity, why were the members of this, to be so particular? Were the latter to take a more dignified stand than the former? Certainly not. The house could scarcely err in following their example; and it would be right in some measure, to regulate their conduct by it. It was correct when a man stood in the capacity of a legislator, to consider the case, when he was acting for his constituents, as if he were acting for himself; and he believed if gentlemen were acting for themselves, they would sooner give 900 dollars for a job of work than 1500 dollars. Then why should they not consult economy as much in their public, as in their private capacity. One gentleman had informed the senate, that the present salary to the printer had been paid for several years, before the discovery was made that it was too great; and another said he was not fond of making innovations on good old practices. What then were they sent here for? They were sent for very little purpose, if they were not to alter any old practices. If the legislature had persevered in errors for eighteen or twenty years, it was high time that they should be raked up and corrected, if possible. The position that laws were not to be altered on account of their long standing, was not correct; because the duty of the legislature was often exactly the reverse.

But gentlemen asked, why not reduce other salaries, and put them out to the lowest bidder likewise? This was no argument, because the correction must begin some where. Yet the gentleman from Wilkes did not want to take the office from the present printer. He did not wish it either. That gentleman had discharged the duties with ability and integrity; and he was as willing that Mr. Gales should have the office as any other person; but he could not consent that any gentleman should have it for more than it was worth. If the question before the house were, what was the real value of the printing, what would be the most correct method of ascertaining that value? Certainly not by applying to the secretary, the treasurer or any other of the heads of department. He would go to the fountain head, to the printers themselves. This was the proper way. He held it to be a correct position that when truth was to be sought for, the shortest way of getting to it was the best. He would go to the spring at once. Let it be advertised that the public printing was to be let out to the lowest bidder, and receive their proposals, and the just value of the work would soon be ascertained. He was convinced that the printer, at present received more for the work than its real value. The business could be done in three months. The salary of the printer was therefore greater than that paid to the judges. This alone would convince him that it was too high. The judges did not receive as much for their services as the public printer, though it required a preparation of many years to fit them for their stations. He had heard it asked out of doors, if the office of public printer was let out to the lowest bidder, why not let out those of the judges likewise? This did not apply. There was no relevancy in the question to the case before the house. The judges were constitutional officers. The lives and property of their fellow citizens were in their hands. They were, and ought to be, for this reason independent. Similar questions were asked in relation to the offices of Secretary of State, the Treasurer, and Comptroller. These officers had also much in their hands, and should be placed in situations above suspicion and temptation. Every officer who received a large salary was an important officer, and should therefore be independent. For these reasons he declared himself opposed to the amendment, but in favor of the resolution.

Gen. Welborn, if he had leave, would answer an observation of the gentleman last up. The gentleman had undertaken to say, that the printing of the general government was let out to the lowest bidder. He understood that their printing was let out at so much per sheet; and that it was done under the superintendance of the secretary of state and the clerks of the two houses. They were responsible to government, for the correctness of the work. This was not the case here. The public printer of the state had to prepare the manuscript, put stops to make it read right, insert the marginal notes, index, &c. and had to take upon himself the whole responsibility. There the printer had nothing but the mere mechanical part to perform, and was under no responsibility. Gentlemen had said that the office was not important; and contrary to what he had expected from the gentleman over the way, who seemed to have so perfect a knowledge of printing, he had declared

that the salary paid was too high. If a committee were appointed to make enquiries, he would be a proper person to apply to on the subject. It was said that the best way to judge would be to offer it to the person who would do it for the least sum. This was not a correct method, because the spirit of party ran so high, that no doubt persons could be found who would do the work for much less than its real value, in order to displace the present officer. Double the number of laws to what were formerly printed were required now and to him it appeared extraordinary that no discovery was made till this time that the salary was too high. To obtain correct, disinterested information on the subject it might be necessary to go to Virginia or Pennsylvania, before a report could be made. The object of the amendment was not to procrastinate, but to obtain correct information. He wished the house to retain the appointment of printer in their own hands, whether they chose to give the office to Mr. Henderson, Mr. Boylan, or any body else. The question was whether they would keep the appointment of printer in their own hands, or delegate it to some other persons. It was well known how slow and tardy were all practices of this kind. The present appeared to him to be a correct test for information; and the great difference between the resolution and the amendment was this—that the one was for giving away the power of appointment, the other for retaining it. He should therefore vote for keeping it.

