

The Kentucky Advertiser.

WINCHESTER, (Kentucky)--Printed by NATHANIEL PATTEN, Jr.

Num. 131.]

SATURDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22, 1847.

[Vol. III.]

CONDITIONS.

TWO DOLLARS if paid in advance—TWO DOLLARS & FIFTY CENTS in six months—THREE DOLLARS at the expiration of the year.

No paper will be discontinued until all arrearages have been paid.

Those who do not direct their papers to be continued at the end of the year will be considered as engaged for the next.

Subscribers at a distance whose papers are sent at our expense, will be charged 25 cents per annum in addition.

ADVERTISEMENTS, not exceeding a square, will be inserted for 30 Cents the first insertion, and 25 cents for each continuance. Those coming from the country must be accompanied by the CASH, or they will not be attended to.

CONGRESSIONAL.

DEBATE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE COMPENSATION LAW.

TUESDAY, JAN. 14.

In committee of the whole, Mr. BRECKENRIDGE in the chair, on the bill to repeal the act passed at the last session of Congress, to change the mode of compensation to Senators, Representatives and Delegates in Congress.

The bill having been read—

Mr. JOHNSON of Kentucky, said that, in moving, as he now did, to fill the blank (for the amount of future daily compensation) with eight dollars, he obeyed the instructions of the committee who reported this bill, of which he was a member. There had been in the committee a diversity of opinion on this subject, one of two gentlemen preferring nine or ten, and a bare majority consenting to eight. Although he did not differ from the committee in the reasoning of their report, he could not feel it his duty to come to the same result as to the future compensation, as a majority of the committee had done. He should, he said, vote against the repeal of the present compensation taking a retrospective operation; he wished the repeal to take place on the 4th day of March next, and leave it to the next Congress, four fifths of whom were elected, to regulate this matter, the right of fixing it. He was desirous, he said, to give them a responsibility which he presumed they would be proud to assume, and should vote against adding at this time a single cent to the old compensation of six dollars per day. Mr. J. expressed his hope, as he had endeavored, in previously discussing the subject, to avoid on a question of this delicacy saying anything in any manner to wound the feelings of the members, that perfect harmony would characterize the whole debate. He believed, he said, that no member of this House, regarding the members as pensioners merely, with a view to pecuniary considerations only, could say that 15,000 dollars was too great a compensation, nor even that it was enough. But Mr. J. said, his judgment and conscience dictated to him in obedience to the public will, to do vote to repeal the law, and leave the compensation as it was previous to the passage of the reprobated compensation law.

Mr. FINLEY, of Pennsylvania, next rose to speak on the subject. His rising occasioned a deviation from the usual order of the House, by the members crowding round him, which may be attributed to the general respect for his years, experience and intelligence.

After making some general observations on the nature of this subject, Mr. F. gave a concise history of what had been formerly done, respecting the compensation of members of Congress. He stated, that under the confederation, each state paid its own members, and instructed and recalled them at pleasure; that when Congress money gave way to specie, some states paid eight dollars a day, some more and some less. Pennsylvania paid six dollars, but had great difficulty to procure members willing to serve. Some small states gave but four, and were rarely ever represented. It must be well known to those who remember that period, and paid attention to it, that nine states out of the thirteen, were a quorum necessary to make requisitions on the states and other important business, and that this number could with difficulty be got together one month in a year.

When the National Government was organized, the committee of the representatives to whom the compensation of the members was referred, took an average of what the states had paid their members, and it was either six dollars, and one third or two thirds, which, is now forgot. They reported, however, six dollars a day for the representatives, but limited it to a time after the census would be taken and a more equal representation should take place; when that time came about, twenty years ago, the subject was again referred to a committee

A salary was proposed and advocated, but believing it was contrary to public opinion, or at least the common practice in paying the state legislatures, this was dropped, and a compensation of eight dollars a day reported; after a discussion this was rejected by one, or at most two votes.

There had about this time been a considerable rise of expense, and several state legislatures had increased their compensation, yet Congress, believing that this arose from temporary causes, increased the compensation of clerks, and some subordinate officers; and of the heads of departments, for a limited time, which, however, has been renewed. When the eight dollars was rejected, some members openly declared their intention to decline, and actually did so.

