



FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 1820.

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CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

MONDAY, MARCH 13.

No report was made by any committee this morning; nor were there more than two petitions presented.

On motion of Mr. Pindall, the House proceeded to the consideration of the motion submitted by him some weeks ago, for amending the rules of the House, so as to oblige the Stenographers admitted within the walls to be under oath, &c.

This proposition, we understand, was supported by Mr. Pindall and Mr. Cannon, and was opposed by Messrs. Smith, of Md. Simkins, Warfield and Walker. On the question to agree thereto, it was decided in the negative, without a division.

The House then again proceeded to the consideration of the bill making appropriations for the support of the Military establishment for the year 1820. And the question being on filling the blank for the amount of appropriation for the Quarter Master's Department—the House having on Saturday refused to fill it with 500,000 dollars—

Mr. Cocke moved to fill it with 400,000; thus reducing it a 100,000, with a view to arresting the Missouri Expedition.

Mr. Trimble moved to fill it with 480,000. He intimated his opinion, that, after what had passed indicative of the views of this House, and particularly under the present aspect of our foreign relations, the Expedition would be restricted to the Council Bluffs. But, even in retracing its steps, &c. certain expenses must be incurred, to the same amount, or very nearly, as if the Expedition had gone on.

After much debate, Mr. T's motion was negatived, 84 to 77.

On the motion of Mr. Cobb, to fill the blank with 450,000 dollars (predicated on the maintenance of the Expedition at the Council Bluffs) the question was not taken by yeas and nays, but was decided affirmatively, by a large majority.

And the House adjourned.

TUESDAY, MARCH 14.

Mr. Smyth, of Va. from the committee on Military Affairs, reported a bill repealing so much of any act as unites the Military Academy with the corps of Engineers, and subjects the professors, assistant professors, and teachers, (not being officers of the army of the U. S.) and the cadets of the said academy, to martial law. The bill was twice read and committed.

On motion of Mr. Slocumb, the committee on the judiciary was instructed to enquire and report to this House, whether any, and, if any, what measures are necessary to be taken for the greater security of debts due the United States in consequence of certain loans of powder, lead, and other munitions, belonging to government, having been made to private citizens by any of the U. States.

On motion of Mr. Cobb, it was resolved, that the President of the U. S. be requested to communicate to this House any information which may have been received by the Department of State, or other Executive Department, of the amount of claims of the citizens of the United States for Spanish spoiliations upon their property and commerce, or those for which the Spanish government is held responsible.

The House resumed the consideration of the bill making appropriations for the support of the Military Establishment for the year 1820.

The item of Fortifications next presenting itself for consideration—and the question being on concurrence with the committee of the whole in filling the blank for the amount with the sum of eight hundred thousand dollars.

Mr. Butler, of N. H. and Mr. Cocke, opposed the filling the blank with the amount, and Mr. Smith, of Md. defended it.

The question was decided affirmatively, by yeas and nays, 103 votes to 51.

The next question was on concurring in the appropriation for contingent expenses, books, maps, &c. for the Military Academy.

To try the sense of the House on the question of appropriating any thing for that institution, the question was taken by yeas and nays, and was decided in favor of the appropriation by 111 votes to 42.

On the question to concur with the committee of the whole in striking out the clause making an appropriation for the completion of the Arsenal at Augusta, in Georgia—

Some Debate took place between Messrs. Cobb, Smith, of Md. Reid, and Cuthbert, on the subject. When, on the question being taken, the house refused to strike out that clause; & agreed to fill the blank with the sum of 27,000 dollars, viz. 25 000 for completing the arsenal and 2000 for draining the marsh near it.

The next item which excited attention was that which embraces an appropriation of 2,776,000 for the payment of the Military and Revolutionary Pensioners. Hereupon rose a Debate: of which we have not room even to trace the outlines. It began by Mr. Barbour's objecting to the amount of this appropriation, because of his intention to propose certain restrictive provisions on the subject, as if adopted, would reduce the number of Revolutionary Pensioners. The debate was kept up with some animation until near 4 o'clock; when the House decided, by yeas and nays, to agree to the above amount of appropriation, being necessary to the payment of the pensions actually granted.

The bill was then at length ordered to be engrossed for a third reading.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15.

The Speaker laid before the House a letter from the War Department, transmitting statements of the sums which have been actually paid since the Peace Establishment, to the General Officers and their staff, specifying particularly on what a count, to whom, and when, paid—rendered in obedience to a resolution of this House.

