

THE NORTH-CAROLINA MINERVA.

RALEIGH:—PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY BY HODGE & BOYLAN.

TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 1862.

VOL. VII. NUMB. 322.

Twenty-five Shillings per Year.

SAVING.

We do not recollect seeing in any of the N. Carolina papers, the following Debates in Congress, on the Bill for reviving a law which had expired, increasing the salaries of the secretaries of the heads of departments, the postmaster-gen. & atty-gen. &c.

Upon this bill, the house resolved itself into a committee of the whole, Mr. Jones in the chair.

Mr. J. C. Smith of Connecticut, moved to amend the bill, by introducing the specific sum to which each officer, separately, should be entitled, instead of the general terms reviving a law passed in 1798 for increasing these salaries for a limited time, which law expired, by its own limitation, on the 31st of December last.

This motion gave rise to a debate which continued till 5 o'clock. Mr. J. C. Smith, Mr. Bayard, Mr. Eullis, Mr. Goddard, Mr. Dana, and Mr. Griswold supported the motion; and Mr. Alston, Mr. Giles, Mr. Nicholson, Mr. Williams of North Carolina, Mr. Elmendorf, Mr. S. Smith, Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Varnum opposed it.

Mr. Bacon said, he never saw any other measure for the purpose of both sides, extending to the affirmative and the negative.

In favour of the amendment, it was urged that some of the salaries might be proper and others not; that unless the amendment should obtain, gentlemen must vote for increasing the whole or none. It was also thought that publicity should be given to the act, and that the actual sums granted should appear upon the face of the bill, and not merely be referred to in a law passed several years since, and now extinct. Mr. Bayard said the proposition as brought forward by the committee, wore the appearance of a veil, designed to conceal the transaction from the public eye under the pretence of continuing an existing law, but in fact, by reviving one which was at first temporary, and which had already expired. It was not sufficient for those in the majority, to show that the expenses of living were now as great as when the law was passed. If they would act consistently, they must prove, before they vote for this bill, in its present form, that those expenses are greater; they opposed this law, as giving extravagant and unnecessary salaries, raised a clamor against it, and by that clamor brought their immediate friends into office, whom they are now willing to feed and supply to a degree which they have dignified as extravagant and prodigal, and at the same time to shelter themselves from public notice under an old law upon which they had cast such opprobrium.

Mr. Bayard declared, that unless they would throw off this veil and act ingenuously, by meeting the subject fairly, and taking the responsibility upon themselves, he would vote against the bill, though he was not at that time prepared to say, that the salaries proposed were higher than he should be willing to give. He thought some of them, at least, were reasonable and proper. He was willing to enable the officers of the government to live in the style and to entertain with the liberality of gentlemen; but if some of them chose to live in a penurious manner, while others were disposed to a liberal and gentleman-like style of living, he did not conceive that the public was under any obligation to enable the penurious officer to lay up more money than the officer who lives in that style which is expected of a gentleman and a public character. He was therefore in favour of the amendment, which would bring each individual salary distinctly before the committee.

Mr. Nicholson was opposed to the amendment for the reason which the gentleman from Delaware had urged in favour of it. He thought it invidious and indecorous, by a vote of that house to point at a particular officer, and say that he did not live like a gentleman. He believed that the increase of salary was proper at the time it was made, and he now thought it proper to revive that increase.

Mr. Eullis was of opinion that the question must eventually be decided by comparing the compensation of each officer with his duties and expenses, and as he thought the amendment offered the most direct way of coming at that comparison, he should vote for it.

Mr. Giles said he and those with whom he voted were charged with inconsistency in now voting for an increase of salary,

which they had formerly opposed when the expenses of living were at least as great as they now are. There is however, said he, one reason for continuing the law which had expired, and that is, that the law accepted with an expectation of being certain established salaries, and they acted optionally in doing so; they had no reason to expect that their compensation would be increased. The compensation however was increased, and the gentlemen who at present hold those offices accepted them with a rational expectation that the salaries would remain as they were when they came into the offices.

Mr. Giles observed that neither this nation, nor any other had the least cause to dread the expense of the civil list. A reduction of salaries could have but little effect upon the national expenditures, and an increase or diminution of these was scarcely worth contending about. He would carry his views of economy to greater and more important objects. The great objects of expense in every government had been armies and navies—and these were the most dangerous and expensive things. He had therefore been opposed to expenses of this nature.

