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Proceedings of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES.

THURSDAY, *August* 27.

MR. SCOTT observed, that a principle of the union in which we were bound, was the principle of reciprocal and equal justice. He thought that the question now before the house was a grand link in the chain of the federal system. The peace of the United States depended as much on this as on any other question which would come before congress. An adoption of some such measure was a piece of justice due to the extremities of the continent. It being therefore a point with them, and a point of justice too, he could not conceive how any gentleman who had the good of their country at heart could oppose it.

The resolution held out this general idea, that the federal government ought to be fixed at that place which is most central with respect to population and territory, having an equal regard to the Atlantic and the western parts of the union. No man in the Western Country ever wished any thing further than that when the central line between the northern and southern extremities was fixed, congress should establish their seat as far back on this line, as the conveniency of maritime commerce would allow.

He thought those people had a right to demand this. If this principle was given, the subject could not involve much debate.

He thought this was a favourable moment to settle the great question which had agitated the mass of the people for several years. We might be assured that congress at this time possessed all their virtue and innocence, but it was to be feared that would not be the case in future. Congress were now clear of all factions, and as destitute as possible of the spirit of party and local views. In a future day faction might drive the government to fix on some improper place, and one of two events would result from this; either they would be again obliged to remove, after expending great sums of money on this imprudent establishment, or the union would be dissolved.

Mr. Livermore said, that the two houses had come to a resolution to adjourn in next month. Many weighty matters were still before the legislature. How long a discussion of this subject would require, was uncertain. It might engross a great deal of time, and there was danger of its producing that animosity and party spirit, which the measure itself proposes to guard against. He wishes first to finish the organization of government, and the performance of those important duties which the public were anxiously expecting of them.

I do not understand, said he, that any gentleman is uneasy at his present situation. I have heard no complaints. Congress are well accommodated in this city. There may be other places, to be sure, in which they might find accommodations, but I believe both the citizens of New-York and the members of the legislature are equally satisfied. I have not heard of any memorial from the former requesting us to remove—Many parts of the country indeed seem to be in a fever to have us with them; especially the state of Pennsylvania—Carlisle, Lancaster, York-town, German-town and Reading, have sent us abundance of petitions, setting forth their various advantages, and we wish that they may enjoy them. If they are pleasantly situated, and have plenty of fish, we are glad to hear it.

I cannot see any reason for postponing all our important matters in order to consider this. If we can dispatch all these matters by next spring, and the road should be so impassable that we should not be able to get home, I shall be for taking it up.

Mr. Livermore then observed, that the idea of a permanent seat was not itself strictly true. As population grew, and as men of new principles and views took their seats in congress, this permanent seat might be altered at pleasure—It was certainly wise in congress to be œconomical—It was always found a very expensive thing to remove—And the finances of their country were not at present adequate to many new expences. A great variety of objects were necessary to be taken into view in fixing the seat of government, besides the mathematical centrality—The healthiness of the situation was a capital circumstance.

Mr. Scott objected to the cavalier manner in which he thought the gentleman treated the subject.

Mr. Jackson said, the existence of the union depended on this subject. The place of the seat of government was important in every view. It might be compared to the heart in the human body; it was a center from whence the principles of life were carried to the extremities.

It was indifferent to him whether the subject was determined now or next session, but he thought it best that the motion should lie on the table.

Mr. Stone remarked, that this would be a very important business, and it was necessary to be extremely cautious in conducting. He knew of no question which would have such a tendency to produce heats and divisions, and it was often the case that unhappy divisions arose chiefly from an indiscreet mode of conducting matters of this kind. He was glad to see the temperate spirit with which the house had set out, and he wished it might continue. He apprehended that no question would so fully try the temper of this body as the present.

The question was then taken on Mr. Smith's motion, and was lost. Ayes 21—Noes 30.

The speaker being about to put the question on the second Monday in December,

Mr. Ames rose, and asked if the original motion was not inconsistent with the resolution of the house to adjourn on the 22d of September? A committee had been appointed to report the business of the present session. The committee reported, and so much of that report was accepted as related to the time of adjournment. It seemed to him therefore, that the proposition to take up this subject at the present time was superseded. He was confident that it was inconsistent with that determination. It would become necessary, therefore, to rescind that determination, and whether that would be done or not, would depend on the disposition of the senate. If they should not concur, the legislature would be obliged to leave the most important business unfinished.

He said, he could not suppress some emotions of surprise, that gentlemen could bring forward questions which had not for their object the complete organization of the government. The government yet lies prostrate and inanimate, and instead of infusing life into it, and giving it motion, we have been in the first place altering our constitution, and now we are going into a long discussion to determine where we shall sit.

If the gentleman's motion only involved a few abstract propositions, it would still be uncertain how difficult their decision might be. But were I a stranger I should apprehend, from the manner in which the motion had been introduced, that it would be a question agitated with as much acrimony as any whatever.

I have always found that even in the most trifling questions it is extremely difficult to obtain unanimity. What then must be the division on a question, which, gentlemen have said, concerns the existence or peace of the union! I believe it will involve as many passions as can reside in the human heart. Every principle of local interest, of pride and honour, and even of patriotism itself are engaged. I am willing to pledge myself to the gentleman, that if the good of the union requires that the seat of government should be fixed at Pittsburgh, I will vote for it. But I must now vote for postponing the business. It is not enough to determine where the seat of government ought to be; but it is necessary to prepare the public mind to agree with ours in the decision of questions of this magnitude.—Our reasons ought to be made public, and they ought to be the reasons of the public.

