

**TO THE FREEMEN**  
OF THE FOURTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF NORTH-CAROLINA, COMPOSED OF THE COUNTIES OF Johnston, Wayne, Greene, Lenoir, Jones, Craven and Carteret.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

The last session of the Nineteenth Congress has just terminated, and the temporary authority which you were pleased to bestow on me as your Representative, returns again to those hands where our National Constitution has most happily placed it. In reviewing my conduct in the exercise of this trust, at once so high, so delicate, and so important, I cannot presume that it has been my fortune to have yielded universal satisfaction. The execution of a public trust, such as that of a Representative in Congress, involves a necessity of acting in situations often of great novelty and embarrassment; and when these difficulties are increased by the excitement produced by clashing interests and contending designs, (as they not unfrequently are) it will readily occur to you that the conduct of your public servants should be regarded with the eye of indulgence. While, Fellow-Citizens, I claim the benefit of this equitable rule, of which the best men of the Republic have availed themselves—there is another rule to which you have a right to subject your Representatives, and to whose operation they should always manifest a cheerful obedience, and this is, "Have they honestly and industriously endeavored to discharge the duties of their station to the best of their ability?"—or in the language of one of the political fathers of our country, (Mr. Jefferson) "Is he honest and capable?" As to the capability of your Representative servants, you are, by the Constitution, the sole judges, and of that it does not become me to speak; but they should always be ready to give you an account of their "stewardship," and explain their conduct in every important particular.

In endeavoring to present to you a concise view of the state of our national affairs, our relations with the other nations of the world, demand attentive consideration. We are now happily at peace with all the world, and I trust, that the moderation and equity which has always characterized our government, will continue to preserve to us the invaluable blessings of this state. Among the lessons of political wisdom bequeathed to us by the Father of his Country, we are enjoined to cultivate peace and honest friendship with all nations. The nature of our Government, and the best interests of our people, inculcate this policy upon us; and it is no less dictated to us by the voice of humanity, of reason, and of religion. The products of our industry are much more than sufficient for our home consumption, and furnish employment for the enterprising merchant, and adventurous mariner, by whose aid they seek a market in every part of the habitable globe—where they are exchanged for the productions of other countries, and each nation is mutually benefitted and conciliated by the "delightful arts of peace." It would seem then that a free and commercial intercourse, wherein each nation allowed to the other, liberal and reciprocal privileges, was most consonant to the interest and welfare of all; but nations are governed by the same selfish feelings, and swayed by the same passions, as individuals, and are apt to regard with envy and jealousy, the prosperity and increasing power of each other. It is much to be feared that Great Britain has been actuated by some such unfriendly feeling in her recent order issued by the King in Council, which prohibited our trade to her West India colonies. These islands are dependent upon the United States for many of the necessities of life, which can be supplied to them by us, at a much cheaper rate than they can be obtained from elsewhere; and, it would seem to be no great favour to permit them to be carried in our own vessels: but it has been the unceasing effort of the British Government, ever since our Independence, to engross this trade for the benefit of her own merchants, ship owners and seamen. It is not only valuable for its employment of our shipping, but it is also of great importance as a nursery for our seamen, without whom, our Navy would be inefficient. As our Government could not consent to surrender this carrying trade into the hands of Great Britain, and permit her ships from her colonies freely to enter our ports with their produce, while they exclude ours—the subject early engaged the attention of Congress, and was referred by the House of Representatives to a committee, who recommended the passage of a law to counterveil this policy, by prohibiting (after the 30th of September next) the admission into our ports of British or any other vessels coming from those colonies from which our vessels are excluded. The Bill further authorized the President of the United States to open the ports of the United States to British vessels coming from the colonies, and to permit them to enter with their cargoes on the same terms our own vessels are allowed to do, "provided the vessels of the United States with their cargoes, shall be admitted into the British possessions abroad, on the same terms as British vessels are admitted from the United States," &c. This Bill was amended by the House of Representatives, so as to prohibit the commercial intercourse with the British colonial possessions, (as the Canadas, &c.) by land, as well as by sea, in the event of the British restrictions not being removed. Before this Bill had passed the House of Representatives, a bill was received which had been passed by the Senate on the same subject. The Senate Bill enacted, that after the 31st of December next, no other or higher duties of impost or tonnage, and no other or higher duties or charges of any kind, upon goods, wares or merchandize, imported from certain specified free ports of the British colonies, in British vessels, should be levied in the United States, than upon vessels of the United States and the like goods, &c. imported in them from said colonies.

