

the last session, it was so now: for the gentleman in his statement of the reasons of the committee, had declared, that the committee were not possessed of proofs with respect to the restrictions of other nations. Sir, shall we stumble on in the retractions of those proofs? Shall we burthen a portion of our citizens without ascertaining the necessity of our doing so? Let us procure those proofs—let us have evidence of this encouragement's being wanting, previous to our laying this additional weight. But, Sir, who has a right to complain on this occasion; the merchants of Portsmouth or the merchants of Savannah? Let us compare the grievance of tonnage in the two places. New-Hampshire, Sir, pays of foreign tonnage the amount of 469 dollars and fifty cents; a mighty sum indeed; from the noise about it an indifferent person might suppose it sufficient to satisfy the national debt. The state of Georgia, which on a former occasion was supposed barely capable of defraying the travelling expences of their members, pays of foreign tonnage 2600 dollars 17 cents—a difference scarcely to be compared.

A gentleman from North-Carolina, (Mr. Williamson) had supported the report, but hoped it never would be adopted on the principles of establishing a navy. Mr. Jackson observed that his reasons seemed to be the keeping the carrying trade within ourselves. Sir, it is a doubt with me if the carrying trade is beneficial to the United States; if it enriches individuals it certainly does not the community; writers on trade divide it into three branches, the home or coasting trade, which is allowed to be the most beneficial to the nation; the foreign trade which is next beneficial, and the carrying trade which is not at all beneficial, unless it be as a nursery for seamen—directly opposite to the sentiments of the gentleman. The carrying trade is therefore very beneficial to countries dependent on their navies—it is said to be particularly so to Great-Britain: but, Sir, is our interest the same with the interest of that nation? Does our national importance and even our very security depend as hers does on the strength of her fleets? If invaded shall we look to a navy for protection? No, Sir, to the agricultural interest—to the hardy sons of the West—to the American yeomanry we shall appeal and we shall there find support. The carrying trade is of no great consequence to us, nor is it to many other countries; it is taking a productive capital from the nation it belongs to, to be employed in the service and carrying the surplus produce of other countries. The most celebrated writers have declared even in Great-Britain, that the coal trade from Newcastle to London is the most beneficial that coal is concerned in. With us, Sir, the whole coasting trade is in the hands of our fellow citizens, where I wish it to remain, as I think it highly advantageous, and this of itself is a very great encouragement.

But Sir, if we examine, I believe, on the principle of encouragement what we have done, it will be found sufficient. I have in my hands, Sir, some paragraphs of newspapers (which he read.) By these, Sir, it appears, that ship-building is most rapidly advancing—a vessel is now building at Boston of 900 tons, one at Salem of 1100 and 22 at Philadelphia of upwards of 250 tons each. What more that branch of mechanics would want, I am at a loss for—unless they wish more work than they have hands to accomplish; for I fancy if it was to be much more increased, they must send to other countries for the workmen. It is just the same with arts and manufactures—they are every where extending themselves, and no doubt owing to the ample encouragement given last session. Shall we then, if we find the encouragement already given sufficient, be still adding to the burthens of the southern states? Will not they have a right to say that they are not attended to; because they are not clamorous with petitions, shall they be saddled with additional weights? It should be remembered, that there is not to this day, a single petition for any one request from the citizens of the state of Georgia before Congress, whilst other states have brought before the house a number which would take three sessions to decide on—because the vote was modest, was she to be imposed on? He hoped her still voice would at least draw some attention. He believed that the southern states were a good milch cow to the Union, but he trusted if the Union milked her, they would not ride her at the same time—the additional tonnage appeared to him to be doing this.

He concluded with reminding the gentlemen (Mr. Madison, Mr. Fitzsimons, Mr. Sherman and Mr. Lawrence) of their former sentiments, and trusted he should not now find them avowing opinions contrary to them.

TUESDAY, May 25.

Mr. VINING having voted in the affirmative on the question, Whether Mr. Gale's motion for the Committee's rising, and reporting the twelve sections of the Funding Bill, in order to their being discharged, as in our last, rose and observed.—That as the vote he had now given might appear inconsistent with his past conduct on this great question, it became necessary that he should say something on the occasion. He said he was a warm advocate in favour of the assumption of the state debts, agreeable to the plan proposed by the Secretary of the Treasury—the whole of that report was valuable; he should regret losing any part of it—and he had full confidence that the measure of assumption would be finally adopted—at present however he considered the object of the bill before the Committee, independent of the bill proposed to be annexed, as of primary consequence to the United States.—He tho't the two objects might be separated; and he was not willing by grasping at a shadow to lose the substance.—He thought the assumption might be brought forward with propriety in the form of a resolution—and he would pledge himself to do it.—He thought this would comport with the idea of the Secretary.

Mr. SEDGWICK said that the gentlemen in favor of the assumption were very unfortunate in not being able to unite in the means of obtaining an object, which they not only approve, but consider as necessary to the execution of justice, and important to the welfare and happiness of this country. That a great majority of those who were in favor of the measure, thought it ought to be provided for before the funds should be established which are to secure the preservation of public credit. That other gentlemen were of opinion that there was no natural connection, and that therefore the subjects should be separated. That he himself was of the former opinion.

