

AN  
ENQUIRY

INTO THE

PRINCIPLES

ON WHICH

A

COMMERCIAL SYSTEM

FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA SHOULD BE FOUNDED;

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

SOME

POLITICAL OBSERVATIONS

CONNECTED WITH THE SUBJECT.

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READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY FOR POLITICAL ENQUIRIES, CON-  
VENED AT THE HOUSE OF HIS EXCELLENCY BENJAMIN  
FRANKLIN, ESQUIRE, IN PHILADELPHIA MAY 11th, 1787.

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PRINTED AND SOLD BY ROBERT AITKEN, AT POPE'S  
HEAD, IN MARKET STREET.

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M.DCC.LXXXVII.



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*T O*

**T**HE HONORABLE THE MEMBERS  
OF THE CONVENTION, ASSEMBLED  
AT PHILADELPHIA FOR FOEDERAL  
PURPOSES, THIS ESSAY IS MOST  
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THEIR OBEDIENT AND

MOST HUMBLE SERVANT

THE AUTHOR.

May 12th, 1787.

**I** DO certify, that on this 14th of May, 1787, a Pamphlet, intituled, *An Enquiry into the Principles on which a Commercial System for the United States of America should be founded, &c.* printed by ROBERT AITKEN, was entered by him according to an Act of Assembly, in the Prothonotary's Office of Philadelphia County, on behalf of Robert Aitken, the Publisher.

J. B. SMITH, Prothon.

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A N

E N Q U I R Y

INTO THE PRINCIPLES

ON WHICH A

*COMMERCIAL SYSTEM*

FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA SHOULD BE  
FOUNDED, &c.

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**T**HERE are in every country certain important crises when exertion or neglect must produce consequences of the utmost moment. The period at which the inhabitants of these states have now arrived, will be admitted by every attentive and serious mind to be clearly of this description.

Our money absorbed by a wanton consumption of imported luxuries, a fluctuating

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ing paper medium substituting in its stead, foreign commerce extremely circumscribed and a federal government not only ineffective but disjointed, tell us indeed too plainly that further negligence may ruin us forever. Impressed with this view of our affairs, the writer of the following pages has ventured to intrude upon the public. But as neither his time nor opportunities will permit him to treat of all the great objects, which excite his apprehensions or engage his wishes, he means principally to confine himself to that part of them, which have been most subjected to his observations and enquiries.

Just opinions on our general affairs, must necessarily precede such a wise system of commercial regulations, as will extend our trade to the greatest length to which it can be carried without affecting unfavorably

unfavorably our other weighty interests. It may therefore be useful in the first place, to take a comparative view of the two most important objects in the United States—our agriculture and commerce.

In a country blest with a fertile soil, and a climate admitting steady labour, where the cheapness of land tempts the European from his home, and the manufacturer from his trade, we are led by a few moments of reflexion to fix on agriculture as the great leading interest. From this we shall find most of our other advantages result, so far as they arise from the nature of our affairs, and where they are not produced by the coercion of laws—the fisheries are the principal exception. In order to make a true estimate of the magnitude of agriculture, we must remember that it is encouraged by few or

no duties on the importation of rival produce—that it furnishes outward cargoes not only for all our own ships, but those also which foreign nations send to our ports, or in other words, that it pays for all our importations—that it supplies a part of the cloathing of our people and the food of them and their cattle—that what is consumed at home, including the materials for manufacturing, is four or five times the value of what is exported—that the number of people employed in agriculture, is at least nine parts in ten of the inhabitants of America—that therefore the planters and farmers do form the body of the militia, the bulwark of the nation—that the value of property, occupied by agriculture, is manifold greater than that of the property employed in every other way—that the settlement of our waste lands, and subdividing our improved



proved farms is every year encreasing the pre-eminence of the agricultural interest—that the resources we derive from it are at all times certain and indispensibly necessary—and lastly, that the rural life promotes health and morality by its active nature, and by keeping our people from the luxuries and vices of the towns. In short, agriculture appears to be the spring of our commerce, and the parent of our manufactures.