The Bill further provided that the Acts of Congress of 1823, 1820, and 1818, regulating this commercial intercourse, should be suspended until the 31st of December, except so much as imposes discriminating duties on the tonnage and cargoes of foreign vessels. It was further provided, that if at any time before the 31st of December, the President should receive satisfactory

evidence that the prohibition of the commercial intercourse between the United States and the colonies of Great Britain, mentioned in the Order of Council of the 27th July, 1826, had been removed, and that no discriminating duties of tonnage or impost were levied upon the vessels of the United States, or upon merchandize, the produce or manufacture thereof, he should be authorized to issue his proclamation, declaring that the acts (before mentioned) were repealed.

An amendment to this Bill was made by the House of Representatives, by which it was in substance provided that in case the President should not issue his proclamation, the acts of Congress of 1818 and 1820, should be revived, and the act of 1823 repealed. To this amendment the Senate disagreed, and the House of Representatives refusing to recede, and both Houses adhering, the bill was lost; so that the trade remains under the British Order in Council and our Act of 1823.

The act of 1818, interdicted commercial intercourse in British vessels, with ports closed against the United States. The act of 1820, in edicted intercourse in British vessels with all the British American colonies, and prohibited the importation of their produce, except the produce of each colony imported directly from itself. These countervailing measures on the part of the United States, were followed by the British Act of June, 1822, already mentioned, which opened certain specified ports in the West Indies to American vessels coming directly from the United States, with certain enumerated articles, &c. This act enabled the King, by Order in Council, to prohibit the intercourse with any country which did not allow to British vessels the same or like privileges granted by it to the vessels of such country. Our act of 1823, suspended the acts of 1818 and 1820 as to the British colonial ports opened to us by this act of June 1822, and authorized the President, if satisfied that no other or higher duties or charges were levied upon vessels of the United States, and goods, wares and merchandize imported therein, into said colonies from the United States, than upon British vessels and the like goods, &c. imported therein into the said colonial ports from elsewhere, to issue his proclamation declaring that no other or higher duties or charges, &c. should be levied upon British vessels, and upon goods, &c. imported from the said colonial ports into the United States, than upon the vessels of the United States and the like goods, &c. imported therein from the said ports.

The use of the word *elsewhere*, in the act of 1823, has led to the whole difficulty respecting the West India trade. Our government contends that this term includes the British dominions themselves as well as those of other countries—and therefore that before Great Britain can claim the benefit of this act, our vessels and their cargoes should be subjected to no other or higher duties or charges, than those to which *British* vessels and their cargoes are subject, notwithstanding such cargoes may be the produce of some of her other colonies. Great Britain contends that this would be interfering with her domestic commerce, and regulations of revenue, and that the West India islands should be admitted into our ports on the same terms as the sugar of Louisiana.

It is much to be hoped that Great Britain will avail herself of the earliest opportunity to return to a friendly intercourse, wherein each nation accords to the other reciprocal privileges, and derives mutual benefits.

We have preserved our peaceful relations with France, although against her we have just grounds of complaint. During the reign of Buonaparte, and before, American property to a vast amount, was seized in the ports of France, and countries subject to her, and confiscated under the most shameful and lawless pretences. Negotiations have been carried on for many years, for the purpose of indemnity to our Citizens who have suffered from these deprivations, and every artifice of diplomacy has been used by France to delay or debar it.

