SPEECH
ON
THE ARMY ESTIMATES.

INTRODUCTION.

IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO DEBATES ON THE ARMY ESTIMATES.

The subject of the Army Estimates used at all periods of the war to bring on one of the most important, if not the most important, debates of the Session. It was in fact like a State of the Nation, and some of the most interesting, if not the greatest, speeches that have ever been delivered in Parliament, were made upon those occasions. The conduct of the war formed of course the main topic of such debates, although whatever else in the state of public affairs bore upon the existing hostilities, naturally came into the discussion.

In 1816 the war was at an end; but the Army Estimates continued to afford a subject of much animated debate, because they raised the whole question of the Peace Establishment, and were in fact a State of the Nation. The following speech, delivered on that occasion, was most imperfectly reported, as in those days generally happened to speeches made in Committees of the Whole House. It has been revised from notes made at the time; but the passage respecting the punishment of Jacobinism is given from memory, and is believed to be much less full than the original was. The speech had a greater success than any other made by Mr. Brougham in Parliament; of which a memorial is preserved in the accounts of the Parliamentary Debates which mention that it was “loudly cheered from all sides of the House” at its conclusion—a thing of very ordinary occurrence; indeed of daily occurrence now-a-days, but which hardly ever happened in former times.
SPEECH

IN SUPPORT OF

MR. CALCRAFT'S AMENDMENT,

To substitute £192, 638, 4s 9d. for £385,276. 9s 6d., the Estimate for the Household Troops.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

MARCH 11, 1816.

Mr. Brogden,—Although I on a former occasion delivered my opinion generally upon these Estimates, yet I am anxious now to state my sentiments in more detail upon a subject of such great importance, and that rather because of the defiance flung out from the other side to all of us, to go into the examination of it. I stand forward to take up the gauntlet which has thus been thrown down; and I affirm that the more minutely you scrutinize the several items of this bill brought in against the country, the more objectionable you will find them. I object, in the first place, altogether to the large force of Guards which it is intended to keep up; and I even protest, though that is a trifle in comparison, but I do protest against the new-fangled French name of Household Troops, under which they are designated,—a name borrowed from countries where this portion of the national force is exclusively allotted to protect the Prince against a people in whom he cannot trust—is the appointed means given him to maintain his arbitrary power—is the very weapon put into his hands to arm him against the liberties of his country. However appropriate the appellation may be there, it cannot be endured in this nation, where the Sovereign ought never to have any reason for distrusting his subjects, and never can be entrusted with any force except that which the defence of his people requires. But the name
is of far less importance than the thing. Has the noble Lord* made out any thing like a case for raising the amount of this force to more than double of what it was in 1791? If any such proof had been given, I should not have been found among the opposers of the proposition. But the truth is, that, with all the professed anxiety of the noble Lord and his friends to go through the estimates, item by item; with all their pretended readiness and even desire to court full investigation; with all the bluster of their defiance to us, and the bravado more than once used, that we durst not grapple with the question in detail; they have themselves wholly shrunk from the inquiry, fled from all particulars, and abandoned all attempts at shewing, in any one instance, from any one conclusion, with a view to any single circumstance in the present situation of the country, that there is the shadow of a ground for this increase of force. We had the subject debated generally indeed, but at great length, a few days ago, on bringing up the report; and it had been repeated before the House on former occasions. We have now renewed the discussion on the motion for going into this Committee. We have been in the Committee for some hours. At this very advanced stage of the debate have we arrived, and, though all the members of the Government have addressed themselves to the question, many of them once and again yet I defy any one to point out a single fact that has been stated, a single argument urged, a single topic used to prove the necessity which alone can justify the scale these estimates are framed upon. It has indeed been said that 2400 of the Guards are destined for France, where I suppose the army of occupation is required in order to demonstrate how tranquil our famous negotiators have left the whole Continent—how perfectly successful—how absolutely final—the grand settlement of all Europe is, upon which we so greatly plume ourselves, and upon which, above all, the political reputation of the noble Lord is built. But suppose I pass over this, and do not stop to ask what reason there can be for these 2400 men being Guards, and not simply troops of the line—those troops required to maintain our final and conclusive settlement, and enforce the profound tranquility in which Europe is every where enwrapt; suppose I admit, for argument sake, and in my haste to get at the main question, that these 2400 Guards may be necessary—what is to be said of all the rest? There remain no less than 7600 to account for. What reason has been assigned, what attempt

