

The Kentucky Advertiser.

WINCHESTER, (Kentucky)--Printed by NATHANIEL PATTEN, Jr.

Num. 136.]

SATURDAY MORNING, MARCH 9, 1847.

[Vol. III.]

CONDITIONS.

TWO DOLLARS if paid in advance—TWO DOLLARS & FIFTY CENTS in six months, or THREE DOLLARS at the expiration of the year.

No paper will be discontinued until all arrearages are paid.

Those who do not direct their papers to be discontinued at the end of the year will be considered as engaged for the next.

Subscribers at a distance whose papers are sent at our expense, will be charged 25 cents per annum in addition.

ADVERTISEMENTS, not exceeding a square, will be inserted for 50 Cents the first insertion, and 25 cents for each continuance. Those coming from the country must be accompanied by the CASH, or they will not be attended to.

CONGRESSIONAL.

DEBATE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE COMPENSATION LAW.

(Continued.)

Mr. JOHNSON, of Virginia, asked the indulgence of the Chairman, and through him, the indulgence of this honorable body, for a short time, whilst he should assign some of the reasons which would influence his vote on the question under deliberation. I ask not, said he, the charity of the House to be extended to my feelings. I disdain the idea of relying for the tranquility of my feelings on the forbearance or charity of any man or set of men on this earth. As I hold myself personally responsible for every sentiment and expression which I utter here or elsewhere, to every man entitled to the treatment of a gentleman, so I hold every individual, having this title, personally responsible to me for every infraction of my rights, or violation of my feelings. I have frequently witnessed the avidity with which malignity and cowardice fixed their fangs on the victim, who would patiently writhe under their torture.

I cannot condescend to notice the strictures of the member from Virginia, (Mr. Randolph) on those who voted against the law at the last session, farther than to say, that he did not yesterday represent truly what he said at the last session. He did then expressly confine his felonious comparison to a single individual, who had contended, in argument, that the old compensation (viz. six dollars a day) was amply sufficient to meet the expenditures of members at this place. This cannot be forgotten by the members; it was attended by circumstances which render it impossible. It is certainly within the recollection of many, very many respectable members of the House.

Sir, I voted against the law at the last session. I received the full compensation to which I was entitled under it, as a member. In doing this, I believed that I acted with perfect integrity and honor; I still think so. In point of honor and integrity, I shrink not from a comparison with any member of this House, or any man in this nation.

I opposed the law at the last session, not from the miserable, contemptible motives which some of its warm advocates then had the presumption to attribute to those who voted against the measure. Not in order, as has been insolently remarked, to creep through a dirty canal to popularity. Not with the view to seek, thro' such a medium, a short lived popularity, more evanescent than the baseless fabric of a dream. I am proud to believe, that, on my part, no necessity existed to conciliate, by such means, the people whom I have the honor to represent. They are too intelligent, too independent, and too honorable. When I came into Congress, it was by the triumph of principle; it was a conquest obtained by the people over cunning, duplicity, and fraud; it was a voluntary effort on their part, to get rid of a man who had long misrepresented their sentiments and their feelings. It was their victory, not mine; a victory which afforded me pleasure, not from selfish or personal consideration, but from the consoling reflection that principle had triumphed. When the election terminated in my favor, it was very doubtful whether I should ever be able to take a seat in the Congress of the United States. I was from home but once from the time I was a candidate, and returned to the district in which I reside not until long after the close of the election. I have never flattered the follies nor the vices of mankind. I am not in my nature to flatter man. I am not indifferent to popularity. But I desire that popularity only which is the voluntary tribute to virtuous, independent and honorable actions; the reward for services performed with fidelity and integrity—no other would I enjoy.

When the law of the last session was under deliberation—the law which is now contemplated to repeal, I saw and I felt the delicacy of my situation. To be called on to vote on a question,

