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Hartford, Novem: 22: 1780

Your Excellency is apprized of the Convention at this Place of Commissioners from your State, and the States of Massachusetts, Rhode Island & Providence Plantations, Connecticut and New York.

Although the original Design of our meeting, was principally to confer upon the most Eligible Mode for completing the Army, and drawing forth the necessary Supplies, from the States we Represent; Yet, as in considering this Subject, we were naturally led to others equally interesting, we conceive it our Duty, to communicate to our Constituents the Result of our Deliberations.

Notwithstanding we have reason to expect every Aid from our benevolent Ally, and notwithstanding Spain has engaged in the War with us, and the Probability that the other European Powers favor our Cause, yet in other Respects we find our Situation to be truly critical and alarming. — Our Army is already or will be shortly, so reduced in point of Numbers, as not to be able to furnish competent Garrisons for the requisite Posts. — Their Pay in Arrear for many Months. — Frequently during the Campaign totally without Provisions, and their present Supplies very precarious, no magazines being provided. — The public Treasuries destitute of Cash, and the Public Officers destitute of Credit, — and almost the whole Northern and Western Frontiers exposed and undefended.

Whence these Misfortunes have arisen, we will not presume to determine; some causes were beyond human prevention, but with Respect to others, we conceive there is a Remedy within the powers of the several States. — To these points therefore we mean to confine ourselves, and to them we most earnestly intreat the attention of your State.

Our present Embarrassments we Imagine to arise in a great Measure, from a Defect in the present Government of the United States. — All Government supposes the power of Coercion, this power however, in the general Government of the Continent never did exist, or which has produced equally disagreeable Consequences, never has been exercised. — It is true that the Powers of Congress have never been explicitly defined, but by the necessarily implied Compact between the States at the commencement of the War, it may be certainly Inferred, that Congress was vested with every power, Essential to the Common Defence, and which had the prosecution of the War and the establishment of our general Liberties for its Immediate Object.

Waving the Question however as to what were originally, or now are, Rightfully the Powers of Congress, the Fact is, that they have hitherto applied to the several States by way of Recommendationatory Requisitions, that the different States have in some Instances, neglected, & in others refused to comply, that Congress have not in any Instance, used Concise means to enforce a Compliance, and their power now is become Questionable. — It must be evident to every sensible mind that under these circumstances, the Resources and force of the Country, can never be properly united & drawn forth. — From this Conviction we have passed the Resolutions N^o 3 and N^o 4 which we consider as temporary expedients, until a perpetual Confederation between the States shall be Established. — The measure proposed in the latter Resolution, may appear to be rather harsh, but let it be remembered, that weak Inefficient Governments, incapable to answer the great end of Society, defence against foreign Invasion, must and will end in Despotism, and that the States Individually considered, while they endeavour to retain too much of their Independance, may finally loose the Whole. —

There is another evil flowing from the same source which tho' possibly not fatal, yet is highly Injurious, and Requires a Remedy. — It is suggested that Congress have no power to punish such of their servants, as do not belong to ^{we forbear to enter into a discussion of this question, it is sufficient that an Idea prevails, that the Jurisdiction of Congress is incompetent to these Cases.} ~~the Army~~. We have therefore intimated to Congress, the necessity of their forming a general mode, for the tryall and punishment of Persons appointed by them to the public offices, and not in the military line. — And it is our earnest wish that the several States, would lend their Aid, in making the necessary provisions by Law, for carrying into Effect the Acts of Congress which may be passed for this Purpose. — The next subject which claims our attention, is the State of Public Credit; whether it can be Immediately, wholly restored is doubtful, but we should be unjustifiable were we to leave any attempts unpaid. — No Questions are more intricate & controverted than those of Finance, we forbear therefore, to enter into a detail of Reasoning, and shall content ourselves, with merely proposing a measure which, altho' partial, yet if adopted by all the States and properly executed, would, we flatter ourselves, have a great tendency to Reestablish our Credit, and place our Finances upon a Respectable footing. —

We assume the following propositions for granted. — That we cannot by Taxes only, raise a Sum sufficient for our current Expenditures. That therefore Recourse must be had to Loans. — That future Loans cannot be obtained, unless upon the most disadvantageous Terms, without certain Funds being Established, for the Redemption of the Present, or at least for the discharge of the Interest. Under the influence of these principles we agreed to the Resolutions N^o 6.

The want of a proper and Permanent Confederation between the States, is a matter of the most serious moment, and upon Investigating the Causes of our present Embarrassments, it appeared to us, that many of them flowed from this source. We must therefore Request your Excellency, to press it upon your Legislature, to use every means, and remove every obstruction, to the Completion of the Confederation.

By the expulsion of the Enemy, we may be Emancipated from the Tyranny of Great Britain, we shall however be without a solid Hope of Peace and Freedom, unless we are properly cemented among ourselves, and altho' we feel the Calamities of War, yet we have not sufficient Inducements, to wish a period to them, until our Disputes, if other means cannot Effect it, have as it were forced us into an Union.

This Letter, with our other proceedings, we must Request your Excellency to lay before the Legislature of your State, and as the matters to which they relate, are of a most Important Nature, we flatter ourselves they will receive a ~~due~~ degree of Attention.

I have the Honor to be.

With Sentiments of the greatest Respect

Your Excellency's Most Obedient Servant,

(By Order of the Convention)

William Bradford. Pericent-

President of the Council of the State of New Hampshire

Letter from Hartford
Convention

22 Nov 1780

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Convention. Nov. 22, 1780.

Letter from the Hartford

William B. Dyer, Esq.