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Pennsylvania Telegraph

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Pennsylvania Legislature.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, Feb. 1, 1861.

The House was called to order at 11 o'clock A. M., by the SPEAKER.

Prayer was offered by Rev. Mr. Johnson.

The CLERK proceeded to read the Journal of yesterday, when,

Mr. PIERCE moved that the further reading of the same be dispensed with.

The motion was agreed to.

PUBLIC CALLENDAR.—ARRIVING THE MILITARY FORCES OF THE STATE.

The House resolved itself into Committee of the Whole (Mr. BRANN in the Chair), on bill No. 10, "A Bill to Amend the Act Relating to Military Forces of this Commonwealth."

The first resolution was read as follows:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in General Assembly met, and it is hereby resolved by the authority of the same: 1. That we authorize the Governor to tender to the President of the United States the military forces of this Commonwealth for preserving the integrity of this Union and the maintenance of the Constitution and the laws.

The resolution was agreed to.

The second resolution was read, as follows: 2. That the Committee of Ways and Means be and are hereby instructed to report a bill to organize and arm the militia of this Commonwealth.

Mr. RIDGWAY moved that the Committee rise and report progress.

The motion was agreed to.

The Committee rose and the Chairman reported the same to the House.

The question being,

Shall the Committee have leave to sit again? Mr. ELLIOTT. I had the honor of presenting the resolutions under consideration. It is not my desire that they shall be taken up and discussed at the present time. I would like to have them referred to a Committee, postponed for the present, something of the kind. They have never been referred to a Committee, when introduced, they were laid upon the table. Would a motion such as I have indicated be in order?

The SPEAKER. It will be when we have disposed of the question now before the House.

On the question,

Shall the Committee have leave to sit again? The yeas and nays were required by Mr. HILL and Mr. RIDGWAY, and were as follows:

Yeas—Messrs. Armstrong, Austin, Bissel, Blair, Boyer, Brewster, Butler, (Carson), Byrne, Caldwell, Collins, Copes, Dismant, Divins, Donley, Unfield, Dunlap, Eilenberger, Heck, Hill, Huhn, Kline, Koch, Leisenring, Lichtenhan, McDonough, Manford, Morrison, Myers, Osterhout, Preston, Randall, Reiff, Rhoads, Ridgway, Sheppard, Smith, (Philadelphia), Stoneback, Teller, Thomas, Wilder and Wilson—41.

Nays—Messrs. Abbott, Acker, Anderson, Armstrong, Barmley, Bartholomew, Blanchard, Bessler, Burns, Butler, (Crawford), Clark, Cowan, Craig, Douglass, Elliott, Frazier, Gehring, Gordon, Graham, Harvey, Hayes, Hofus, Lowther, M'Gonigal, Marshall, Mullin, Ober, Patterson, Peirce, Pugh, Reilly, Roller, Schroek, Seltzer, Shafer, Stehman, Taylor, Tracy, Walker, White, Williams, and Davis, Speaker—41.

So the question was determined in the negative.

Mr. HILL then came before the House on second reading.

The first section of the bill was read.

Mr. SHEPPARD. I think, sir, that we have already passed a resolution in substance similar to the first resolution before us; and I think it is inexpedient at the present time to act upon this. I move that the further consideration of these resolutions be postponed for the present.

Mr. SELTZER moved to amend by postponing them until next Friday.

Mr. PATTERSON moved to amend the amendment by making them the special order at 12 o'clock on next Friday.

Mr. SELTZER accepted the amendment as a modification.

And the question recurring on Mr. SELTZER'S amendment as modified.

Mr. AUSTIN moved to amend the amendment by making them the special order for Friday two weeks.

The amendment to the amendment was disagreed to; and,

The question recurring on Mr. SELTZER'S amendment.

Mr. WILLIAMS moved to amend the amendment by making the resolutions the special order for next Monday at 8 o'clock, P. M.