We have compelled Spain to yield us the Floridas as a compensation for the property of our Citizens, taken under similar circumstances; and the honor of the nation, and its sacred duty to its citizens, requires that France also should make redress. Her unwillingness to do so, is the more injurious, as she has satisfied European nations for similar claims.

Having thus briefly, Fellow-Citizens, presented you a view of our Foreign Relations, I will direct your attention to our internal or home concerns, and will first endeavor to exhibit to you the state of the National Treasury.

By the Report of the Secretary of the Treasury, the aggregate amount of the National Debt on the 1st of October, 1826, was 75,923,151 dollars and 47 cents, or near seventy-six millions of dollars. This amount includes the residue of the Revolutionary Debt, amounting to more than thirteen millions, and the sum of seven millions subscribed to the Bank of the United States, in lieu of which the U. States own an equal amount in the stock of that Bank. The residue of the debt, amounting to near fifty-six millions, has been contracted since the 1st January, 1812. A payment on the 1st January, 1827, reduces this debt to about seventy-four millions;—of this amount, about thirty-two millions bears interest at 5 per cent.—12 or 13 millions, an interest of five per cent.—about sixteen millions, an interest of four and a half per cent.—and upwards of thirteen millions, being the remnant of the Revolutionary Debt, an interest of three per cent. By the act of the 3d March, 1817, ten millions of dollars are annually appropriated to the Sinking Fund, for the redemption and payment of the Public Debt. In addition to this, acts are occasionally passed borrowing large sums to be applied to the payment of this debt. Whenever money can be borrowed by the government at a less interest than six per cent, it is obviously advantageous to do so, as thereby a debt bearing six per cent. interest, may be paid by the creation of an equal amount of debt bearing a less interest, which makes an annual saving, sometimes to a very large amount.\*

\* Some of these estimates were reduced by Congress—particularly those for Fortifications, from which nearly \$200,000 were deducted.

The receipts of the Treasury for the three first quarters of the year 1826, amounted to a little under nineteen millions six hundred thousand dollars, and the estimated receipt for the fourth quarter, was six millions three hundred thousand dollars.

Of this revenue, about twenty-four millions are derived from the customs, or duties on imposts and tonnage—the residue, from the sales of the public lands, dividends on United States' Bank stock, arrearages of the old internal duties and direct tax, &c. The receipts for the year 1827, are estimated at \$23,150,000—and the expenditures (including the application of ten millions towards the payment of the National Debt,) at \$20,702,954, to which may be added an appropriation of \$500,000 for the gradual increase of the Navy—making the total estimated expenditure \$21,202,954. The items of these expenditures, (exclusive of the sums applied towards the payment of the National Debt and the increase of the Navy,) were estimated as follows:

Civil List,	\$1,263,394
Miscellaneous,	302,155
Foreign Intercourse,	261,000
Expenditure of the Army, including Mil. Acad.	2,081,255
Fortifications, Armories, Arsenals, and Ordnance,	1,171,400
Revolutionary and Militia Pensions,	1,571,240
Indian Department,	181,224
Arrearages,	20,000
Internal Improvement,	202,000
Naval Establishment, including Marine Corps,	3,230,260.

A Bill establishing a uniform system of Bankruptcy throughout the United States, occupied a large portion of the time of the Senate, during this last session, but was finally rejected by a small majority. This Bill provided (in substance) that in case of inability to pay debts, or what is commonly called insolvency, the property of the insolvent should be equally divided among his creditors, in proportion to their demands against him, and in case he had conducted himself honestly, that he should be discharged from further liability.

