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Political.

To the Editors of the Federal Republican.

Baltimore, Oct. 31.

Gentlemen—When the publication in the National Intelligencer, relative to the proceedings of a meeting at New York, in which my name is mentioned, together with those of Mr. Morris and Mr. Otis, first made its appearance, I did not consider any public notice of it on my part as necessary. I am still of the same opinion. But some of my friends have lately informed me, that they and many others, think differently. I submit my judgment to theirs, and have resolved to write you this letter, which you will oblige me by inserting in the Federal Republican.

It is utterly untrue, that any person or persons were authorized, on the part of the meeting at New York, to communicate with Mr. Clinton, or that any representation whatever of political sentiments expressed by him, was made to the meeting. In private conversations, among some of the members, mention was from time to time made of opinions, which Mr. Clinton was stated, or supposed to have expressed, relative to the war, to a maritime defence, and to the freedom and protection of commerce; but neither in this, nor any other manner, did I hear ascribed to him any intention to separate himself from the democratic party, or to break off all connection with it, or any intimation from him, or any of his friends, that he entertained, or had expressed in any manner, such an intention. Had I understood that he had made such intimations, I should have thought them a strong ground of objection to him on the part of the federalists, because I should have regarded them as an artifice, equally undignified and insincere, to work upon the supposed party feelings of a body of men, who were acting from very different and much higher motives.

The federal gentlemen assembled at New York entered into no resolution to support the election of Mr. Clinton. They did indeed prefer him to Mr. Madison. But this preference, as far as I was concerned, or as I became acquainted with the sentiments of others, rested wholly on public grounds.

A very attentive consideration of the course pursued by the American government towards the two great belligerent powers, ever since the year 1805, had long ago induced those gentlemen with whom I had an opportunity of particularly conferring on this subject at New York, as well as myself, strongly to suspect that war against Great Britain, on the side of France, was resolved on by those who directed the affairs of this country, and would be made as soon as congress could be brought into the measure; and that the causes from time to time alleged for hostile proceedings were mere pretexts, but by no means furnished the real motives. These suspicions could not increase, as the scheme appeared to be gradually advancing towards its accomplishment. But when, after the war was declared, we saw that it was persisted in, although the orders in council, always alleged as the sole cause of it, were revoked, and doubt was removed from our minds, and we were convinced that no termination of this war could be expected, while Mr. Madison should remain at the head of the government.

Our knowledge of the utter incapacity and ineffectuality of the administration, and of those to whom it had confided the principal management of military operations, led us, at the same time, to believe, that nothing but disaster and disgrace was to be expected, in the progress of the war. Although we thought it wantonly and foolishly undertaken, and still more wantonly persisted in, still we wished, that while it continued, it might be so conducted as to shew the courage, prowess and resources of the nation, in the most advantageous light; which we were perfectly convinced could never be done, while it should be conducted by the present administration.

It is obvious, and universally admitted, that a stable and efficient financial system, commensurate with the resources and the wants of the nation, is essential to its well-being, in various and its most important points of view, both as respects its reputation abroad and its safety, happiness and prosperity at home. War, it is very clear, cannot be carried on without money. Hereofore, this country derived an abundant revenue from its commerce; a revenue, too, which was collected without difficulty, and paid without being felt. If the present administration be not hostile to commerce in principle, which there is too much reason to believe, it is certain that their policy for several years past has tended strongly to its ruin, which the present war has completely accomplished. It is equally certain, that while the war continues commerce cannot revive, and that no revenue from it can be expected. But money must be had. If, therefore, the war continues, recourse for obtaining the necessary supplies must be had to most burdensome taxes; rendered tenfold more oppressive by the loss of vent for our produce, and the consequent impoverishment of the country; or to the still more disastrous and destructive expedients of paper money; forced loans, involuntary contributions, confiscations, and national bankruptcy.

We have ever regarded a maritime defence commensurate with the resources of the nation, as essential to its prosperity, honor and safety, if not to the permanent existence of a free government. Naval power is not only the best suited to the character of our people, to our geographical situation, and the genius of our government, but it is the only power by which our commerce and

our sea coast, our only vulnerable points, can be defended; and the experience of all ages, as well as the reason of the thing itself, fully proves, that naval power in the hands of any government, is less liable to abuse, than military power—that one is as favorable, as the other is dangerous, to public liberty.