* Lord Castlereagh.
ever made, by the noble Lord to assign a reason why 3600 more Guards should be wanted more than in Mr. Pitt’s celebrated establishment of 1792? I desire, however, to have this explained—I demand the ground for this enormous augmentation of what you call your “household force”—I have a right to know why this increase is called for—I call for the reason of it, and the reason I will have. Deduct all you require, or say you require, for France; what has happened since Mr. Pitt’s time to justify you in nearly doubling the number of the Guards? That is the question, and it must be answered to Parliament and to the country—an answered, not by vague generalities—by affected anxiety for discussion,—by shallow pretences of desire to have the fullest investigation,—by blustering defiances to us—and swaggering taunts that we dare not investigate. We do investigate—we do advance to the conflict—we do go into the details—we do enter upon the items one by one; and the first that meets us on the very threshold, and as soon as we have planted a foot upon it, is this doubling of the Guards. Then how do you defend that? Where is the ground for it? What is there to excuse it or to explain? Mr. Pitt found 4000 enough in 1792 then what is there to make 7600 wanting now? Look at home—Is the country less peaceable now than it was then? Quite the contrary. It was then disturbed; it is now profoundly quiet. Then, although there was no insurrection, nor any thing that could be called by such a name, unless by those who sought a pretext for violating the Constitution, and by suspending its powers securing their own, yet still no man could call the state of the country tranquil—universal discontent prevailed, here and there amounting to disaffection, and even breaking out into local disorders;—rumours of plots floated every where about;—whilst meetings were held;—unmeasured language was used;—wild schemes were broached;—dangerous associations were formed. Though no man had a right to say that the government was entitled to pursue unconstitutio

1. constitutional
2. courses
3. evils
4. obliged
5. reason
6. anxiety
7. that
8. lowering
9. alarm
10. natural
11. feeling
12. duty
13. executive
14. vigilant
15. prepared
16. The
17. fears
18. loyalty
19. unquestioned
20. though
21. wisdom
22. doubted
23. led
24. good
25. farther
26. Meetings
27. encouraged
28. address
29. crown
30. testify
31. resolution
32. support
33. prerogatives
34. Bonds
35. entered
36. defending
37. Constitution
38. believed
39. threatened
40. Pledges

fortune were given to stand by the established order of things, and resist to the death all violence that might be directed against it. Parliament was not alone in countenancing these measures, proceeding from alarm. Both Houses addressed the throne; both joined in asserting the existence of great peril to the Constitution; both declared that the public peace was in danger from the designs of the evil-disposed. To read the language of those times, both in public meetings and their addresses, and in Parliamentary debates, and resolutions of the two Houses, any one would have thought that a wide-spread disaffection had shot through the land; that the materials of a vast rebellion were every where collected; and that the moment was tremblingly expected when some spark lighting on the mass, should kindle the whole into a flame, and wrap the country in destruction. Yet in that state of things, and with these testimonies to its menacing aspect, Mr. Pitt, at the very time when he was patronising the doctrines of the alarmists, encouraging their movements, and doing all he could to increase rather than allay their fears; when he was ground- ing on the panic that prevailed, those measure out of which his junction with a part of the Whigs arose, whereby he succeeded in splitting that formidable party—yet never dreamt of such a force as we are now told is necessary for preserving the public peace. He proposed no more than 4000 Guards; and held that amount to be sufficient.

