

CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

MONDAY, FEB. 9.

Mr. Newton, from the committee of Commerce and Manufactures, reported a bill "to continue in force, from and after the 30th of June 1819, until the 30th June 1826, the fourth paragraph of the first section of the act 'to regulate the duties on imports and tonnage;' which was twice read and committed.

Mr. Newton also reported a bill "to increase the duties on iron in bars and bolts, iron in pigs, castings, nails and allum; and to disallow the drawback of duties on the exportation of gunpowder. [The duties to be substituted for those now existing are, on iron pigs, fifty cents per hundred weight, on iron castings seventy-five cents per hundred weight, on nails four cents per pound, on iron in bars and bolts excepting iron manufactured by rolling, one dollar per hundred weight; and on allum, two dollars per hundred weight.] The bill was twice read and committed.

The Speaker laid before the House the annual report of the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund (the President of the Senate, the Chief Justice of the United States, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Attorney-General.) [The amount of the public debt on the first day of the present year stands at \$ 99,004,800 51-100.] And then, probably on account of the excessive cold, which made it inconvenient to attend properly to business, the house adjourned at an early hour.

TUESDAY, FEB. 10.

The following message was received from the President of the United States by Mr. J. J. Monroe.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

As the House appropriated for the President of the United States will be finished this year, it is thought to merit the attention of Congress in what manner it should be furnished, and what measures ought to be adopted for the safe keeping of the furniture in future. All the public furniture provided before 1814, having been destroyed with the public building in that year, and little afterwards procured, owing to the inadequacy of the appropriation, it has become necessary to provide almost every article requisite for such an establishment; whence the sum to be expended will be much greater than at any former period. The furniture, in its kind and extent, is thought to be an object not less deserving attention than the building for which it is intended. Both being national objects, each seems to have an equal claim to legislative sanction. The disbursement of the public money, too, ought, it is presumed, to be in like manner provided for by law. The person who may happen to be placed, by the suffrage of his fellow-citizens, in this high trust, having no personal interest in these concerns, should be exempted from undue responsibility respecting them.

For a building so extensive, intended for a purpose exclusively national, in which the furniture provided for it, mingled regard is due to the simplicity and purity of our institutions, and to the character of the people who are represented in it, the sum already appropriated has proved altogether inadequate. The present is, therefore, a proper time for Congress to take the subject into consideration, with a view to all the objects claiming attention, and to regulate it by law. On a knowledge of the furniture procured, and the sum expended for it, a just estimate may be formed, regarding the extent of the building, of what will still be wanting to furnish the House. Many of the articles being of a durable nature, may be handed down through a long series of service; and being of great value, such as plate, ought not to be left altogether, and at all times, to the care of servants alone. It seems to be advisable that a public agent should be charged with it during the occasional absences of the President, and have authority to transfer it from one President to another, and likewise to make reports of occasional deficiencies, as the basis on which further provisions should be made.

It may also merit consideration, whether it may not be proper to commit the care of the public buildings, particularly the President's House and the Capitol, with the grounds belonging to them, including likewise the furniture of the latter, in a more especial manner, to a public agent. Hitherto the charge of his valuable property seems to have been connected with the structure of the buildings, and committed to those employed in it. This guard will necessarily cease when the buildings are finished, at which time the interest in them will be proportionably augmented. It is presumed that this trust, in a certain degree at least, incidental to the other duties of the superintendent of the public buildings, but it may merit consideration whether it will not be proper to charge him with it more explicitly, and to give him authority to employ one or more persons under him, for these purposes.

JAMES MONROE.
Washington, Feb 10, 1818.

The message was read and referred to the committee of the whole to whom is referred the bill to provide for erecting additional buildings for the accommodation of the several Executive Departments.

Mr. Robertson, of Lou., from the committee of Public Lands, reported

a bill supplementary to the several acts for the adjustment of land claims in the state of Louisiana and territory of Missouri; which was twice read and committed.

On motion of Mr. Hopkinson, it was Resolved, That the committee on the Judiciary be directed to enquire into the expediency of increasing the salaries of the Judges of the Supreme Court of the United States.

The House resolved itself into a committee of the whole, on the bill "concerning half-pay pensions, &c. and for other purposes."

The first section of the bill goes to equalize the pensions allowed for services in the Revolutionary and late war, and to assimilate the mode of paying them.

Mr. Burwell moved to strike out the second section of the bill which is in the following words:

"That in all cases where provisions has been made by law for five years' half-pay to the widows and children of officers and soldiers who were killed in battle, or who died of wounds received in battle, or who died in the military service of the United States, during the late war, the said provision shall be continued for the additional term of five years, to commence at the end of the first term of five years in each case respectively, making the provision equal to ten years half-pay."