On motion of Mr. Hooks, the committee of Commerce were instructed to enquire into the expediency of having buoys placed on certain parts of the Coast and Inlets of the state of N. Carolina, to direct vessels into the different channels.

Mr. Slocumb moved to proceed to the consideration of the resolution offered by him, for fixing a period for the termination of the present session; and the motion to take it up was negatived.

The engrossed bill making appropriations for the support of the Military Establishment during the year 1820, was read a third time, passed, and sent to the Senate.

The remainder of the day was spent in committee of the whole on the appropriation bill for the payment of the Civil List.

Considerable discussion took place on some of the items of the bill; particularly on that appropriating the salary of a thousand dollars to the Reporter of the decisions of the Supreme Court. A motion to strike out that clause failed by a large majority.

The committee had not gone thro' the bill at half-past three o'clock; when the committee rose, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again.

THURSDAY, MARCH 16.

Most of the day was occupied in Debate on the Civil Appropriation Bill; and briefly on the clause which proposes an appropriation of One Hundred Thousand dollars "for completing the contracts for constructing the road from Washington Pennsylvania, to Wheeling, made during the year 1817."

On this there was a rather animated Debate; Mr. Slocumb having moved to strike it out of the bill. The objections to it were, principally, First, To the power of Congress to construct roads at all; and, Second, To the nature of the contracts, some of which it was suggested had originated in collusion and fraud. This question has been, in substance, discussed so much at large for several successive years, that we have no thought it necessary to report the Debate at length.

After deciding the question on Mr. Slocumb's motion in the negative, the committee rose; and the House adjourned.

FRIDAY, MARCH 17.

Mr Robertson submitted the following joint resolution for consideration:

Resolved, By the Senate and House of Representatives, &c. That the consent of Congress be and the same is hereby given to a contract and agreement made and concluded by and between the States of Kentucky and Tennessee, at Frankfort, in Kentucky, on the 2d day of February 1820, to adjust and establish the boundary line between them.

The resolve was read twice, and ordered to lie on the table.

The House again resolved itself into a committee of the whole, on the appropriation bill for defraying the Civil Expenses of the government.

Mr. Cobb renewed the motion which he made the other day on another bill, but then withdrew, to insert in the bill an appropriation of \$30,000 for negotiating a treaty with the Creek and Cherokee Indians for the extinguishment of their title to certain lands in the state of Georgia—Agreed to.

In the progress of the bill, a motion was made to strike out the appropriation or the expenses of the commission under the 5th article of the Treaty of Ghent, so much as provides a compensation for an Agent under that Treaty; and after a short debate, the motion was agreed to without a division.

Mr. Woodbridge moved to amend the bill by introducing an appropriation of twenty thousand dollars, to defray the expenses of extinguishing the Indian title to land in the territory of Michigan.—Agreed to.

The bill was then reported to the House with sundry amendments; and after some debate on some of the amendments, it was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading.

SATURDAY, MARCH 18.

The bill from the Senate to suspend, for further time, the sale or forfeiture of land for failure in completing the payments thereon, was reported by Mr. Anderson, from the committee on the Public Lands, without amendment. It was laid on the table.

Mr. Anderson, from the committee on the Public Lands, to whom had been referred the bill to change the mode of disposing of the public lands, (from credit to cash, &c.) reported the same with amendments. [The amendments propose to strike out all that part of the bill which change the sales from credit to cash payments.]

After a short discussion, as to the proper disposition of the bill, it was committed to a committee of the whole house.

The engrossed bill making appropriations for the support of government for the year 1820 was read the third time, passed, and sent to the Senate for concurrence.

The bill making appropriations for the centre building of the Capitol, and for other purposes, passed through a committee of the whole; the sum inscribed by the committee (111,789 dollars, for the centre building,) agreed to by the House, and the bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading.

The House then resolved itself into a committee of the whole on the bill to amend the act of March 18, 1818, providing pensions for persons engaged in the land and naval service in the revolutionary war.

Mr. Bloomfield rose, and after stating the contemplated effect of this bill, entered into a particular history of the progress of the act of 1818, through the two Houses, the different features it assumed, and its ultimate shape, compared with the bill originally reported by the committee, of which he was chairman, to show that that committee are innocent of having produced the embarrassments which had grown out of that act. To try the question whether the House was willing to repeal the existing act, he concluded by moving to strike out the first section of the bill.

