

THE PENSION DEBATE.

The Annual Appropriation Bill Passed by the House.

A Lively Discussion in Which Opinions Were Freely Expressed.

The Course of THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE Not Pleasing to the Gentleman from Pennsylvania.

The pension appropriation bill was passed in the House on Friday after a lively debate in committee of the whole. Mr. Hopkins being in the chair. The bill being called up, Mr. Barney, in charge, made a statement.

Mr. Curtis. No, sir; but I do claim that where the local pension board rates a pensioner and gives him a ratable disability, and if it does not give him a ratable disability, it ought to be ignored.

Mr. Curtis. I think the law is sufficient. It simply is a question of construction in the office of the Commissioner.

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striking out these just cases for pension, and I warn you, so that you may be at guard.

In addition to Mr. Robinson three other gentlemen were allowed to speak on the time of Mr. Livingston (Ga., D.), but their remarks were not printed in the Record until later.

DEFENDED BY A TENNESSEE DEMOCRAT.

Mr. Sims (Tenn., D.) defended Mr. Evans's course. He said a pension was simply a gratuity, for which he was criticized by William Alden Smith (Ohio), who asked if it was not a solemn obligation upon the Government—an implied contract, sacred and binding, that those who were entitled to it should not be asked in vain for help from the Government they saved?

When one of the members asked why there was such a delay in the Spanish war cases as to amount to almost exclusion, Mr. Sims said:

Oh, it does not amount to exclusion. The great majority of the soldiers were engaged in the Spanish war were young men, who have a long life before them. Now you want to have them pensioned as boys, when they are old men, and to be drawing pensions all that time. I say that any Commissioner of Pensions, regardless of politics, ought to take such cases as necessary, properly investigate and determine the facts of a case when it is before him.

SPANISH WAR PENSIONS.

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list, to read this paper, and then come in here and say that the Commissioner of Pensions has not fairly and to the point made the rolls, and the duties, that high office. [Applause.]

The average amount paid annually to each pensioner in 1899 was \$1,617.74, a magnificent record made by the Congress of the United States. The annual value of the entire pension roll was \$1,617,740,000, a magnificent record made by the Congress of the United States.

Notwithstanding this fact, that we have made this large increase over all previous years, still the Pension department is criticized here the trouble of having to pay under my own supervision and under my own notice cases in which there were hardships, no doubt. In those cases I felt that justice should be done, and I have had a friend from Ohio and my friend from Massachusetts have said: But where is there a case in which justice was not done?

The Chairman. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. Mahon submitted as part of his report the \$1,617,740,000 of the Commissioner of Pensions of the work of the office for the past year.

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Mr. Hill. Then it is useless to raise it to \$250. Mr. Benton. I understand it to be \$250 income. Mr. Hill. Is it net income or gross income? Mr. Benton. I understand it to be gross income.

Mr. Hill. It seems to me the Pension Committee ought to see that legislation carefully in order to see that it is beneficial in its results.

Mr. Mahon. The Commissioner of Pensions says that it means net income. Mr. Hill. That is what I want to know. Mr. Barney. And I understand that if the bill which has passed the Senate shall pass the House and become a law, it will provide for an increase of that limit of income to \$250, that will relate also to net income and not to gross income.

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