

The States experiencing the difficulties arising from numerous representative assemblies have in several instances diminished them; the endless divisibility of power consequent on such numbers had fully satisfied the people that the want of responsibility was the pernicious effect of a large representation; they are therefore reducing those unwieldy bodies as fast as they can.—Pennsylvania he said, appeared to be far happier since the reduction of its assembly.

A large sphere of representation gave the people a fairer opportunity to select the best characters; they could exercise their own judgments unbiassed and uninfluenced; the trust was greater, which was conferred, and in proportion to its magnitude would be the public solicitude that it should not be improperly delegated—besides which, it is, said he, impossible in a large sphere of representation for candidates to practice those little arts, so common at elections—nor can they go round and take every little demagogue of the district by the hand to secure his vote.

As European examples had been recurred to, he would mention one circumstance which confirmed the justice of his remarks, those parts of Great-Britain which are divided into the largest districts, send the smallest number of representatives, such as London and the county of Yorkshire, the latter tho containing more inhabitants than the ancient dominion, sends only two members to parliament—and the members of those districts, it is remarkable, have always been the staunchest friends of the liberties of the people. In noticing the remarks of Mr. Giles and Mr. Findley he said, that the object of representation was different from that of giving information to their constituents; legislation was their great business—and not making up weekly large packets to send off to the influential characters in the districts which the members represented on the floor of that house. The people it is true have a right to be informed of public measures, and it is the indispensable duty of government to make provision for that purpose; and this ought to be done through the medium of the Post-Office—this medium is the only competent one, as it will open the way for that general information which is necessary to the security, and to the liberties of the people.

With respect to security from corruption by means of a numerous representation, he still retained his former opinion; he did not anticipate evils from that quarter.

He observed that in the warmth of debate he had before expressed himself with rather more zeal, than he wished he had; but as he thought an undue degree of censure had been the consequence, it was become necessary in some measure to justify himself, by citing some examples to shew what exceeds a very numerous representative body may be guilty of. He then related a fact which occurred in Virginia, the Legislature of which on a certain time had acted in a legislative executive and judicial capacity on the same occasion—he also instanced a more recent fact in the secession from their duty, of a considerable body of the representatives of Pennsylvania—these facts demonstrated that a numerous representative body was liable to a mobbish spirit.

He next adverted particularly to some remarks of Mr. Giles, and concluded by saying that if the ratio is at this time fixed at 30,000, it must hereafter be increased, in doing which, some serious difficulties may take place, especially in respect to those states whose number of representatives must in that case be reduced—he thought it best therefore to agree at the present time on a larger ratio.

Mr. Clark said he did not rise to trouble the House with a lengthy discourse, for he had always believed that long speeches answer no valuable purpose; he meant only to offer a few remarks on what had been said in opposition to his former observations, and he hoped, that although the gentlemen contend for the ratio of 30,000 as the only basis whereon to found the liberties of the people, he should not be stigmatized with the name of an aristocrat, for voting in favor of a large ratio. Hitherto he had not borne that character, and he could not suppose himself yet infected, unless he had caught the disorder since he became a member of the present House. Much had been said about the influence of the bank, and that bank directors were members of the House of Representatives: the bank said he is public property, and therefore he could not see the force of the gentleman's arguments respecting the dangerous influence of that institution, unless it was, that he was displeased at the distribution of the shares, so much of the stock being held at New-York and to the eastward; and so little at Connogochegue. In the same predicament he viewed the other objections respecting the influence of speculators, for he did not know that any members of the House were speculators, neither could he see any danger from bribery.

In reply to Mr. Findley's observation, that more wisdom would be brought into the House by increasing the ratio, he asked whether this

would not also bring in more folly? for the probability is, that the ratio of both wisdom and folly will increase with the increase of numbers, and likewise of honesty and dishonesty: and with respect to the smallness of the district, or that it was safer for a small number to send a member than a greater, he was of a different opinion, as he believed, that if ever the practice of bribery should come into play in America, it would be easier for a representative to purchase a small district than a large one: if ever the liberties of the people are endangered, it will not be by the smallness of the representation but by the corruption of electors and elections: This is the door which Congress should guard in the strictest manner, and that will secure the people against corruption in the House.

A gentleman from Georgia has observed, that the disposition of a great many millions of dollars has been in the hands of a quorum of this House, of whom it requires only 17 to form a majority; on this Mr. Clark observed that the old Congress which was composed of a much smaller number, were entrusted with the disposal of larger sums, although there were sometimes only two members from the largest State, Virginia, and no complaints were heard of their conduct.

But there is an argument which ought to have weight in the present question.—The Senate, although a much smaller body than this House, are fully competent to judge of our proceedings and of the safety of the country: indeed, said Mr. Clark, it appears very evident to me that we are not in want of a larger number in the House of Representatives to debate any question, if it be considered how much has already been said on the subject now before us.

Mr. Vining expressed much surprize that the subject, which to him appeared perfectly definable, should have occasioned the debate to travel so widely from the line marked out by the Constitution. The pendulum seems to vibrate between the numbers 81, 96, and 113; and should that pendulum rest on any one of them in preference to the others, he could not suppose that it would affect the liberties of America. Why, therefore, all this extraneous argument about a point of so easy decision? We are sent here to administer the government; the first principles of which are already fixed, so that neither branch can encroach on the other. The Senate, the House of Representatives, the President, have each defined powers; and whilst those remain, I shall always believe the liberties of America are invulnerable.