Mr. Elmendorf said he would reply to some remarks made by the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. Bayard) because he thought those remarks extremely improper, and unworthy of any reply. He thought it did not belong to that house to decide, whether the officers of government were gentlemen or not. He believed they were gentlemen, and that he (Mr. Bayard) hazarded his own reputation as a gentleman by making the remarks.

Mr. Bayard explained. He said he was not surprised that the gentleman did not understand him—He had always found it extremely difficult to make him understand—he had not insinuated that any of the officers of government were not gentlemen—but had merely referred to their comparative style of living in regard to hospitality, liberality, and customary equipage.

Mr. Elmendorf was sorry that he had misunderstood the gentleman and proceeded to remark, that there was a laudable economy manifested in the bill itself, as it merely enacted in four lines, that the former law should be revived; whereas, if the amendment obtained there would be the additional expense of printing the particular salaries of seven or eight officers.

Mr. Goddard said, if it was not the object, it was at least the effect of the bill, in its present form, to cast a veil over the transaction. He was at a loss to understand why gentlemen so peremptorily refused to let the items of compensation appear upon the face of the bill, unless they were unwilling that the subject should come fully before the public. The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Giles) on a late occasion was anxious to render compensation proportionate to services. Granting that the ratio of salaries, fixed by the law now proposed to be revived, was just and proper at the time of its passage, how is it known and how can it be known without an examination of each, that the same ratio is now the most proper. Very considerable reductions have been made in the military and naval establishments, and a consequent reduction has taken place in the duties and services of the heads of those departments. He was not disposed to concur in the economical project proposed by the gentleman from New York. He thought, in saving of information, of which the gentleman had spoken, and which he had proposed to accomplish by preventing a publication of the sums given to public officers, not the most laudable species of economy, nor one which it was worth the while of the house to inculcate.

Gen. Smith thought the salaries rather too low than too high, as increased in 1798. The officers were merely enabled to exist; they ought to have a liberal support while in office and something to carry home when they retire.

Mr. Dana said, gentlemen are egregiously mistaken if they suppose, that by rejecting the amendment they can prevent a

* N. B. This would swell the bill to eight or ten lines and a printer would be about as long in printing it as Mr. E. was in making his economical remark; but would not charge as much as the expenses of Congress would amount to in that time.

discussion of the merits of the bill and an examination of the items. Though the amendment proposed is the most direct and proper way of coming at each separate question, those questions may be reached by annexing a proviso naming the particular salary proposed to be altered. He declared that for his part he would not be prevented in this way from offering his opinion upon the real merits of the bill. He did not think that the law proposed to be revived established the best possible ratio of compensation for the present time and the present rate of services. He suggested that there ought not to be so great a difference between the salary of the secretary of the navy and that of the secretary of state. As great talents, industry and fidelity are requisite in the former as in the latter, and he did not see why the compensation should not be equal. He wished for an opportunity to examine these questions distinctly and understandingly, and he would not be compelled either to reject or to adopt the whole *en masse*. If gentlemen would not meet the subject in the most direct and proper manner, they would still be unable to elude the examination demanded.

Mr. Mitchell was in favour of the bill as it stood.

Mr. Bacon had heard no objection to the rate of salaries established by the law of '98; he therefore concluded that the rate was a perfectly proper one; consequently, if he voted to increase one salary, he should vote to increase every other one in exact proportion, and if he voted to diminish one he should vote to diminish every other one in exact proportion. He, though he had seconded the amendment, was astonished at the reasons given by the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. Bayard) for supporting the motion. That gentleman, he said, had declared that he would vote against the bill, unless the majority would make concessions to that gentleman and acknowledge that they acted improperly in opposing the passage of the law. Mr. Bacon had never expected to hear such a principle avowed on that floor. He did not think it either an honourable or an honest principle.

Mr. Bayard rose and said that a friend had mentioned to him an expression which had fallen from the gentleman from New York (Mr. Elmendorf) which he himself did not hear, but which he was informed charged him with having hazarded his own reputation as a gentleman by the remarks which he had made. He wished to know what the gentleman meant by that observation.

Mr. Elmendorf rose, appeared embarrassed, and looked pale. He said he might have used the expression, as he spoke upon the spur of the occasion without consideration; but declared, it he did use the expression, he meant nothing personal or disrespectful to the gentleman.

