

either settle the number of the representative body, as it now stands, or reduce it, or establish it at one hundred, perhaps they might, before the end of the session, be obliged to repeal their act; as they would be bound by the amendment, as soon as it is ratified by a sufficient number of States. If gentlemen thought it probable that the proposed amendment would be ratified by the several States, they ought already to consider it as a rule for their conduct, and be restrained by it, from giving less than one representative for thirty thousand inhabitants. After the representation amounts to one hundred, Congress will, no doubt, have a right to fix it there, until it is increased by the ratio of one to forty thousand; but that is a power, which, he presumed, Congress will not exercise; but that they then will establish some ratio, by which the increase of representation shall keep pace with the increase of population, until the house consists of two hundred members.

Mr. Boudinot was convinced of the propriety of striking out the word "thirty." The House ought to consider what would be an adequate number, for doing the business of the union; and that number ought not to be exceeded, except to answer some very valuable purpose. Business would proceed with difficulty, if the representation was so numerous, as it would become by the ratio of one to thirty thousand. The present representation of the United States is in a ratio very different from that of one to thirty thousand; and yet he thought it fully adequate. From a rough calculation, he said, that the ratio of thirty thousand would produce one hundred and thirteen members; thirty-five thousand would give ninety-seven; and forty thousand would produce eighty-one. If the number once settled was to rest there, he would not be over anxious to oppose the increase; but if gentlemen would take into view the increase consequent on the next enumeration, they would find that the number must by far exceed the due bounds.

The increase of expence had been mentioned. He thought it would greatly exceed the calculation of the gentleman, and, for his part, although he was willing to tax the people for the necessary purposes of government, yet he would never consent to subject them to unnecessary burdens. Every man must see, that if the number was doubled, it would take almost double the time to do the business, as every member would have an equal right to deliver his sentiments, and thus protract their deliberations.

He thought the people of the United States would be duly represented, and to their entire satisfaction, if the ratio was set higher than thirty thousand; nor could he imagine that such an exact proportion, between the representatives and the represented, was at all requisite to secure their liberties, or to do the necessary business of government. This indeed might be the case, if the power, vested in Congress, was proportionate to their number: but since the House would possess the same powers, whether it consisted of a greater or a smaller number, he thought the people equally secure in either case. The ratio of thirty-five thousand, which would produce ninety-seven members, would, in his opinion, be a very proper one. If however the people should think otherwise, they had it in their power to correct the mistake, by ratifying the proposed amendment. Their not having as yet ratified it, was to him an argument that they thought the ratio too low; or at least that they considered the question as doubtful. Some of the States, he observed, have postponed the consideration of the amendment; and eight only have as yet agreed to it. On the whole the house might safely adopt the ratio of one to thirty-five thousand; for that the increasing population of the United States would ever supply a representation sufficiently numerous to answer every good purpose.

Mr. Clarke observed that his objection was not merely on account of the pay of the members, but an increase in the representation would bring an additional expence on the people, by increasing the number of public offices, as almost every man would wish to see his friend provided for. The liberties of America, could be in no danger from the present ratio of representation. The doors of the House are open, and the people know what their representatives are doing.

Mr. Steele was in favor of the motion for striking out *thirty*. In discussing the important subject before the committee, he observed that there were two enquiries to be attended to—What is the proper number to constitute a representative body for the United States, and what ratio will leave the fewest fractions in the respective States—One member to thirty thousand he conceived would give too numerous a representation; according to the present number of inhabitants it will almost double the present number; it will divide and diminish the responsibility; it will divide and diminish the responsibility, make the House too unwieldy, retard public business, and increase the public expences unnecessarily—An adequate representation he thought would be comprized within a much smaller number.

Gentlemen have called our attention to the

House of Commons of Great-Britain, and the National Assembly of France; but, said he, God forbid that we should draw our precedents from such examples as may be cited from European representation.

He was opposed to thirty thousand as the ratio—it would in fractions throughout the United States, leave above three hundred and sixty-nine thousand citizens unrepresented. Thirty-five thousand he thought the most eligible number, as it would leave the fewest fractions.