in which I was personally interested although the amount of interest was too trifling to influence any honest or honorable man; to influence any description of persons, except the deplorable mendicants, or trembling paupers. For what man, I ask, who is fit to come here—who is qualified to represent the free, the independent people of this nation—who could be influenced by pecuniary considerations—who could not, by the proper exertion of his own abilities, in domestic pursuits, benefit himself and his family far beyond any thing which the government can afford or ought to give. The delicacy of my situation did not result from a doubt as to the course which I ought to have pursued, which I determined to pursue. The question was no sooner presented to me, than my convictions of the impolicy and impropriety of the measure, assumed the force of intuition. Yet I knew that the most pure, and honorable motives were ever liable to misrepresentation. That an honest opposition to a measure of an impolitic character, especially if it required any thing like what some term self-denial, would be attributed to a base, low and contemptible mode of courting popularity; that little souls, bursting with malignity, would be constantly scattering their filth and their venom round. I, sir, have never trembled nor cowered before mortal man; nor have I ever stooped to a mean act, to promote my private or my public interest. At the last session I took occasion to state that I was satisfied that the depreciation of money, and the increased price of every article of consumption—of living, had rendered the six dollar compensation insufficient to meet the reasonable and decent expenses of members at this place. I have uniformly maintained this opinion. I would then have voted for a law, raising to a moderate amount the daily pay of the members, to a sum which would have borne the same proportion to the expense of living which the old compensation bore, at the time it was fixed, provided the law had been postponed in its operation until the 4th of March next. But I will never vote for any measures in which my personal interest may subject me to the imputation of being influenced by selfish, sordid and mercenary motives.

The mode of compensation presented an objection which was irresistible & conclusive. Every appropriation of the public treasury should be clear, definite, and certain. No mystery should exist. The people for whose benefit alone this money should be touched, ought to have the means of judging with certainty as to the amount of expenditure, in order to enable them to judge of the justice and the wisdom of the expenditure. The services rendered by the members of Congress, by the members of every legislative body, are, from their nature and character, contingent and uncertain. Depending on the relations of the country—sometimes on the prosperity, and frequently on the adversity with which she may be visited. They are not services of that character which can be fairly and properly compensated by a fixed annual salary. The various misrepresentations which have existed in reference to the law of the last session—the law which now claims the attention of this honorable body—which has obtained the serious attention of this nation—the difficulty which has been experienced by the people in understanding its provisions, are, to my mind, conclusive evidences that it ought to be repealed. Why then should the law of the last session be so pertinaciously adhered to? A law which proposes a compensation by salary, when in truth, no single idea which enters into the complex term called salary, is preserved by that law. What is a salary? A certain fixed and determined sum, to be paid at certain fixed periods—dependent on no other contingency but the continuance in office. Whereas, the salary provided by that law depends on several contingencies. The member must be in his place on every day during the session, or must be prevented, after taking his seat, or after setting off from home with the view to take his seat—by sickness, or in the second from taking his seat, to entitle him to the salary. For, if he is absent a single day, or any number of days, from the service of the House, either with leave or without leave, a deduction is made of a sum equal to that which the absent days bear to the whole number of days in the session, or sessions, if there be more than one in the year. I can truly say that I do not know the opinion of the majority of the people in the district in which I reside, on the subject of this odious law. As far as I have heard, not much has been said in relation to it. This I

do not attribute to the influence which they have wielded the question. I have no doubt they are sensible on the subject, as the people of the United States generally are. I account for it on the ground that they know the course which I pursued on the question—the vote, which I gave. I again most peremptorily deny that my opposition to the law at the last session, was the result of that miserable, contemptible policy which several gentlemen have presumed to charge upon those who have opposed that measure. Sir, I will trouble the committee no longer.

Mr. ROSS, of Pennsylvania, said, the question under consideration was too agreeable to excite unpleasant sensations; because, it gave every member an opportunity of speaking of those objects most dear to his heart—of himself and his constituents. It is a trite observation, that the reason lovers are never tired of each other's company, is, because they are constantly talking of themselves. The same observation might be applied to the representative and his constituents. They are, or ought to be, equally alive to the interest and reputation of each other. If so, it may reasonably be expected, much will be said on the subject under consideration, which may be truly termed a selfish one. He said his constituents had unsolicited, re-elected him, without requiring of him any other pledge, than that of his past conduct. They had confided to him the free and unqualified right to exercise his own judgment, after a full hearing on every question which might arise. Such generous confidence, on their part, at a time of unusual excitement and ferment, deserved, and should receive, of him, the most profound regard for their interest. Their approbation, next to that of his own conscience, would be the only boon he should aspire after, so long as they continued to honor him with their suffrages.