This motion was negatived, ultimately, by a considerable majority.

Mr. Hitchcock moved to amend the section so as to extend the continuation of the pension to motherless children of deceased soldiers under sixteen years of age, as well as to the widows.

This motion was negatived. The third section is in the following words:

"That in all cases where any soldier of the regular army shall have died while in the service of the United States, in the late war, or in returning home from said service, leaving a widow, such widow shall be entitled to receive the sum of forty-eight dollars annually, for the term of five years, as a half-pay pension; and in case of the death or intermarriage of said widow, before the expiration of the term of five years from the death of the husband aforesaid, the half-pay for the remainder of the term shall cease."

Mr. Cobb moved to strike out the above section from the bill; which motion was supported by himself, and opposed by Mr. Harrison, and was negatived by a very small majority.

The fourth section is in the following words:

"That in all cases of half-pay pensions, embraced by this act, and all other acts of Congress making provision for half-pay pensions, the same shall extend to all cases where the party died within six months after his return home, of diseases contracted in the service during the late war with Great-Britain."

Mr. Linn moved to strike out this section; which motion was opposed by Mr. Barbour, and Mr. Comstock, and was negatived by a large majority.

The fifth section of the bill provides that the widow of any officer or soldier killed in battle or who died in service during the Revolutionary war shall have a pension, if a soldier, of 48 dollars per annum, if an officer, of 100 dollars per annum.

The sixth section provides that in all cases where an indigent mother has lost her son in battle, if he has no widow or children, she shall receive a pension of 48 dollars per annum for five years.

No attempt was made to strike out these two sections.

After having gone through the details, the committee rose and reported the bill to the house, and the house adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11.

The Speaker laid before the House a letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting a report, in obedience to a resolution of the House, concerning contracts for the supply of fire arms, the supplies at each of the national armories, and the number, species, and quality of arms manufactured and repaired at said armories.

The bill for the remission of duties on stereotype plates and upon Bibles and Testaments in foreign languages, imported by Bible Societies, was, on motion, re-committed to a committee of the whole house.

The House then took up the report of the committee of the whole on the bill concerning half pay pensions, &c. and agreed, successively, to all the amendments thereto reported by the committee.

Mr. Harrison then moved to strike out the 3d section of the bill, but subsequently withdrew it; when

Mr. Colston renewed the motion to expunge the section; on which considerable debate took place.

The motion was finally negatived 99 to 48.

Mr. Harrison then moved to amend the section, by making the pension commence from the first of March, 1817, instead of from the death of the husband; on the ground that it would be more beneficial to the widow and more convenient to the Treasury to pay the five years' pension gradually, than in a gross sum, which would be

payable under the section as it stood. This motion was negatived—ayes 44.

Mr. Hitchcock proposed so to amend the bill, as to confine the pensions to the widows of such soldiers as enlisted prior to the 10th of December, 1814; which motion was agreed to without opposition.

The question was then taken on ordering the bill to be engrossed and read a third time; and decided in the negative, 79 to 65.

Messrs. Bryan, Forney, & Walker, from this state, voted in favor of the bill; & Messrs. Edwards, Hall, Mumford, Slocumb, J. S. Smith, Stewart, Settle and Williams, against it.

Mr. Storrs, under a belief that the bill had been rejected from a dislike to the 3d section, or some other feature, and that, divested of the objectionable provisions, the bill would pass, moved to reconsider the vote just taken, that the bill might be modified and rendered acceptable to the House.

This motion, after some discussion, was negatived—ayes 53, noes 86; and the House adjourned.

THURSDAY, FEB. 12.

Mr. Lowndes from the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on that part of the general military appropriation bill which respects extra pay to officers of brevet rank when on separate service made a detailed report, stating the views of this House adverse to that appropriation, and the arguments by which the conferees on the part of the Senate sustained their preference of it. It appears that the committees of the two Houses parted without being able to come to an agreement, each retaining its own opinion.

After the reading of the report Mr. Lowndes, remarking that the views taken of the subject by the committee rendered unnecessary the attempt to elucidate it by any further remarks from himself, moved that this House do adhere to its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate which proposes an appropriation for the brevet extra pay.

Mr. Mercer, suggesting that the length of the report was such as to prevent a due comprehension of the force and scope of its reasoning by hearing it once read, therefore moved that the report lie on the table and be printed; which motion was agreed to.

Mr. Edwards, of N. C. offered the following resolution for consideration:

Resolved, That the committee on Military Affairs be instructed to enquire into the expediency of making some provision for the widows of such soldiers of the militia as died after reaching their homes in consequence of diseases contracted whilst in the service.