Mr. Brickell would not have spoken again on the question before the house, had he not found that gentlemen were arguing the merits of the original resolution. The gentleman from Wilkes had denounced him as being unfriendly to the general government, because opposed to the amendment. [Gen. Welborn disclaimed any such intention.] Mr. B. had not been able to discover in the resolution any thing of a political measure at all. If he had, it might have induced him to take a different view of the question from that which he now took. He looked upon the public printing as a job of work which there were several persons in the place competent to execute, and was well understood that wherever there was competition, it always had a tendency to reduce the price of labor. This would account in some measure for the difference in the rate of printing at the present time, and at former periods. The reason of the price being lower would perhaps be found in the cheaper rate at which material could be procured. The rates too were better understood, and there were several presses, as were, under the very nose of the legislature. He never knew any thing like a redundancy either of material or labor to produce a rise in the price; the contrary whenever there was an influx of labor or commodity, the prices would invariably fall.

A committee was to be appointed to enquire into the value of printing and then it was to be given to a particular person; because gentlemen supposed that the politics of the printer would give a tone to those of the state. For his part he boasted of his political opinions; but if he had no better foundation for them than the sentiments of the public printer, that instant would he relinquish them. He did not care who had the public printing; indeed, he was more favorably inclined towards the political sentiments of Mr. Gales, than to those of the other printers; but he stood there as the agent of three or four hundred freeholders who cared not who executed the business, provided it was well done, and performed at the cheaper rate. They could not doubt, but that every gentleman who would put in proposals, would be competent to discharge the duty which he had undertaken. The resolution proposed to give out the work to a printer, and certainly none other than a printer would be employed. Those who were authorized to contract, would no doubt require from him good security. There were several persons who conducted papers at this place with equal ability, who were no doubt well qualified for the business; then why give one person 1500 or 1600 dollars for what could be obtained at a less sum. In reason, in justice, and on the principles of economy it ought to be put out to the lowest bidder.—Or they might fix the salary at 900 dollars and then elect whom they pleased. This was the ground taken by those who opposed the resolution. But there could be nothing more than to receive proposals. The printers would then sit down and make a fair calculation, and be enabled accurately to ascertain what they could do the work for. He could never travel out the road to suppose that men would do an injury to themselves merely for the purpose of injuring others. If the mode he had mentioned would be adopted, true republicanism and true economy would shine forth. The growing and contentious subject would be done away; and there would be no more of this bustle and confusion.

Mr. Mebane entertained no wish to have another word on the subject, nor would he, but the gentleman from Richmond, mistaking an observation which he had made use of when he was up before. He had not said, or at least he did not intend to say that he was opposed to innovation in any shape. He wished to have said that he was opposed to innovation when nothing was to be gained by it. He regretted that he had no sufficient command of himself at all times, to say exactly what he wished, nor even to recollect what he had said. He asked what was the great difference between the friends and the opposers of the amendment. The latter said that they opposed to the original resolution were also opposed to lowering the printer's salary; and wished to give him more than enough. This was not correct. They wished to do no such thing; they wanted to give him enough; and to keep the appointment in their own hands. The object of the amendment was apparent and specific—no so with the resolution. We, said he, guess at its object, and believe we are not mistaken—it was to let out the printing to the lowest bidder. It was to change the present mode of choosing the printer. When any course of business had been acted upon for several years, and found to answer, he saw no ground for changing it. And what was the great discovery which had been made in regard to the business? Why, that the state had been paying the printer too much. If so, let it be reduced, but not give away the appointment