He said he was not sure the course he should pursue, on this occasion, was that which was best calculated to ensure to him a lasting popularity. If granted it was in accordance with the present prevailing opinion; but he recollected when a navy was unpopular in this country, and particularly in his district; when he was charged with political heresy for his adherence to that establishment; when instead of increasing the navy, it was deemed expedient, by its friends, to yield to the popular clamor against it, and, at the close of a most unpopular administration, to pass a law to sell a part of that which existed. But a navy is now the favorite of the people; not a voice is raised against it, and its increase is loudly called for. He rejoiced at the change of the public sentiment in this instance. But may not the opinions of the people undergo a similar change with regard to the compensation of members? he thought it by no means improbable. How odious was the United States Bank a few years ago—amongst the republicans! What a darling is the National Bank now with many of them! He said he made these observations to show he was too well acquainted with the instability of public opinion to make it a rule of action, and to acquit himself of the imputation of being actuated by a desire to obtain popularity; a desire always honorable when, it can be accomplished by fair and honest means.

He said he could not agree with his venerable colleague (Mr. Findley) who seemed to think the great change which had been made in the representation of Pennsylvania at the late election, was not to be ascribed to the compensation law, inasmuch as seven or eight members who had voted against that law had not been elected to the next Congress. He, Mr. R. thought the compensation law had prevented their reelection; he was justified in this opinion by a recurrence to facts. Unceasing industry had been made use of both in and out of this House, to identify those who voted against that law with those who voted in favor of it, as equally culpable, if not more so. For this purpose, in Pennsylvania, on the 4th of July last, a toast was drunk, and circulated with assiduity, at a respectable meeting, at which it was said one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of that state presided, with a most unhandsome and unjust sentiment attached to it. If recollected right, it was this: "The Fifteen Hundred Dollar Compensation Law—the receiver is as bad as the thief." To the dissemination of such unbecoming sentiments may fairly be ascribed, in a great measure, the failure of the election of the members alluded to. This toast should not have been noticed, but for its accordance with a more exceptionable sentiment, expressed by the gentleman from Virginia last session, and reiterated during the present debate, "that if he had voted against the compensation law, he

would as soon have been caught with a hand in his neighbor's pocket, as to have taken the money."

It is just when applied to the opponents of the compensation law? Will they bear the touchstone of a fair and candid examination? Is it not the duty of every good citizen to submit to the laws which are passed by a majority, however injurious they may be in their operation to him as an individual? If he is bound to submit to those laws which injure him, may he not fairly, honestly, and honorably avail himself of those which benefit him, although he voted against them? By what system of morality is a member of this House excluded from the benefits and advantages of the laws passed by the majority? Was not the compensation of the members, when it was first fixed, deemed too high by many? Did not many of the then members oppose it on that ground? Did any of them refuse to receive the sum fixed on? Was there any other law under which they could receive their pay? Was there then any political adventurer hardy enough to implicate those who voted against the law, in the censure which attached to those who voted for it, because they received the compensation? Was there any other law than the fifteen hundred Dollar Law (as it is commonly called) under which the minority could have received their pay last session? If the law had been popular, its opponents would not have been entitled to any of the credit. As it has proved unpopular, they ought not to incur any of the censure. Let the question be examined by analogy to other cases. Will any gentleman say that those who opposed the national Bank, (even under the belief that it was unconstitutional) were bound by honor or morality to decline subscribing for the stock? The gentleman from Virginia certainly would not, because he declared his determination to act otherwise. Suppose a majority of Congress should, in a fit of frenzy, pass a law to sell the unlocated lands at six cents per acre, instead of two dollars. would any one say it would be immoral or dishonorable in those who opposed the law, to take out warrants under it? But it is an old proverb, that "miser loves company." If true, it is not surprising that those who have committed suicide, should, Sampson-like endeavor to crush their opponents beneath the general wreck their own conduct has produced. Mr. R. said he made these observations to rescue himself, and those who had sincerely acted with him, in opposing the passage of the law, from the imputation which were unfairly and unjustly attempted to be cast upon them.

He said this might be hailed as a proud day for the people. Their power and influence are portrayed in strong and vivid colors, by the sincere repentance and deep contrition of many of those who voted for the law; the sincerity of which, was evidenced by their anxiety to be foremost in undoing what they had hastily done last session. He trusted the people, would receive the sacrifice now made to their will, (the repealing of the law) as an ample atonement.

The arguments urged by the people at the late election, in favor of the repeal of the law, have been, and are, more convincing and conclusive, than any thing that has or can be said in this committee; and, but for the reasons assigned as an apology for the enactment of it, though not urged as reasons why it should be continued, it would be unnecessary to trouble the committee further.

