Circular

In obedience to the orders of Congress, I have the honor to transmit you the present state of the troops of your line, by which you will perceive how few men you will have left after the 1st of June next. When I inform you also that the regiments of the other lines will be in general as much reduced as yours, you will be able to judge how exceedingly weak the Army will be at that period, and how essential it is the States should make the most vigorous exertions to replace the discharged men as early as possible.

Congress are now preparing a plan for a new establishment of their Army which when completed they will transmit to the several States with requisitions for their respective quotas. I have no doubt it will be a primary object with them to have the States in the War, and it appears to me a point of importance to our Independence that I cannot forbear entering into the motives which ought to determine the States without hesitation or alternative to take their measures decisive by for that object.

I am religiously persuaded that the duration of the War and the greatest part of the misfortunes and perplexities we have hitherto experienced, are chiefly to be attributed to the system of temporary enlistments.
And we on the commencement raised an Army for the
War, just as we now within the reach of the abilities of these
States to raise and maintain, we should not have fairly
and those military checks which have so frequently
beaten us, or should we have incurred such
enormous expenditures as have destroyed our paper
Currency and with it all public credit. A moderate
command, free on a permanent establishment, was
the of acquiring the discipline essential to military
operations would have been able to make head against
the enemy without comparison better than the things
of Militia which at certain periods have been, not
in the field, but on their way to and from the field;
for from that want of permanence which also returns
all Militia, and of that cowardly which cannot be
exercised upon them, it has always been found impossi-
cable to detain the greatest part of them in service
for the time for which they have been called out and this
has been commonly so short, that in have had a great
proportion of the time two fets of Men to feed and
pay, one coming to the Army and the other going
from it. From this circumstance and from the extra-
ordinary waste and consumption of provisions, from
Camp equipage, Arms, &c., and every other article
incident to irregular troops, it is easy to conceive what
an immense increase of public expense has been produced
from
from the source of which I am speaking. I might add the diminution of our Agriculture by calling off at critical Seasons the Labour employed in it, as has happened in instances without number.

In the enumeration of Articles wasted, I mentioned Clothing. It may be objected that the term of engagement of the Lands do not include this, but if we want Service from the Men particularly in the cold Season we are obliged to supply theirs notwithstanding, and they leave us before the Cloaths are half worn out.

But there are evils still more shocking that have befallen us. The interval between the dissipation of one Army and the collection of another has more than once threatened us with ruin, which humanity speaking nothing but the superannuation or folly of the enemy could have saved us from. Now did our cause suffer at the close of '76, when with a little more than two thousand Men we were driven before the enemy from Jersey and obliged to take post on the other side of the Delaware to make a show of coming Philadelphia, while in reality nothing was more easy to them, with a little enterprise and industry than to make their passage good to that City and despoil the remaining force which still kept alive our aspiring
offering opposition. What hundreds there from despoothing our little Army and giving a fatal blow to our affairs during all the subsequent winter, instead of remaining in a state of hoped inactivity and permitting us to know about their quarters when we had scarcely troops sufficient to mount the ordinary guards? After being vast two Battles and Philadelphia in the following Campaigns for want of these numbers and that degree of discipline which we might have acquired by a permanent force in the first instance, in what a small and furious situation did we again find ourselves in the Winter of 77 at Valley Forge, within a day's march of the enemy, with little more than a third of their strength, unable to defend our position or retreat for it for want of the means of transportation. What but the frustration of our Army enabled the enemy to detach so boldly to the Southwest in 78 and 79 to take possession of two States Georgia and South Carolina, while we were obliged here to be the spectators of their weakness, set at defiance by a Garrison of six thousand and regular troops, acceptable only where by a Bridge which nature had formed but of which we were unable to take advantage from the great weakness, apprehensive even for our own safety.

