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CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

On the passage of the bill for raising an additional military force.

MONDAY, APRIL 4.

(CONTINUED.)

Mr. Howard said, in a moment, menacing as the present, and upon a measure for national defence, unanimity was important; that the question before the House involved the exercise of the highest powers confided to the general government by the constitution of the country—to provide for national defence. With regard to regular troops he never would either as a citizen or a public man assent to the maintenance of more than the necessity of the times imperiously called for.

Those gentlemen opposed to the bill called upon its advocates to say whether this is intended for a war or peace establishment, declaring at the same time it is too large for a state of peace and too small for a state of war. Before he would give it the name of either, he must be able to pronounce with certainty whether we can preserve peace honorably, or be constrained to resort to hostilities. He could only say for himself that he did not vote for it as a permanent addition to what we call our peace establishment, but an augmentation of military force demanded by our present circumstances and prospects of danger. Mr. H. said it was not necessary to justify his support of this measure to give it any particular name, but to state his object only; were he certain of war, he agreed with gentlemen that the number proposed was too small, and if assured of peace that it was too large; the very circumstance of doubt as to war or peace is the very reason why he wanted an increase of military force. What do gentlemen understand by a peace military establishment? Do they view it as predicated upon an expectation of unchangeable peace? Or does it not look at least to a possible state of war? And is it not that which it is intended to guard against? Undoubtedly it is—and as war becomes probable or the continuance of peace doubtful we ought to augment our military force; then it is equally unnecessary and impossible before we prepare, to speak with certainty as to peace or war. To require this first is to say that all precautionary measures with a view to a probable state of war are impolitic, and that we are to wait until the event happens, and while grappling with it to look about in confusion for the means of defence and resistance. To justify opposition to this bill gentlemen ought to be able to say with certainty that we shall have peace, while those who advocate it are only bound to show that its duration is doubtful.

At an early period of the session he heard it from more than one quarter of the House that we were in a state of war. If acts of hostility on one side without resistance on the other, constitute war gentlemen were correct; but if it requires not only attack but violent resistance to constitute it we are not at war. It is this state of things (whatever may be its appropriate name or character) which constrains me to support the bill upon your table, as a measure preparatory to meet that event which present circumstances but too fairly promise, and he would say that if our present situation does not demand measures for defence, nothing short of actual hostilities will justify them.