Mr. Cannon moved to amend the section, by striking out all that part of the first section which allows to officers higher pensions than what is allowed to privates. It would be perceived, Mr. C. said, that the object of this amendment was to place the officers of the revolutionary army on the same footing as the soldiers of the revolutionary army. He had no wish to repeal the act, but this bill contained a principle—that of discrimination—which he could not reconcile to his mind; any other mode would be better than this—they were all citizens, and were all entitled, in an act of bounty, to an equal quantum of relief; and, to enforce this opinion, Mr. C. argued at some length. Mr. C. however, waived his motion to give way for an amendment, which Mr. Barbour intimated his intention to offer, which embraced what Mr. C. had in view.

Mr. Barbour then submitted his amendment. He explained to the committee the substantial object of his amendment. The first object was to repeal the law,

as to all those who had served for a term less than three years, after they shall have received their pensions for two years, and to continue pensions for life, to all those who had served three years and upwards, to officers and soldiers an equal sum, after they also shall have received two years' pension according to the act of 1818. Mr. B. then proceeded to state, a good deal at large, the inducements which operated on him in voting for the act of 1818. He had voted for that law under the best feelings. He was willing to do an act of benevolence; and he had been influenced, he confessed, not a little by the impressive language of his honorable friend from New Jersey, (Mr. Bloomfield,) who had himself been a conspicuous actor in the scenes of the revolution, and who had introduced and advocated the bill of 1818; but, in giving his sanction to that act of benevolence, Mr. B. had no idea that it would produce so vast a consumption of the public resources. According to the report of the committee of 1818, it was expected that the maximum of the pensions to be allowed would be about 200,000 dollars; but what was the fact? It was now found that it exceeded that amount by about fifty times. Mr. B. was then, and was yet, willing to perform towards the soldiers of the revolution an act of benevolence, but not at a cost which the nation was not prepared to pay. As to the proposed repeal being inconsistent with the honor of the nation, it, as was said, inconsistent with a vested right, Mr. B. observed, he was not among those who would do any thing that was inconsistent with either, and yet he was prepared to vote for a very considerable modification of the law. He argued that the pensions granted could not be deemed a vested right—that the act was one of gratuitous bounty—not of justice; because, had it been demanded by justice, it could have known no distinction; that, being an act of charity, it continued at the option of the government; and this opinion Mr. B. illustrated by various arguments. In voting for this modification he did no violence to the benevolence which dictated the first act, because a man was not bound to extend charity to the injury of his own family. To continue the act unmodified would be injurious and unjust to a large portion of the people of this nation, as it would be necessary to raise the amount required by it by laying taxes, either directly or indirectly; and he wished that the state of the Treasury might not be such as to coerce the House into the imposition of direct taxes. Let the committee, Mr. B. said, cast a look over the country, and see if there were not thousands & tens of thousands on whom the tax would fall, who were as poor, and infinitely poorer, than thousands of those pensioners for whom the tax would be laid, &c. Mr. B. again adverted to the details of his amendment. He had singled out those who had served three years and upwards, because it was they who bore the heat and brunt of the war—in the fields of Monmouth, of Princeton, of Bennington, of Brandywine, &c. A great part of the nine and twelve months' men were substitutes, and in addition to their pay from their country, received pay as substitutes—in many cases, he had understood, they were double substitutes—serving successive tours as such. Mr. B. thought all who continued to receive pensions, ought to be put on an equal footing; the sum allowed he would make sufficient to provide for them food and clothing—further than this it was utterly impossible for the government to go. In fixing the allowance the comfortable subsistence of the individuals was all that could be provided for—he could not think of taking their families into view, or entering into considerations of former affluence, &c. To provide relief with such views, or to that extent, would be beyond the ability of the nation to pay, without resorting to the means before alluded to—of laying taxes on the people, &c.

Mr. Culpepper was willing to strike out the first section of the bill, not, however to accept the substitute offered by Mr. Barbour, but to agree to the best provisions to guard against imposition. He wished the act, in other respects, to stand as it was—he would not strike off one cent of what these men were justly entitled to by the existing act. Mr. C. said, he knew what it was to be a soldier, himself, and to serve, when a morsel of bread was a luxury. Many, however, took the benefit of this act who were not entitled to it, and he would do every thing to guard against that abuse, but further he would not go. He was against reducing officers to the level of the soldier. Their habits were different, Mr. C. said, and their talents, and their wants—the officer was of more value to the country, and it would be a bad example, and injurious hereafter to the interest of the nation to put them on the same footing. He thought the distinction made in the act was a good one, and he would not consent to change it.

