

Mr. Bland then rose, and said, he had the misfortune to differ with all his colleagues on so important a point as that of the state debts being assumed by the United States in its general funding system; and as that singularity might be attributed by some either to caprice, whim, or a perverse humour, he thought it incumbent on him to shew to the house, and to his colleagues in particular, that he considered it as founded upon the soundest principles, both as to the general welfare of the Union, as well as to that of the particular state of which he had the honor to be one of the representatives.

He knew, he said, that his attachment to the general weal of the Union, had been doubted by some who did not know him. He knew that he had been denominated an anti-federalist when the adoption of the new constitution was agitated. He then did consider, and at this instant did consider some parts of that constitution as dangerous to the general liberties of his country. He wished to see them amended. He had since had the pleasure to see them in part amended. He hoped in future to see them so amended as to take away every objection; so far he was an anti-federalist. But he assured the house that there was no man in America more strongly attached to a firm union of the states than himself, or a good and efficient government which consisted with the true principles of liberty.

Among his objections to the new constitution was a dread that he entertained of silent majorities, on questions of great and general concern; that he had heard gentlemen in that house, some of the firmest supporters of the adoption of the new government, lament and deplore these silent majorities with great pathos. That however, his ideas of binding the states together, (upon the principle of his having been opposed to the adoption of the constitution without the amendments he had mentioned) might be ridiculed, he conceived himself that he was perfectly consistent; he always had supported and should continue to support those measures which should bind and strengthen the union, so far as was consistent with the constitution and the rights of a free people.

He should now consider the subject before the house as it concerned the state from whence he came, and altho' he addressed this particularly to his colleagues, he conceived what was said of Virginia would apply in part to most of the states in the union. He conceived, that should the assumption of the state debts not take place (he meant that part that might properly be considered continental as having been incurred for the common defence during the war) those states which have made the most vigorous exertions would be most embarrassed. In this predicament it was generally allowed Virginia stood.—Virginia had at one time in the field twenty-one regiments, including Virginia infantry, cavalry and artillery; these were fully officered; it was true, some of them were continental and some state regiments, but they had been all settled with alike.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14.

Sundry petitions were read.

The report of the committee on the accounts presented by the printers for newspapers supplied the house was taken up.

Mr. SHERMAN moved that the report be accepted.

Mr. GERRY observed that a free press is of the greatest importance to the people, and all proper encouragement ought to be given it; that the practice of Congress in taking the newspapers upon a liberal plan conducted to this object; that the most beneficial consequences had resulted to the government from that information which their constituents had received thro this medium. Gentlemen have observed that persons at the seat of government derive an advantage from the early intelligence which that circumstance enables them to obtain—but it will not be denied that all parts of the union have as good a right to political intelligence, as the spot where Congress happens to be; no mode of conveying this intelligence can be devised which is attended with so much facility as this; and no citizen can grudge the expence; it does not amount perhaps to more than the fraction of a farthing, on an average.—The information conveyed through this channel has afforded the greatest satisfaction to our constituents—it is expected from us, and is what they have a right to—and so great has been the anxiety on some occasions for news from Congress, in some of the towns in the Eastern States, that I have been informed (said he) that half a dollar has been given for a newspaper. The last session of Congress, complaints were made of the partiality and misrepresentations of the printers, and justly; in their accounts of the debates some of the members were held up in a ridiculous point of light and great injustice was done thro the inaccuracy of those partial publications. This session matters have been better conducted; the debates have been more impartially handed to the public—the printers publish on both sides, and are willing to correct their mistakes. If no other advantage was to be derived from a general encouragement—this freedom and impartiality being obtained, is a sufficient indemnification for the trifling expence; if one or two printers only, were to have public encouragement; or the exclusive printing of newspapers for Congress—it would preclude the public in all probability from that full and impartial information to which they are entitled; it would tend to giving the house an undue control over the press, or perhaps make it the tool of a party.—Mr. Gerry made many other remarks, and concluded by observing, with respect to any saving to the public—the expence was so trifling compared to the advantage, that he thought it a very contemptible object of economy, in a national point of view; and moved to reject the clause which proposed that Congress should not be supplied with any more papers at the public expence.

Mr. BENSON said he hoped the resolution would be agreed to with an amendment, which he moved, by striking out what relates to supplying the Senate; he was for leaving that part of the business to themselves; he gave a short account of the origin of Congress being supplied with papers.—Under the old confederation he said, Congress was considered as a diplomatic body—the members were amenable to the States who sent them; Congress could not compel their punctual attendance—hence the expedient of taking the papers to keep the members together, from the time of meeting, till they formed a house; but he observed this did not apply to the present Congress, who are a differently organized body, and the introduction of newspapers interrupted public business. He adverted to the odd appearance the charge must make in the account of public expences.

Mr. SMITH (S. C.) offered a variety of observations to shew the ill policy of adopting the report—enlarged on the advantages derived to the people from the diffusion of the information contained in the newspapers which were transmitted by the members.

