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CONGRESS
OF THE UNITED STATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 17, 1800.

Mr. WALN obtained leave of absence for three weeks.

Mr. STONE also obtained leave of absence.

Mr. VARNUM called up his resolution, laid on the table on the instant, for reducing the second regiment of artillery to three battalions: it at present consists of four battalions.

Mr. OTIS declared himself surprised at the resolution offered by his colleague, as he had not known any act passed in that house with more unanimity, or which appeared at the time or since to be attended with more general satisfaction, than the act on which the present establishment of artillery and engineers was founded. At the time the act was passed, the body of artillery and engineers thereby raised was considered and declared to be part of the permanent army; and in this view it had since received the sanction of the house in every form in which it had been presented.

To shew that this was the case, it would be only necessary to exhibit a history of the establishment of this body of our military force.

Prior to the year 1794, the corps of artillery and engineers consisted of one battalion.

In May 1794, in a time of profound peace, an act passed increasing the establishment to a regiment, consisting of four battalions.

In May 1796, an act was passed recognizing and confirming the existence of the regiment, previously directed to be raised.

In April 1798, before Congress contemplated the existence of that emergency which afterwards occurred, before the provisional army was authorized, or a naval equipment with a view to actual hostility with a foreign power was begun, an act passed directing the raising an additional regiment, to consist of three battalions, and this not merely for three years, as had been hitherto usual, but for five years.

On the 3d of March 1799, an act passed for the better organization of the troops of the United States, augmenting the numbers of the companies and regiments of infantry and cavalry, and directing that the second regiment of artillery should consist of four battalions instead of three. The provisions of this act were such as manifested the determination of Congress that the artillery thus directed, and that only should be raised in any event. Thus the augmentation was not authorized for the purpose of meeting the crisis or of constituting a part of the temporary arrangements for defence, but as a resource for instruction and defence at all times and upon all occasions.

In the last session of Congress two acts were passed which materially affected the military establishment. One of which suspended all further recruiting in reference to the twelve regiments; but was silent in respect to the artillery.

The other for authorizing the President to disband the infantry and cavalry, but expressly restraining him from diminishing the numbers of the artillery—Was he not therefore warranted in the assertion that the present establishment of the two regiments of artillery and engineers had been authorized with the greatest deliberation, and sanctioned as a favorite measure. That it was intended to be cherished as a nursery for those branches of military science which are most difficult of acquisition,

which cannot be learnt or practised upon a sudden emergency? While every other part of the military establishment had experienced a radical reform. The organization of the artillery had hitherto remained exempt from objection and dispute.

This being the case, was it not incumbent on the gentleman, who had submitted the resolution before the house, to point out some of those discriminating circumstances that recommended the adoption of a measure at this time which has been hitherto deemed inexpedient? Was it not incumbent on him to shew that he did not intend the accomplishment of this measure as a prelude to the entire annihilation of the little germ of an army that now remains to this country.

For his part, Mr. OTIS declared, he was not ambitious of assuming either credit or responsibility that would arise from a reformation that would leave the country destitute of defence. He was willing that those who succeeded in the administration of the government should reap the honor and advantage of this reform.

Whether the force at present authorized by law was more than adequate to the protection of our extended sea board, and our no less extensive frontier, would clearly appear, by a statement of the distribution of it that is intended when the regiments are complete.

He had taken some pains to inform himself of this fact and had prepared a document to shew exclusive of officers commissioned and non-commissioned, the numbers that would be stationed at the respective parts. Mr. OTIS then went minutely into a statement of the numbers allowed to every port and garrison where the Artillery are to be employed, the results of which were as follows:

In Georgia and S. Carolina	192
Virginia and Maryland	192
Pennsylvania	144
New-York	288
Connecticut	48
Rhode Island	144
Massachusetts	192
On North Western frontier } from Niagara to Mobile Bay. }	336
Total	1536

And this number was to be divided among nearly thirty different garrisons.

Now, let any man, acquainted with the extent of our country, and who knew how vulnerable it was in many points, forming a line in one direction of 1500 miles, and in the other direction of more than 2,000; let any man decide whether such an extended country could be adequately defended by a force less than 2,000 in number? When the numerous harbors to be defended, on the sea board, and the number of forts on the western frontier requiring garrisons to protect them from the attacks of the Indians, were considered, could any reasonable man affirm that 2,000 artillery and engineers were too many?

Cannot we support this establishment? Are we too poor? True economy itself would dictate a continuance of the force.—For the militia, however useful in other circumstances, could afford but little defence to our forts and harbours without a corps of regular artillery to support and encourage their efforts. He put entirely out of view all considerations derived from the four existing regiments of infantry. They were entirely occupied in defending our western frontiers from Indian invasion. Their services were there required, as the militia would not be kept in readiness to repel sudden aggressions, but at an enormous expense.

We are extremely young in the science of engineering. However competent the militia may be to the great purpose of ultimately defending the country, they are not in such a situation as to be enabled to protect our forts and harbours on a sudden invasion. If the militia are incompetent to this end, we must rely upon a standing force. Infantry and cavalry might soon be created.—But artillery and engineers were not the growth of a day. By dismissing these, you deprive yourselves of all the solid advantages to be derived from the mil-

itia, who in co-operation with a small regular force of this description would be formidable, but who, unaided by them, would be inefficient.

