

TO THE HONORABLE

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ALTHOUGH you were elected to Congress, certainly without my concurrence, yet I presume that as a Citizen of the District which you represent, I may claim the honour of being considered one of your "Constituents." As such your Circular of the 4th instant, is addressed to me—and as such I take the liberty of commenting upon it. The question between you and the People is not, whether the War in which we are engaged is to be prosecuted with vigour—whether obedience is due to the Law which declares it, or whether the personal and pecuniary services which it exacts ought to be rendered? Upon these points there can be no doubt, no difference of opinion. Here will be found that unanimity of sentiment which becomes Americans. All are indeed ready to rally around the standard of their Country. But the momentous subject of discussion at the bar of your Constituents is, ought that War to have been declared? Are you justified before them for having involved your Country in all its horrors and calamities?

You give us, Sir, at full length the President's Message and endeavour to reinforce its persuasions to War by embellishments and repetitions of your own. Discarding whatever is calculated to mislead or perplex us, let us fairly and plainly examine what are the grounds upon which this appeal to arms is attempted to be justified. The Impressment of our Seamen forms in your Circular, a conspicuous cause of War. It is not, it cannot be pretended by you that any new claim has been advanced on this subject by our enemy—or that their practice has of late been particularly injurious to our Seamen. You know, or ought to know, that the British never did assert the right to impress American Seamen—and that they never refuse to surrender them when the evidences of their citizenship are exhibited. They do indeed claim the right of taking their own Seamen out of our Ships & their officers in exercising this right no doubt do occasionally impress Americans. The similarity of language, manners, and dress renders it difficult to distinguish between them, & furnishes sometimes a pretext and often a real cause for mistake. If this matter did not admit of regulation, and the British refused to come to any just arrangements upon the subject, then indeed might we stand justified in resorting to the last argument of Nations, to the sword, to settle it.—But is it so?—A man who has had our opportunities ought to know that the British Government did offer to the American Commissioners Munroe and Pinckney to pass a law punishing the impressment of Americans if we would pass a law which should prohibit the granting of protections to British Sailors. This fact is stated in the letters of these Gentlemen to Mr. Madison of 14th Nov. 1806. You know also that an informal arrangement was actually made with the British Government, which designed to prevent and which these Gentlemen believed would prevent all impressments from American Ships except in notorious cases of desertion where we could not with reason object to them.—This arrangement was rejected by Mr. Jefferson.—You speak of six thousand applications for relief from impressed Seamen. Mr. Blackledge, you owe it to truth and to candour to speak more plainly—less insidiously.—Do you mean to be understood as asserting that there now is that number of impressed Americans?—It is not so.—Do you mean to state that since the institution of the American Government up to this day, during a period of twenty three years, this is the sum total of all the cases, spurious as well as genuine, which have been heard of? If so, why did you not state further how many of them were from persons not entitled to redress because they were not Americans?—how many were released immediately upon application? or how many thought proper to remain notwithstanding their liberation was ordered?—And why did you not inform the People that as late as the 15th of April last the British Minister Mr. Foster offered to procure the release of all such Americans as our administration would give him a list of?—And pray Sir, where did you learn the interesting story about the nephews of our Immortal Washington? Was it from the same authority which informed you of Commodore Rodger's dispatch and the Capture of the Belvidere?—Upon the question of impressment I feel as lively a solicitude as the most furious Democrat in or out of Congress.—I never would tolerate in any Nation the arrogant pretension to force our Seamen into their service. But it is apparent that this subject of difference might have been settled in

we would abandon our claim to protect British Seamen by our flag. I am not willing to involve my Country in a War to save British Sailors from impressment, and to the discouragement of our native Tars. One cause of War if I understand your Circular we were fortunate enough to purchase from John Henry at the moderate price of fifty thousand dollars of the public money. According to the statement of this "unprincipled" man, he was employed by the Governor of Canada at a time when the Governor dreaded a war and invasion from America, to spy out our secrets, to discover the extent and nature of our differences, and to encourage the Eastern Men, if they were so disposed, to resist the menaced War at the risk of a dissolution of the Union. How much of this is true depends greatly on the credit of this "artful" and bribed informer. Care was taken by the President to prevent his examination, by sending him off in a Public Ship to France before his communications were published. But if it be all true, and even if his employment had been sanctioned by the British Government (and you know that Mr. Foster and the British Ministry deny that it was) are we now to go to war about it to prevent the British from using Spies hereafter? Then I presume the war must be perpetual. Certainly upon the same principle we ought to have declared war against Spain also. She formerly had her agent Powers successfully employed with Judge Innes and others in Kentucky planning a severance of the Union.—Certainly on the same principle we furnish a just cause of war against ourselves by the actual employment of similar Agents in East-Florida. The President insinuates that it is probable, and you boldly charge it as a fact that the Indian war has been excited by British Agents. Upon this subject your Constituents demand of you the proofs which bear out your assertion. John Randolph early in the session called for them in Congress, & called for them in vain. Mr. Foster thought it due to the honour of his Government to repel the accusation with disdain.—Where is the evidence?—If it exist, let it be given and it at once justifies you in voting for war.—It will vindicate your vote more than volumes of such Circulars as you have written.—But if it do not exist—tarnish not the honour of your Country by a calumny against its enemy. Until such a charge be proven, and instead of proof you give us only furious declamation and abuse, it ought not to be believed of any civilized nation. I have heard it said that English arms & Blankets have been found upon the Indians.—Is it not known that these are common articles of traffic—and in fact that they are in part furnished to the Indians from our own government stores? The Citizens of our frontiers it is said, impute the Indian war to British instigation.—I fear that it may be much more justly attributed to another cause, to the cupidity of our frontier men for the Indian lands. At all events we demand, and we have a right to demand that this charge be proven before we hold you guilty of the blood which may be shed on account of it.