Mr. SHERMAN observed that he did not particularly recollect the origin of Congress taking the newspapers, but the punctuality of the members at present rendered any such expedient unnecessary. He objected to the papers being read in Congress; but if it is thought necessary that Congress should be supplied with the papers as heretofore, the members may receive them at their lodgings, and there they may read them before they come to Congress; as to the observation that the printers are more impartial this session than they were the last—he did not think there was much in that—he thought that they had always aimed to be impartial—he conceived it was for their interest to be so; it is true they are liable to commit errors, and some have been printed in the debates, but when they have been pointed out, they were willing to publish corrections, and in many cases have done it. He did not think that the members sending the papers to their constituents conducted so much to diffuse information, as the publications which took place in consequence of the printers sending their papers to each other; this answered the purpose to much greater extent.

The motion for striking out what relates to the Senate, was negatived.

The question being divided—the first part of the report respecting payment for the papers was agreed to—the latter part was negatived.

In committee of the whole on the bill to regulate the post-office of the United States.

The committee made considerable progress in the discussion of the bill but did not finish it.

THURSDAY, APRIL 15.

A message was received from the President of the United States, informing the house that the act further to suspend part of the law to regulate the collection of the Revenue, has received his assent.

The bill for the government of the territory, south of the Ohio, was read the second time, and made the order of the day to-morrow.

A message was received from the Senate with the bill for the punishment of certain crimes against the United States, informing the house that they agree to some of the amendments proposed, and disagree to others.

A motion was made by Mr. Boudinot that a committee be appointed to originate a bill for the mitigation of penalties and forfeitures accruing under the Revenue Laws in certain cases therein mentioned. Laid on the table.

Mr. Gale moved for the order of the day on the report of the Secretary of the Treasury for the support of the Public Credit. The motion being seconded, occasioned a debate.

Some gentlemen wished the committee to be discharged from further proceeding in the Report, till a plan of accommodation should be agreed to, in respect to the assumption of the State debts. The house were warmly agitated on this subject for a considerable length of time. Several members were called to order, and a variety of motions respecting order made. At length the yeas and nays were called for, and taken, and the question for going into committee was carried.

The proposition for effecting a modification of the public debt being read, Mr. Seney moved to strike out the clause which relates to the debts of the particular States. This motion was seconded by Mr. Parker.—Mr. Sherman, Mr. Gerry, Mr. Ames, and Mr. Bland spoke against the motion. Mr. White and Mr. Seney in its support—but the committee rose without coming to a decision.

FRIDAY, APRIL 16.

Sundry petitions were read.

Mr. Boudinot of the committee to whom was referred part of the petition from the inhabitants of the town of Portsmouth, N. H. brought in a report which was read.

A committee, consisting of Mr. Boudinot, Mr. Goodhue, and Mr. Huntington, was appointed to bring in a bill for the mitigation of penalties and forfeitures, pursuant to a motion laid on the table yesterday.

The order of the day being called for on the report of the Secretary of the Treasury—Mr. Fitzsimons said, he wished a suspension of the motion while he read a proposition which he meant to offer for the consideration of the house; it was in substance as follows—viz. That a Committee be appointed to devise a plan for the assumption of the debts, payable by the respective States—and a mode of paying the interest thereon—also to provide for the speedy and effectual settlement of accounts between the United States and individual States.

This motion being objected to, as informal; it subsided, and the house went into a committee of the whole.

The motion for striking out the clause respecting the State debts in the proposition for effecting a new modification of the domestic debt, was carried in the affirmative.

The proposition for opening a loan on the first plan was then read; when Mr. Boudinot moved that the words, "To receive the other third in lands in the Western Territory at the rate of 20 cents per acre," should be struck out; and proposed a substitute similar to that which he offered in the former discussion of this subject.—This motion occasioned a debate, which lasted till 3 o'clock; and the vote being taken, the motion was negatived. The committee then rose and the House adjourned till Monday.

N. B. While Mr. Sedgwick was speaking as in our last, Mr. Page called him to order, and reminded him of the great impropriety of his rising on the floor of the committee, and remonstrating against the solemn vote of that committee, which had just been entered on the journals: He added it was strange the gentleman could not have patience till the report of the committee should come before the House, when he might renew the motion for the assumption which he had so much at heart. Some members however, calling out "hear him," Mr. Sedgwick went on—when he sat down Mr. Page rose, and moved that the committee might rise, as he thought it highly improper it should sit merely to hear passionate remonstrances against its proceedings.

Mr. Jackson also made some spirited strictures to the same purpose, on Mr. Sedgwick's speech.

FROM THE FEDERAL GAZETTE.

Mr. BROWN. THE House of Representatives in Congress appear much divided on the subject of assuming the debts contracted by individual States for the support of the late war;—this may be justly

considered as a great national question, and the welfare and importance of the United States depend in a great measure upon its determination.