He said, those who are in favor of a higher sum than six dollars per day, contend that justice and sound policy require it; that the compensation of a representative ought to be such as would enable the virtuous and intelligent citizen of every class in society, to serve his country in the national legislature; such as would enable him to live like a gentleman when here, and maintain his family while absent; such as would ensure the continuance of the services of the ablest heads and the best hearts in the country, and such as would put him in some measure on a par with the other officers of government—make him independent, and place him above the influence of executive patronage, which six dollars per day is altogether inadequate to do.

These reasons are plausible, if not strong, in favor of a higher per diem than six dollars. They naturally suggest the questions, what are the requisite qualifications to make a good representative? The answer is plain—Wisdom to discern, and integrity to pursue, the true interest of his country. Will a high salary, or a greater per diem have a tendency to bring men, with such qualifications, into the national legislature, sooner than the moderate sum of six dollars per day?

Would it not have a contrary tendency? Would it not stimulate every political adventurer, who had nothing to lose, & every thing to gain, by securing an election, to supplant, by unfair means, the meritorious candidate, in the confidence of the people? The qualified candidate would feel too much respect for his own character, and that of his constituents, to gain their votes by soothing their follies, or flattering their vices; but the unqualified candidate would be all things to all men—he would affect sanctity with the religious—laugh with the merry—treat the avaricious—flatter the vain—cringe to the proud—promise every thing, and perform nothing, and then blame those whose popularity he wished to destroy, for his failure to accomplish what he had promised. He would, nine times out of ten, succeed. But leave, said Mr. R. the pay so low that it cannot be an object worthy the pursuit of any one, and the people will look for the best qualified man to fill the office—he will not seek the office, the office will seek him, and it will find the proper person.

Gentlemen appear to think that a good salary, or a handsome per diem, is essentially necessary to bring a respectable representation into this House, and to make them, when here, independent of executive influence. If so, it should be given. But when did gold give intelligence to the head, or integrity to the heart? That it will not do the former, is proved by the conduct of Ferdinand the seventh—and that it never has done the latter, may be collected from the characters and conduct of Bacon, Marlborough, Dodd, & Gratian. The latter of whom, while indignant, was the bold defender of his country's rights—yes, and, of the rights of man. His fellow subjects, grateful for the many services he had rendered them, gave him 50,000 pounds sterling. They made him rich, or, in the language of gentlemen, independent; but they paralysed the patriotism of his heart—he ceased to be the eloquent champion of civil liberty, feelingly alive to the miseries and afflictions of his oppressed countrymen.

Enable your representatives, said Mr. R. to live in ease and affluence—contract habits and tastes, above the mollified part of their constituents, and inconsistent with the plain republican manners of your country, and you qualify them to become the panderers of power, and the creeping, cringing sycophants of the court. You cannot, by your laws, imbue men with virtuous, independent, stern, and inflexible characters. The laws of nature, and of nature's God, aided by an early education, can only accomplish the object you aim at.

But all abstract reasoning on this, as on most other subjects, said Mr. R. is dangerous. It leads to errors, which facts and experience alone can correct. He might be wrong in the views he had taken; but while he retained his present impressions, he must act in unison with them: he should, therefore, vote for filling the blank with the lowest sum named, which was six dollars. If this sum should not be agreed upon, he thought it would be better to repeal all the laws fixing the pay of members, and leave the subject so that the next Congress, who had been elected expressly with a reference to this subject, should be obliged to act on it. The people would then have an opportunity of testing the sincerity of those whom they had elected because they professed an entire opposition to the compensation law.

He said the proposition of the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Randolph) to refund, would meet with his cordial support, if consistent with a proper respect for the integrity of the representative character, of which he entertained some doubts.

But he was admonished, by the recollection of a favorite saying of a great but eccentric genius, that words are the counters of wise men and the money of fools, to say no more.

Mr. BARBOUR said that before the decision of this question, he asked the indulgence of the committee whilst he very concisely stated his views of the subject; and the reasons which would influence him to vote in favor of the bill upon the table, having for its object the repeal of the compensation law of the last session.

He said that he should vote for the repeal of that law partly for the reason which had induced him to vote against it at the last session; and partly for a most important reason, which had occurred since that time; he meant, the decided expression of the public opinion, upon the subject. When this question was before the House, at its last session, he said he was opposed to the passage of the law, first, because he considered the compensation to members, not as a remuneration, for