The insolvent laws of the different states had, as was said, involved this subject in great confusion, and enabled a person in failing circumstances, to give unjust preferences to particular creditors, instead of making a fair division of his effects among them all; and the Constitution of the United States seemed to provide against this mischief by giving to Congress power to pass uniform laws on the subject of bankruptcy. A clause was introduced into this bill enabling persons who were not merchants or traders, (as farmers and others) to take the benefit of this bill or not, (at their option). A Bill imposing high duties upon woollen goods imported into the United States, usually called the Tariff Bill, passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 108 to 99. These duties were so increased as to amount to a prohibition of the introduction of many kinds of goods which are usually worn by most of our fellow-citizens—and the duties were lightest upon the finest quality of goods. As the operation of such a Bill would be very severe upon our State, particularly upon the farming and mercantile classes, who would be burdened for the promotion of manufactures in the Northern and Eastern States, and would, as I thought, materially diminish the revenue which is now derived almost entirely from imposts, I deemed it my duty to oppose it. The Bill was not acted on in the Senate for want of time; there is no doubt however that the attempt to pass it will be renewed in the next Congress, with increased energy and anxiety.

The Constitution gives to Congress the power of organizing and disciplining the Militia of the Union.—Under this power, a board of distinguished officers, selected from the Regular Army and Militia, were convened at Washington, who prepared a system of Cavalry Tactics, and also recommended to Congress for adoption. The board seem to be of opinion, that the number of the militia now subjected to duty, might be advantageously reduced; by requiring those only to do duty who are between the ages of 21 and 30; that a less number might be better armed, equipped and disciplined; that the frequent ordinary musters under the present system, are productive of no good consequence, but are rather injurious. They propose to divide the Union into grand divisions, and to establish camps of instruction for officers, in each division, to be continued for ten days in succession in each year. This plan has not yet been finally acted upon by Congress, farther than to appropriate a sum of money for the printing and distribution of the systems of tactics, throughout the United States. An act was passed for the gradual improvement of the Navy of the United States, by which \$500,000 were annually appropriated, for six years; for the purpose of procuring and preserving valuable ship timber, as live oak, &c. for the use of the Navy—and for the construction of two Dry Docks, on the most approved plan, one to be located on the North and the other on the South of the Potomac. This Bill originated in the Senate, with a provision for a Naval Academy; but the House of Representatives, by a small majority, struck out this useful appendage to a Navy.

I have thus endeavored, Fellow-Citizens, to give you a concise and impartial view of such great measures and interests as I deemed most important. If there should be any subjects of minor importance which I have omitted, I shall be happy to supply the omission in the more agreeable mode of personal communication.

It may perhaps be improper in a detail of legislative proceedings, and in rendering you an account of my conduct as your Representative, to introduce the subject of the next Presidential election; but I cannot forbear expressing my satisfaction that there are and will be (as is believed almost universally) but two Candidates—so that the election cannot devolve upon the House of Representatives, but must be made by the electoral colleges; in which, one or the other candidate must obtain a majority of the suffrages of the People as they are given by the Electors—upon whomsoever that choice may devolve, I trust I know my duty too well as a good citizen, not to yield him an honest support.

I believe our present Chief Magistrate to be an enlightened and experienced statesman, and that he is honestly disposed to promote what he deems the best and greatest interests of our country. The journals of Congress will show that I have not yielded the administration an indiscriminate support, nor have I been guided by a blind and prejudiced opposition. I have endeavored to give to every measure proposed, a calm and patient consideration, and when I deemed it conducive to the national welfare, I have supported it without regard to its source, whether it came from the administration or their opponents.

This I deemed an upright course, and I felt that I should do my Constituents great injustice if I adopted any other.

The lively gratitude I feel for the honorable testimonial of your confidence which I have already received, impels me to proffer you my services as your Representative in the Twentieth Congress.

If you should think proper again to confide your interests to my care, I will endeavor to serve you with zeal and fidelity.

I am, sincerely,

Your friend and fellow-citizen,

JOHN H. BRYAN.

NEWBERN, March 16, 1827.

\* This plan was adopted at this Session, and the Secretary of the Treasury was authorized to borrow 16 millions of dollars, at 5 per cent. to be applied to the extinguishment of the same amount of Government debt at 6 per cent.