When I left my constituents, I did not contemplate such a thing as this, nor have I yet formed my opinion. When I do, I pledge myself that it shall not spring from local or selfish principles.

The gentleman has brought forward this subject as a very important one. As such we will consider it. If it were to determine merely the center of matter, it might be settled in a short time—If we are to represent the oaks and the mountains—If the acres in the United States are to be represented, a few days of calculation may determine it.

I am of opinion, that the center of our government should be so placed as to propel the blood to the extremities, with the most equable and easy motion.—I would place the head of the government where it might guard most effectually the extremes, and protect the weak parts. It is my wish that the territory now subject to the laws of the union may continue so, and that the government may be so situated as to use its force with the best advantage to ensure the preservation of the union, and obedience to its laws.

The gentleman from Connecticut has rightly said that the states of North-Carolina and Rhode-Island should have a voice in this business.

I would not impute unworthy motives to the gentleman who introduced the motion; but I would ask him whether the world at large should not be equally convinced of their purity; whether, in justice to himself, the public mind should not be better prepared for the occasion. I am not convinced that our government, still so ill cemented and so feeble, could stand the shock of such a measure, and therefore I most earnestly deprecate the event.

Mr. Scott and Mr. Hartley said a few words, and Mr. Sedgwick proposed that the last Tuesday in December be assigned for the business. The question on this was lost.

Mr. Sherman then withdrew his motion; and Mr. Smith (S. C.) proposed Thursday se'nnight, which was negatived.

The question for making this business the order of the day for Thursday next, was then put and carried.

FRIDAY, *August* 28.

Mr. Goodhue presented, agreeably to order, a bill for suspending a part of the collection law, relative to the navigation on the Patowmack, which was read a first time.

A petition from a number of persons, commanders of packet boats that ply between Rhode-Island and the adjacent states, stating certain hardships they experience under the present revenue laws, particularly the tunnage duty, and praying relief, was read and laid on the table.

The house resolved itself into a committee on the bill for establishing the salaries of the officers of government.

Mr. Boudinot in the chair.

To the secretary of the treasury, it was proposed by the bill to allow 5000 dollars per annum.

This sum was reduced, after some debate, to 3500.

To the secretary for foreign affairs (now called secretary for the department of state) it proposed an allowance of 3500 dollars—This was reduced to 3000.

To the comptroller of the treasury, it proposed to allow 3000 dollars—This was reduced to 2000.

To the secretary at war, it proposed to allow 2500—This was raised to 3000.

To the auditor, it proposed to allow 1500 dollars, to the treasurer 1600, and to the register 1250—these sums were agreed to.

To the assistant of the secretary of the treasury, it proposed an allowance of 1600 dollars—This was reduced to 1500.

To the governor of the western territory, it proposed an allowance of 1000 dollars, with an additional allowance as superintendent of Indian affairs.

This was altered; the allowance as superintendent of Indian affairs was struck out, and the salary as governor raised to 2500 dollars.

A clause was added, providing for the salaries of the three judges of the western territory, allowing to each of them 800 dollars per annum.

To the secretary of the governor of the western territory, the salary was fixed at 750 dollars.

The remainder of the bill was gone through without any material amendment, when the committee rose and reported.

The report was accepted, and the bill ordered to be engrossed for a third reading.

The following is a statement of the salaries as allowed by the said bill.

	Dollars.
Secretary of the treasury,	3500
Secretary of state,	3000
Secretary at war,	3000
Governor of the western territory,	2500
Comptroller of the treasury,	2000
Treasurer,	1600
Auditor,	1500
Assistant to the secretary of treasury,	1500
Register,	1250
The judges of western territory, each,	800
Chief clerk in department of state,	800
Chief clerk of the comptroller,	800
Secretary of governor of western territory,	750
Chief clerk in department of war,	600
Chief clerk of the auditor,	600
All other clerks, at	450

SATURDAY, *August* 29.

The bill for regulating the coasting trade was received from the senate with the concurrence of that body in the amendments proposed by the house to the amendments of the senate.

The engrossed bill for establishing the salaries of the executive officers was read a third time, when Mr. Smith (S. C.) moved to recommit it, in order to supply some deficiencies. He observed, that a number of officers were not provided for, such as the foreign ministers, consuls, &c.

It was however thought improper to annex salaries to offices which the legislature had not expresly created or recognised, and the motion was negatived.

The question was then put on passing the bill, and the yeas and nays being called, it passed in the affirmative—Ayes 27—Noes 16.

Mr. Boudinot presented a memorial of sundry inhabitants of the county of Middlesex, in New-Jersey, praying that the district courts in that part of New-Jersey may be held at Perth-Amboy. Read and laid on the table.

The house then resolved itself into a committee of the whole on the judiciary bill.

Mr. Tucker's motion for striking out that section which provides for the establishment of district judges in each state, was taken into consideration. This brought on a warm debate. The motion was advocated by Mr. Livermore, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Burke, Mr. Stone, and opposed by Mr. Smith (S. C.) Mr. Benson, Mr. Sedgwick, Mr. Ames and Mr. Sherman. The committee rose at four o'clock without deciding the question, and the house adjourned.