Under this impression, Mr. Chairman, I shall vote for striking out 30,000, in order to accommodate the question to a medium. But I shall do this on different principles from some other gentlemen; notwithstanding I at the same time confess that the ratification of the first amendment to the Constitution ought to govern us in deciding this question. The spirit of the amendment appears to me clearly to imply, that we should not suffer the number of Representatives to exceed one for 30,000. I am here not as a person who shall exercise discretionary opinions, but judge by the letter of the Constitution: and in this case we may increase the number, but we cannot make it less after the enumeration. In the mean time, until that enumeration is complete, the representation remains as it has been hitherto, which I believe may be about one member to every 40 or 41 thousand.

If we go upon theory only, I would enlarge the representation to its greatest extent, and hand down the principle to futurity in letters of gold, that a very great representation—that democracy is the very best government that can possibly be devised, provided it were practicable to give it stability. Next to a government as free as theory could extend, we have the freest in the world; a government of representation, which will increase with the population of the country, and the ten new States will always preserve an equilibrium; but if you increase it to an extreme, you may render it tumultuous, although it may be safe.

Mr. Chairman, a great deal has been said of the necessity of planting strong guards against the invasions of influential characters. Sir, I fear no corruption; neither can I see the ground on which it can make an entry into these walls. In the British Parliament I will admit that corruption has planted her standard; but that is the natural consequence of a very large representation, and a constitution widely different from ours; and yet in that body, how many patriots have we not known to hold forth the language of freedom, as loud and warm as in any part of the earth!—But to what end would corruption be attempted in this government, which is in itself perfectly rotatory? The President is elective every four years; the Senate by interlocations from two to six years; and the House of Representatives every two years. Then surely, sir, there is no need of guards to prevent the inroads of corruption; and the argument is not in the least applicable to the present system of our affairs. The difference between

the state legislatures and the national one, affords another security to the citizen. They have the power of life and death, of making laws, &c. &c. and Congress have a concurrent legislation in such affairs as are proper. Election forms another barrier in favor of the liberties of the people; for whilst elections are kept pure and free, there is double security.

Calculations have been exhibited by several gentlemen; and I have likewise made one, although not so old or experienced in calculations as some. But I find that all those vibrate between the ratios of 30 and 40 thousand; and it is contended that the people will be better represented by adopting the small ratio, which produces the largest representation. But, sir, how many of the people are there who are not represented? Is the slave? The infant requires nothing more than nourishment from nature. By misapplying calculations, you may narrow down the government so much as to endanger its dissolution; but if kept in a due medium, you ensure safety. The present is a larger representation than either France or England boasts. I wish, Mr. Chairman, to support the state governments, but I also wish to support the federal government.

I cannot, however, see the propriety of comparing this to the government of Great-Britain, although that is called a government of representation, consisting of two Houses of Parliament, one of which is elective; the lords are hereditary, and the king can do no wrong; and it has hitherto been, I believe, the next best government, after our own, in the world. And yet we know with how much reluctance Ireland obtained a participation of the trade and commerce of Great-Britain: although a Flood bellowed forth with the voice of liberty like a Demolthenes, still nothing could induce the British ministry to give way, until the volunteers effected it. And have we not the volunteers, sir, in this country, to protect our rights? Yes, sir: the American volunteers are perfectly competent to this service.

To return to calculation of the ratio of representation. Admitting the state of South-Carolina to return 200,000 inhabitants, then the ratio of one to 34,000 will produce 100 members; if the ratio of 30,000 be adopted, there will be an increase of 13 members, and afterwards the ratio will be one to every 40,000, until the House shall consist of 200 members, after which there shall not be less than 200 Representatives, nor more than one for every 50,000 inhabitants. This, sir, is the spirit of the amendment already adopted by nine states; and shall we not exercise the discretionary power delegated to us, by giving celerity to the measure by a bill? I agree with the gentleman from Pennsylvania, that a trifling expence is no object compared to the security of the people; but I am sorry to hear any thing of locality or the passions of the people introduced, for the voice of the people; for if locality and passion were to govern this House, instead of *vox populi* we should soon have occasion to term it by another name, the *vox diaboli*.

I am under no apprehensions from the stockholders of the bank, or the speculators in the funds; for it is their interest to have a wise and good representation. The people who are employed in the more simple path of agriculture, removed at a great distance, are not more interested in the security of the government than the more informed stockholder. As an example of the discernment of the great commercial people of London and Bristol, I need only mention their choice of a Fox and a Burke, for until a late day Mr. Burke was the champion of the people and the friend of liberty.

If our Senate should take any unwarrantable stride towards aristocracy, have we not the power to check them? No President can very well attempt it at any time hereafter; and we are perfectly secure in the present time from all suspicion of corruption.

The state which I represent contains 59,000 inhabitants, and yet I shall feel myself acting in the line of my duty by voting for a ratio of 34,000, as coming nearest to the spirit of the amendment. A due proportion of firmness I think necessary in the government, and we shall weaken it by any change which is not for the better. I shrink from nothing, sir, but a breach of my duty, and it is not the public voice, so much as the public good, that ought to be considered.

In reply to the analogy introduced by the gentleman from Pennsylvania, of a road, I will beg leave to mention another. Suppose a pillar was to be raised which could be easily effected by 100 men, and that two or three hundred were employed, would not this, in the language of the venerable Franklin, be paying dear for the whistle? But this is a subject which I should be sorry to view with a ludicrous face; it is a question of liberty, wherein the state governments have an equal share of security: and let the pendulum of the ratio light either below or above 97, or 113, there is equal safety; and all that has been said goes to prove that as the population increases, we ought to increase the representation in that ratio, and at present I think the number 34,000 will meet the sense of America.