

*A Circular Letter from the Committee appointed at a numerous meeting of the Republicans of Wilmington and its vicinity in February last, to correspond on the subject of the election of Elector for this District.*

WILMINGTON, N. CAROLINA, OCT. 4, 1808.

SIR,

WE understand that General BROWN, of Bladen, a Federalist, has been announced a candidate as Elector for this district, to vote for a President and Vice-President of the United States; in opposition to SAMUEL ASHE, Sen'r. Esq. late Governor; the candidate nominated by the Republicans, to execute that important trust.

The address posted up at Onslow, declaring this opposition purported as we are informed, that the Candidate nominated by the Federalists—disapproves of the present restrictions on commerce, meaning the Embargo—is friendly to commerce, with some remarks leading the people to understand that if the Federalists get into power, these restrictions will be removed; and lastly, that he disapproves of the measures of the present administration, generally.

It is hoped that a fair and candid enquiry into the merits of political opinions thus avowedly held up as a claim to a specific political trust, will not be deemed disrespectful, nor even inconsistent with personal regard towards the candidate; more especially when instituted by any portion of that community with whose representative authority he is in nomination to be clothed.

In front of these recommendatory claims to our suffrages, stands *disapprobation of the Embargo*; Pursuing therefore the order in which they are laid down, this measure shall receive our first notice.

Correct opinions, sir, of the expediency of political measures can only be formed when considered with reference to the circumstances under which they are adopted; for with nations as individuals lesser evils are frequently of necessity submitted to, in avoidance of those of greater magnitude.

It is on this principle alone, that a candid examination of the policy of the Embargo can be made. If it should appear that in the then existing state of our foreign relations, it was not only the most provident; the most moderate; but absolutely the only measure, except immediate war; that consistent with our national independence, could have been adopted; bold assertions against its merits; and pathetic declamation against its effects; will not, it is presumed, obtain much influence, when addressed to the sober reflection of the people of this district.

In order to present you with a full and comprehensive view of that political situation of the U. States, which rendered the embargo eligible; we shall trace from their very source, the various causes which combined to produce it.

For this purpose we shall necessarily be compelled to recur as far back as August 1805; About that month the British government, by interpolations of the law of nations, adopted and enforced

some new restrictive regulations against neutral commerce; and it appears by a report of our Consul in London, that under these new restrictions, upwards of twenty of our vessels had just then been captured, and brought into the ports of his district for condemnation.

These encroachments on our rights deeply affecting our commercial interests; spirited memorials were presented to the President and Congress of the United States in January 1806, from the merchants of Salem, Boston, New-York, Philadelphia and, Baltimore; signed by persons of all political parties.

The memorial from the merchants of Baltimore (and signed let it be remembered, by Federalists as well as Republicans) in a strain of fervid eloquence, highly expressive of the indignant feelings of the memorialists; states, "that they will not trespass on the time of the constituted authorities with a recital of the various acts by which our coasts, and even our ports and harbors have been converted into scenes of violence and depredations, by which the security of our trade and property, has been impaired; the rights of our territory invaded; the honor of our country insulted and humiliated; and our gallant countrymen oppressed and persecuted; they feel it unnecessary to ask that the force of the nation should be employed in repelling and chastising lawless freebooters, who have dared to spread their ravages even beyond the seas which form the principal theatre of their piratical exertions, and to infest our shores with their irregular and ferocious hostility—These are outrages which have pressed themselves in a peculiar manner upon the notice of our government, and cannot have failed to excite its indignation and correspondent disposition to prevent and redress them—SUCH IS THE VIEW WHICH YOUR MEMORIALISTS HAVE TAKEN IN THIS ANXIOUS CRISIS OF OUR AFFAIRS; WHICH APPEARS TO THEM IN AN ALARMING DEGREE TO AFFECT THEIR COUNTRY AND ITS COMMERCE." This memorial concludes thus, "the means of redress for the past, and security for the future, are respectfully submitted to your wisdom. But your memorialists cannot forbear to indulge a hope, which they would abandon with deep reluctance that they may yet be found in an amicable explanation with those who have ventured to inflict wrongs upon us, and to advance unjust pretences to our prejudice."