We are challenged to go into particulars; we are defied to grapple with the question in detail. Then I come to particulars and details with the noble Lord. The main duty of the Guards is the London service; that is the district to which their force is peculiarly applicable. To keep the peace of this great metropolis is their especial province; and I grant the high importance of such functions. Then I ask when London was ever more quiet than at this moment? When were its numerous inhabitants ever more contented, more obedient to the laws, more disinclined to any thing like resistance? At what period of our history was the vast mass of the people by whom we are surrounded, ever more peaceably disposed, more unlikely to engage in any thing approaching to tumult, than now? Why, they have even given over going to public meetings; the very trade of the libeller languishes, if it be not at end, in the general tranquillity and stagnation of these quiet times. All is silence, and indifference, and dullness, and inertness, and assuredly inaction. To the unnatural and costly excitement of war, has succeed ed a state of collapse, perhaps from exhaustion, but possi-
bly from contrast alone. The mighty events of the latter
days, when the materials for the history of a country were
crowded into the space of a few months, have left the pub-
lic mind listless and vacant. The stimulus is withdrawn,
and change has had its accustomed sedative influence.
They who had been gazing till their eyes ached, and they
doubted if they were awake, upon the most prodigious
sights ever presented in the political and the moral world,—
upon empires broken up and formed anew,—dynasties
extinguished or springing up,—the chains cast off by not
merely a people, but a hemisphere,—and half the globe
suddenly covered with free and independent states,—wars
waged, battles fought, compared to which the heroes of
old had only been engaged in skirmishes and sallies—treaties
made which disposed of whole continents, and span the fate
of millions of men,—could hardly fail to find the contempla-
tion of peace flat, stale, and unprofitable. The eye that had
been in vain attempting to follow the swift march of such
gigantic events, could not dwell with much interest upon the
natural course of affairs, so slow in its motion as to appear
at rest. And hence, if ever there was a time of utter inac-
tion, of absolute rest to the public mind, it is the hour now
chosen for supposing that there exists some danger which
requires defensive preparations, and the increase of the gar-
rison with which the listless and motionless mass of the
London population may be overawed. Why, my Honour-
able and Learned friend* has had nobody to prosecute for
some years past. It is above two years since he has filed
an ex-officio Information, unless in the Exchequer against
smugglers. Jacobinism, the bugbear of 1792, has for the
past six years and more never been even named. I doubt
if allusion to it has been made in this House, even in a
debate upon a King's speech, since Mr. Pitt's death. And
to produce a Jacobin, or a specimen of any other kindred
tribe, would, I verily believe, at this time of day, baffle the
skill and the perseverance of the most industrious and most
zealous collector of political curiosities, to be found in the
whole kingdom. What, then, is the danger,—what the spe-
culation upon some possible and expected, but non-existing
risk—which makes it necessary at this time to augment the
force applied to preserve the peace of the metropolis? But
I fear there are far other designs in this measure, than
merely to preserve a peace which no man living can have
the boldness to contend is in any danger of being broken,
and no man living can have the weakness really to be appre-
hensive about. Empty show, vain parade, will account for the array being acceptable in some high quarters; in others, the force may be recommended by its tending to increase the powers of the executive government, and extend the influence of the prerogative. In either light, it is most disgustful, most hateful to the eye of every friend of his country, and every one who loves the Constitution,—all who have any regard for public liberty, and all who reflect on the burthens imposed upon the people.