Mr. H. asked what was the nature of the war waged between France and Great Britain; was it a war of blood? No. Do you find the armies of the belligerents coming in conflict? No. It is then merely a war of commercial interdiction, and while France feels the effects of British orders of council, and England those of French decrees, we occupy the ground which subjects us to the pressure of both; while they experience the loss of commercial advantages, by their commerce being forced from its old channels, we are subject to the same inconvenience, besides the positive loss of property, ship and cargo; he could not see a single avenue through which neutral trade could pass with safety, for if you are touched or taken into port by a British cruizer and afterwards released, it only makes your case complete for a French court to decree confiscation and *e converso*, and yet both these powers affect great regard for neutral rights. Mr. H. said the object of the belligerents in adopting their present iniquitous system, is too glaring to escape the notice even of the most undescerning, that of torturing us under professions of regard, into an alliance with one against the other; a strict neutrality we had always observed, and to it he hoped, we would undeviatingly adhere, he wished us to rely upon our own energies and resources; he would never consent to place the destinies of this country within the shadow or reach of that great collossal power of France which never raises its arm without overturning a throne, and whose vestiges through republics are marked with the destruction of their liberties, nor would he associate in arms the only surviving republic in the world, with Great Britain from whom our forefathers thought it right to make an eternal separation, and sanctioned that opinion by a revolution which cost the best blood of our country; when we withdraw our commerce completely from the ocean, and leave nothing but waves for French decrees and British orders of council to prey upon, and evince by this procedure our determination not to participate in the contest, is it improbable that one of those great and enraged belligerents, will be provoked by disappointment or prompted by the love of spoil to make war upon us; but the gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. Randolph) says that neither France nor G. Britain can threaten us with a dangerous invasion. Mr. H. said, if neither of those powers can, none ever will be able to alarm us by invasion, the one possessing considerable armies, and an unexampled maritime force, the other possessing if not the most numerous the most efficient land force the world ever knew, managed by a man of irresistible effort and boundless ambition. Although he differed very widely from the gentleman on this point, yet he would, when convinced of his error, yield his opinion with cheerfulness; for it was much more agreeable to him to believe the nation inaccessible to dangerous attack, than liable to invasion, but of this he was still to be convinced. The situation of the country in this moment of danger and apprehension, demands that we should place it in a posture of defence, we were called here for that purpose; the nation look for it, and will be surprized if not irritated, should we rise without doing something to prepare them to meet that event which is generally believed may probably spring out of the present state of things; he hoped we would not put at hazard the safety of the country, to avoid the expenditure of money which you have heaped in your treasury. The injury which might be done to New-York alone, in one week, would be more than the expence of this force as long as you may probably want it; at this time a few ships of the line could lay that city, the boast of our country, in ashes or under contribution; Norfolk, Charleston, and many other commercial places, not much less valuable or vulnerable, require your attention. If gentlemen will look to our western frontier they would see the necessity of fixing some garrisons to aid the militia in the event of an Indian war, and to keep possession of some points so important to the defence of the country. Mr. H. said, he believed that if Detroit had been given up to us in 1783, when the definitive treaty between us and G. Britain was concluded, it would have saved the lives of thousands, and the western settlements and population would have had other limits than those which they now have. You find that the treaty of Grenville, concluded between us and the Indians, in 1794, has been inviolably observed on their part, owing to British influence being withdrawn or counteracted by our possession of Detroit. What is the situation now of this important point? Almost without troops, and in the vicinity of a British garrison, into which they have lately, as we hear, thrown a considerable reinforcement of men; but the same gentleman from Virginia says, that the circumstance of troops being thrown into the British possessions in America, is a proof that they do not intend to go to war with us; but for his part, he regarded it as evidence of very different views, he said it was certainly necessary to send troops enough to this place to defend it against sudden attack, & to hold it at all events. When he spoke of sending regular troops to the western country, he meant not to rely upon them for active service in repelling the attacks which might be made by the savages upon the frontier generally, but to hold those important points we now have, which if once lost, would give to G. Britain the means of exciting the Indians to war, which otherwise she might not have. If gentlemen will look lower down the western waters, they will find the territories of Indiana and Upper Louisiana presenting an extended and defenceless frontier, exposed to inroads from Indian nations, some of whom, to be sure, we have never been at war with, but might be excited to war by those means which never fail to enlist the savage, and which G. Britain so well knows how to employ. If we adjourn without doing so nothing for the safety and protection of those defenceless citizens, they will, and justly too, complain of your neglect; but, sir, turn your attention to New-Orleans for a moment, and when I conduct you to that point, I carry with me the anxiety and first interest of every citizen who resides upon the waters of the Mississippi. The possession of this place is not only important, but indispensible to the welfare and prosperity of the western people, and ought not to be at hazard one moment. What is its situation? In the neighborhood of the Havannah, where a large force is always kept, and not far distant from other Spanish settlements, whose force could be brought to act upon it without difficulty or much delay, and almost one thousand miles from those parts of the western country, from which any considerable force could be taken; this place ought not only to be strongly fortified, but ought to have a force which at all times would be able to maintain possession, which if once lost, would cost the lives of thousands, besides your millions, perhaps to regain. Whether we look to war with G. Britain or France, it is equally in danger; if with the latter, we know that the resources of Spain are at her command. But gentlemen say, that the militia would be raised, and possession if lost, soon recovered; but Mr. H. asked, if it was reasonable to require of the western militia to leave their families and farms, to go a thousand miles into a sickly climate, to defend or regain possession of a place, which it was equally the duty of the whole U. S. to protect? That they would cheerfully contribute their proportion of men and money is not to be doubted; but that they would submit to the whole burthen, it was unreasonable to expect. Mr. H. observed, that when he urged the adoption of this measure, he was not to be understood as wanting confidence in the militia, it was upon them he principally relied, but in the event of war we must have some fortified places, & they ought to be maintained by regular troops. Garrison duty was what the militia would perform with reluctance, if they are employed, it ought to be in active enterprizing service, and not in sweeping or defending garrisons. Mr. H. said, he should certainly vote for the bill, and he believed that the opposition offered to it, did not proceed from a reluctance to defend the country, but a belief that such a measure as this bill contemplates was not called for by existing circumstances.