These interpolations of the law of nations, pressing with great severity on France as a belligerent; Buonaparte intoxicated by recent successes, and infuriated under the effect of these novel regulations; issued a decree at Berlin in November 1806, declaring all the dominions of Britain in a state of blockade, representing that "these measures were resorted to only in just retaliation of the barbarous system adopted by England, which assimilates its legislation to that of Algiers, and shall cease to have effect with respect to all nations who shall have firmness to compel the English government to

respect their flag." Again, "the provisions of the present decree shall be abrogated and null in fact, as soon as the English abide again by the law of nations."—Soon after the date of this decree, a treaty was concluded in London between the United States and Great Britain—at the signing of which treaty a Note was added, to this effect; that its provisions should in no wise preclude that government, from adopting any measures it might deem proper, to counteract Buonaparte's Berlin decree if that decree should not be resisted. Thus on a principle of retaliation against their enemy, the very principle on which Buonaparte founded his decree; and on which it is equally justifiable; they say your undoubted rights as an independent nation, and even the provisions of this treaty, notwithstanding; we must be considered at liberty to regulate and controul your lawful commerce to suit our views as a belligerent! What share this note, thus wholly nullifying every article the treaty contained on the subject of commerce, had in producing its rejection by the President, we cannot pretend to determine; this much we may presume to observe, that such indefinite pretensions, to a right of controul over the lawful trade of the United States, could not well have been expected by ratification, to receive the sanction of its first magistrate.

About the latter end of November 1807, there were rumours in circulation, derived from private correspondence and British prints; that in pursuance of this assumption of right, the British Government were about to issue Orders of Council of the tenor of those, which afterwards proved to have been at that time actually issued. To rebut the assertion of the ministerialists in the House of Commons, that the embargo could not have been predicated on the Orders of Council, as their existence was not known here at the time that act passed; it was proved there on oath, that intelligence of their nature, and their expected early promulgation, was transmitted to this country sometime before such promulgation really took place—On the day the message recommending the embargo was sent to Congress, there appeared in the National Intelligencer sundry extracts from London and Liverpool papers of the 11th & 12th of November 1807—stating the circumstance with certainty; so that it appears upon the whole although on that day our government had no official knowledge on the subject; yet that the existence of these orders was placed beyond all doubt. By these Orders of Council some supplemental additions, and an act of Parliament levying a tax under them, our trade is completely cut off from every port of the European Continent, from whence the British flag then was, or thereafter might be, by war or otherwise excluded. It is well known until very lately the British flag was excluded from the ports of every country in Europe except Sweden; and is probably by this time excluded from the ports of that kingdom also.

There were indeed by the last European accounts some ports in Spain and Portugal, then in the

hands of the patriots open to the British flag; but in the view of every man of reflection, the ultimate success of these brave men, against the immense force of the usurper, is very doubtful; it is infinitely too uncertain, to found any commercial calculations on such a result.

But sir there are terms; there are conditions, on which even under these Orders of Council, we may be permitted to trade to the European Continent generally—these terms and conditions held out to an independent nation, are indeed rather insolent and degrading!—the minds of independent Americans must revolt at them; especially the minds of those who in the revolutionary war individually bled and sustained privations; or of those who suffered in the loss of property and connections, in opposing the very principle as colonies, which is now attempted to be imposed upon us, for permission to carry on our lawful commerce as an independent nation—The principles a payment of tax to Great-Britain—a principle sir, acquiescence in which would be a total abandonment of our national independence. Instead of pursuing a direct course in our outward passage to, or in our homeward passage from such ports of the European continent as exclude the British flag; we must in the first instance go to a port in England, there for the purpose of paying a tax, discharge and reload; and then only are we permitted to proceed to the port of destination—this, let it be understood is not properly speaking what may be called a duty—a duty with reference to foreign trade is an imposition of payment by the legislative power of a nation for permission to export or import certain articles or for permission of vessels to enter the ports of such nation.

The right of an independent nation (except where otherwise bound by treaty) wholly to exclude the ship of any other nation from its ports; absolutely to prohibit the importation or exportation of certain articles, in or out of its own ports; or so to modify or regulate these matters as may seem meet to itself, is not to be questioned; but as no one nation has a right at will, to prescribe the terms on which any other two independent nations shall trade with each other, the right to impose duties ever must be considered as confined to the regulation of such trade, as others may think proper to carry on with itself. Whereas this is a tax levied by Great-Britain as a condition, on which alone one independent nation is by them permitted to trade with another independent nation; each of whom as such is entitled precisely to the same rights with herself. With the same propriety, and supported by the same principle of justice and right, should our flag from war or policy be excluded from the Portuguese ports in South-America; might we wholly interdict; or according to our will and pleasure controul; modify; and prescribe the terms on which alone the British should be permitted to trade there—adopting the same measures towards them as they have towards us; the conditions would be that all their vessels