He said it had been often asserted and to his remembrance never denied, that the state debts were so unequal, that in some States it would be found impracticable to make an adequate provision for them, and at the same time for those States to contribute their equal proportion to the national treasury. That these circumstances were well known to those men to whom the people would commit the administration of their State governments; in this situation what measures would the duty and interest of these men induce them to pursue? Unquestionably, without delay, by the best means in their power, to adopt a system for the preservation of public faith. Such a system and that to be adopted by this government could not concurrently be carried into execution; the one or the other must fail; both were the measures of governments depending on popular opinion.—That it ought to be a subject of enquiry therefore, which would most probably be the object of popular affection; here a knowledge of a few facts would be sufficient to determine the judgment. He said he spoke only of Massachusetts because his knowledge of facts on this subject, did not extend beyond it—that in that State a very great proportion of the national securities had been alienated, and that at a very low rate of depreciation. The purchasers of these securities, from principles well known and which are inseparable from the human heart were not the objects of affectionate regard; the system therefore which is to secure this debt cannot itself be popular. On the other hand, the State debt having had the interest regularly paid for some time, and at no time being without any provision for that purpose, had much the greater part of it remained in the hands of the original holders. It was distributed throughout every part of the State, and in every village and neighborhood there remained a grateful recollection of the merit of those services which were rendered as the consideration for the existing demands against the government; that from a cool and dispassionate reflection on these facts, gentlemen would be able with certainty to predict, without a spirit of prophecy, the issue of a legislative contention on this ground between the national and State governments.

Mr. Sedgwick said that his mind there was an inexplicable mystery in the conduct of gentlemen who declared themselves in favor of the assumption, and that they considered it irrelative to the subject of funding the debt, and yet declined giving the reasons on which such an opinion was founded. That he ardently wished the gentlemen would condescend to give the explanation their friends requested; hitherto they had mysteriously declined to do it. He requested that they would be pleased to remember that a very considerable majority of those who are in favor of the measure, supposed the debts contracted by the States for the support of the war, to be the proper debts of the United States. If this was a well founded opinion there could not possibly exist a doubt, but they should be added to the list which already contained many different species of securities—that now was certainly the proper time to determine whether that opinion was just or erroneous.

He further observed that this was the proper time to determine on this subject from another very important consideration—if the State debts are assumed, all the sources of revenue without violence or injustice, will be at the disposal and under the control of this government. That without the assumption, seizing on those which are necessary to secure the interest of the State debts, would be in the extreme both violent and unjust. That a tax, for instance on spirituous liquors was for many reasons proper and would be in a great degree productive; that notwithstanding should that article, under the present circumstances be excised, it would be putting this government on a competition, to which he believed it would be found unequal.

Mr. Sedgwick further observed that the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Madison) at a time when he had not the happiness to be present, at the end of eight weeks debate on this subject, during which time he had remained only a silent hearer, had come forward in a speech, which had been given to the public, and he was informed with great accuracy—that by means of discharging, immediately afterwards the committee from the further consideration of the subject, no answer had been given to it; that this speech which he feared was designed to make an unfair and undue impression on the public mind, was a performance in his opinion composed of unfounded facts, monstrous premises and inconclusive deductions; that it would avoid the magnanimity of the gentleman and the partiality of his friends to permit a full examination of his argument that it might justly be determined how far it deserved the character he had imputed to it.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26.

Mr. Gilman informed the House that yesterday the joint committee of both Houses waited on the President of the United States and presented the following bills:

An Act to prescribe the mode in which the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings in each State, shall be authenticated so as to take effect in every other State.

An Act to provide for mitigating or remitting the forfeitures and penalties accruing under the revenue laws in certain cases therein mentioned.

An Act to continue in force an Act passed at the last session of Congress, entitled an Act to regulate processes in the Courts of the United States.

An Act for the government of the territory of the United States, South of the river Ohio.

A message was received from the President of the United States informing the House that he had given his assent to the two first of the above Acts. The other two originated in the Senate.

Mr. Page made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Parker, that the committee of the whole be discharged from any further consideration of the bill respecting the State of Rhode-Island, and added the following observations:

Mr. PAGE. Sir, I rise to move that the committee of the whole be discharged from considering the bill respecting the State of Rhode Island, which originated in the Senate—and hope that it will by the house be rejected—for I think, as the Convention of that State is to sit in a few days, we should have nothing before Congress which could tend to influence their choice of the Constitution, under which they are to live. It peculiarly behoves this House, as Representatives of Republican States, which have always asserted their rights to judge for themselves in all cases which interested them as freemen—which adopted the plan of government after mature deliberation, unbiassed by any such motives as the bill alluded to holds out to Rhode Island: I say it becomes this House therefore to take care that their sister State, now about to consider of the propriety of adopting the Constitution, shall be as free to judge for herself as was any other State in the Union—Should this bill pass, and should Rhode-Island adopt the Constitution, she will come with so bad a grace into the Union, that she must be ashamed when she enters it, and the independent States must blush when they receive her—She will be laughed at by the majorities in the other States, and despised by the minorities—How far this may tend to strengthen the Union let those who favor the bill judge. She would be in the situation of a soldier, prest into the service, looked upon as unworthy to be ranged with the volunteers—suspected of an inclination to desert, till perhaps indeed it may become her interest, like his to do so, and to act vigorously against those who had insulted her.