Mr. F. said, that to members, whose farms supported their families, and who did not bring their families with them, the six dollars a day would still pay their expenses; but to such as have in support their families by industry in any occupation it would not do. Several members to his own knowledge, had tried it a few sessions, sending the half of their wages monthly to support their families but had to decline. It was well known that members preferred almost any offices in the gift of the U. States, as well as of their own state, to a seat in Congress, and it is evident, that for want of the attendance of members, the most important measures were frequently transacted in a thin house, which certainly ought not to be the case.

He observed, that agreeably to the principles of our government, all classes, and all interests ought to be represented in Congress. He knew that the wages might be made so low, that but one class, viz. the wealthy, who could afford the expense, and did not depend on their own personal industry, would serve. But this would change the nature of the government. But even if the compensation was raised, or the salary established, there would always be many who would not serve, many to whom no wages we ought to give would compensate their loss, and there are many whom no compensation we could give would induce them to leave their endearing families, comforts and cares, to serve at such a distance from home as many of the members have to do. Some who have done so, always reflect on it with deep regret.

Mr. F. said, as this was the last session he ever would serve, his voting for an increase of the daily wages, as he designed to do, could contribute very little to his advantage, when it was known that, though he was not here last session, to vote either for or against the compensation law, being prevented by sickness; he was yet entitled to receive the compensation, but would not claim nor would he receive it; therefore expected, that voting for an increase of wages would not be imputed to him as the result of self-interest. He would not vote for the repeal of the salary, because he thought it contrary to the constitution or any principle of the government; but, because he thought it inexpedient. On the whole, Mr. F. said, that he wished to leave those who succeeded him on a footing equal to what he was himself when he came into Congress. He wished a reasonable compensation to be fixed, to continue till after the next census, not but what he knew every Congress had equal power as the first Congress had, to fix their own compensation. All the state legislatures have done so, some of them oftener than once. He would vote to fill the blank with eight dollars, not because he thought it equal to six when he went first into Congress, but because he thought, when the currency was regulated to a specie standard, which he hoped would be the case before the next Congress, it would be equal. This was no new thought of his. He, agreeably to his own opinion of the public good, had determined to vote for a moderate increase of wages before he left Congress; for obvious reasons such a question had been delayed till long after the state legislatures had set the example.

Mr. RANDOLPH, of Virginia, then took the floor. The auction of popularity, he said, differed in one material respect, from all others: the first bidder standing in the same relation to the transaction as the last bidder does. Hence it could be no cause of surprise, that at all times, where any measure within the scope of public contemplation should be peculiarly odious, a great anxiety should be manifested as to who should be foremost in the repeal; or otherwise, if the measure was entirely desirable, the same struggle should take place in the race who should be first to reach the goal. He for one, he said, had been extremely glad that the House of Rep-

resentatives had, on this occasion, so far at least, not been wanting in a sense of decent self-respect. He hoped the committee would not understand him to intend to enter into the merits of the bill, or to commit himself to the support of it on its final passage; but he had no hesitation in saying, if it was to pass, that it ought not to pass in the shape in which it had been offered by the committee. What urgency was there in this case? Would any honorable member show him that there was a great urgency that the act of the last session should be repealed as to the remaining part of this session, and that the law should be further modified by an increase of the compensation thirty three and a third per cent? This body ought not to act on any frivolous impulse; it ought not to act on any temporary excitement. He hoped not to be misunderstood. The people of the United States are the sovereigns of the United States; the government is theirs, because the soil is theirs—the country is theirs; they have a right to be heard. But what, said he, have we heard from the public on this occasion, except a solitary petition this morning from some part of Pennsylvania for a repeal of the law? Now, with all due respect for public opinion; where is the necessity for the passage of the bill on the table? If this House, said he, is to act on this subject; if it is to undo or patch up the act of the last session; if this House is to offer something like a tub to the great Levitation of popularity, what ought they to do? To undo all they have done, or to do nothing. In what situation otherwise shall we stand? In what predicament shall we present ourselves to our constituents? going on the principle that these constituents are hostile to the law. Thank God mine have said nothing to me about it; no, sir, I do not think mine will say anything to me on that score. What shall we say to the people who have been clamoring about it, when they are told that we have repealed the act, and taken the difference of thirty-three and a third per cent. more than we should have had if we had never passed it? I would not wish to stand in a more pitiable, I would add painful, condition before the people, than with this bill in my hand as amendatory of the act of the last session.