Impressments—British Spies—and Indian Cruelties, are convenient topics to excite popular feeling, and to make up if possible for the deficiency in the cause which alone occasioned the declaration of war.—If Sir you have any ground to stand upon warranting your vote for an appeal to arms, it is to be found alone in the Orders in Council.—This was the point upon which hung the question of peace or war—and this merits an examination of a more particular kind.—In reviewing these Orders in Council you seem utterly to have forgot that they had any connection whatever with the French Decrees; and yet justice requires they should be considered as flowing out of these and as a continuance and return of the same species of commercial warfare which these introduced. The Berlin Decree issued by Bonaparte on the 21st Nov. 1806, declared Great Britain blockaded by Sea and land—prohibited all commerce with her or in her manufactures—and made lawful prize of all merchandize coming from her, or her colonies, or of her manufactures.—To this decree succeeded the British orders in Council of January and November 1807, modified in April 1809. These orders in Council prohibited all trade to France or in French manufactures.—Bonaparte then followed with his Milan, Rambouillet, and Bayonne Decrees.—By them he endeavoured to annihilate commerce. Every Ship whatever might be its cargo that had been at a British Port—which had been visited by a British Cruiser—that had paid any duties to the British Government—or that had an English article on board was (to use his new phrase) *denationalized* and made the

subject of capture. All American vessels that had entered his ports were ordered to be confiscated and sold, and the proceeds paid into his private purse. The object of this new and barbarous mode of warfare was plainly to be seen. On the part of France the design was to aim a mortal blow at the British commerce, and to intimidate and terrify neutrals into a concurrence with this plan. On the part of England it was expected by the severe pressure which should be brought upon France to compel Bonaparte to abandon his desperate scheme, which threatened her very existence. The French Emperor declared that his decrees should remain the fundamental laws of his Empire until the English should renounce what he called the new principles of blockade—and that they should be enforced against all Nations who did not agree to make common cause with him. The British government announced that they would repeal their orders when and not before France annulled her decrees. Under the combined operation of these decrees and orders, American Commerce was harassed, & various expedients were from time to time adopted to relieve it. On the 5th Aug 1810, the French Secretary for foreign affairs promised our government that the Berlin and Milan decrees should be revoked on the 1st Nov. following, provided that Great Britain would in consequence of that declaration repeal her orders in Council and renounce the principles of blockade, or if she did not, that America would enforce respect for her neutral rights. This vague promise the President of the United States was pleased to take for the deed itself. On the 2d Nov. he proclaimed that the French decrees were revoked, and demanded of Britain to perform her promise of repealing her orders in Council. The British Government on the 29th December in answer to this application declared that they were then ready to abandon the orders if this were all which the repeal of the French decrees rendered necessary. But that the promise of Bonaparte required also that they should first renounce what he called the new principles of blockade—that is to say, as stated in the Berlin decree, the right of blockading by a maritime force the commercial unfortified towns of their enemy, his ports harbours, and the mouths of his rivers. This right consecrated by the Law of Nations, the most valuable which their naval superiority gave them, and which they deemed essential to their safety they refused to renounce.—A non-intercourse law with Great Britain was then enforced—which has ever since continued. In the mean while the French continued to plunder, to burn, and to sink our vessels coming under the operation of the Berlin and Milan decrees, and to evince in the clearest and most unquestionable manner, what might have been foreseen at first, what had been declared in the decrees themselves, what had been repeated in every shape official and unofficial, that nothing less than War with Britain would procure for us an exemption from their depredations.—A long, and embarrassed correspondence, as to the extent in which a partial repeal of the French decrees might produce a like repeal of the British orders, was carried on between our Secretary of State and the British Minister. Nothing satisfactory did or could result from it. To cut the Gordian knot, war was declared with England.