But if the internal state of the country offers not the shadow of justification for this increase of force, what shall we say of the state of foreign affairs? Above all, what shall we say of the comparison between the face of those affairs now, and its aspect in 1792? That was really a period of external danger. Never was there greater room for anxiety; never had the statesmen, not of England only, but of all Europe, more cause for apprehension and alarm,—more occasion for wakefulness to passing events,—more ground for being prepared at every point. A prodigious revolution had unchained twenty-six millions of men in the heart of Europe, gallant, inventive, enterprising, passionately fond of military glory, blindly following the phantom of national renown. Unchained from the fetters that had for ages bound them to their monarchs, they were speedily found to be alike disentangled from the obligations of peaceful conduct towards their neighbours. But they stopped not here. Confounding the abuses in their political institutions with the benefits, they had swept away every vestige of their former polity; and, disgusted with the rank growth of corruption to which religion had afforded a shelter, they tore up the sacred tree itself, under whose shade France had so long adored and slept. To the fierceness of their warfare against all authority civil and religious at home, was added the fiery zeal of proselytism abroad, and they had rushed into a crusade against all existing governments, and on behalf of all nations throughout Europe, proclaiming themselves the redressers of every grievance, and the allies of each people that chose to rebel against their rulers. The uniform triumph of these principles at home, in each successive struggle for supremacy, had been followed by success almost as signal against the first attempts to overpower them from without,—and all the thrones of the Continent shook before the blast which had breathed life and spirit into all the discontented subjects of each of their trembling possessors. This was the state of things in 1792, when Mr. Pitt administered the affairs of a nation, certainly far less
exposed either to the force or to the blandishments of the revolutionary people, but still very far from being removed above the danger of either their arts or their arms; and the existence of peril in both kinds, the fear of France menacing the independence of her neighbours, the risk to our domestic tranquillity from a party at home strongly sympathizing with her sentiments, were the topics upon which both he and his adherents were most prone to dwell in all their discourses of state affairs—Yet in these circumstances, the country thus beset with danger, and the peace thus menaced, both from within and from without, Mr. Pitt was content with half the establishment we are now required to vote! But see only how vast the difference between the present aspect of affairs and that which I have been feebly attempting to sketch from the records of recent history, no page of which any of us can have forgotten! The ground and cause of all peril is exhausted—the object of all the alarms that beset us in 1792 is no more—France no longer menaces the independence of the world, or troubles its repose. By a memorable reverse, not of fortune, but of divine judgments, meting out punishment to aggression, France, overrun, reduced, humbled has become a subject of care and protection, instead of alarm and dismay. Jacobinism itself, arrested by the Directory, punished by the Consuls, reclaimed by the Emperor, has become attached to the cause of good order, and made to serve it with the zeal, the resources, and the address of a malefactor engaged by the police after the term of his sentence had expired. All is now, universally over the face of the world, wrapt in profound repose. Exhausted with such gigantic exertions as man never made before, either on the same scale or with the like energy, nations and their rulers have all sunk to rest. The general slumber of the times is everywhere unbroken; and if ever a striking contrast was offered to the eye of the observer by the aspect of the world at two different ages, it is that which the present posture of Europe presents to its attitude in Mr. Pitt's time, when, in the midst of wars and rumours of wars, foreign enemies and domestic treason vying together for the mastery, and all pointed against the public peace, he considered a military establishment of half the amount now demanded, to be sufficient for keeping the country quiet, and repelling foreign aggression, as well as subduing domestic revolt.

