

rary, it is plain that these men will lose more than other citizens by the destruction of the common liberty—for their property is made to depend wholly on the laws—their policy is to keep all quiet, not to change the government, as many insinuate. It would be a queer blunder for a man of six per cent. to join in a plot against a free government, which pays him his income. Liberty, therefore, has gained new friends rather than foes by the funding system—whose livings are made to depend on their support of the present free and equal system of laws.

On the whole, no country ever gained more credit, wealth and power, in three year's time, than this has done since the new government began. If the newspapers are full of charges against the government which has chiefly produced this wonderful change—at the very moment when the change is fresh in our minds, and if they are capable of fanning the people against it in the prosperous outset—What will happen when mistakes or disasters, incident to all governments, shall have destroyed its popularity?—It will be torn limb from limb, unless the body of the people, who form its solid support, shall be willing to protect it against its arful and implacable enemies.—Of all its friends, the farmers should be the firmest; for Congress lays no land-taxes, and yet things go on very well—too well, say the newspapers.—And whether it encourages manufacturers to eat the provisions at home, or navigation to seek a market abroad, we are sure of the benefit. Oppression will make a wise man mad. If only talking about oppression when there is none, will make a man mad, I will say he is not a wise man. A FARMER.



CONGRESS.

PHILADELPHIA.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1792.

In committee of the whole, on the Fishery Bill.

THE first section being read as follows:—  
“Be it enacted, &c. That the bounty, now allowed upon the exportation of dried fish of the fisheries of the United States, shall cease on all dried fish exported after the tenth day of June next; and in lieu thereof, and for the more immediate encouragement of the said fisheries, there shall be afterwards paid, on the last day of December, annually, to the owner of every vessel, or his agent, by the collector of the district where such vessel may belong, that shall be qualified agreeably to law, for carrying on the Bank and other Cod Fisheries, and that shall actually have been employed therein at sea, for the term of four months at least, of the fishing season next preceding (which season is accounted to be from the last day of February, to the last day of November in every year) for each and every ton of such vessel's burthen, according to her admeasurement, as licensed or enrolled—if of twenty tons and not exceeding thirty tons, one and a half dollars, and if above thirty tons, two and a half dollars, of which bounty three eighths parts shall accrue and belong to the owner of such fishing vessel, and the other five eighths thereof shall be divided by him, his agent or lawful representative, to and among the several fishermen who shall have been employed in such vessel, during the season aforesaid, or a part thereof, as the case may be, in such proportions as the fish they shall respectively have taken may bear to the whole quantity of fish taken on board such vessel during such season. *Provided*, that the bounty, to be allowed and paid on any vessel for one season, shall not exceed 170 dollars.”

Mr. Giles expressed some doubt respecting the principle of the bill; and for the purpose of collecting the sense of the committee on the subject, he thought the most effectual means would be a motion to amend the bill, by striking out the whole section.

He accordingly made the motion—observing at the same time, that he could not positively assert, whether the reasons which determined him against the principle of the bill, were well founded or not; that, in matters where a local preference is given, it is necessary to accommodate; and he would be happy if his objections could be removed.

The present section of the bill (he continued) appears to contain a direct bounty on occupations: and if that be its object, it is the first attempt as yet made by this government to exercise such authority;—and its constitutionality struck him in a doubtful point of view; for in no part of the constitution could he, in express terms, find a power given to Congress to grant bounties on occupations:—the power is neither

directly granted, nor (by any reasonable construction that he could give) annexed to any other power specified in the constitution. It might perhaps be brought in under a mode of construction already adopted by the house, viz. that of “ways and ends;” by which any power whatever might be equally implied:—but he wished ever to see some connexion between a specified power, and the means adopted for carrying it into execution.

There is a great difference between giving encouragement, and granting a direct bounty.—Congress have a right to regulate commerce;—and any advantage thereby resulting to a particular occupation connected with commerce, comes within that authority: but when a bounty is proposed to a particular employment or occupation, this is stepping beyond the circle of commerce; and such a measure will affect the whole manufacturing and agricultural system. In all cases, the revenue, to be employed in this bounty, is drawn from all the sources of revenue in the United States, and confined to a particular object. He was averse to bounties in almost every shape, as derogations from the common right; and he thought there would be no great difficulty in proving that a government is both unjust and oppressive in establishing exclusive rights, monopolies, &c. without some very substantial merit in the persons to whom they are granted; altho' even in that case the propriety of such grants is still questionable.

Under a just and equal government, every individual is entitled to protection in the enjoyment of the whole product of his labor, except such portion of it as is necessary to enable government to protect the rest; this is given only in consideration of the protection offered. In every bounty, exclusive right, or monopoly, government violates the stipulation on her part: for, by such a regulation, the product of one man's labor is transferred to the use and enjoyment of another. The exercise of such a right on the part of government can be justified upon no other principle, than that the whole product of the labor of every individual is the real property of government, and may be distributed among the several parts of the community by governmental discretion; such a supposition would directly involve the idea, that every individual in the community is merely a slave and bondman to government, who, although he may labor, is not to expect protection in the product of his labor. An authority given to any government to exercise such a principle, would lead to a complete system of tyranny.