Mr. Troup said, that after the very eloquent and patriotic speech of his friend from Virginia (Mr. Randolph) he felt it doubly incumbent on him to justify the vote he should give by a few observations. I really cannot, said he, for my part perceive, with the gentleman from Virgina, that a bright prospect of peace has suddenly opened upon this country. My views of things at this moment are very different; it really seems to me that the clouds are gathering about us darker and thicker every day. It must be, from the nature of things, extremely difficult to determine whether we shall have peace or war, because that event, I trust, depends on powers not to be controlled by us. But however difficult it be to determine it, what security have we that we shall not be attacked? Are we certain that an act of hostility against this country will ever be preceded by a solemn and formal declaration of war? No sir, all experience is against it. The Spanish frigates were attacked, and there was no declaration of war—nay, they were attacked in the midst of negociation for peace, or rather in the midst of friendly negociation; Copenhagen was attacked and in flames, and there was no declaration of war. Recollect when your measure of embargo begins to press hard upon the British colonies; when from that salutary measure the colonies are reduced to the last extreme of wretchedness & want, the tygress will attack you for food for her young; it is not unlikely that she may steal upon you in the dead of night, and treat you as at Paoli. And pray sir, what security have you against that power which a gentleman from S. Carolina (Mr. D. R. Williams) so appropriately called the tiger? What security have you against France? Do you expect to sleep in profound tranquility because Britain interposes between you and France her thousand ships? It would be idle and irrational to expect it. You have an instance the other day of the Rochefort squadron making its way in the face of the whole British navy, and it is said with 5,000 troops on board, who might, for aught you could have done, be drawn up on your frontiers.

But what is to be done in the present crisis of affairs? Is the nation to remain undefended merely because gentlemen entertain prejudices against a particular species of defence? On what physical force will you rely for defence? You can only chuse between the militia and a standing army; and when the other day it was proposed by an honorable gentleman from Virginia to class and new organize the militia you refused to do so. And it is well known that the present defective system of militia, in our quarter of the country at least, is good for nothing. No man has more confidence in the militia than myself; I consider them the great and cheap defence of the nation. But you must class, arm, and equip them; and when it is so armed, classed and equipped, purge this country of that refuse of humanity, a British faction and a French faction, if indeed there be any such, and your militia will defend you against the world.

The jealousy of standing armies is characteristic of our people; it results essentially from their habits and political institutions; but this jealousy existing only in times of peace, is in a season of public danger always succeeded by that policy which reposes the safety of the nation in discipline, in habits of obedience, and in concert of operation. No man ever complained of a standing army when his country was invaded. No man complained of a standing army during the revolution, though many complained, and causelessly complained of the militia. The truth is that the evil of standing armies is always effectually guarded when the regular force bears a very small proportion to the armed militia. By adopting such policy, by so proportioning your regular force to your militia, you will have nothing to do but to command it to lay down its arms, and it is done.

Circumstances render it necessary at this moment to create a war establishment, not so much for the purpose of defence against invasion, an event, perhaps, not so seriously to be apprehended as was well observed by my friend from Virginia, but to preserve peace by preparing for war. It is at this time, and under such circumstances as the present the maxim applies, to preserve peace or avert war you must prepare for war.

As to confidence in men, under whom this force is to be wielded, and of which so much has been said, I will only observe, that I either have very great confidence or no confidence at all, and a sufficiency of it on the present occasion, to believe that it will be neither misdirected nor abused—and I repose this confidence the more readily, as I am aware the army will be disbanded with the same facility it has been created when the occasion of it ceases.