But efficient measures for the establishment of an adequate naval force can never be expected from those whose prejudices, feelings and avowed opinions are, and always have been, directly and strongly opposed to a navy; and who have discontinued, oppressed, and almost wholly destroyed that of which they found the country in possession.

But great as these evils are, they are by no means the greatest which, in our apprehension and belief, will in the train of this war. Undertaken without preparation, and conducted without vigor, skill or success, its authors must soon be, if they are not already, convinced that it cannot be carried on by any resources of this nation, which they have either the courage, the independence or the talents to call into action. They see, or soon must see, that the militia will not invade Canada, if it were a fit species of force for such a purpose. The resource of volunteers, for the purpose of invasion, has failed in the outset. And the tardiness and small number of enlistments, for the regular army, prove what was so often foretold, that the people of this country enjoy too much ease, comfort and independence at home, to become regular soldiers for any other purpose than for the defence of their country from invasion. The avowed object of the war, and the only object which has the appearance of being rational, is the conquest of Canada, as a mean of compelling the British to comply with our terms or of indemnifying us for their non-compliance. But it must soon be ascertained, that Canada, for the reasons which have been stated, cannot be conquered by our own force; and it will necessarily and speedily occur to those charged with the war, and bent on carrying it on at every risk, that France has troops enough, which she would be ready to lend or hire for such a purpose, and that it would be easier to procure 20 or 30,000 men from her than to raise them in our own country. Hence a French alliance, and the co-operation of French troops in this country, as soon as they can be sent here, are natural and necessary consequences of the continuance of this war. The number of French citizens now in this country, devoted to the views of the French government, is known to be very great. Probably it is much greater than any body imagines. And the certainty and facility with which they could be embodied, whenever a French standard should be raised here, will easily be perceived by those who have observed, as we have done, the prompt and blind obedience paid by every French subject, wherever he may be, to the orders of his government.

The practicability, not to say the facility, of transporting a French army to our shores, will readily be acknowledged, when it is recollected how often French fleets, with large bodies of troops, have eluded the British fleets appointed to watch them; how impossible it is to maintain, with a large fleet, the uninterrupted blockade of any port, especially those from the mouths of which every strong eastern wind must blow away the blockading squadron; and how easily Bonaparte formerly transported an army of 40,000 men from Toulon to Egypt, in spite of all the exertions of Nelson to intercept him. The horrors of this alliance, which we considered as a necessary consequence of the war, if continued, need not be represented to those who have attended to the effects of French fraud, violence and ambition, in every country where French arms or counsels have been introduced, especially within the last ten years. There is another evil, more horrible even than this, and equally to be apprehended, as we believe of the continuance of this war. The pressure of the war, great every where, is particularly severe in the Eastern States. Their subsistence depends in a great measure, and their wealth almost entirely, on maritime industry. A great portion of their property consists in ships. A great portion of their people are sailors or fishermen. The most populous part of their territory lies on the sea coast. The largest of their towns, the repositories of their wealth, are within reach of the guns of hostile fleets. The ruin and despair which must be produced among such a people, by the long continuance of such a war as we are now engaged in, may easily be perceived. Feeling it to be most oppressive, and knowing it to be wholly unnecessary; believing that it proceeded from passion, prejudice and erroneous political speculations, if not from worse causes; they must grow more and more restless under its pressure, and lose by insensible but rapid degrees, their attachment to the government, which they must and will regard as the author of such evils. They must soon begin to consider the union of the states as the prime cause of their sufferings. Their attachment to it must diminish, and soon be extinguished; and this bond which has hitherto held us together, being once broken, they will soon relieve themselves from a burden which they will consider as no longer tolerable, and erect a separate government for themselves, and taking the care of their own interests and safety into their own hands.

