

XXVIII

VETO OF SALARY INCREASE

TO THE HONORABLE SENATE AND HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES:

In accordance with the duty imposed by the Constitution, a bill entitled, "An act to establish the compensation of the members of the General Court," being House No. 1629, is herewith returned without approval.

This bill raises the salaries of members from \$1000 to \$1500, an increase of fifty per cent, and is retroactive. It is necessary to decide whether the Commonwealth can well afford this additional tax and whether any public benefit would accrue from it.

These are times that require careful scrutiny of public expenditure. The burden of taxes resulting from war is heavy. The addition of \$142,000 to the expense of the Commonwealth in perpetuity is not to be undertaken but upon proven necessity.

Service in the General Court is not obligatory but optional. It is not to be undertaken as a profession or a means of livelihood. It is a voluntary public service. In accord with the principles of our democratic institutions a compensation has been given in order that talent for service rather than the possession of property might be the standard of membership. There is no man of sufficient talent in the Commonwealth so poor that he cannot serve for a session, which averages about five months, and five days each week, at a salary of \$1000 — and travel allowance of \$2.50 for each mile between his home and the State House. This is too clear for argument. There is no need to consider those who are too rich to serve for this sum. It would be futile to discuss whether their services are worth more or less than this, as that is not here the question. Membership in the General Court is not a job. There are services rendered to the Commonwealth by senators and represen-

tatives that are priceless. For the searching out of great principles on which legislation is based there is no adequate compensation. If value for services were the criterion, there would be 280 different salaries. When membership is sought as a means of livelihood, legislation will pass from a public function to a private enterprise. Men do not serve here for pay. They seek work and places of responsibility and find in that seeking, not in their pay, their honor.

The realities of life are not measured by dollars and cents. The skill of the physician, the divine eloquence of the clergyman, the courage of the soldier, that which we call character in all men, are not matters of hire and salary. No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave. Public acclaim and the ceremonious recognition paid to returning heroes are not on account of their government pay but of the service and sacrifice they gave their country. The

place each member of the General Court will hold in the estimation of his constituents will never depend on his salary, but on the ability and integrity with which he does his duty; not on what he receives, but on what he gives; and only out of the bountifulness of his own giving will his constituents raise him to power. Not by indulging himself, but by denying himself, will he reach success.

It is because the General Court has recognized these principles in its past history that it has secured its high place as a legislative body. This act disregards all this and will ever appear to be an undertaking by members to raise their own salaries. The fact that many were thinking of the needs of others will remain unknown. Appearances cannot be disregarded. Those in whom is placed the solemn duty of caring for others ought to think of themselves last or their decisions will lack authority. There is apparent a disposition to deny the disinter-

estedness and impartiality of government. Such charges are the result of ignorance and an evil desire to destroy our institutions for personal profit. It is of infinite importance to demonstrate that legislation is used not for the benefit of the legislator, but of the public.

The General Court of Massachusetts is a legislative body noted for its fairness and ability. It has no superior. Its critics have for the most part come from the outside and have most frequently been those who have approached it with the purpose of securing selfish desires of their clients or themselves. A long familiarity with it increases respect for it. It is charged with expressing the abiding convictions and conscience of the people of the Commonwealth. The most solemn obligation placed by the Constitution on the Executive is the power to veto its actions. In all matters affecting it the General Court is entitled to his best judgment and carefully considered opinion.

Anything less would be a mark of disrespect and disloyalty to its members. That judgment and opinion, arrived at after a wide counsel with members and others, is here expressed, in the light of an obligation which is not personal, "faithfully and impartially to discharge and perform" the duties of a public office.