Without now giving an opinion on the merits of the bill, reserving himself till the bill should be more fully before the House, he rose to offer an amendment which he believed would supersede the amendment proposed by the gentleman from Kentucky. Take notice, said he, I do not pledge myself to vote for the bill, even if my amendment be adopted, I do not wish to entrap the House, but to shew what, in my opinion, ought to be done, if we move in the question at all. Mr. R. they proposed to strike out the whole bill, and insert in lieu thereof a provision to repeal entirely the law of last session, and require a deduction from the amount of pay received by the members, of so much as, during the past and present sessions, they shall have received over and above the rate of six dollars per day. The act of the last session was retrospective and retroactive in its operation; and if the House touched the law at this session, in his opinion they ought to take up the matter where they did at the last session, and any law now passed should be retroactive in the same manner as the act passed at the last session. It perhaps might be remembered by the chair, or perhaps the chairman might not have thought it worth while to remember, that at the last session, he (Mr. Randolph) had made a motion, limiting the operation of the law to a future Congress; and that that motion, on the argument of other gentlemen, he had seen fit to withdraw—and he had so thought for this reason, that each Congress ought to take upon itself the responsibility of assessing its own pay; that to do so was a duty devolving on it, from which it had no right to shrink. If they had now assessed it too high in their own opinions, they ought to refund the surplus.

The CHAIRMAN having declared that Mr. Randolph's motion did not supersede that of Mr. Johnson—

Mr. RANDOLPH said, he was not in the situation of the man, who had been so long remembered that he was forgot; but he had been so long a member of the House as to have lost all knowledge of its rules and orders of proceeding. The rule with which he had been acquainted for near fourteen years, in this House, was, that the motion to strike out the section of a bill superseded a motion to amend it. He wished to know, if not now in order, when it would be in order to propound his motion to the House.

Mr. CLAY (the Speaker) explained the change of practice in late years in the House, whereby it was established,

that a bill should be open for any amendments, to be made as perfect as it could, before a motion was entertained to strike out the first section.

Mr. SOUTHWARD, of New Jersey, said this subject was one so practical, so familiar to every one by the discussions it had undergone, that it was not worth while to detain the House with any remarks in support of the proposition which he now submitted, to fix the compensation for the future at the old standard of six dollars per day.

Mr. GROSVENOR, of New York, said he was in favor of retaining the salary feature, because he thought it most consistent with the public interest. But if that law must be repealed, one great objection to that course would be removed by the adoption of the amendment suggested by the gentleman from Virginia. If touched at all, said he, it should be in such a manner as not to brand our names and that of the Congress to which we belong, to the latest ages, with dishonor and disgrace. I would not put into my pocket that compensation which I believe to be right, and refuse it to our successors, or put in my pocket what I believe unjust and keep it there. For the purpose therefore of removing this great and prominent difficulty in his mind, he should move to fill the blank with TEN dollars—not that he should, if his motion succeeded, vote for this bill, because in the abstract he preferred a salary. He would make the mileage different, however, and at a less rate than that, Mr. G. disclaimed any intention, at this time, to enter into the general question, reserving himself for a future opportunity.

Mr. T. WILSON, of Pennsylvania, intimated his wish so to amend the bill as that, the law should remain as it is until the 4th of March next, and that it should then be divested of its objectionable salary feature.

Mr. REYNOLDS, of Tennessee, intimated his wish if the gentleman from Virginia was serious in his refunding system, that he would be good enough to make the day of refunding some convenient time after the close of the session, to give gentlemen an opportunity to obtain the means of complying with that provision. [This suggestion produced no little mirth in the House.] Mr. R. said he was not for coming down at once to six dollars per day, but was for fixing on that daily sum which would amount as nearly as might be to 1500 dollars for the whole time of sitting during a year.— He would inform the gentleman from Virginia, he said, that, if in his remarks on that head, he had alluded to the committee who reported this bill, they had nothing to do with the rapid race of popularity, which the hon. gentleman had so handsomely described.— He would only add, that he believed the honorable gentleman himself had now announced a motion, which had more substantial popularity in it than all the other motions on the subject put together.