Mr. Bayard proceeded: he was equally unable to understand the gentleman from Mass. (Mr. Bacon) he presumed that no gentleman on that floor would utter sentiments which he had not considered or would be ashamed to defend what he had advanced. He had perceived nothing in the character or conduct of the gentleman from Massachusetts which entitled him to assume the office of judging either of the honor or honesty of others.

Mr. Bayard said, he should be governed, on the present occasion, very much by the conduct of gentlemen on the other side. When the law was passed, the then majority openly took the responsibility upon themselves—a clamour was raised, and a new order of things brought about. If gentlemen now want the law, let them take it; but let it appear to be what it really is, their own measure, and let not us still be compelled to suffer the whole opprobrium which may result from the measure. If gentlemen now think that the law is right, and that they were formerly wrong in opposing it, let the fact so appear to the world, and let them not attempt to screen themselves under the cover of a law which was intended to be temporary, and which has actually expired. It is futile to urge, as the gentleman from Virginia has done, that the present officers accepted their places with an expectation that their salaries would be continued as they were. It is to be presumed, that those gentlemen knew the laws of their country, and that this act was to expire in a few months. The gentleman from Virginia says, that the expense of the civil list is small, and not worth much attention—that he is for carrying his views

of economy to much higher and more important matters—to the military and naval expenses. How long has the gentleman entertained these sentiments? It is but a short time since he thought it very important to extend his economy to the judiciary department, an article of economy by which a few thousand dollars are saved at the expense, as very many gentlemen in both houses of the legislature, and throughout the country believe, at the expense of the constitution of our government; He had thought it necessary to economize in the mint establishment, the destruction of which, instead of being a saving, would probably be an actual loss to the nation, at least to the poorer part of it. Mr. Bayard repeated, that he felt no hostility to the compensations proposed, and that he should probably have voted for them, had gentlemen brought up the subject fairly, and offered to make the measure their own.

Mr. Dana observed, that gentlemen resolve to consider the rates of compensation fixed by the late law as perfect in every respect, and to pronounce the former administration infallible. He believed it to be the only instance in which they had been disposed to ascribe that attribute to that administration. He said if the gentlemen had no wish to veil this measure from the public view, it was pretty extraordinary that they would not suffer the separate propositions to be brought up and fairly met.

Mr. Griswold. When the law was passed it was deemed necessary for the officers to employ their whole time at the seat of government, and in the public service. If that service has diminished since the 4th of March last, and gentlemen can now be spared for half the year to pursue their private and professional business at home, there can be no propriety in paying them full salaries.

After a few other remarks, the question on Mr. Smith's amendment was taken and voted. The committee rose and reported the bill to the house.

Mr. Dana rose and stated in the house, that the salary contemplated by the bill to the attorney general was 3,000 dollars; that this salary had originally been 1,500 that it was raised first to 2,000 afterwards, in consequence of the war in Europe and the numerous prizes to be decided upon in our courts, it was increased to 2,400, and finally, on account of the increased duties of that officer, for a limited time, under the 6th and 7th articles of the British Treaty his compensation was raised, for three years, to 3,000 dollars. At this time he was obliged to reside constantly at the seat of government, and his whole time was occupied in public business; that officer, had then probably, more business in one month than he has now in a year—this is evident from incontrovertible fact—that officer can now be absent from the seat of government for six months together, which would certainly not be the case if public business required his attention. Mr. Dana thought, therefore, that it would not be unreasonable to reduce his salary to its original amount, upon the principle of apportioning compensation to the quantum of service rendered; but he was not disposed to make so great a reduction;—He would propose merely to take off 600 dollars which were added only for a limited time and in consideration of extraordinary services which were no longer required, and for that purpose would move that the following proviso be annexed to the bill:

Provided, that the annual compensation of the attorney general shall not exceed 2,400 dollars.

Mr. Giles opposed this amendment: he thought that the salary was not too great, and that an officer ought not to be punished for visiting his family. The salary, he said, was not now as high as that given to the judges of the supreme court, who spend less time at the seat of government than the attorney general.

Mr. Lovander did not expect, that the professions of economy which that gentleman had made at the commencement of the session, would end in a proposition to increase the salaries of the executive officers of government. He said there was no analogy between these officers and the judges of the supreme court. The former judiciary system had been found extremely defective and inadequate; but in changing that system, and in diminishing the duties of the judges it was impossible to diminish also the compensation fixed by law, without a direct violation of the constitution, which violation that house had not former-