Mr. WILLIAMS. I propose to state in a few words my reasons for offering this amendment. We have been engaged for four weeks—ever since the opening of the session of this legislature—in efforts to save the Union. We differ as to the mode, we all agree as to the object. We all aim at the same end by different routes. Gentlemen are all doubtless equally honest. There are two modes of saving the Union, as there are two modes of settling all controversies. One is to surrender, either implicitly and without reserve, or to surrender upon qualification. The other is to defend. The former seems to be the policy of this House. I have already suggested, on more than one occasion, that this in my view, is not the road to peace. By such a course, as that gentlemen will, I think, obtain "not peace, but a sword." I thought that I took the view which statesmen ought to take on this question. It has been my judgment from the beginning, that no nation can be sustained unless she will demonstrate that she is willing to exert herself to conserve her own existence. For that is the question involved here. For taking this position, as I have already said, I am led to a man of this sword. My friend from Montgomery (Mr. Hill) a few days ago suggested, in debate, that I wish to report to the sword, and in fact, to spill the blood of our brethren at the South. I know that we are told in a very old book, which, no doubt, my worthy friend has read very often, that "they who take the sword shall perish by the sword." The sword must be taken as an instrument of self-defence—as a means for the conservation of a people, just as a vessel must sometimes be used for the defence of an individual.

Now, sir, my opinions upon this question, though they may not meet the approbation of this House, are, I think, the true conservative opinions. It is an old maxim, that to avoid war you must show that you are always prepared to meet it. This is an aphorism—a well received maxim in politics. Theoretically, I believe it is disputed by nobody; practically, it is disputed by men who call themselves conservatives, and, if they do not institute, they would at least imply, that we, who differ from

them in opinion, are destructive in our policy. I think the history of all nations shows, that nothing short of firmness and determination, in a great crisis like the present, can save any nation. What is the cause to which all our present troubles are to be attributed? Do we not all see that it is the indecision, the infirmity, the vacillation of the General Government? Have we not stimulated and fed this rebellion by our hesitation and irresolution, and indecision—not merely through our representatives in the General Government, but through the action and the policy of the legislatures of the States?

What is the temper of this House with regard to these questions? When there is a question of submission, then all is hurry. We are not allowed even the ordinary privilege of debate. We are forced into votes upon great questions whose magnitude and whose consequences are not truly understood. We have, within a day or two, done an act which I take to have been a great blunder—not a crime, perhaps, under the Constitution, but, as Talleyrand on one occasion said, "it is something worse than a crime, a blunder"—as gentlemen who sustained it will discover when they come to reap the fruit—the application of some which it is likely to produce. But when we come to the question of that sort, as I have remarked, we are not to be allowed even the privilege of sleeping upon it. But now, when there is a question of arming the State—not of going to war, but of indicating our disposition to prepare for it, and our determination to defend the integrity of this great nation—then we must have indefinite postponements. I tell gentlemen that, by such a course, we are doing war, and no government upon the face of God's earth but our own, inhabited by a people whose instincts are overwhelmingly for the Union, could have stood under these circumstances, or ever will stand.

Here is a measure that can offend nobody. It is a question of life—not simply the lives of individuals, but a question involving the life, the property, the happiness of thirty millions of people. Whether this rebellion shall be crushed in the bud—in its incipient state—whether its crest shall go down in defeat—will depend upon the attitude of the great States. It is supposed by some gentlemen here that the ocean is now visited by tempest, and the waves of which are running mountain high; will be tranquillized by casting upon it a little bottle of oil that you distilled here a few evenings since. Will it be so?

Gentlemen have intimated upon this floor that the whole thing is a ruse—it is a trick—it is a false pretence—it is a juggler. It is not intended to result in anything. It is merely to consume time. Ah! gentlemen undertake the men with whom they have to deal. If we are dunces—if we cannot see the consequences of these things—we cannot readily deceive them. They know how to deal with Northern Legislatures, and Northern people. The policy which they have heretofore pursued successfully, they think they can now adopt with the same result. How do matters stand? This Convention, it seems, is not expected to accomplish anything. In the meantime this huge rebellion is developing and ramifying, extending its hundred arms throughout the whole South. Our public arsenals and arms are seized, and while we quietly sit here, with our hands in our pockets, and our feet on the ground, we are doing nothing to give assistance, (though we have thousands and tens of thousands of them, if they were called upon) the Capital of our nation is to be seized by a grand coup d'etat. These eight millions of white men in the Southern States are to take possession of this Government, and have it declared *de facto* the whole of Pennsylvania. If it is not a question of self-defence—the mere expression of a determination on our part to prepare for the crisis—are for staying it of indefinite life. Are they men of Pennsylvania? Have they Pennsylvania hearts in their bosoms? I tell them again, the policy which they recommend is one which does no honor to the memory of their sires. It was not thus that our forefathers met a crisis like the present—perhaps not even so great. I hope gentlemen will refer to the example of their patriotic ancestors. I hope that nothing will be done to discredit our history. I hope that we shall place nothing upon our records which may declare that this great government—the greatest, the best, the most blessed the world ever saw—is to be overthrown. I trust we shall place nothing on our record to show that it was the unflinching hand of the Pennsylvania Legislature that contributed to its destruction.