He entertained fewer doubts, respecting the principle, as it regards political economy. All occupations that stand in need of bounties, instead of increasing the real wealth of a country, rather tend to lessen it; the real wealth of every country consisting in the active product of useful labor employed in it:—it is therefore bad policy to encourage any occupation, that would diminish instead of increasing the aggregate wealth of the community:—and if an occupation is really productive, and augments the general wealth, bounties are unnecessary for its support; for when it reimburses the capital employed, and yields a profit besides, it may be said to support itself:—when it fails in these points, any forced advantage, that is given to it by the government, only tends to decrease the wealth of the country.

The subject however might (he observed) be considered in a more favorable point of view—and that is, whether the provision be essential to the defence of the United States, and whether the bounties proposed in the bill were more than equivalent to the portion of defence that would be procured by them.—The bill does not (in his opinion) contain that kind of encouragement, which is essential to the national defence. Any man, who takes a view of this country, must be convinced, that its real support rises from the land, and not from the sea; and the opposite mistake must have arisen merely from a servile imitation of the conduct of Great-Britain: the inhabitants of this country heretofore thought favorably of her government, and the revolution has not yet altered their former ideas respecting it.

But the circumstances of the two countries will, on examination, be found widely different: Britain, surrounded by the sea on every side, finds a navy necessary to support her commerce; whilst America, possessed of an immense territory, and having yet ample room to cultivate that territory, has no occasion to contend by sea with any European power:—her strength and her resources are all to be found within the United States; and if she but attends to her internal resources, the object of national defence will be much better answered.

He next proceeded to consider whether that portion of the national defence which might be derived from the fisheries, would not be purchased at too high a price. Although the apparent intention of the bill is only to convert the present existing drawbacks into a bounty—yet the drawbacks being allowed only to the actual ex-

portation of the fish, and the bounty being granted on the tonnage of the fishing vessels, there can be no comparative value between the drawback and the bounty; they have no necessary relation to each other; and the latter may exceed the former, or the former exceed the latter.—He had made a calculation, and upon the most favorable principles, grounded on the reports of the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of State.

Here he produced a calculation, tending to shew that the proposed bounty on the tonnage of the fishing vessels, would considerably exceed the amount of the present draw-backs:—from a comparison between the bounty, and the number of sailors employed in the fisheries, he shewed what an expense each man would be to the United States—and, after other remarks, observed, that even Great-Britain, whose whole national support and defence depends on her navy, had found, that the men employed in the fisheries, though so necessary for that defence, cost her too much:—that America, whose consequence, as a nation, does not depend on a navy, ought to take a lesson from the experience of Britain:—that he did not wish to enter into a competition with Britain and France, in supplying the different markets with fish; that, as those nations are able to hold out greater encouragement to their fishermen, than we can to ours, we would, by such a competition, only exhaust the treasury of the United States to no purpose: and upon this principle alone, he thought there was some reason to doubt the policy of the measure proposed in the section under consideration, which therefore he hoped the committee would agree to strike out, unless his objections could be obviated.

Mr. Murray observed, that in order to demonstrate the propriety of the measure, it would be incumbent on the friends of the bill, first, to prove that the fishery trade is in a state of decay, that the stock employed in it does not yield the ordinary profits, so as to justify the merchants in embarking their capital in this branch of trade,—that there is a system of defence in contemplation, which the circumstances of the country call for, and which this trade is calculated to furnish,—that other branches of trade, which do not stand in need of encouragement, are not equally capable of furnishing seamen for the purpose,—that this particular object so peculiarly claims the attention and encouragement of the United States, as to leave far behind every consideration of the manufacturing interest, the agricultural, &c.—all this he thought necessary for gentlemen to prove, and to shew some very strong necessity for encouraging one particular class of men, in preference to all others.

Mr. Goodhue.—It happens, that the fisheries of the United States are almost entirely confined to the state of Massachusetts; and they furnish a considerable, a principal portion of our export trade. As we are a part of the United States, the United States in general are interested in the prosperity of that branch of business, so far at least as it contributes to the national defence:—it furnishes a copious nursery of hardy seamen, and offers a never-failing source of protection to the commerce of the United States. If we engage in a war with any European power, those seamen will be excluded from their ordinary employment, and must have recourse to privateering. During the late war with Britain, we annoyed the enemy more in that line, than all others; and had it not been for privateering, it would often have been impossible to keep together our armies, who frequently in the hour of need, were supplied by the privateers with ammunition and cloathing, of which they were wholly destitute. All that we wish to obtain by this bill, is that we may not be burdened with duties. An opinion has been entertained, that no drawbacks ought to be allowed on the re-exportation of articles imported from foreign countries: but if this opinion were to obtain in practice, and no drawbacks were to be admitted, we must confine our importation to articles for our own consumption.

The drawback, allowed by the existing law, on the exportation of salt fish, was calculated to be only equal to the duty beforehand paid on the quantity of salt used in curing the fish: but the fishermen complain, that, as the act now stands, they are wholly excluded from any participation in the benefit, which centers entirely in the coffers of the merchants:—the object of the present bill, is only to repay the same money into the hands of those persons who are immediately concerned in catching the fish; and there can no reasonable objection be made to such a transfer of the drawback, as government will not lose a single dollar by the change. The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Giles) talks of the unconstitutionality of granting bounties: but no bounty is required:—we only ask, in another mode, the usual drawback for the salt, used on the fish:—if we can make it appear that the bill does not contemplate any greater sums to be drawn from the treasury, than are already allowed, it is to be hoped that no further opposition will be made