Driven from the argument of necessity, as the noble Lord seemed to feel assured he should be the moment any one examined the case, he skilfully prepared for his retreat to another position, somewhat less exposed, perhaps, but far
enough from being impregnable. You cannot, he said, disband troops who have so distinguished themselves in the late glorious campaigns. This topic he urged for keeping up the Guards. But, I ask, which of our troops did not equally distinguish themselves? What regiment engaged in the wars failed to cover itself with their glories? This argument, if it has any force at all, may be used against disbanding a single regiment, or discharging a single soldier. Nay, even those who by the chances of war had no opportunity of displaying their courage, their discipline, and their zeal, would be extremely ill treated, if they were now to be dismissed the service, merely because it was their misfortune not to have enjoyed the same opportunity with others in happier circumstances, of sharing in the renown of our victories. It is enough to have been deprived of the laurels which no one doubts they would equally have won had they been called into the field. Surely, surely, they might justly complain if to this disappointment were added the being turned out of the service, which no act of theirs had dishonoured. I am now speaking the language of the noble Lord's argument, and not of my own. He holds it to be unfair towards the Guards that they should be reduced, after eminently meritorious service—he connects merit with the military state—disgrace, or at least slight, with the loss, of this station. He holds the soldier to be preferred, rewarded, and distinguished, who is retained in the army—him to be neglected or ill used, if not stigmatized, who is discharged. His view of the Constitution is, that the capacity of the soldier is more honourable, and more excellent than that of the citizen. According to his view, therefore, the whole army has the same right to complain with Guards. But his view is not my view; it is not the view of the Constitution; it is not the view which I can ever consent to assume as just, and to inculcate into the army by acting as if it were just. I never will suffer it to be held out as the principle of our free and popular government, that a man is exalted by being made a soldier, and degraded by being restored to the rank of a citizen. I never will allow it to be said, that in a country blessed by having a civil and not a military government, by enjoying the exalted station of a constitutional monarchy, and not being degraded to that of a military despotism, there is any pre-eminence whatever in the class of citizens which bears arms, over the class which cultivates the arts of peace. When it suits the purpose of some argument in behalf of a soldiery who have exceeded the bounds of the law in attacking some assembled
force of the people, how often are we told from that bench of office, from the Crown side of the Bar, nay, from the Bench of justice itself, that by becoming soldiers, men cease not to be citizens, and that this is a glorious peculiarity of our free Constitution? Then what right can the noble Lord have to consider that the retaining men under arms and in the pay of the state, is an exaltation and a distinction, which they cease to enjoy if restored to the state of ordinary citizens? I read the Constitution in the very opposite sense to the noble Lord’s gloss. I have not sojourned in congresses with the military representatives of military powers, —I have not frequented the courts, any more than I have followed the camps or these potentates,—I have not lived in the company of crowned soldiers, all whose ideas are fashioned upon the rules of the drill and the articles of the fifteen manœuvres,—all whose estimates of a country’s value are frauded on the number of troops it will raise—and who can no more sever the idea of a subject from that of a soldier, than if men were born into this world in complete armour, as Minerva started from Jupiter’s head. My ideas are more humble and more civic, and the only language I know, or can speak, or can understand in this House, is the mother tongue of the old English Constitution. I will speak none other— I will suffer none other to be spoken in my presence. Addressing the soldier in that language—which alone above all other men in the country he ought to know,—to which alone it peculiarly beoves us that he, the armed man, should be accustomed,—I tell him, “You have distinguished yourself,—all that the noble Lord says of you is true—nay, under the truth—you have crowned yourself with the glories of the war. But chiefly you, the Guards, you have outshone all others, and won for yourselves a deathless fame. Now, then, advance and receive your reward. Partake of the benefits you have secured for your grateful country. None are better than you entitled to share in the blessings, the inestimable blessings of peace—than you whose valour has conquered it for us. Go back then to the rank of citizens, which, for a season, you quitted at the call of your country. Exalt her glory in peace, whom you served in war; and enjoy the rich recompense of all your toils in the tranquil retreat from dangers, which her gratitude bestows upon you.”—I know this to be the language of the Constitution, and time was when none other could be spoken, or would have been understood in this House. I still hope that no one will dare use any other in the country; and least of all can any other he endured as addressed to the soldiery in arms, treating them as if they
were the hired partisans of the Prince, a caste set apart for his service, and distinguished from all the rest of their Countrymen, not a Class of the people devoting themselves for a season to carry arms in defence of the nation, and when their services are wanted no more, retiring naturally to mix with and be lost in the mass of their fellow citizens.

But it has been said that there is injustice and ingratitude in the country turning adrift her defenders as soon as the war is ended, and we are tauntingly asked, "Is this the return you make to the men who have fought your battles? When the peace comes which they have conquered, do you wish to starve them or send them off to sweep the streets?" I wish no such thing; I do not desire that they should go unrewarded for their services. But I cannot allow that the only, or the best, or even a lawful mode of recompensing them, is to keep on foot during peace the army which they compose, still less that it is any hardship whatever for a soldier to return into the rank of citizens when the necessity is at an end, which alone justified his leaving those ranks. Nor can I believe that it is a rational way of showing our gratitude towards the army, whose only valuable service has been to gain us an honourable peace, to maintain an establishment for their behoof, which must deprive the peace of all its value, and neutralize the benefits which they have conferred upon us.