Some gentlemen seem to favor the ratio of thirty thousand, because that number has been recommended by some of the conventions, in their proposed amendments to the constitution; but he hoped that no decision would be founded on those subsequent amendments—It would be well to recollect the sentiments of gentlemen in the several conventions—In many of them, they were agreed to, without any wish or expectation that they should ever be taken into consideration, and therefore he thought that no argument ought to be drawn from them—Neither ought Congress, said he, to be influenced by the example of the state governments—Business is so transacted in most of them, on account of their numerous representation, that there is very little permanency, or consistency in their systems. Too numerous an assembly is perpetually liable to disorder—and when that is the case, government becomes contemptible—this consideration had greater weight with him than an additional expediture of a few dollars. He again objected to any example from Great-Britain or France; their assemblies, said he, are too numerous and unwieldy to transact business without confusion—and compared with what he considered as an adequate number, are mere mobs.

With respect to the proposed amendments, he said that they have not been adopted by three fourths of the States; and from thence he inferred that they would be finally rejected.

He thought the amendment respecting the ratio of representatives, not so good as the original clause in the constitution—and said he would not hesitate to declare that it ought never to be adopted as a part of it. It has been said that the voice of America is in favor of the ratio of thirty thousand; were this the case, he would obey the voice of America—but he believed that the opinion of enlightened America was that forty or fifty thousand would not be too high a ratio—he should give the preference to either of those numbers to thirty or thirty-five thousand, were it not on account of the fractions that would remain—he concluded, by saying he should vote for thirty-five thousand.

Mr. Lawrence agreed that an adequate number was the great object to be attended to—but he contended that the original motion would give this number more completely than a larger ratio—and it ought to be considered that before the next enumeration, it will not be probably more than one to fifty thousand. As to the increase of expence, he observed that the great objects being accomplished, the future sessions will be short; besides which, the compensation of the members may be diminished—but he considered a necessary increase in the expence, to be fully counterbalanced by affording greater security to the liberties of the people. The firmness of a government depends on a strong executive—but this executive should be founded on a broad bottom—and the broader the basis, the more secure is the public freedom under a vigorous executive.

The existence of the Union may depend on the fullness of the representation.—The inequality in the proportional increase of the number of inhabitants in different States, ought also to be taken into consideration,—for it was very probable that in a short time, while some of the smaller States had a representative for every thirty thousand, others would not have one to forty thousand—He said he was governed by general principles, and not by any calculations of fractional numbers—the constitution contemplates the ratio he had proposed, and therefore he hoped the motion for striking out would not obtain.

Mr. Goodhue observed, that the situation and circumstances of the government of the United States were so different from those of France or Great-Britain, that no parallel could be drawn respecting them—Nor is there, said he, an absolute similarity between this government and those of the state governments. The objects of legislation which come under the cognizance of Congress, are but few compared with those which engage the British House of Commons and the National Assembly of France—A much larger representation for them, and in our state legislatures is therefore proper, than is necessary for us in the general government.—He doubted the opinion that a large representation was less liable to corruption than a small one—some facts appear to confirm the former sentiment.—He did not consider the expence as a material objection, if an increase of the number was necessary to doing more ample justice, or for the greater security of the liberties of the people—but as he thought this was by no means the case, he was in favor of striking out 30, in order to insert a larger number.

Mr. Barnwell agreed with the gentleman last speaking; he said he should vote for striking out thirty, in order to substitute the largest number that had been mentioned.—Mr. Barnwell entered into an abstract and philosophical discussion of the principle of representation in government—the leading sentiment was, that a large proportion of representatives was not necessary to obtain the best objects of legislation, in expressing the wills of the people, or to secure the liberties of the constituent body—the great point, he observed, was to combine the greatest portion of honesty, with a due degree of activity—That number which would comprise a due proportion of these, would be competent to all the purposes of legislation, whether the number for which it legislates is ten thousand, or five hundred thousand. On this principle he was decidedly against a large number, and in favor of a small one. Adverting to the British House of Commons and the National Assembly of France, with respect to the former, he said, their corruption is in a great degree owing to their numbers; as to the latter, he observed, that the National Assembly had acted in his opinion politically and wisely—they sat out with a large representation in conformity to the sentiments of the people at the moment; but on experience, finding the number too great, they have reduced it from twelve hundred to about 250. He believed, he said, that the general sense of the people was against a large representation in Congress—the inconveniences experienced from numerous bodies in the state legislatures, has led several of the States to lessen the number—He instanced Georgia, South-Carolina and Pennsylvania.

