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CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

THURSDAY, APRIL 7.

Debate on the passage of the bill for raising an additional military force.

(CONTINUED.)

Mr. RANDOLPH moved to recommit the bill.

The SPEAKER having stated the question—

Mr. RANDOLPH said, he thought it perfectly fair, and in order, to give as a reason for the re-commitment of the bill, those objections to it which went to show that it was incapable of answering the purposes which gentlemen had told them it was intended to meet; and he also thought that on this question he should be correct in replying to those arguments which went to shew that it was calculated to answer those purposes. The arguments of those who had opposed the bill had been grossly (God forbid that he should say wilfully) perverted and mistated; his object was really to recommit the bill, because in its present shape it was but an increase of the present peace establishment. In showing this, he should consider himself perfectly at liberty to explain the arguments hitherto urged against it, and to reinstate them in the position in which they ought rightfully to stand.

A gentleman, (Mr. Talmadge) I believe one of the first who took part in the debate yesterday, said Mr. R. told us, that if we require the service of men, we must calculate on paying the price of that service; that if we wish men to fight for us and protect us whilst we are staying at home in peace and in safety, we must make our account with compensating that service. Undoubtedly we must. But it is the paying a part of the community at the expence of the remainder, it is the making the military a distinct profession, placing ourselves in the situation of the sheep, and them in that of the dogs, who, whilst they protect us from the wolf, may at any time worry or devour us at pleasure—it is this very thing which constitutes in our minds a principal objection to the bill. It is not the encouragement of the military spirit to which we object, but the fostering it in a small portion of the community to the destruction of it in the mass of the community—it is that to which we object. If indeed, as I am not at present disposed to question, we are in want of artillerists and engineers, if we want men of science and skill, in that most difficult and all important branch of the military art, let us raise artillerists and engineers, and employ professors to teach them the profession. But it is not by recruiting a few infantry or raising a few dragoons, that this most important deficit in our military knowledge can be supplied. If the arguments of the gentleman be correct, all the troops proposed to be raised should be artillerists and engineers, and persons ought immediately to be employed to instruct them. The arguments, as far as they have any weight, go to this point, and if not to this point, to none at all. I declare upon mine honor, that I deprecate this bill from motives, some of which perhaps gentlemen are not aware of. If I wished to destroy the administration of this country, if I wished it to be blown up from its very foundation, root and branch, I should really consider this bill as one of the most effectual engines for producing that result—one of the most auspicious events that could have occurred, both on account of the expence, and the principle involved in the bill; from which I foresee that by an eternal and perpetual recurrence to a standing military force in every emergency, the militia will be laid aside, and neither armed, organised, or disciplined.

But we are told, that it is necessary to have a pre-existing regular force for disciplining and training the militia. Is it possible, sir, that gentlemen are serious in urging an argument like this in favor of the bill? Who are the regular troops to be raised? Where have *they* learnt the art of war? In what camps have they been bred, in what actions, in the face of what enemy have they been engaged? Or what can they teach the militia, which they wish to learn, or which can be of any real use to them in time of danger? When they and the militia go together into action, in point of courage, practice in the art of war, and familiarity with danger and with blood, they will stand on the same footing with the militia. In what constitutes the real soldier they differ nothing from the militia. The sole difference is, that while the militia are at home, working hard to pay them, the regulars will have lived in camps and huts at the expence of meritorious industry, at the expence of the honest labor of the land; and I will venture to say that the habits which in such a life they will have contracted, will render them inferior to the honest laborer of the country; for in all other respects they are precisely on the same level.

But it is said that British footsteps, unhallowed footsteps have trod upon our decks, and when their trace is found upon them that France confiscates your property. And do you raise two brigades of non-descript troops to prevent the British from treading on your decks or the French from finding their traces afterwards? How is this to cure the evil? What relation is there between the evil complained of and the remedy provided? None that the most intuitive mind can discover. When a part of the south-eastern angle of Great Britain—(the Goodwin sands) was overwhelmed by the sea, an old inhabitant was asked the reason, and he was of opinion that it was caused by the steeple of the neighboring village church, because before the erection of that steeple the land in question was never overflowed. There is as much reason in raising these troops to erase the footsteps of an enemy from our decks as there would have been in destroying that steeple in Kent to prevent the water from overflowing the country—more especially as these decks are now laid up in wet dock. But one thing at least we must allow in justice to this army, whatever other exceptions may be taken to it; it is just as well calculated to meet the French army as the British navy; and as well calculated to meet a British navy as the French army, it is equally well adapted to the British as to the French crisis, because, it is adapted to neither.

But we are told that garrison duty in time of peace is vexatious and oppressive to the militia. No doubt of it, sir; I believe they ought not to be called upon to perform it. I am not perfectly clear that there should be any such duty, but I am decidedly of opinion that the militia should not be called upon to perform it. But what can be more idle than to pretend to fortify and garrison with a few thousand troops the whole extent of this vast country. It is said also that the militia of the western country, some of the best in the U. S. or in the world are at so remote a distance that they would be half dead with fatigue after travelling across the wilderness, and incompetent to the defence of New-Orleans, or unable to attack it if already taken. This argument [their remoteness from the scene of danger] was urged without effect, when it was proposed to raise troops in 1805—6, when an attack might rationally have been expected in that quarter—but now that no attack is expected it is allowed great weight.