See, too, the gross inconsistency of this argument with your whole conduct. How do you treat the common sailors who compose our invincible Navy? All are at once dismissed. The Victory, which carried Nelson's flag to his invariable and undying triumphs, is actually laid up in ordinary, and her crew disbanded to seek a precarious subsistence where some hard fortune may drive them. Who will have the front to contend that the followers of Nelson are less the glory and the savours of their country than the soldiers of the Guards? Yet who is there candid enough to say one word in their behalf, when we hear so much of the injustice of disbanding our army after its victories? Who has ever complained of that being done to the seamen, which is said to be impossible in the soldier's case? But where is the difference? Simply this: That the maintenance of the Navy in time of peace, never can be dangerous to the liberties of the country, like the keeping up a Standing Army; and that a naval force gives no gratification to the miserable, paltry love of show which reigns in some quarters, and is to be consulted in all the arrangements of our affairs, to the exclusion of every higher and worthier consideration.
After the great constitutional question to which I have been directing your attention, you will hardly bear with me while I examine these Estimates in any detail. This, however, I must say, that nothing can be more scandalous than the extravagance of maintaining the establishment of the Guards at the expense of troops of the line, which cost the country so much less. Compare the charge of 2000 Guards with an equal number of the line, and you will find the difference of the two amounts to above L.10,000 a-year. It is true that this sum is not very large, and, compared with our whole expenditure, it amounts to nothing. But in a state burthened as ours is, there can be no such thing as a small saving; the people had rather see millions spent upon necessary objects, than thousands squandered unnecessarily, and upon matters of mere superfluity; nor can any thing be more insulting to their feelings, and less bearable by them, than to see us here underrating the importance even of the most inconsiderable sum that can be added to, or taken from the intolerable burthens under which they labour.

As for the pretext set up to-night, that the question is concluded by the vote of last Friday, nothing can be more ridiculous. This House never can be so bound. If it could, then may it any hour be made the victim of surprise, and the utmost encouragement is held out to tricks and manœuvres. If you voted too many men before, you can now make that vote harmless and inoperative, by withholding the supplies necessary for keeping those men on foot. As well may it be contended that the House is precluded from throwing out a bill on the third reading, because it affirmed the principle by its vote on the second, and sanctioned the details, by receiving the committee’s report.

The Estimate before you is L.385,000, for the support of 8100 Guards. Adopt my Honourable friend’s amendment,* and you reduce them to about 4000, which is still somewhat above their number in the last peace.

Sir, I have done. I have discharged my duty to the country—I have accepted the challenge of the Ministers to discuss the question—I have met them fairly, and grappled with the body of the argument. I may very possibly have failed to convince the House that this establishment is enormous and unjustifiable, whether we regard the burthened condition of the country, or the tranquil state of its affairs at home, or the universal repose in which the world is lulled, or the experience of former times, or the mischievous tendency of large

* Mr. Calcraft.
Standing armies in a constitutional point of view, or the
dangerous nature of the arguments urged in their support
upon the present occasion. All this I feel very deeply; and
I am also very sensible how likely it is that on taking anoth-
ner view you should come to an opposite determination.
Be it so—I have done my duty—I have entered my protest.
It cannot be laid to my charge that a force is to be main-
tained in profound and general peace, twice as great as was
formerly deemed sufficient when all Europe was involved in
domestic troubles, and war raged in some parts and was about
to spread over the whole. It is not my fault that peace will
have returned without its accustomed blessings—that our
burthens are to remain undiminished—that our liberties are
to be menaced by a standing army, without the pretence of
necessity in any quarter to justify its continuance. The
blame is not mine that a brilliant and costly army of House-
hold Troops, of unprecedented numbers, is allowed to the
Crown, without the shadow of use, unless it be to pamper a
vicious appetite for military show, to gratify a passion for
parade, childish and contemptible, unless, indeed, that no-
thing can be an object of contempt which is at once dan-
gerous to the Constitution of the country, and burthensome to
the resources of the people. I shall further record my
resistance to this system by my vote; and never did I give
my voice to any proposition with more hearty satisfaction
than I now do to the amendment of my Honourable friend.