The resolution in question he also considered as quite premature. What change, he enquired since the last session, when the maintenance of this battalion was recognized as expedient, had occurred in our foreign or domestic relations? A convention it is said is made with France. But we are ignorant of its terms, its nature, or extent. It has not yet been ratified, and when ratified, who will answer for its due execution, or the consequences which may ensue.—If it restores our friendly relations with France, may it not produce a misunderstanding with other powers? Do not circumstances exist that render it highly prudent to secure and strengthen our Western posts? He was persuaded that if a powerful nation like the United States, would declare its inability or reluctance to support this moderate military force; it would incur the contempt of other nations. They would hardly condescend to treat with us for a compensation of injuries, or if they made treaties, they would violate them in the full confidence of impunity.

But it was said by the gentleman, that as this battalion had not yet been raised, the inference was obvious that it was not necessary.

But for what reason had the raising of it been delayed? It would be recollected that during the last session of Congress, the late Secretary of war presented to this house, a project for reducing the two regiments of artillery to three battalions each, and in lieu of the fourth battalions to substitute a corps of artillery and engineers, and a military academy in which they might be initiated into the principles of these useful and necessary sciences.

While that report was pending before the legislature, it would have been improper and inexpedient to recruit for this fourth battalion. Had the substitute been adopted, the measure would have been superceded. But the report of the Secretary, though many parts of it were in his opinion highly deserving of attention, was not accepted by Congress. Since that period, the seat of Government had been removed. The former Secretary of the war department had resigned, and some time of course had been lost; he knew however that some of the officers had been appointed, and had reason to believe that the corps would soon be perfectly organized.—Another reason, Mr. OTIS alleged was, that the attention of Government had been principally directed to organize the temporary army. It being conceived that the permanent establishment might proceed more leisurely. On the whole, Mr. OTIS said, that he was not one of those who were dismayed at the crisis in the political affairs of the country, and he trusted there was still a majority in the house, who unawed by a change of times, and unshaken by the prospect of seeing their measures hereafter reversed, would persevere while they had the power in maintaining the principles and measures to which the nation was indebted for its dignity and prosperity. If the administration of the Government is destined to change, let those who succeed take upon themselves the burden of reform; and if it was intended by this resolution, that he should have an opportunity to partake in the glory and advantages of it, with alacry acknowledgment he begged to decline the offer.

Let those, into whose hands the future government might fall, realize the expectations that have been raised, let them perform all the engagements they have made, let them preserve and augment the public prosperity, and while they enjoyed the exclusive credit of their measures, they should on those conditions receive all the support and approbation which in his humble sphere he could afford.—But he had no idea of adopting measures that would betray symptoms of regret and contrition for the past, and he hoped his friends would do nothing that should be construed into a leath bed repentance of a conduct which constituted their glory and their pride.—Re-

liring himself from a short political career, he had the consolation to reflect that his efforts had been directed to the support of no measure, which would not be a source of satisfaction, if he were retiring from the sphere of existence. And he doubted not that the other gentlemen had been actuated by the same motives and would unite in the evidence of their sober conviction by voting against the resolution.

Mr. VARNUM observed that his colleague had not confined himself to a true statement of facts. It was well known that the military force raised in 1794 was for a standing army, of which character was the first regiment of artillery. But when the second regiment was raised, the country was in a state of alarm. We were told war menaced us, and were terrified with the idea of invasion. Still it was determined by Congress that the regiment should consist of no more than three battalions. If then at that period, when the danger was exaggerated by our fears, three battalions were thought sufficient, can more be thought necessary now, when there is no alarm, no danger of war or invasion?

Mr. Varnum was of opinion that the three battalions were sufficient for every national purpose to be accomplished by artillery. He did not mean to say that they were equal to the defence of the country in case of invasion. The idea would be childish. In such a case our reliance must be upon the militia, upon the great body of the people themselves.

The gentleman, who had preceded him, had dwelt on the unfavorable condition of the militia, and the little knowledge we had yet acquired in relation to artillery and engineers. Yet that gentleman must know that in Massachusetts alone there were forty companies of artillery and engineers, well equipped and well disciplined, ready, at a moment's notice, to turn out in defence of the laws of the United States, or of that state. Other states were probably as well provided.

The only occasion we had for this description of troops was to defend our harbors and ports from any sudden attack. For this purpose twenty-eight companies were fully adequate. On the occurrence of a great danger, we must not look up to these men, but to the people. Our true defence, our great and only defence consisted in the militia. He believed them to be in such a state as to protect us from any danger.

Mr. RUTLEDGE was supplied at the remarks of the gentleman from Massachusetts. He had stated no facts, he had referred to no documents; but had confined himself to a declaration of his belief that the four battalions of artillery are unnecessary, and had concluded by pronouncing, as he had frequently before done, a panegyric upon the militia. He thought as highly of the militia as the gentleman did; and he felt more for them. He did not desire to drag them from the plough and the enjoyments of domestic felicity, to carry them to the sea coast, there to confine them for long periods in forts, under the pretence of a miserable economy.

A comparative view of the relative expenses of a standing force and the militia would convince the gentleman that the latter was by far the most expensive.

Let him call to recollection the state of our fortifications at the close of the revolutionary war. Fortifications then covered the face of the country. But no sooner was peace restored to us, than the people believed it would last forever. Government received the same impulse, and suffered the defence of the country to fall into decay. And what were the consequences? we were now called upon to repair them. This very result would be produced by that pitiful spirit of economy that the gentleman wishes to revive.

Mr. Rutledge spoke not from documents. But what he said was derived from actual observation. In travelling from the southward he had seen on the sea coast harbors and forts miserably garrisoned.

His friend from Massachusetts had not been correct in his statement. The numbers he had affirmed to differ there were not those actually there, but those contemplated to be stationed, when the establishment was complete.