Mr. Anderson, of Kentucky, avowed himself decidedly opposed to the repeal of the law, and consequently against Mr. Barbour's amendment, but he would support every proposition tending to give

the act a fair and strict construction; and he would therefore take those parts of Mr. B's amendments which went to that object. Mr. A. said he was afraid he might have been wrong in voting for the act of 1818, but he was sure he should be right in voting against its repeal. The bounty had been freely offered and continued two years, and, whether right or wrong, originally, he would not withdraw it. He was opposed to the levelling principle. That feature he had been in favor of when the act was under consideration; but Congress then determined against it—the distinction between officers and privates had existed two years, and he was averse now to disturbing it. Mr. A. said, the bounty had been voluntarily offered by Congress—the soldiers of the Revolution had been invited to come forward and receive this boon, at the hands of a grateful country—and would it be generous or becoming, because it was found to take more money than was expected, now to revoke the bounty? Mr. A. tho't not, and spoke at some length in support of his opinion. He concluded by saying that if the law was defective, or not sufficiently guarded, he would give it additional safeguards; but he would not repeal it, or so modify it as to reduce the allowance of an officer from 240 dollars to 96 dollars.

The committee then rose, obtained leave to sit again, and the House adjourned.

MONDAY, MARCH 20.

A bill was reported from the committee of Naval Affairs, the object of which is to amend the act for the government of the Navy, as to an increase in extension of the present term of enlistment of seamen.

Mr. Pindall reported a bill, the object of which is to amend the acts authorizing the publication of the laws of the United States, so as to confine the publication of them to 25 newspapers in the states and one in this District, and to abolish the compensation now allowed by law for that service. These bills were twice read and committed.

Mr. Storrs, from the committee on roads and canals, reported a bill providing for the erection of Toll-gates, toll-houses and the appointment of toll-collectors on the National Road leading from Cumberland, in the State of Maryland, to the river Ohio.

This bill having been read, and its second reading being in due course proposed—

Mr. Barbour moved to reject the bill. This motion gave rise to a short debate, in the course of which it was supported by Mr. Barbour and Mr. Randolph, and opposed by Mr. Hardin, Mr. Livermore, and Mr. Bullard Smith.

The motion to reject the bill was supported on the ground that the question which it involved, had been as much discussed as any ever presented to the view of the Legislature; that the discussions and solemn decisions of this house had gone forth to the world; that the mind of every member was made upon it, and therefore there was no need of delay for reflection—and that the principal of the bill was, in the opinion of the advocates of its rejection, so obvious that it ought not to be entertained by the house for a moment.

The motion to reject was opposed on the ground that the question was one of much importance, and ought not to be hastily decided of; that the preservation of a national work, which has already cost so much money, was an object of importance; that within the constitutional power of Congress; that, in fact, the question involved in the bill had never yet been decided by Congress; that, being, but this day presented, it would be unreasonable to call upon the house to say it was so obvious they would not look at it, &c.

The engrossed bill appropriating money for continuing the Centre Building of the Capitol was read a third time, passed without debate or division. The remainder of the day was occupied in debating the bill for amending the pension law, and the proposition of Mr. Barbour to substitute for it a different bill—Messrs. Reid, Hill, Fuller, Trimble, Barbour, Livermore and Bloomfield, engaged in the bill; among whom M. Hill, Mr. Fuller, and Mr. Livermore, earnestly opposed any invasion of the principle of the present pension law, tho' willing to make any necessary amendment to its details. Mr. Fuller spoke on the subject considerably at large.

Before coming to any decision on the subject, the committee rose, reported progress—and the House adjourned.

TUESDAY, MARCH 21.

Mr. Storrs, from the committee on Roads and Canals, to whom the subject was referred, made a report, of which the following is the resolution recommended by the committee for the adoption of the House:

Resolved, That the committee on Roads and Canals be discharged from the further consideration of the communication to this House from the Secretary of the Department of the Navy, on the 18th day of January last, and the petition of the inhabitants of the borough of Erie, in the state of Pennsylvania, relative to the improvement of the harbor of Erie.

The House concurred in the report.