I agree with the Secretary of the Treasury, that "the assumption of the debts of the particular States by the union, will be a measure of found policy and substantial justice, and that it would contribute in an eminent degree to an orderly, stable and satisfactory arrangement of the national finances." But I will go farther, and do not hesitate to assert that public credit can never be established but by one uniform system of revenue throughout all the States; that impartial justice cannot be done to the people and to the creditors in any other way, but by a continental arrangement: and in fact that if ever the national debts, including those of particular States contracted as aforesaid, are paid, it must be by a national fund constituted on the resources of the Union drawn forth and directed "by one authority."

When it is said the assumption will augment the debt so much that it cannot be paid, it is evidently meant that the debts shall remain with the States and some of them not be paid at all, for surely an aggregate of the funds would at least not be weaker, or less efficient than so many separate ones; hence it appears that one question involved in this business is, shall the creditors of debtor States receive payment of the debts due to them or not? And another is, shall the general government exercise the power of drawing forth the resources of the union for national purposes, or shall it be impeded in doing its duty by States funding systems, and "distinct interests drawing different ways?" It is proposed that a liquidation shall take place, of the accounts between the union and the individual States; "the settlement to be under the superintendance of commissioners, vested with equitable discretion, and final authority." And that the balances found due to creditor States "shall be provided for by the United States, "at a reasonable interest, but not to be transferable."

At whatever period the company accounts may be settled, there will be balances due to and from the different States; and the measure contended for is perhaps the only possible mode that can be devised, by which the creditor States will be reimbursed for their advances—And it is the best mean that can be fallen upon to equalize the burthens of the States; for the longer the accounts remain open and the States go on in the way they have done heretofore, the greater will be the inequalities.

We should judge of this proposition upon true national principles, and extend our inquiries beyond the limits of a single State and throughout the union, in order to see which of the two ways is the most likely to do justice, and to establish credit. Several of the States are in a situation to pay their debts, but there are others who have not the means since the surrender of their funds, admitting they were ever so well disposed; and in such cases I contend that the creditors have unquestionably a just claim on the union; because all the debts were contracted upon the credit of the union; as well as of the individual States, from the relationship that each of the members was known to have to the whole. Now I would ask, if Congress can establish credit while there are any of the debts, for which the union is bound, unprovided for?

But it will be said that the creditors must compel their States to pay them; and if this cannot be done, that Congress must compel them, not only to pay their creditors, but to pay up their requisitions. The first is out of the question, the creditors cannot make use of compulsory measures, and as to the latter, I can only answer that I have heard of but one method proposed, that is, that the general government should levy taxes upon the delinquent States; and this I believe will never be put in practice.

If the debts are well funded, it can surely make no difference to the creditors; and the argument that some of the States are under contracts with their citizens to receive said debts in payment for lands and confiscated estates, must cease to be an objection, when it is considered that it will be in the power of any of the States to pass laws for receiving the funded debt of the United States in lieu of the former, in discharge of all such engagements. And for so much of the continental debt as a State may receive in this way, she will have a claim upon the national treasury.

I wish to see the whole of the national debt funded on the same terms and but one species of certificates in the Thirteen States. Why should different parts of a debt, that is all equally just be unequally paid? Which will be the case if the debts in question are to be provided for by the several States in their individual capacities. Although the assumption may appear at first view to be against the interests of the other public creditors, there can be no doubt but it will tend to their mutual advantage in the operation of a system that is intended not merely as a temporary expedient, but to be commensurate to its object.

FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES. MR. FENNO.

A Society of gentlemen, anxious to promote the *Salus Populi*, which should be the principal object of every public body, met in this city several months ago, and continue in it yet; they come from different States; and their intention is to compose and publish, from time to time books on such subjects as may be interesting, but on such subjects only as shall be of national concern. Although nothing respecting this society has appeared in the News-papers, yet as it is known to many that they have met,—when they met,—and what they met for; and some may suppose that they have been doing nothing all this time, I think it a piece of justice to the society that the world should be informed they have not been idle,—they meet regularly every day, Saturdays and Sundays excepted.—Their hours of business [for they have stated hours] are fully employed, and the Public may be gratified ere long, with the following publications, which, from my knowledge of the genius and erudition of the gentlemen who compose the society, I am persuaded will be masterly performances; viz.

- 1st.—A *Treatise on trifling*, in Folio, shewing in what manner four hours of every day may be dissipated to the greatest advantage:—*Periurium hora, et imputantur.*
- 2d. An *Essay on Procrastination*; in which Procrastination is proved to be the true Philosopher's Stone, which turns all things into gold, and that by the use of it a fortune may be acquired more easily and expeditiously than in any other way.—
- 3d. The terrors of election. A Poem.—
- 4th. The art of minding the Ram:—an elaborate performance, tending to shew the falsehood of the old scholastic adage, "*Ex nihilo nihil fit.*"—
- 5th. The Dutch Pensionary's rule of doing one thing at a time, or not beginning a second piece of business before the first was finished; in which it is made apparent that the rule is a very absurd one.—

THE above are part of the result of the society's labors; but it is said that a number of pam-