Thus, the dissolution of the union, and all the direful evils attendant upon it, must, as we believe, be the last and necessary consequence of continuing the present war. If the union should not actually be dissolved, still that sentiment of

attachment to it which has hitherto been a national sentiment, and on the preservation of which its permanent existence depends, must as we thought be most materially enfeebled, if not entirely destroyed, and the way thus be paved for a speedy and final dissolution.

Men who conscientiously believed that such consequences are to be expected from the continuance of this war, and that it will most certainly be continued as long as Mr. Madison remains in power, would naturally be inclined to give the preference to any other candidate whose election might afford the chance of escape from evils so terrible. We viewed Mr. Clinton in this light. We thought it probable, from his situation in a northern and commercial state, from the firmness and independence of his character, from the known sentiments of his deceased uncle, and from the opposition made to the war by his principal friends & supporters, that he would avail himself of the earliest opportunity of making peace on reasonable and honorable terms, which we were persuaded might be done whenever the American government should think fit; and of restoring commerce to that state of freedom, protection and prosperity, which it heretofore enjoyed. We also were of opinion, that while the war should continue, there was a great probability of its being conducted by Mr. Clinton, with far more ability, and therefore with far more honor, and less injury to the country, than could be expected from the present administration.

Such, Gentlemen, were the grounds on which, as far as I was concerned or informed, the preference was given to Mr. Clinton over Mr. Madison, by the federal gentlemen assembled at New York. The meeting neither received, expected, nor desired any profusion of political opinions, much less any suppositions as to political conduct, from Mr. Clinton, or any of his friends. They relied on his known character, his situation, and his obvious interests, which they considered as the only pledges of any value, on such occasions. They did not consider them as certain pledges, but merely as affording reasonable ground of hope. On one side they saw the certainty of ruin, on the other a chance of escape. Thus situated, and judging as citizens of the United States, and not as members of a party; preferring their country to themselves, and her safety to their own prospects of power, office or emolument, they thought it their duty to do all that might depend on them, towards rescuing her out of the hands of those, who have brought her into her present unhappy and alarming state. They trust that their conduct will be thought to merit the approbation of all good men; and may prove conducive to the safety, honor and happiness of their country.

I am, gentlemen,
With great regard,
Your friend, & most obt. serv't.
ROBERT G. HARPER.

Legislature of North-Carolina.

DEBATE

On the Motion of Mr. Wilson, to proceed by a joint ballot of both houses, to choose electors of president and vice president.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19.

ELECTORAL LAW.

Mr. Duncan Cameron called up the resolution submitted by him on Tuesday, to wit:

"Resolved, That it is expedient to repeal the existing law prescribing the mode of choosing electors to vote for a president and vice-president of the United States—and to provide by law for choosing such electors, by laying out the state into such number of districts, as the state is entitled to electors, under the last census and apportionment of representatives by congress."

Mr. Wilson moved to postpone the resolution for the purpose of taking up the one on the same subject offered by himself, for proceeding to-morrow morning to choose electors by joint ballot.

The latter motion was decided to be out of order.

The question on taking up Mr. Cameron's motion was then decided by yeas and nays, and lost. Yeas 64, nays 65.

The house then took up Mr. Wilson's motion, in the following words:

"Resolved, by the senate and house of commons of North-Carolina, that they proceed on to-morrow morning, at the meeting of the two houses, to appoint by joint ballot, fifteen electors to vote for president and vice-president of the United States, agreeably to the provisions of the act of assembly passed in 1811."

Mr. Duncan Cameron then moved to amend the resolution, by striking out the whole thereof except the word "resolved," for the purpose of inserting the words, "That it is expedient to repeal the existing law for electing electors, by a joint ballot of both houses of the General Assembly to vote for president and vice president of the U. S. and to provide by law for laying out the state into districts to choose fifteen electors; such electors for the ensuing election to be elected by the members of this general assembly, representing the counties composing such districts; and hereafter by the freemen of this state in their respective districts."

A question was hereupon raised by Mr. Stone, whether it was in order to offer a resolution, the same in substance, as he contended, with one which the house had just refused to take up?