Mr. E. said, that a principle similar to that contained in this resolution was contained in the bill which was yesterday rejected, and he believed a large majority of the house were in favor of that provision, but had voted against the bill on account of other provisions, highly objectionable, which it contained. His motion was intended again to bring the subject before the house.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. Burwell, in rising to make a motion, said that there was a subject referred to the committee of Ways and Means, which would probably excite some notice when the general appropriation bill should be reported, and respecting which his motion was intended to procure some information which might be necessary to a correct understanding of it. Under the treaty of Ghent, certain Commissioners had been appointed to ascertain the boundary lines between the United States and the British Northern provinces. By the estimates of appropriations submitted to the House, it appeared that the House was called upon to appropriate 82,666 dollars, to defray the expences of these Commissioners for the present year, of which fifty thousand dollars was for "contingent expences;" for the session and past year. At the last session there had been appropriated thirty-four thousand some odd hundred dollars for this object. He thought he was perfectly warranted in saying, that it would require, under the present plan, from five to ten years to complete the survey of the boundaries. If so, the expences of ascertaining them would amount to a larger sum than the object could be worth. There was another point on which the House would probably desire information; which was the appointment of Agents to the three Commissioners, with salaries equal to those of the Commissioners. Now, Mr. B. said, he had examined the different articles of the treaty; and he could find in it no authority given to the commissioners to appoint these, though a power was expressly given to them to appoint Secretaries. One of these boards also had ceased to exist, he presumed, as the gentleman who had been the commissioner on the part of the United States, was now a member of this House; notwithstanding which the House was called upon to appropriate for the three Boards.

To obtain information on these points, he moved the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Treasury be directed to lay before this House a statement of the monies paid for defraying the expences of the Commissioners under the 4th, 6th and 7th articles of the treaty of Ghent, specifying the items of expenditure and the claims at this time presented for payment.

The resolve was agreed to, nem. con.

On motion of Mr. Cushman the committee on Military Affairs were instructed to enquire into the expediency of making further provision by law to enable any soldier entitled to bounty land who has received an honorable discharge or a military land warrant, & is unable to produce the same to obtain a patent.

Mr. Sergeant called the attention of the House to a resolution laid on the table by Mr. Trimble a few days ago, and now lying there, together with certain documents transmitted to the House by the Executive on the case of Mr. Meade. This question was of higher importance than respected Mr. Meade merely; as it involved the whole question of the capacity of the government to extend protection to its citizens—and certainly no question of greater moment could ever present itself. Questions of this sort might sometimes lead to great national consequences, and ought therefore to be closely investigated and accurately examined. It was with this view (in which he had the concurrence of the mover of the resolution) he moved that the resolution and the documents relating to the case of R. W. Meade be referred to a select committee, to examine and report the facts, &c.

Mr. Trimble assented to this course. It was perhaps proper, that there should be a report of a committee stating all the facts, and bring them into one point of view; and he was satisfied with a course having that object in view.

The House then resolved itself into a committee of the whole, on the following resolutions, submitted by Mr. Johnson, of Ky. at an early period of the session, and now for the first time taken up:

1. Resolved, That it is expedient to provide by law, for the widows of soldiers of the regular army, who were killed in battle, or who died in service, during the late war with Great Britain.

2. Resolved, That it is expedient to provide by law, for the disbanded and deranged officers of the army of the United States, who served in the late war against Great Britain, by donations in land, viz: to a major general, 1200 acres; a brigadier general, 1120 acres; colonel and lieutenant colonel, 960 acres; major 800 acres; captain 640 acres; and subalterns 480 acres.

3. Resolved, That it is expedient to establish by law three additional military academies, viz: one in the vicinity of Fort Dearborn, in South Carolina; one in the vicinity of Newport, Kentucky; and one in the vicinity of Harper's Ferry, in Virginia: one third of the cadets to be the sons of the officers and soldiers of the late army, who died in the service of the United States in the late war.

4. Resolved, That it is expedient to establish by law an additional national armory, to be located on the western waters.

5. Resolved, That it is expedient to organize by law a corps of invalids, to be composed of one thousand men.

6. Resolved, That it is expedient to provide by law, for the repeal of so much of the act of Congress of the 6th of July, 1812, as authorizes additional pay and emoluments to brevet rank, in the army of the United States.

7. Resolved, That the military peace establishment of the United States shall consist of eight thousand men, including the corps of invalids, provided that the corps of engineers, the general staff and the ordnance department, shall be retained as at present established. Provided also, that no part of the army shall be disbanded, in consequence of said reduction; but the same shall be effected by permitting vacancies as they occur, to remain.

