

Newport Aug^t 29th 1789

Dr Sir,

This town, the town of Providence, and I believe some other towns in this State have petitioned Congress that the vessels of this State may for a limited time be exempted from paying the same bondage and port charges as foreign vessels are subject to.

We are informed that there have been exactions of the packet boats of this State by the Collector of New York; but we are yet to learn by what authority ^{they} have been exacted.

The vessels of N^o Carolina and this State it is apprehended are not subjected to them by the tonnage acts; and the clause in the Act regulating the collection of duties imposed by law on tonnage ^{States} which respects the two non-acceding, it is conceived, so far from countenancing such exactions, places them on the same footing with the States in the Union; for thereby the goods, wares and merchandise of the growth of those two States are admissible into the States in the union free of duty, and goods &c imported into them by vessels of the non-acceding States, from States or Countries without the limits of the United States, are not subject to other duties, than such goods &c are subject to when imported in vessels belonging to States which have acceded to the Union. This clause cannot it is thought be so construed as to make our vessels liable to the payment of foreign tonnage and port charges, without twisting language out of its natural import;— and as has been observed they are not subject to that exaction by the Tonnage Act.

Besides, the conduct of Congress towards the non-acceding States hath manifestly been actuated by the principles of moderation and lenity, with an expectation no doubt of drawing them into the union by the cords of love.

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The vessels of N^o Carolina and this State it is apprehended are not subjected to them by the tonnage acts; and the clause in the Act regulating the collection of duties imposed ^{States}

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This appears from the clause referred to, and that any construction of the tonnage act, import act, or act regulating the collection of the duties imposed by law on tonnage &c., which will expose our vessels to pay the same tonnage and port charges as foreign vessels must be repugnant to those principles, and therefore could not be intended by Congress;—for if the exaction should be continued we shall be obliged to lay up our coasters and packet-boats;—and if any of our goods &c. should be exported to the States in the Union it must be in bottoms not our own, and upon such terms as the carriers of them shall be pleased to impose;—and further we shall be compelled to draw & receive the provisions and fire-wood which we draw from the other States upon the same hard condition, and by consequence the lenient design of Congress will be frustrated, and the numerous poor of this town be involved in the deepest distress. Contemplating Congress in the most favorable light, they would, in such a case, be viewed as giving with one hand and taking away with the other;—a light in which that august body would not certainly chuse to be beheld.

The clause alluded to in its natural construction places the trade and navigation of the non acceding ^{States} for the present, on the same foot with that of those which have acceded. If it had been intended that goods ^{not of their growth or manufacture} imported by any State the former into the latter should be subject to the same tonnage as if imported in foreign vessels; it would it is conceived have been explicitly expressed;—but it cannot by a fair construction be even so much as implied;—how then is it to be accounted for that the same tonnage & port charges required from foreigners should be exacted from our coasters carrying goods &c. of our own growth or manufacture?—

After having considered this matter as impartially and deliberately as I was able I cannot discover on what ground it is that the collector of New York has proceeded in exacting the same tonnage and port charges of our packets

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as he would have exacted of foreigners.—Congress appears to me to have carefully avoided any expressions that might lead the non-acceding States to think that they considered them as foreign nations.—A continuance of the exaction of the tonnage & port charges mentioned will be considered as a plain declaration that they are viewed as such by Congress.

I have not seen the petitions of the other towns.—The petition of this contains, besides the subject of tonnage, a request that Congress would before they adjourn, make some provision, by which this State may immediately on the adoption of the New Government, be admitted to all its benefits.—A material alteration has ^{been made} taken place in the house of deputies.—at the election in this month, twelve or fourteen antifeds have been removed, and their places filled with Feds, from which it is hoped that at the next Session a convention may be ordered, and the New Government adopted, —and it is feared that Congress may not assemble until late in the winter.—In my letter by the last post I hinted something to you about such a provision. I did not then know that a petition was in contemplation.

I hope that you, Sir, and the other friends to the suffering Feds in this town and State will favorably receive its petition, and that it may be granted, if it can be done, as I conceive it may, in perfect consistency with the general good of The United States.

I am informed that one or two gentlemen of the Town of Providence are appointed to attend their petitions.

The memorial and petition of this town will be transmitted by M^r Marchante who was moderator of the Town meeting at which it passed.—It is hoped that the want of a person to converse ^{with} the members on the subject of it

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One of the Gentlemen who attends the Providence Petition is that M^r. Bourn whom I recommended to you as a proper person for a Judge ^{of} the Western territory. — I find by a York paper that William Barton, I suppose Co^l. Barton of Providence is appointed to that office. — M^r. Bourn will be able to give you every information you may wish to receive respecting this State. — He is I think a sensible man, and worthy of your notice. —

You may communicate this letter to such members as you may think proper. — Please to present my regards to those of my acquaintance, and believe me to be with great esteem

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