Mr. Baldwin was opposed to the motion. One representative for thirty thousand appeared to him by no means a great representation. The opinion that, of late, had been so often advanced from the press, and in public discussion, for reducing the representative branch in government to a small number, he held to be full of dangerous error. He was sensible, that the terms great and small were so merely relative in their signification, that it was difficult precisely to understand each other in the use of them. Perhaps they may most properly, both of them, be considered as extremes. No doubt representation, which of late seems to be used as the character of republican government, is a great improvement upon democracy or legislation by the whole body of the people. He could conceive that a representation might be so large as to partake of the evils of assembling the whole body of the people; but it was a very improbable and not a dangerous extreme: the other extreme was full of danger. These observations acquire much force when applied particularly to the governments of this country; enfeeble the representative part of them, and you sap the very principles of life. They stand on a different basis from the governments which have gone before them, and may justly be said to be new experiments in government; time, as yet, has scarcely given room to judge of the probable issue; but this we may pronounce with much certainty, let the principles of representation languish, and they have no chance of success.

It had not been found practicable to ground representation in the federal constitution upon any other principle than that of numbers—but extent of territory is unquestionably one of the natural principles on which it rests, and would if possible be regarded. One for thirty-four or thirty-five thousand may be deemed a proper representation in the kingdom of France, or of Great-Britain. The four millions which compose the United States, compactly settled where there was great fecundity in the country, and pretty equally distant from a common center, would be properly represented by a smaller number than in their present sparse settlement.—But still farther, the settlement of the United States is a fillet stretched along the sea coast for seventeen hundred miles, comprehending as great a variety of climate and interests as one of the other quarters of the globe. It is difficult to conceive of a situation which calls for a greater extension of the principle of representation.

It has been said that one for thirty thousand will make too large and unwieldy a body: he was sensible that was a point that did not admit of being determined by any conclusive reasoning; it was a mere matter of opinion, sound judgment only is to be used, time and experience will come on and confirm or correct the opinion. In such a case, said he, it is wise to enquire how this has been judged of by others who have had a representative body. In France 1200 was not thought too great a representation in forming their national assembly, and the number established by their new constitution for their stated legislature, was not 250, as the member last up had stated—but if he had not been misinformed by the publications in this country, it was nearly 750.

In the kingdom of Great-Britain, 500 is not thought too great a representation; and can 113, which is the greatest number contended for, be considered in this country as a huge and impracticable mass of representation.

It had ever appeared to him to be among the strongest marks of our youth and inexperience, that we grew wise too suddenly. He was afraid this instantaneous wisdom which sprung up so at once, and set at naught, or removed to the extreme of absurdity and folly, the deliberate and tried opinions of the most profound and enlightened among men, in circumstances peculiarly favorable to honest decision, will itself be left by time on that extreme.

And how does this compare, he asked, with the opinion and experience of this country in the state governments? The idea had before been called up, but in his opinion justice was by no means done to the comparison. It had been said that the States in general had found their representation too large, and were diminishing it. Let another view be taken of the comparison; a State will not suffer the ordinary business of its own internal legislation to be intrusted to fewer representatives than from one to two hundred, and in some instances more, and yet in the federal government they are obliged to submit to a legislation which can much more substantially affect their happiness and property, and perhaps they have there but a single representative, or at most but five or six. The slightest comparison shews that there is no manner of proportion between them, that they are irreconcilably distorted; surely gentlemen of the opposite opinion will not have the effrontery to attempt to draw an argument from that source for diminishing the present representation.

The several state conventions which had thought proper to annul at all upon the federal constitution, had pretty uniformly expressed their wish that the representation should be increased. Theorists in government, so far as he had been informed, had generally given their opinion that this part was too small, and out of proportion. He was as far from venerating mere theories of government as any man, and was sensible they must adjust themselves to the times and circumstances of the people. But it would not be useless to enquire, how does this appear in practice? He could say for himself that it brought his own mind to the same conclusion, that it was the part of the federal constitution, of all others most defective and insecure. Thirty-three members had formed the house, seventeen was a majority, and equal to the decision of any question. Questions had already occurred, involving property to the amount of from fifty to eighty millions of dollars, and much of it in the hands of the most daring individuals, rendered desperate by their speculations. He did not say there had been any foundation for uneasy apprehensions from that quarter; but he did say, that in other countries it would be supposed to be a most dangerous experiment upon the passions and imperfections of human nature. But it had been said, and with an unexpected assurance, that increasing the numbers did not increase the security against these evils. If so, why not reduce it at once to the venerable number thirteen, or indeed three, which would give us as great a security as the whole body of the people? It is idle to pursue observations on such a point—the mind that can ask for reasoning upon it, can scarcely be supposed in a situation to be benefited by reasons.

The federal government, it must be admitted, is in fact pretty highly seasoned with prerogative—practice has already evinced