Mr. Smilie said with respect to standing armies he agreed with the gentleman from Virginia; he believed them dangerous to every free country and that they should not exist but when the safety of the country required it. We do not differ in sentiments on this, said Mr. S. but we differ materially in another point. The gentleman thinks there is no necessity for them at present, and I think there is a stronger necessity than ever has existed since the peace of 1783. It is evident from what the gentleman himself has told you that he has no objection to a standing force whenever that force becomes necessary. That the gentleman once entertained such sentiments he has told you himself; he has alluded to the circumstance; we all recollect it. We find that the session before the last, when we had some little differences with Spain, when our territories were, as the gentleman has said invaded, though in truth it was a *little* affair, the gentleman from Va. offered this resolution.

"*Resolved*, That such number of troops not exceeding as the President of the United States shall deem sufficient to protect the Southern frontiers of the United States, from Spanish inroad and insult, and to chastise the same, be immediately raised."

Here then the gentleman himself was willing to raise a regular force for the purpose of chastising the Spaniards. In a time of peace with others, and while negociations were pending with Spain. I disapproved of it; so did a majority of this House, and it was not adopted. This shews that the only difference of opinion between the gentleman and myself is whether at that time and this we were in such a state as would justify the raising a regular force. Will any gentleman pretend to compare the situation of our country at this day and at that? A mere lawyer only, and no one else would say that what happended at that time was so serious as it is pretended. The gentleman tells you that he was in favor of a regular force at that time because it was inconvienent for the militia to march? Was it more inconvenient at that time than it is now? Not at all. The truth is that the only difference of opinion which can rationally exist is as to the number now to be raised.

With respect to the number proposed, which the gentleman supposes altogether inadequate, he should bear it in mind that this will not constitute our whole force. In case of invasion it is upon the militia that we must depend chiefly; but certainly there are points where it will be necessary to have a small regular force. The gentleman has exclaimed, how easy it would be, if all his force was placed in the city of New-York, for the British to lay waste that city. Does the gentleman mean in case of an attack upon New-York, to give it up without a struggle? If not, for God's sake let us take some necessary course to enable us to make that struggle. I consider that the situation in which we are placed requires this force. But when the gentleman talks of invasion, and tells us if we apprehend such an event, we should prepare to meet it in a very different manner, I answer that we wish to put ourselves in a situation to meet events if they should occur. The gentleman from Virginia agrees that we are in no great danger of attack from France. Are we secure with respect to the other? That G. Britain may not make an attack upon our sea-ports I do not believe; and when we are likely to get into conflict, it is always necessary to consider the character with whom we contend. It has already been said that the Spanish frigates were attacked without a declaration of war; it is the common practice of modern times. In 1755 Britain destroyed almost the whole of the French trade without a declaration of war. Constantinople was at peace and she had sent a minister there to induce them to join her in the war against France; while her minister was negociating there she sends her fleet up the Helespont. It is very fortunate that the same has not happened to us; and that it will not yet happen I am very doubtful, as it is her usual practice. This being the common usage then, have we any security that we shall not share the common fate? Besides we have information that a certain class of the people of Britain, the navy department, thirst for war. I mention this to shew that we have not security against their will to do it.

With respect to the gentleman's observations in regard to different parties, or rather to the friends of the two belligerent nations, I regret that they have any friends; for it is the greatest curse that could befal us that any foreign nation should have influence amongst us. The influence of France or of England is equally injurious. But I differ with the gentleman in the opinion that it is in favor of France, I confess that I have no apprehension that France, since its republican form of government has been destroyed, could have maintained any influence in this country; she has no body here to promote it but the American people themselves from a recollection of her past services, and from the original cause of her revolution and consequent republican institution. The first of these causes is long since worn out; and can any republican of this country feel an attachment to the present government of France? Surely not. Where then in the name of God can any influence exist in favor of France? It cannot exist. We know and all America knows that the present administration, and particularly the highly respectable character at the head of it, have been accused of a prejudice in favor of that nation. Look at the volume of documents latel