Surely, Sir, it becomes this House to pity the frailty of the weak and ignorant, who know not the blessings of our New-Government, to forgive the perverse and wicked who oppose it from base principles, and to shew a generous indulgence to that jealous, cautious republican spirit, which indeed we should cherish and revere. Let this House manifest such a disposition, and I will venture to predict the happiest consequences. Rhode Island will find it her interest to unite with States possessing such magnanimity—her rights she will see can never be violated, and her true interests never can be neglected; but Sir, if we shew that we are more anxious to complete the numbers of our State than to preserve inviolate the rights of freemen, and the principles of the late glorious revolution—if we are more sollicitous to restrict smuggling than to extend the benign influence of our New Constitution, through the state of Rhode-Island, as well as through the twelve other States,

what can that State expect from a union with States thus disposed? But if we not only manifestly shew this disposition, but also a malevolence resembling that which Great Britain shewed when she in her rage to answer her revenge, and extend her despotic power over America, shut up the port of Boston, hoping to starve into submission its virtuous citizens—Must not the Rhode-Islanders, like the Bostonians detest the cruel attempt, resent it, and by their resentment, may not the consequences be too much like those which followed in the case alluded to? May they not be applauded by true Republicans throughout the world? May they not be supported by the enemies of our peace?

Sir, they will take advantage of every circumstance which may afford them an opportunity of gratifying their envy or revenge. There is perhaps but one nation upon earth, which wishes to see these States flourish in peace, and it may not be long before she may think that our growing greatness may interfere with hers. Let us not therefore run the risk of endangering the peace and harmony of the United States—Let us not even wound the feelings of a sister State—Let us not expose ourselves to the charge of inconsistency, impropriety, rashness, and cruelty; but let us to avoid those charges, discharge the committee of the whole, take up the bill in the House and reject it at once—leaving Rhode Island unbiassed (by any thing Congress can do) to adopt or reject the Constitution, as they may think proper. If they adopt it the bill will be unnecessary—If they should reject it, then let us leave them on a footing with foreigners—they are allies at present, and should be treated as such. But it is said our revenue is in danger. Sir, take my advice, and you will make it the interest of Rhode Island to unite with us, or at least lay her under an high obligation not to smuggle; but go on with the bill, and you force her to smuggle—nay, perhaps to be your enemy for ever. States in Europe adjoining each other, shew us, that this bill is unnecessary. It would be thought madness there, to interdict all commercial intercourse of neighboring States, merely with a view to prevent smuggling—It would I believe too be looked upon as equal to a declaration of war.

Sir I lament that this bill has been committed, but if it should now be taken up and rejected, it will be doing all that can be done—and will shew that as soon as the attention of the House was turned to it, a proper regard was shewn for the rights of freemen. This bill is too inconsistent with the character the Representatives of these States ought to support—it has too much the appearance of certain British acts of Parliament, which our constituents have execrated. Surely Sir, the Representatives of Massachusetts, must unite with me in opinion, that such a bill should not be committed—The Members of States which applauded the glorious spirit of that State in opposition to a similar act, who risked their all in her support, and thereby acquired liberty and immortal honor, will, I trust, vote with me—and surely the States which came late into the Union, and such as adopted the Constitution by a small majority, will consider that the case of Rhode-Island, might have been their own—Surely even those, if such there be amongst us, who think that devoted State to be as British Ministers said America was, a nest of miscreants, will allow that it will be inhuman to punish the innocent with the guilty. I think therefore that the bill deserves not the sanction of this house—that it is impolitic and unjust—I hope the committee will be discharged, and the bill taken up for a third reading, and rejected, time enough, to leave the Convention of Rhode-Island free to adopt the Constitution or reject it as they may please.

Let us consider with what indignation the Convention of any of the States, which we represent, if about to sit on such an occasion, would have received such an Act of Congress—would they not have protested against it, as an insult, and adjourned without deliberating on the favorite Constitution? Is there a man in this house were he in such Convention, who would not agree to such protest and adjournment? But Sir, let us consider the design of the bill: If it be intended to induce the State of Rhode Island to come into the Union, I think I have shewn that it is badly calculated to answer that purpose—and if intended to prevent smuggling, I think I have shewn that it is more likely to produce that evil, than to prevent it.—If the motion be agreed to, no inconvenience can arise, but much mischief may be prevented. I hope therefore that the House will agree with me, that the committee of the whole be discharged, and will not leave such a bill hanging over the heads of the people of Rhode-Island, which must put them into a situation different from that of any other State in the Union when they adopted the Constitution.—Let it not be said, Sir, I conjure this House, that the confederated Republics of America have united upon any other principle than that of a free and perfect conviction of the excellence of their federal plan of government—Let it not be said that fear had any share in bringing even the smallest state into the Union—Let us not treat a sister state in the very manner we disdained to be treated by Great Britain.