But after all, if we do attempt to defend these important points with this force, let gentlemen come home to themselves and ask what will be the consequences if it should fail; for be it remembered that if this force be raised, it is avowedly for the defence of important positions on the sea board and western frontier. Every man I should suppose would be of opinion that the force is incompetent for defence. But let it be raised on the ground that the Executive asks it and pledges his responsibility to defend the country with it, what will be the consequence if it fails? And can any man believe that, separated at so great a distance from New-Orleans as the ports of France and Spain (for they are one and the same) and of G Britain are, that either power will make an attack upon that point with a force which that which is proposed to be raised would be capable of resisting? It cannot be believed. It is therefore our true interest not to lull our people into false security—not to give them a pledge of defence when we know that that defence is not capable of being made by such a force as that which is contemplated. Let New-York be bombarded or laid under contribution, or New-Orleans taken possession of whether by a maritime or land force, and the persons who pass this bill are politically defunct from that day. They can never survive such an event; it is not possible that they should. And if Great Britain should dispatch a strong squadron from Halifax or Jamaica, or France should order the Rochefort squadron to pay us a visit, each of these towns might be destroyed if even the whole 6,000 men were there and much more easily if they had only their proportion of that number.

This army, this increase of our regular force is stated to be a necessary evil. Nay, more—it has appeared that all this clamor about standing armies is mere whim; that indeed this is not a standing army; that to call it so is not to give it its appropriate name. There is not much novelty or ingenuity in this position; its whole merit consists in the boldness of the assertion. It is precisely (I mean no offence to any one) the old federal argument; in those times it was said as it was yesterday, that the clamoring about a standing army was merely for the purpose of opposition; we opposed the standing army, and carried our point with the people. Here is an army still more objectionable if possible; for this is raised neither for a specific purpose, nor for a definite time expressed in the law itself; the advocates of the bill have absolutely taken up the old federal cry that it is not a standing army, and gentlemen on the other side say it is a standing army; and yet with past experience have they the temerity to join with them on that question? In 1798, every thing went on merrily—no dissentients, except one or two states, the old dominion and her eldest daughter, and the first of these divided by a very formidable minority—and what was the consequence in three short years? A complete revolution of the political wheel, and, as long as similar causes produce similar effects, you must calculate upon the same issue if you will persist in bringing the same causes into action.

Without noticing as I intended to have done, that any militia or even regular force dispatched for the relief of New Orleans must be transported by water, and of course not exhausted by a long march as gentlemen contend—permit me to observe that the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. G. W. Campbell) has totally mistaken, because he has certainly mistated all the arguments which he condescended to notice. In the first place we are charged with the disposition to sit here with folded arms and make no preparation. And then it is asked, is not the crisis such as to call for preparation? We say it is; but we differ as to the sort of preparation. Some gentlemen thought gun-boats a proper preparation. I did not. Some thought fortifications good. I was one who entertained strong doubts on this subject, though I agree perfectly that they are better than gun-boats. In both these points my worthy friend from North Carolina (Mr. Macon) thought with me. Some gentlemen think an army is requisite. I would not give 50,000 stand of arms, which will not cost by a fourth as much as this army, for 6000 men as an actual preparation for defence. I would not exchange 50,000 stand of arms for 6 or even 12,000 men as an effective defence.

But we are asked what danger can a great continent with a population of five or six millions, apprehend from six thousand men? Why, sir, 6000 men added to 4000, our present number, make 10,000 men, and every body must agree that it is a very decent beginning—a very pretty nest-egg of a regular military force. The first monarch who invented this engine in modern Europe, and resorted to the business of setting aside a distinct class as the blood hounds of the throne to keep the rest of his subjects in awe, although master of a kingdom, far more populous than the United States, had not any thing like such a capital to go upon; and that little capital has ended in a standing military force of 600,000 men, the scourge of Europe and their own country. And it must end so here. What are we? Who are we? Certainly flesh and blood. Will not the same causes produce the same effects among us as among other nations? Is it necessary to recall to mind the guards of Pisistratus? An army acts upon society by its influence as well as by its physical force; and while upon this part of the subject permit me to say that it will act upon this House in that shape. A gentleman (Mr. Talmadge) has expressed his confidence that the President of the United States, in his selection of officers, will chuse the fittest persons. I hope he may. I hope they will not be taken out of this or the other House. Heaven forbid that I should suspect that they would be taken from either branch of the legislature. But unfortunately the constitution is silent on this head, for even old Homer himself we are told sometimes nods. The framers of the constitution have omitted in this instance a necessary precaution against an evil which in another they have guarded against, after a fashion, to say the least of it, in the case of a civil office. By the constitution "no Senator or Representative shall, during the time for which he was elected, be appointed to any *civil* office under the authority of the United States, which shall have been created, or the emoluments whereof shall have been increased during such time." On the subject of *military* office the constitution is silent, thereby holding out a sort of premium to the legislature to create military offices; and an improper bias it may in future have upon them. The same provision which the constitution has made in the case of civil office, would have been a less inadequate one in the case of a military office, and for this reason. You create a civil office and you cannot yourself fill it; but you have nothing to do provided you have strength or favor at court, but to put the old officer in the new office, and get into the old one yourself. Some precedents might be adduced of this even in these pure days of our young republic. In military offices I am not so clear that this could be done, for the old colonel could not accept the new colonelcy, since he would not only belong to a younger regiment, but, when the people, no longer able to endure their expence, should come to reduce the army, his regiment might be disbanded, when perhaps the old one would be retained. Not being conversant with the punctilios of military life, I throw this out as a hint merely. Now this is an influence against which, in my opinion, it behoves us to guard ourselves. No man certainly ought to vote for this bill who has the slightest idea of accepting an appointment under it, or indeed any other appointment; not that I say such appointment will be offered to him—I hope not—but if he feels a disposition to accept it in case it should be offered to him, he is not a good juror, he is not fit to pass between this bill and the people of the United States. He is disqualified in foro conscientiae—I wish to God he were in the forum of the constitution too. [Here it seemed to be doubted whether Mr. R's remarks were perfectly regular—he continued.]

