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CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WEDNESDAY, January 2.

DEBATE ON MR. STEELE'S MOTION FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

In Committee of the Whole. Mr. WHITE in the Chair.

Mr. Wadsworth first noticed Mr. Steele's statements and calculations.—These he said, were erroneous, and even if correct, the inferences the gentleman had drawn from them, did not appear to him just.

The great object of that gentleman in offering his calculations to the House, was to shew a prodigious progressive encrease in the expences of the war department, since the establishment of the new government.

Mr. Wadsworth proceeded to shew the inaccuracy of the gentleman in this attempt, by the following statement.

Mr. Steele stated, that for 1790, the appropriations for the Quarter-master's department amounted to

Table of military appropriations for 1790, comparing Mr. Steele's estimates with actual figures. Includes categories like 'Whereas the sum appropriated was' and 'Total omissions for 1790'.

Table of military appropriations for 1791, comparing Mr. Steele's estimates with actual figures. Includes categories like 'Mr. Steele states the Quarter-master's department at' and 'Total omissions'.

Table of military appropriations for 1792, comparing Mr. Steele's estimates with actual figures. Includes categories like 'Mr. Steele states the Quarter-master's deprt. at' and 'Total omissions for 1792'.

From the foregoing, the inaccuracy of Mr. Steele's statements, and of the calculations founded on them, were evident. The prodigious rapid encrease of the war department expences did not appear, and the gentleman's saving plan, founded on the difference of the appropriation for 1792, and the sum estimated for 1793, proved very trifling indeed, amounting to a few thousands only.

Mr. Wadsworth said he did not positively pledge himself for the absolute accuracy of his statements, but if there were errors in them he ventured to say they were but trifling.

He next took notice of Mr. Steele's arguments relative to the ordnance department. From what had been said by that gentleman on this he truly thought, as he had expressed it, that the business bore a ludicrous appearance.

As the gentleman from N. C. rested his assertion of abuses in the war department, on the statements he had produced, these assertions, he conceived, he sufficiently answered, by shewing the statements misstated.

Mr. Wadsworth referred to parts of the Secretary at war's reports to shew that that officer had been in favour of conciliatory, and averse to hostile measures with the Indians, to another part to shew his opinion where and how militia were effective.

He next turned to the causes of the war. The establishment of a war department was, in his opinion, by no means, as had been suggested, the cause of the Indian war, but rather the effect. The war existed before the establishment of the present government, it is an inheritance from the old confederation and so is the war department.

Neither could the present mode of carrying on the war be called the creature of the war department. It was rather the President's war,—or the war indeed of the house, the war of the legislature: the plan was a good one as the experience of the President in these wars made him a proper judge; it had his approbation and we know it.

He mentioned several instances of the cruelty of the whites towards the Indians, he also stated the information of Judge Innis, of the depredations of the Indians: the single district of Kentucky had lost from 1783 to 1790, 1500 men, women, and children, killed and taken, with 2000 horses and other property, amounting to at least 50,000 dollars, and to these he attributed the war in which we were involved.

He next proceeded to examine the opinion advanced of the superiority of militia over regular forces in an Indian war. He recurred to history to disprove the opinion. So early as the year after Braddock's defeat, he said, Virginia attempted to protect itself against the incursions of the Indians by establishing a number of posts along their frontier.

The Pennsylvania frontier had been more than once penetrated notwithstanding the resistance of the militia. He next cited the instance of Col. Bouquet's success against the Indians with only two regiments of regular troops, which had even been much weakened by a long campaign in the West-Indies.

The first check the troops of the United States met with during the operation of the present war system he adverted to, in the expedition under Gen. Harmar. In that instance the want of vigour in the militia is acknowledged by their own commander; and as to the expedition under Gen. St. Clair, the regulars were few and not to be named when compared with the number of the militia.

He next took notice of a late instance, the engagement between Major Adair, commanding a party of militia, and some Indians. He expressed his good opinion of that officer, but the conduct of his men he wished to bring to view; and this he evinced from the commander's own letter wherein he says, "that the Indians obtained their end, the triumph is theirs," and in another place, "I will candidly

confess when they retreated the Indians, I believe, was more the effect of choice than necessity."

Mr. Wadsworth then combated the opinion advanced, that Indian expeditions by militia, were less expensive than by regular troops; after mentioning several facts to the contrary, he instanced General Clark's western expedition which had cost, he was not prepared to say how much, but immense sums. He appealed to gentlemen who had commanded militia and continentals in the late war to declare which appeared to them the most efficient troops,—the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Parker) who had spoken in favour of the resolution before the house, he said, in one instance in the late war, if he recollected right, had no great reason to boast of his companions. He mentioned, as encreasing the expence, the want of stores, inseparable from expeditions with militia, as well as waste of lives.

The settlement of Kentucky, he said, which had been protected by militia, had cost more blood than the whole American war, he believed. If the number of lives lost in that undertaking could be computed it would make the reflecting shudder.

Something had been said of the tardy nature of military operations with regular troops, and it had been remarked, that an expedition this year had not been effected. He attributed this to the slowness of the recruiting service, owing to the clamour raised against the war by those opposed to the present system. Besides, the government had been blamed for not shewing pacific dispositions towards the Indians, and had withheld the war, to procure peace by treaty—a vain hope.—But several attempts had been made on our part to procure peace.

A gentleman from Virginia had objected to a respectable military establishment, because it would produce an increase of military among the British and Spaniards, to the North and South of us.—This was no reason with him, why the United States should not make themselves respectable in the eyes of the Indians.

Some years since, they told us of their confederacy, and to think of no separate treaties—to keep on our side of the Ohio. We now flatter ourselves with peace, because they have told us they will treat—but in what language, and by whom dictated, I am forbid to tell, the doors were closed when we received it.

The same gentleman had also mentioned those enlisting in our service as worthless characters: the sweepings of the streets, &c. They appeared to him as respectable, he said, as the generality of those who turned out in the American war.

He made some further observations on the comparative excellence of regulars and militia, and brought some further instances into view in support of his opinion.

Abuses, it had been intimated, had crept into our army; no army could be totally free from abuses, he observed, and he gave it as his opinion, that the army of the United States was as free from them as most, especially when its distance from the seat of government was considered.

He concluded by a recapitulation of the sentiments he had expressed, and which should influence him to vote against the motion. Especially as the system had been adopted after mature consideration. To change it now would argue that when it was first adopted, it was done with unbecoming haste, or shew a great instability. The Indians would laugh at us as inconsistent, and might be induced

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