How did the same Garrison insult the mainland of these States the ensuing Spring and threaten the destruction
distinction of all our Baggage and Arms, and by a
good countenance more than by an ability to defend
them? And what will be our Situation this winter, our
Army by the 1st of January diminished to a little
more than a sufficient Garrison for West Point; the
enemy at full liberty to ravage the Country wherever
they please, and leaving a handful of Men at New-York,
to undertake Expeditions for the reduction of the State,
which for want of adequate means of defense will it is most to be dreaded add to the number of
their conquests and to the examples of our want of
energy and wisdom?

The loss of Canada is the loss of the fate
of the brave Montgomery compelled to a rash attempt
by the immediate prospect of being left without troops
might be enumerated in the catalogue of evils that
have sprung from this fruitful source.

We not only see those dangers and suffer
these losses for want of a constant force equal to
our exigencies, but while we labor under this impediment it is impossible there can ever be any own
a system in our finances. If we meet with any fresh blow the great sources which the
moment requires to stop the progress of the mischief
surely oblige us to depart from general principles
to run into any expedients or to adopt any expedient
means...
The idea is chimerical and that we have to long pursued or it is a reflection on the judgement of a Nation so enlightened as we are, as well as a strong proof of the empire of prejudice over reason. If we continue in the information we shall deserve to lose the object we are contending for.

America has been almost arraigned out of her liberties—We have frequently heard the details of the Militia settled upon one and another cause by Men who judge only from the surface, by Men who had particular views in misrepresenting, by visionary Men whose confidence easily swallowed every vague story in support of a favorite Hypothesis.

I solemnly declare there was intended to a single instance that can counterbalance all opinion of Militia as raw troops being fit for the real business of fighting. I have found them useful as light parties to skirmish in the Woods, but unqualified of making or justifying a serious attack. This prejudice is only acquired by habit of discipline and service. I mean not to detract from the merit of the Militia these zeal and spirit upon a variety of occasions have intitled them to the highest applause, but it is of the greatest importance we should learn to estimate them rightly.
We may expect very little from one, but we must not expect from any, for none for which Regulars alone are fit. The late Battle of Monmouth is a melancholy comment upon this doctrine. The Militia fled at the first fire, and left the Continental troops surrounded in every fire and encompassed by numbers to combat for safety instead of victory. The enemy themselves have extenuated to this hour.

An effect of short enlistments which I have not yet taken notice of, is that the constant fluctuation of their men is one of the sources of disaffection to the officers. Just either by great trouble, fatigue and separation (with which the bearing of recruits is attended) they have brought their men to some kind of order; they have the satisfaction to see them go home, and to know that the day is gone to recommence the next campaign. In Regiments so constituted, an officer has neither satisfaction nor credit in his command.

Every motive which can arise from a consideration of our circumstances, either in a domestic or foreign point of view, calls upon us to abandon temporary expedients and substitute something durable, systematic and substantial. This applies as well to our civil administration as to our military establishment. It is as necessary to give Congress the common head sufficient power to direct...
that the common sense as it is to raise an Army for the War, but I should go out of my province to expostulate on Civil Affairs — I cannot forbear adding a few more remarks.

Our finances are in an alarming state of derangement. Public credit is almost ruined, at its last stage. The people begin to be dissatisfied with the sable mode of conducting the War, and with the uneffectual burdens imposed upon them, which the light in comparison with what other nations feel are from their novelty heavy to them. They lose their confidence in Government spac...
all the reports of the officers employed in collecting them are gloomy.

These circumstances combine to show the necessity of immediately adopting a plan that will give more energy to Government, more vigor and more satisfaction to the Army. Without it we have every thing to fear. I am persuaded of the sufficiency of our resources if properly directed.

Should the requisitions of Congress by any accident not arrive before the Legislature is about to rise, I beg to recommend that a plan be devised which is likely to be effectual for raising the Men that will be required for the War, leaving it to the Executive to apply it to the Public which Congress will fix. I flatter myself however the requisitions will arrive in time.

The present Crisis of our Affairs appear to me so serious as to call upon one as a good Citizen to offer my sentiments freely for the safety of this Republic. I hope the motives will secure the Liberty their
taken

I have the honor to be with the highest Respect Sir

Your most obedt Servant

G. Washington

New Hampshire