I have said that there is no limitation to the continuance of this force, and I am giving it as a reason why the bill should be recommitted. Perhaps gentlemen have been told that the enlistments are for five years. That is no limitation. The enlistment of men on the peace establishment is for the same term—*only* five years. The two establishments (they are in fact but one) are precisely on the same footing, the one is as much a peace establishment as the other, the commissions in both are without limitation as to time. But it is said that this House has control over the public purse, and may refuse appropriations. And do gentlemen believe, in case of indisposition in the two other branches, that this army will be disbanded by a measure so strong as that? No, sir; let them look at the history of Great Britain; let them see the House of Commons in possession of a double check over the military—and I wish we had it too, for it is an important one, and we are too much in the habit of giving power out of our own hands, which it does not not depend upon our votes to recal: The House of Commons have the same check over the supplies that we have, and also the power of refusing the mutiny bill or articles of war, an annual bill. But unfortunately for that country, a pretext has been never wanting to her corrupt and ambitious ministry to keep in service a standing military force. The warning voice of her Barnards and Shippens and Saviles have been drowned in the din of ministerial corruption, they began with a little force, until a standing army has become a part of the government, I might say of the constitution—& until the power of refusing supplies has sunk into a mere form, and this is maintained, not by writers hostile to their constitution; not by jacobins and levellers, but by the veteran and chosen political troops who surround the throne this modern doctrine of the English constitution is avowed. And whence has it proceeded? It has arisen because the people, seduced to resort to this expedient of a standing army, upon every frivolous pretext have been induced to give money to a particular class in the community to stand between them and danger, while they have been enervated by a life of sedentary habits, or by pursuits which, while they did not deprive the subject of the pleasures of active life, equally disqualified him from performing his part in the society of which he was a member. The standing army has become a part of the constitution in theory as well as practice. It is allowed, no one pretends to deny it, that the House of Commons have virtually relinquished the power to refuse the supplies or the mutiny bill. It would be attended with no other consequence, were they to refuse them, than to place the French emperor, or one of his lieutenants upon the English throne. It would work a dissolution of society. But deplorable as these consequences are to the British government, they are attended with infinitely less of evil in that country than they would be in ours. There is but a *shade of difference* (to use a favorite expression of late) between that government and those governments where a standing army is their whole machinery and support. That government is professedly regal; it has an hereditary king and nobility & I had like to have said an hereditary heirarchy; aristocratical associations and corporations fostering every species of monopoly, every thing which can create a distinction between man and man. A standing army is not calculated to operate the same mischief on that government, as on a people whose habits and mode of life are similar to our own. The power of refusing supplies, and of rejecting the mutiny bill, are as merely a nominal appendage to the House of Commons, as much as the faded shadow of their ancient greatness is the title of King of France is to their sovereign. And it will soon become so here if you pass laws which place us in a situation not to put our high prerogative into execution but at the risk of the existence of the state, and leave us no alternative but of shrinking from that severe duty, or destroying our government; for when the safety of the government depends upon regular troops, the refusal to pay them is a political *felo de se* and I am not sure that this may not be the case when the destruction of our natural defence may have been accomplished.

It then will appear that it is not true that we are willing to consider this as a time of peace and safety, and consequently unwilling to make any provision for defence. It is not true: I repeat it is not true. We are willing to make preparation, and the sort of preparation which we wish to make is to arm the whole body of the militia, to arm every man capable of bearing arms, but more particularly to class the militia, & arm *instanter* that portion of our youth first to be called out; and let any man put the two sorts of preparation into the scales of expediency and sound policy and see which will kick the beam. Ours is a preparation for the *nation*. This is for two or three spots on the coasts, which taken all together, are a mere nothing to the whole; and even they would be much better protected by our mode of defence than by this. It is inadequate and frivolous. It is frivolous, to pretend that the seaports in the United States, to say nothing of Detroit and the western posts, can be defended