Messrs. Steele, W. W. Jones and Cameron contended that the proposed amendment was strictly in order. The object of it was to have a fair ex-

pression of the sense of the House upon the merits of the question. To have such an expression, upon any proposition he might make, they contended, was a right which every member possessed; and, on the present question, it could not otherwise be obtained than by something similar to the motion then offered. It could not be obtained by a vote on the resolution offered by Mr. Wilson; neither, in the consideration of that resolution, would it be in order to take into view the whole subject connected with the electoral law of last session.

The Speaker decided Mr. Cameron's motion to be out of order. From which decision an appeal was made to the house; when it was confirmed, yeas 75, nays 54.

Mr. Cameron's motion was therefore not received. The gentleman then moved to postpone the consideration of Mr. Wilson's resolution until Monday next.

This motion, he declared, did not proceed from any desire to prevent a vote for electors, in some shape or other, but from a wish to afford time to every member of the house, to reflect upon a subject, which was certainly of great magnitude.—Perhaps all who were present felt determined to proceed, in some manner, to the choice of electors; yet there were but few who would not prefer one mode to another. None could wish the state to remain unrepresented; but, for the purpose of allowing time to all to make up a calm and deliberate opinion, he wished the motion for postponement to prevail. Mr. C thought it in order, on this motion, to go into the merits of the question, so far as to shew the propriety of adopting some other mode of choosing electors than the one proposed in the resolution before the house. He would state a case which would prove this: When the consideration of a resolution, substituting another mode of choice for the one proposed in the resolution of the gentleman from Stokes, (Mr. Wilson) was called for, the house refused to hear it. Now was a member to be precluded from expressing his sentiments upon any proposition he might bring forward? Certainly not. And yet, if it was not in order to go into the merits of the question upon the motion for postponement, such would be the effect of the vote the house had given. Mr. Cameron was proceeding, when

Mr. Stone enquired of the chair, whether on a simple question of postponement it were in order to go into the general merits of a proposition? If so, debate might be rendered infinite.

Mr. Speaker gave it as the opinion of the chair, that debate on the merits would not be in order.

Mr. Steele (of Salisbury) then enquired, when such debate would be in order? If a member could not, at some period, express his sentiments on any motion brought forward, the rules of the house were very defective. If the sacred right of freedom of speech, of fair debate, so essential to the preservation of liberty, could be evaded or trampled under foot—if they could not be exercised at all times, the rules of the house required immediate amendment. Every citizen in the community had an undoubted right to be heard on the floor of the house by his representative. If the merits of the question could not be debated now, he would be thankful to be informed by the chair when they could be gone into?

The Speaker observed, that debate would be in order on the question of adopting the resolution.

Mr. Steele said if the general question could then be discussed he was satisfied.

Mr. Stone would be sorry, he observed, that any question of order should be prematurely decided, before it actually occurred. The present was only a simple question of postponement, and not a general question on the resolution before the house.

The question on postponement was now taken, and lost, without division.

Mr. Stone, being seconded, called for the yeas and nays on the main question.

Mr. Steele then moved to amend the resolution, by striking out the word thereof except the word "resolved," and inserting, "That the present general assembly vest the power of appointing the electors of president and vice president of the United States in the present legislature, unconstitutional, and an infringement upon the elective franchise of the free people of the state of N. Carolina."

Mr. Murfree called for a division of the question on striking out and inserting; which was agreed to.

Some conversation then took place as to the propriety of debating the general question, on the motion to strike out.

The Chair decided that the general question was open for debate.

Mr. STEELE. On the present motion, Mr. Speaker, I should consider myself as perfectly in order in expressing my opinions upon the whole question before the house. So much, however, has been said, on the various forms in which the electoral law of last session has been discussed, relative to the impropriety and inexpediency of the measure, that I shall confine my remarks strictly to the most important aspect in which it is to be viewed—its unconstitutionality. This I trust I shall be able to illustrate by the most irresistible conclusions and convincing testimony. I shall undertake to make it appear that the act passed by the last Assembly, not only violated the constitution, but was hostile to the very spirit and genius of that freedom which the sacred instrument was intended to secure.

In forming an opinion on all constitutional questions, it is necessary that a recurrence be had to first principles. One of these I hold to be, that the freemen of the United States have a right to