



CONGRESS.

PHILADELPHIA.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1.

ORDER OF THE DAY—THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH.

MR. SEDGWICK said that the last session of Congress, the House of Representatives by the appointment of committees, to which almost every object of discussion in the President's Speech was referred, so far monopolized the public business, that during great part of the session, the Senate had very little to attend to.

He thought it of importance that a similar interference should be avoided the present Session. He then recapitulated the principal objects recommended to the attention of Congress in the Speech; and informed the House it had been intimated to him, that the Senate proposed to take into consideration the subjects of the Mint, Weights and Measures, Consuls, election of President and Vice-President, and the establishment of Land Offices. The House therefore, if they thought proper, might avoid a primary discussion of these subjects, and employ their deliberations on other important parts of the speech. Some of these the House had already provided for, by the appointment of committees—others remained to be attended to—among these, the reference in the Speech to the excise law he thought of very material consequence, and accordingly moved that a committee should be appointed to take into consideration, that part of the President's Speech which relates to the carrying that law into execution—and to report such circumstances in the law, as may, with consistency, be so altered as to remove any well intentioned objections against it; also to ascertain and report whether there exists a due proportion between the duties on foreign spirits and those of domestic manufacture.

Mr. Boudinot observed, that it struck him as an impropriety for the House to receive any information from the Senate except through an appointed medium; this informal mode, if it was allowed, would be a bad precedent and productive of great embarrassment; the difficulty which has been mentioned might be avoided by the appointment of a joint committee—which he thought to be the most eligible mode.

Mr. Sedgwick replied that he meant only to convey to the House the information he had received, which he supposed was of importance—he had no intention of establishing a precedent.

Mr. Lawrance called for the reading of the Speech, which being read—committees were appointed on the several articles as stated in our last.

Mr. Sedgwick's motion occasioned considerable debate; Mr. Steele moved an amendment by inserting the Secretary of the Treasury in lieu of a Committee. This officer he observed was more competent than any other person to give information on the subject, as he had paid the most minute attention to the operation of the law—prejudices, he said, were entertained against the Secretary, on account of his having originally drafted the law—these prejudices he wished should be removed, as he was well satisfied that it was the wish of the House, as well as of the Secretary that every reasonable objection against the law should be removed.

The motion for a reference to the Secretary was supported by Mr. White, Mr. Lawrance, Mr. Gerry, Mr. Smith (S. C.) Mr. Ames, and Mr. Williamson.

Mr. Sedgwick contended for a Committee; he was supported by Mr. Vining, Mr. Parker, Mr. Boudinot, and Mr. Goodhue; on this side of the question it was urged that there was a manifest impropriety and want of respect in referring any part of the President's Speech, or a Law of the Union to the head of any particular department; that the information to be derived from the Secretary, would of course be received by a committee, and by them be communicated to the House.

The present subject involved considerations that should arrest the particular attention of the Legislature, as they only were competent to deciding upon them. The motion has reference to the rate of duties, and the House was certainly the most competent to judge of, and estimate the public taxes.

After some further debate Mr. Sedgwick withdrew his proposition—and a motion by Mr. Ames, for a reference to the Secretary of the Treasury for information respecting any difficulties in the execution of the Law, was agreed to.

The business of Offices for the sale of vacant Lands within the Territory of the United States,

being considered as particularly connected with revenue—a committee of the house was appointed to prepare and report a bill, or bills on that subject.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2.

A number of petitions were read and referred. Mr. Giles called up a memorial from the officers of the Virginia line, and other papers relative thereto, which were communicated by the President, to the late Congress, but not acted upon. The papers being read, he laid on the table the following resolution:

That so much of the message and communications from the President of the United States to both houses, on the 17th of January last, as relates to the bounty lands granted to the officers and soldiers of the Virginia line on the continental establishment, be referred to a select committee, to examine the matter thereof, and report the same with their opinion thereon to the house.

On motion of Mr. Dayton, it was resolved, that the Secretary of the Treasury be directed to report to the House, whether any and what alterations in favor of the spirits which shall be distilled from articles of the growth or produce of the United States, or from foreign articles within the same, can, in his opinion, be made in the excise law, consistently with its main design, and with the maintenance of the public faith.

Mr. Giles laid on the table a motion, that the Secretary of the department of War, should be instructed to lay before the House an accurate statement of all balances of pay which appear, by the books of his office, to be due to the officers and soldiers of the late army of the United States, and which either remain unclaimed, or have been claimed but not paid; together with the reasons for withholding payment from those who may have respectively entered their claims therefor.

Mr. Vining laid on the table a motion for the appointment of a committee, to report a bill or bills, to establish an uniform system of bankruptcy throughout the United States.

Mr. Dayton laid on the table a motion, that the board of commissioners, for settling the accounts between the United States and individual States, be directed to report to the House the progress they have made in such settlement; and their opinion as to the prospect which the present state of the business affords, of its speedy and final conclusion.

Mr. Smith then called for the order of the day, pursuant to which,

The House resolved itself into a committee of the whole (Mr. Muhlenberg in the chair) and took up the bill for the enumeration of the inhabitants of the district of South-Carolina.