8. Resolved, That it is expedient to provide by law, for one additional ration, for each of the commissioned officers of the army of the United States.

9. Resolved, That the Committee on the subject of military affairs, be instructed to report bills, embracing the objects of the foregoing resolutions.

No debate took place on these resolutions, but the question was successively taken on them.

They were all rejected, except the 4th, which was passed over, (on account of information on that subject having been called for from the military department)—and the 6th, which was agreed to, by as large a majority as there was for rejecting all the others.

The following resolution had also been referred to the same committee, on motion of Mr. Walker of N. C.

Resolved, That it is expedient to provide by law, that all minors who were regularly enlisted in the late or present army of the United States, and who served twelve months and upwards, and having been honorably discharged, shall be entitled to an adequate bounty of land or a commutation for such bounty in money.

This resolution, after a good deal of debate and amendment, in which Messrs. Walker, Storrs, Cobb, Edwards, Little, and Rhea took part, was rejected.

There had been referred to the same committee, on motion of Mr. Comstock, of N. Y. a resolution, that it is expedient to allow a pension to officers of the present army who were wounded in the service during the late war.

This motion was also rejected by a large majority.

The committee then rose and reported its proceedings to the House.

The question being on concurrence in these several votes—

Mr. Johnson, in a speech of half an hour, entered his protest against the several decisions of the House.

The votes in committee of the whole were then severally concurred in.

When the sixth resolve was under consideration, Mr. Robertson, of Lou. moved to amend it by adding to it a proposition to this effect: that the committee be instructed to enquire into the expediency of educating at the Military School of the United States, the sons of all officers, non-commissioned officers or privates, who have fallen in fighting for their country.

After considerable discussion, the amendment was negatived, not, it is believed, from an objection to the principle it embraced, but to its introduction in this manner.

After the whole of the resolutions had been disposed of, and the 6th referred to the Military committee, to bring in a bill—

Mr. Robertson renewed, in a separate form, the proposition he had failed just now in carrying by way of amendment; but it grew late, and the House adjourned without coming to a decision on it.

FRIDAY, FEB. 13.

Mr. Lowndes from the committee of Ways and Means, reported a bill making appropriations for the support of the navy of the United States for the year 1818; which bill was twice read and committed.

Mr. Johnson of Ky. from the committee on military affairs, reported a bill repealing so much of the act July 6, 1812, as allows extra pay and emoluments to brevet rank; which was read, and (after some conversation on the course it should take, and after once deciding against a commitment, but which decision subsequently was considered and reversed) was committed to a committee of the whole house.

On motion of Mr. J. S. Smith, the Secretary of the Treasury was requested to lay before the House, a statement of the number of tons of bar iron, iron in pigs, and cast and rolled iron, that has been imported into the United States annually, and from what countries, from the first of May, 1812, to the first of May, 1817, and if any, what quantity has been exported during the same period.

Mr. Johnson of Kentucky, offered the following motion for consideration:

Resolved, That the Secretary of War be directed to report to the House of Representatives, his opinion as to the propriety of continuing the office of claims for the term of one year, from the 9th of April next, and if, in his opinion this office should not be continued, to what branch of the War Department would it be proper to transfer the duties of the Commissioner, to investigate the claims for lost property.

Mr. Poindexter questioned the propriety of calling on the Head of a Department for his opinion as to the necessity or expediency of continuing an office.

Mr. Williams, of N. C. remarked that a similar resolution was already referred to the committee of claims, and if they had deemed it expedient to call on the Secretary of War, they would have done so. It was proper to call for facts from a Department, but not for opinions, and the House was as well qualified to judge of the propriety of continuing this office as the Secretary of War. The course proposed was irregular, and he disapproved of it, though it was with reluctance that he opposed a call for information.

Mr. Johnson, of Ken. said this resolution was different from that which had been referred to the committee of claims, and there was no irregularity in calling upon a department to know what branch of it a particular business could best be referred to. The Secretary of War had a control over this business to a certain extent, and he was best able to give information on the subject. The office of claims had been created for certain purposes; this office was about to expire by law, and he thought it perfectly proper and regular to call on the Secretary of War, as one particularly qualified by his acquaintance and control over the claims concerns, to say whether the further continuance of the office was necessary, and if not, to what branch of his department it could most properly be referred. At any rate, Mr. J. said, he should deem it his duty to bring this subject forward in some way or other. After establishing an office for the settlement of claims, would it be proper, he asked, at the end of two years, to close the door against all which may not have been brought forward? So partial and un-