Mr. DESHA of Kentucky, said, there were four propositions before the committee, for filling the blank in the bill—ten, nine, eight, and six dollars. He had seconded the motion to fill the blank with six dollars, and he should vote against every proposition, till it came down to six dollars, which he should support, because he thought we ought to retrace our steps, and place the pay of the members on its former footing, at six dollars per day. A gentleman had said that he would not be moved by the public voice on this occasion. Mr. D. said he thought he possessed as much independence as most men, but he confessed he was not so independent as to disregard public opinion. Ours is a government of the people: the people are virtually the governors, and we, as their agents, are bound to act up to their will, when that can be ascertained; and can any gentleman doubt that the will of the people is against the compensation law? It has not only been disapproved, but reprobated, from one end of this continent to the other, in a few places, excepted, where extravagance is the order of the day, and among a few individuals, in other places, who consider themselves exclusively entitled to all offices of prominence; and who look forward with expectation of filling the situation, when a fat salary would be quite welcome. It is my opinion, that the people had not only a right to complain, but had ample cause of complaint. We had but recently got out of a necessary, but expensive war. I want to say the people were oppressed, but I will say they were pretty heavily burdened with taxes, and I have no hesitation in saying that they would have borne double—yes, treble, as much, if they could have been convinced it was necessary, in defence of their rights but when they discovered, (as they believed) that the adoption of the com-

ensation law was aggrandising ourselves, and laying additional burthens on them; was it any wonder they complained? Although I have no doubt but what the agitation in the public mind, was, in some instances, carried to extremes, yet, the opposition to what they conceived an encroachment, was a favorable symptom; for while ever this feeling in the public mind, is alive, liberty is safe. The people will correct any errors that may be gone into by their agents.

Mr. D. said, that this was an unpleasant subject to touch upon, and what made it rather embarrassing to him was the knowledge that he was speaking against the feelings and inclinations of a majority of the House, and at the same time recollecting the pointed and severe sarcasms, and ridicule attempted to be attached to all those who were opposed to the compensation bill, last session, and particularly to those who got an opportunity of speaking against the measure. But where duty impelled, he trusted he should not interfere with motives, and should be cautious not to make use of expressions calculated to wound feeling, and he hoped he should be treated with a correspondent liberality as he should be very careful of his own feelings.—

Mr. D. said he rejoiced when his honorable colleague brought forward the resolution on which this bill is bottomed, because he thought it came better from him than it could, from any other member, as he brought forward the measure which this bill contemplates modifying, or repealing; but the gentleman's speech accompanying the resolution, was of a character well calculated to defend the purpose of the resolution. It was calculated to rivet on the minds of the original advocates of the measure, that the law giving the salary to members of Congress, was just and correct, and ought not to be repealed. The gentleman told you that what influenced him in the introduction of the resolution, was that he discovered that the compensation law was disapproved of by the people; and as he was always willing to act consistently with the will of the people, and subscribed to the principle of instruction, he therefore felt it his duty to introduce the resolution, and should vote for the repeal of the compensation law. This, to be sure could not be collected from the tenor of the gentleman's speech, but the gentleman told us so, and his word is always good. To harbor a thought that any other motives than the purest kind, actuates my colleague in his public conduct, would be doing him injustice; and he certainly is entitled to considerable credit for willingly attending to the wishes of the people, and subscribing to the principle of instruction, which I view as the very essence of representative government. To deny that the people have a right to instruct their agents, is striking at the very nature of our government. I have been often gratified with the open, gentlemanly, and candid manner, my colleague treats questions in debate; but I confess on that occasion I should have been perfectly satisfied with the bare resolution, accompanied by the speech, as I viewed the remarks, (although they were delivered with considerable eloquence) as in direct hostility to the object expressed in the resolution.

The gentleman contrasted the present pay of the members of Congress, with the pay of a number of the officers of government, commencing with the President of the United States, and coming down to the Sergeant of Arms, and Door-Keeper. I will appeal to my honorable colleague's candor, to say whether this kind of argument was altogether so fair, or, if fair, was it applicable on the present occasion, unless money is made the first consideration, as in the combined report of the committee who produced this bill? in which report, notwithstanding it is ably drawn, there is scarcely a patriotic sentence from the commencement to the end.— Money, money, is the burden of the song. I venture to say, when the people of this country generally adopt such principles, by making money the first consideration, to the exclusion of patriotic feelings, that your liberty will be on the totter, and will soon be gone.— But to return to the Sergeant of Arms, and Door-Keeper: These men are not on y useful, but excellent officers—and I confess I wish to see them in their present places, while ever I am honored with a seat in this House.— But can any gentleman suppose they would accept the situations they now fill, for the honor attached to them?— Certainly not. Enolument must be the only consideration that can induce them to wish the places: and ought that to be the case with a gentleman who represents thirty five thousand free people? Most unquestionably not. I view the situation of a man who