This, sir, is as correct a statement of the important facts connected with the question as brevity will admit.—It is carefully extracted from official documents before me. Now, sir, upon this statement it is apparent that we had just cause of offence both with France and England.—But you are called upon in the name of your Constituents,—and you cannot escape the call, you must answer it—you are called upon to say why, under these circumstances, did you select France as a friend and England as an enemy?—why did you embark your Country on the side of France in the tremendous War which she wages against her Adversary? It is idle—it is worse than idle—to pretend that Barlow's dispatches warranted any reliance upon French justice or French friendship. They were sufficient to convince the most incredulous that nothing could, nothing would be done to remove our well founded complaints, until we should take the last fatal step to procure the Emperor's good will—become the enemy of his enemy.—Barlow had been ten months in France dancing attendance upon the Emperor's servants—and had obtained literally nothing.—Britain you say, was the first to infringe our rights—and has been the first to tell us she will not recede from her injustice.—No part of this excuse is true.—France by her Berlin decree commenced this anti neutral system.—The Orders in Council were subsequent in

date and retaliatory in principle.—Your associates in Politics have sometimes indeed referred to the British Blockade of May 1806, as giving birth to the Berlin decree. It is unnecessary now to examine with what propriety this has been enforced into the controversy, since the dispute on this question was completely settled between Mr. Foster and Mr. Monroe.—Mr. Foster declared that upon a revocation of the Orders in Council, this blockade will not continue without an adequate force to maintain it—and with such a force it is admitted on our part to be legal.—Britain has not "been the first to tell us she will not recede from her injustice."—In the last solemn communication of the British Minister of June 14th, he positively declares—"I will now say that I feel entirely authorized to assure you that if you can at any time produce a full and unconditional repeal of the French decrees, as they have a right to demand it in your character of a neutral nation; and that if disengaged from any connection with the question concerning our maritime rights, we shall be ready to meet you with a revocation of the Orders in Council."—But what says our good friend the Emperor Napoleon? He explicitly tells us and the world, in the Report of the Duke of Bassano, his Minister of Foreign Relations, to his Senate on the 10th March last, that until the Neutral flag shall protect enemy's property—until the right of search shall not be exercised by the armed vessel within cannon shot—and until blockades be confined to those ports only which are invested, besieged, and in danger of being taken—the decrees of Berlin & Milan shall subsist for those nations whose flags are *denationalized*.—If this be not an avowal of his determination not to recede from his injustice, tell me I pray you, how is such a determination to be expressed? The Decrees are to be enforced until we force the British to adopt principles which the Law of Nations do not warrant; which we have no right to insist upon; and which we cannot compel them to admit.—They are then to continue forever—unless we take side with him and thus save our flag from pollution.

In the announcement of the causes of war against G. Britain, and of the injuries from her to which we ought not to submit, you mention an act of Parliament of March 1808, imposing a duty on American cotton exported from England to France. At the time when Great Britain in retaliation of the Berlin decree had prohibited all trade of neutrals to France, she offered to them by this act the alternative either to enter England, pay the transit duty and to proceed to France, or stay away from France altogether. This alternative which the British ministry represented as an accommodation to the American shipper, was received by us as equally injurious to our rights, and as ungrateful to our feelings as the Orders in Council which it professed to mitigate.—We remonstrated, and by order of the King, Dec. 1808, the duty was repealed.—This revocation was communicated by Mr. Canning to Mr. Pinckney 24th Dec. 1808, & by Mr. Madison to Congress in June 1809.

Can it be possible, Mr. Blackledge, that you are so ignorant as really not to know that the collection of this transit duty was abandoned in the same year in which it was imposed—Or are you so un candid as to urge upon your Constituents as an existing cause of war, an injury which has ceased to exist years ago?—With equal justice may Great Britain inflame the minds of her people to war with us by alledging that we violated the treaty of peace in interposing legal obstacles to the recovery of the debts due her merchants—or you have inserted in your list of injuries the detention of the western posts,—points settled in the treaty of 1794.

Your remarks upon the possibility of Great Britain taxing the United States to the amount of twenty millions annually and the illustration of your argument by a statement of the effect of a tax on the article of Pork in English and French markets, merits notice only from its extreme ignorance and absurdity!

You now know that Great Britain has long since abandoned the claim to collect a transit duty, and you cannot assert that she has since advanced any such pretension. Your calculation then is founded upon the possibility that she may make such a claim. If imaginary fears of possible future injuries, are to be considered as cause of war, with what nation shall we remain at peace. Your calculations will apply with equal force to all nations, and will justify an immediate war with the Emperor of China as much as with Great Britain. The only legitimate causes of war is the redress of injuries which exist—but you assign us