Mr. BYRNE. I must confess that my voice is still for peace. I am not in favor of war. I think that for us to assume at this time a warlike attitude would be unwise. I do not approve of arming the State of Pennsylvania before we know that there will be a necessity for it. I at first thought that this was simply a general bill for arming the militia of this State; I thought it merely related to the militia system. But if it be, as the remarks of the gentleman from Allegheny (Mr. Williams) imply, a bill for the adoption of which we shall place ourselves in an attitude of war, I think it unwise. I think it premature. Does not the gentleman bear in mind, that those States against whom he wishes us to arm this State are sister States? Does he not remember that the men of the South, whom he proposes to fight, are our friends and our brothers? Does he consider them in the same light as a foreign foe, that might come to us from the booming of our shores? Does he not consider that they are a part of our flesh and blood? When a ship has encountered a hurricane, and the captain sometimes directs that the cargo shall be thrown overboard, to save the ship. So it should be with us. We should exert every nerve, we should exhaust every measure that looks to peace. When every peaceable measure shall have failed, then, and then alone, I shall be for measures of war.

I think it unwise at this present time to present to our sister States a hostile attitude. My friend from Allegheny (Mr. Williams) has yet to learn that this mission for whose appointment we have provided, will be of no avail. He can see into the future as well as I can; but I still have hopes from the action of these gentlemen who are about to proceed to Washington. I hope for the best. Evil will not come to pass unless we shall have time to come at any rate before it. These resolutions assume to place us in a warlike position in advance. I shall vote against them. There is not time enough for any warlike measures. Let us not be premature. Let us not be rash and hot-headed. Let us view the subject calmly and dispassionately. Let us, if we can, hold out the olive branch of peace, regardless of party platforms, which should be thrown to the winds of heaven in this day of the nation's peril.

Mr. SELTZER. I give gentlemen credit for patriotic motives in their desire to have prompt action on these resolutions. But I think that Monday is a rather unfortunate day for considering a subject of this kind. I am in favor of considering these resolutions at an ear-

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Mr. HILL. I am altogether opposed to the adoption at this time of any resolutions of this nature. I am ready to believe that the gentleman from Allegheny (Mr. Williams) is entirely sincere when he claims to be for peace; but sir, it does strike me very strangely that he should conceive that the appropriate means for obtaining peace in this instance consist in preparing for war. Why, sir, has he studied the southern character—does he know the history of his country, when he claims that a preparation for war will intimidate the men of the South, and force them into measures of capitulation? A just view of the character of the South does not justify any such assumption.

But there is another view. Are we now to resort to measures of intimidation when we have within a few hours provided for the appointment of Commissioners whose mission is to devise some peaceful mode of settlement by consultation and conciliation? Yet, right in the face of this proceeding, we are asked to sanction a proposition for placing the State in a hostile attitude. Such a course would be extremely unwise. It would be an insult to those Commissioners whom we have sent; it would take from them every power which they might otherwise exert to restore peace to the country.

Why should this Legislature adopt resolutions of this kind? Do the people demand it? Have we received any petition to this effect? On the contrary, are we not flooded day after day with petitions, with such resolutions as, "I believe in the people in favor of measures of peace? Yet, regardless of the expressed will of the people, it is now proposed that we shall do the very thing from which they beg us to abstain.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Will the gentleman allow me to ask him a question? Mr. HILL. Certainly.

Mr. WILLIAMS. I have not misunderstood the gentleman voted for the resolutions passed an evening or two since authorizing the appointment of the Commissioners to whom he has referred. I wish to know whether there were before us any petitions from the people of Pennsylvania in favor of that measure, and if so, how many.

Mr. HILL. So far as I have been able to understand the feelings of the people of Pennsylvania, as indicated in the petitions in which they have urged us to withdraw our statute books offensive laws, the sentiment of Pennsylvania is strongly in favor of any measure looking to conciliation and peace.

Mr. WILLIAMS. The gentleman must excuse me, but he has not answered my question. I ask whether there were any petitions presented to this House in favor of the measure which I have designated.

