East Oregonian.

MONDAY, JULY 30, 1888.

DAILY AND SEMI-WEEKLY,

—BY THE—

East Oregonian Publishing Company,

—AT—

PENDLETON, - - - - OREGON.

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ABOUT PENSIONS.

The Righteous Indignation in the Senate Over a Reasonable Proposition.

Editorial Correspondence.

I notice that a very hot debate took place recently in the Senate over what seemed to be rather an innocent proposition. Some Senator moved to have 100,000 copies of the President's vetoes of pension bills printed. This at once aroused the virtuous indignation of several Republican Senators, especially the particularly pious Senator Blair, of New Hampshire. Now no one Senator has labored more assiduously to squander the surplus in the Treasury than Mr. Blair. He is the author and was the chief advocate of the stupendous steal known as the Education bill, which passed the Senate some time ago, but which will doubtless be killed, as it most certainly deserves to be, in the House.

Now whether it would be just the proper thing to print 100,000 copies of these pension-veto messages, I do not say. Perhaps it was not intended to merely throw a little pepper in the eyes of such cranks as Brother Blair. If so, it worked very well, for he made himself as ridiculous as could have been wished by even his bitterest opponents. To fully understand the position in which the Republicans found themselves placed by the introduction of this little resolution, a few facts must be remembered.

The President has vetoed quite a large number of private pension bills, beside an enormous proposed swindle called a dependent pension bill. It is charged that Mr. Cleveland has vetoed more pension bills than all his predecessors put together, and probably the statement is true, but in every instance he has given his reasons for the veto in a message to Congress. In a few instances these messages, or portions of them, have found their way into the newspapers. In all such cases the reasons he assigned for the vetoes were entirely valid and sufficient. He found on investigation that the bill was a swindle. He found that some dishonest person was attempting to obtain a little plunder while so much was going, and he simply said the steal should not be permitted, and gave the facts which constituted the ground of his objections to the bill. On the other hand he has signed thousands of pension bills—more than any other President has had occasion to sign—and has never by word or act, intimated any objection to pension laws, either general or private, except on the ground of fraud in the claim.

The Republican press, ever since his first veto, have continually asserted that the vetoes were unjust, that they arose from the President's animosity to pension legislation, and that he was a hater of the soldiers. They have even said—and some of the Senators have argued—that he had exceeded the power given him by the constitution, and that he had no right to veto such measures at all. In fact, there has been no end or cessation of very bitter criticism of the President because of these vetoes. All this was for a purpose—to arouse against the President the animosity of the ex-soldiers and cost him their votes. Therefore it ought not to seem unreasonable to let the President's reasons for his action in these cases be printed and sent out among the people, so that they could judge for themselves whether he was in the wrong or not. For over three years he has been accused of doing great wrong in the matter of these vetoes; why not give him a chance to be heard? Why not let the people, read the reasons which he has given to Congress? Are the Republican Senators fearful to let these cases go before the people, and stand upon their merits? It would seem so. They are very ready with accusation and denunciation which they are very careful shall be spread broadcast throughout the land, but they not only object, but become filled with exceeding great wrath when it is proposed to simply furnish the country with the President's statements of facts and reasons. A well known rule of law is, that if a party, in the trial of a cause, suppresses material evidence in his possession, the presumption is that such evidence would be against him. Well, the President is accused; he is on trial before the voters of the country; his friends offer to merely introduce as evidence, for what it is worth, his reasons for the acts wherein it is alleged, he is guilty, and his accusers refuse to allow that evidence to come before the people. The presumption then is that it would be against them and in his favor. The presumption is that his messages give sufficient reasons for his acts, and that he is not guilty.

Reasonable voters should, and will, distinguish between hostility to pension legislation, and an abuse to pension legislation. They ought to, and I think will, distinguish between objections to giving all deserving ex-soldiers pensions, and objections to fraudulent and undeserving schemes to swindle Uncle Sam out of his "surplus." Let us look at this pension business a moment in a general way, and see if it may not be reasonably presumed that an immense amount of such swindling is going on. In almost every issue of the daily Oregonian we read of one or more pensions granted to persons in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Probably some of them are deserving; probably some of them are not. I don't know how many such cases are reported in that paper's dispatches in the course of a month or a year, but presume they will average at least one a day in the territory named. Now estimating the population of this territory at 500,000 and that of the United States at 60,000,000 the same ratio would give an average of 120 pensions granted daily, or 840 weekly, or 3,600 monthly, or 21,900 yearly, supposing Congress to be in session six months in a year. Of course this is only a crude estimate; the number may be much more, or it may be less; but I haven't the official figures—I presume the Republicans would object to their being printed, too. At any rate, the number of pensions granted is several thousand yearly, and is increasing, and this over twenty-three years since the war ended. I think it is a sufficient reason for watchfulness on the part of the President that now a quarter of a century after the service was rendered, the applicants for pensions should still be coming in constantly increasing members, by the thousands each month, and after the pension mill has been busily grinding out pensions these many years. A reasonable supposition would be that by this time the number of honest and worthy applicants would be comparatively few, or at least would begin to diminish. But no, there seems to be no sign of any cessation or diminution in the hosts whoare clamoring for government bounty. The army of ex-Union soldiers, however, is scarcely more numerous than the army of pension-claim agents, whose business it is to "get bills through." Washington has hundreds, if not thousands of men who live off of the "divy" of pensions obtained for either honorable and worthy or dishonest applicants. Getting pensions has become a regular business, and is plied with great industry by these pension lawyers, the size of whose income depends on the number of claims they can work through Congress. And it is pretty certain that these private pension bills go through Congress without examination. A pension bill in Congress, as a rule, is like an ordinary bill amending a town charter in our Legislature; it goes through as a matter of course. That this must be so is shown by the fact that a few days ago, over a hundred of such bills were passed in the Senate consecutively, at the rate of over one bill per minute. During this administration the President has received for his signature many thousand such bills, and a few of them, comparatively, he has vetoed for reasons which the Republican Senators do not wish the public to know. A New York paper, commenting upon the subject, says the President by these vetoes has saved the country about $24,000 a year, and ridicules with great severity what it calls Mr. Cleveland's industry in very small matters. To effect this paltry saving he has devoted himself to personally investigating all these bills, which the New York organ esteems as very small business indeed. It might be so considered if the money saved by these vetoes were all; but it is not. By these vetoes, the President, at the risk of losing favor with certain voters has shown that he has both the will and the courage to perform his full duty, even in small matters; and if he does his duty fearlessly in small matters it is tolerably certain that he will do the same in great matters. The country will not be appreciably richer or poorer because of these vetoes, but Congress and the pension sharks and dishonest claimants have thus had notice, that no sort of fraud will be tolerated, and that none but worthy and deserving soldiers need apply.

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jy9 dsw 1m

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jy26

NOTICE.

All persons knowing themselves indebted to the undersigned will please come forward and settle their accounts by cash or note, as I wish to balance my books by August 1, 1888. All accounts not settled by that date will be placed in the hands of a collector.

M. J. SMITH, Proprietor City Bakery.

jy16 1m d sw

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