Some gentlemen having expressed their apprehensions, that, by the words of the bill, the marshal of the district of South-Carolina might be empowered to make a new enumeration of the inhabitants, which was contrary to the sense of the House, and would give that State an undue advantage over the other States, an amendment was moved and adopted by the committee, in the following words, "Provided that in the said return" [of the enumeration of the inhabitants of the district of S. Carolina] "such persons only shall be included, as were inhabitants of the State at the time prescribed for taking the census," &c.

Another amendment being also proposed and adopted, the committee rose and reported the bill as amended.

The House then proceeding to consider the amendments of the committee, some remarks were made, to shew that the one above quoted might tend to violate the return, and was moreover an unnecessary precaution, as the proposition was not for making the enumeration of the whole State, but of giving in the return of the enumeration already made, and completing the census, by the addition of a very small district, that was not yet included in the general return. The amendment was therefore rejected by the House, and the bill was ordered to be engrossed.

Mr. Gerry from the committee to whom was referred the memorial of the sheriff of Suffolk county, in the State of Massachusetts, made a report, tending to grant to all persons, confined in any State, under the authority of the United States, the same privileges and immunities, to which they would be entitled, if confined under the authority of the State. Ordered to lie on the table.

Mr. Secretary Otis, by order of the Senate, laid before the House a petition from the distillers of New-York, praying some alterations in the excise law.

The committee appointed to consider and report on the petition of Susannah Fowle, made a report, which was referred to the committee appointed to prepare a bill for compensating invalids, widows and orphans in certain cases.

Adjourned.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3.

Mr. Page and Mr. Lee, members from Virginia, appeared, were qualified and took their seats this day.

The bill to extend the time allowed by law, for completing the census of South Carolina, was read the third time and passed.

Mr. Giles' motion laid on the table yesterday, respecting the bounty-lands to the officers and soldiers of the Virginia line, &c. was taken into consideration, and after some variation made at the instance of that gentleman, was adopted.

Several petitions for compensations, pensions, &c. were presented, read and referred to the heads of departments.

A petition from Abraham Hunt was read, praying to be reimbursed certain losses incurred in the town of Boston by the British army—also that he may receive half-pay or commutation as an officer of the late army of the United States. On the question to refer said petition to the Secretary of War, it passed in the negative.

A petition of David Cook was read, praying to be placed on the pension-list—this was referred to the committee appointed to bring in a bill for allowing compensations to widows, orphans and disabled persons, in certain cases.

Several petitions being presented for the renewal of lost certificates of public debt—Mr. Sedgwick observed that it would, in his opinion, be the most eligible method to take up the subject at large—and he accordingly moved that a committee should be appointed to prepare and report a bill directing the mode in which evidences of the public debt of the United States, which have been, or may be lost or destroyed, shall be renewed.

The motion being amended by striking out the words "or may be" was adopted, and Messrs. Sedgwick, Giles and Dayton, appointed the committee.

Two petitions from Capt. John Manly, presented by Mr. Gerry, were read and referred to the Secretary at war.

Mr. Dayton's motion laid on the table yesterday, respecting the board of commissioners appointed to settle the accounts between the United States and individual States was taken into consideration, and adopted.

Mr. Ward, of the committee appointed for the purpose, presented a report on the petition of Francis and Isaac Choate, the purport of which was that the prayer of said petition cannot be granted.

ORDER OF THE DAY—THE CENSUS.

In committee of the whole.

Mr. Muhlenberg in the chair.

The motion of Mr. Lawrance was again read, viz. That until the next enumeration of the inhabitants of the United States, there shall be one representative for every thirty thousand persons.

Mr. Sedgwick moved to insert the word *four*, between thirty and thousand.

Mr. Dayton moved to strike out *thirty* before thousand, and leave the blank to be filled up.

Mr. Livermore moved to insert *forty thousand*.

Mr. Clark observed, that it was well known that great uneasiness prevailed among the people in various parts of the Union, on account of the salaries and compensations to the officers of government—the expence of supporting the government was increasing—and it must therefore be contrary to the general wishes of the people to enlarge the representation, which would add to the public burthen, without being productive of any advantage.

He was in favor therefore of the motion for striking out *thirty*, and would then move to insert *forty*.

Mr. Williamson, after a few preliminary remarks on the several calculations that different members had made, and applying the various results to the population of the small States in particular, observed, that such a ratio should be adopted as would leave the fewest fractions, and at the same time do as much justice as possible to those States. With respect to the general question, he thought the people were divided in opinion—some were in favour of a large representation—others were opposed to a great addition to the present number. The expence of supporting the government is great—the people realize that in the nature of things it must increase—this consideration should lead to adopt a medium, and if possible to fix on a ratio that might give general satisfaction. At all events he wished that Congress would reserve to itself the power of increasing the number of Representatives, in case the sentiments of the people should be in favor of the measure. He observed that the lowest number of Constituents which had been mentioned was thirty thousand, and the highest forty—if gentlemen could not agree in either, he hoped they would adopt the medium.

Mr. Lawrance objected to striking out *thirty*.

This subject, said he, has been canvassed throughout America—innumerable are the pamphlets and newspaper publications which have appeared in all parts of the United States. The smallness of the representation was early objected to—and it was very generally expected, that when the amendments to the Constitution took place, that one Representative to every 30,000 persons would be the established ratio.