Mr. HILL. That was a measure which did not require any special petition. We understood the sentiment of Pennsylvania to be in favor of that measure, and we have had it harmonized with their wishes. In a variety of forms, officially and otherwise, we have had it expressed to the people of Pennsylvania, and are in favor of exhausting every effort to restore peace to the country. We well understand that they wish, in a spirit of compromise, to restore harmony and adjust the difficulties which are now threatening to dissolve this Union. The resolutions now before us do not, in my view, harmonize with that peace-desiring sentiment which I believe is wide-spread throughout the State. I think the effect of the measure will be directly the opposite of anything like peace; and I shall therefore oppose it in every shape.

Mr. PATTERSON. I certainly doubt the propriety of hasty action upon this question. But a few days ago we adopted measures with the view of sending a Commissioner to Washington bearing the olive branch. When we have taken this step toward the peaceful adjustment of difficulties, shall we now accompany it with a threat? My friend from Allegheny (Mr. Williams) has had occasion to criticize the attitude of the South in addressing to us propositions for peace, coupled with a threat. If it proposed that we shall now imitate the example?

I entirely agree with my friend when he says that "in time of peace we should prepare for war." But with whom are we now engaged in war? Is it with a foreign foe? Is it with our own brothers, bound to us by every tie of fellowship and kindred, and separated from us geographically only by an imaginary line. In such a war as that, none of us should be eager to win military honors.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW. If the gentleman will allow me to propound a question, I would ask whether the State of Virginia is not arming to day?

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Mr. WILDEY. Is that question debatable? The SPEAKER. The chair conceals that the question is debatable, but gentlemen must confine themselves as closely as possible to the motion. The Speaker has allowed considerable latitude, heretofore, and will continue to do so.

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Mr. HILL. That was a measure which did not require any special petition. We understood the sentiment of Pennsylvania to be in favor of that measure, and we have had it harmonized with their wishes. In a variety of forms, officially and otherwise, we have had it expressed to the people of Pennsylvania, and are in favor of exhausting every effort to restore peace to the country. We well understand that they wish, in a spirit of compromise, to restore harmony and adjust the difficulties which are now threatening to dissolve this Union. The resolutions now before us do not, in my view, harmonize with that peace-desiring sentiment which I believe is wide-spread throughout the State. I think the effect of the measure will be directly the opposite of anything like peace; and I shall therefore oppose it in every shape.

Mr. PATTERSON. I certainly doubt the propriety of hasty action upon this question. But a few days ago we adopted measures with the view of sending a Commissioner to Washington bearing the olive branch. When we have taken this step toward the peaceful adjustment of difficulties, shall we now accompany it with a threat? My friend from Allegheny (Mr. Williams) has had occasion to criticize the attitude of the South in addressing to us propositions for peace, coupled with a threat. If it proposed that we shall now imitate the example?

I entirely agree with my friend when he says that "in time of peace we should prepare for war." But with whom are we now engaged in war? Is it with a foreign foe? Is it with our own brothers, bound to us by every tie of fellowship and kindred, and separated from us geographically only by an imaginary line. In such a war as that, none of us should be eager to win military honors.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW. If the gentleman will allow me to propound a question, I would ask whether the State of Virginia is not arming to day?

Mr. PATTERSON. I suppose the gentleman knows it with a certainty? My friend from Allegheny (Mr. Williams) has had occasion to criticize the attitude of the South in addressing to us propositions for peace, coupled with a threat. If it proposed that we shall now imitate the example?

There has been no haste in regard to these resolutions. They were introduced on the 12th of January and have lain on the table ever since. I have done nothing to bring them up. There has been no precipitate or premature action in regard to them. They come up in the ordinary course of business. Gentlemen do not listen to complaints with regard to haste when I wish to force upon us some dir-eating contrivance, such as those that have been brought up almost every day, and which, I understand, it is the intention to renew in quick succession. Where has been the haste? Has it been on our part? I think it is, to say the least, very impolite in gentlemen to charge haste upon this side of the House. There has been no haste in regard to the matter. We have acted calmly and coolly. We have submitted quietly with as good grace as we could, when gentlemen have forced upon us propositions that seemed to us humiliating.

I do not wish that the merits of this resolution shall be discussed to-day, and I hope that this debate will stop here. I trust that we shall postpone the subject until Monday. This is the first request that I have made of the House, but if gentlemen choose to vote it down, they may do so. I am not prepared to say that I do not propose any war-like proceedings—our object is to tender to the President of the United States the military forces of this Commonwealth for maintaining the integrity of the Union, and the supremacy of the Constitution and the laws. It is, I believe, the Father of our Country, who has said, "in time of peace prepare for war."

No actual war is now upon this country, but we are altogether unprepared if any such emergency should arise. We are without arms to place in the hands of our people, however ready they might be to fight. This