The commerce of America, including our exports, imports, shipping, manufactures and fisheries, may be properly considered as forming one interest. So uninformed or mistaken have many of us been, that it has been stated as the great object, and I fear it is yet believed to be the most important interest of New-England. But from the best calculations I

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have been able to make, I cannot raise the proportion of property or the number of men employed in manufactures, fisheries, navigation and trade to one-eighth of the property and people occupied by agriculture, even in that commercial quarter of the Union. In making this estimate I have deducted something from the value and population of the large towns for the idle and dissipated, for those who live upon their incomes, and for supernumerary domestic servants. But the disproportion is much greater, taking the Union at large, for several of the states have little commerce, and no manufactures—others have no commerce and scarcely manufacture any thing. The timber, iron, cordage and many other articles necessary for building ships to fish or trade—nine parts in ten of their cargoes—the subsistence of the manufac-

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turers, and much of their raw materials are the produce of our lands. In almost all of the countries of Europe the most judicious writers have considered commerce as the handmaid of agriculture; and if true there, with us it must be unquestionable. We have few manufactories to throw into the scale against the landed interest. We have in our lands full employment for our present inhabitants, and instead of sending colonies to new-discovered islands, we have adjoining townships and counties whose vacant fields await the future increase of our people.

If a comparative view of the importance of our various interests should terminate in a decided and great superiority of agriculture over all the rest combined—if emigration and natural increase are daily adding to the number of our planters and farmers—if the states are possessed of mil-

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lions of vacant acres, that court the cultivator's hand—if the settlement of these immense tracts will greatly and steadily encrease the objects of taxation, the resources, the powers of the country—if they will prove an inherent treasure of which neither folly nor chance can deprive us, let us be careful to do nothing that can interrupt this happy progress of our affairs. Should we from a misconception of our true interests, or from any other cause, form a system of commercial regulations, prejudicial to this great mass of property, and to this great body of the people, we must injure our country during the continuance of the error. I must finally return, under the disadvantages of further changes, to that plan, which it must be our sincere desire, as it is our serious duty at this time to devise.

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While I feel an absolute conviction that our true interests should restrain us from burdening or impeding agriculture in any way whatever, I am not only ready to admit, but must beg leave to urge, that sound policy requires our giving every encouragement to commerce and its connexions, which may be found consistent with a due regard to agriculture.

The communication between the different ports of every nation is a business entirely in their power—The policy of most countries has been to secure this domestic navigation to their own people. The extensive coasts, the immense bays and numerous rivers of the United States have already made this an important object, and it must increase with our population\*.—As the places at which the cargoes

\* The coasting vessels, entered at the custom house of Philadelphia in the year 1785, were 567 sail; all the other entries of sea vessels in the same year were 501.

goods of coasting vessels are delivered must be supplied with American produce from some part of the Union, and as the merchant can always have American bottoms to transport the goods of the producing state to the state consuming them, no interruption to the market of the planters and farmers can be apprehended from prohibiting transportation in foreign bottoms from port to port within the United States—A single exception may perhaps be proper, permitting foreign vessels to carry from port to port, for the purpose of finishing their sales, any goods that shall be part of the cargoes they brought into the Union, from the last foreign place at which they loaded. The fleets of colliers on the British coast evince the possible benefits of such a regulation

The consumption of fish, oil, whalebone and other articles obtained through the fisheries, in the towns and counties, that are convenient to navigation, has become much greater than is generally supposed. I am informed that no less than five thousand barrels of mackarel, salmon and pickled cod-fish, are vended in the city of Philadelphia annually; add to them the dried fish, oil, spermaceti candles, whalebone, &c. and it will be found a little fleet of sloops and schooners are employed in the business. The demand for the use of the inhabitants of those parts of the Union to which these supplies can be carried, is already considerable, and the increase of our towns and manufactures will render it more so every year. In the present state of our navigation we can be in no doubt of procuring these supplies by means of our own

own vessels. The country that interferes most with us at our own market is Nova Scotia, which also, I am informed, has had some emigrants from our fishing towns since the decline of their business. Such encouragement to this valuable branch of commerce, as would secure the benefits of it to our own people, without injuring our other essential interests, is certainly worth attention.—The Convention will probably find on consideration of this point that a duty or prohibition of foreign articles, such as our own fisheries supply, will be safe and expedient.

The article in the British trade laws, which confines the importation of foreign goods to the bottoms of the country producing them, and of their own citizens, appears applicable to our situation. By means of those two flags we should be  
certain



certain of the necessary importations, and we should throw out of each department of the carrying trade every competitor, except the ships of the nation by which the goods were raised or manufactured. All trade with several countries, such as China and India, whose vessels seldom or never make foreign voyages, would be secured into our hands. It will be found, that an application of this regulation in practice, will be attended with no difficulties or inconveniencies, and besides the immediate benefits already mentioned, our merchants will be led directly to the original market for the supplies of which we stand in need. Instead of purchasing the goods of Russia or the East-Indies in England, France or Holland, our own ships will sail directly to the fountain from whence they have flowed to us through foreign channels. The credits

given us in Europe after the peace, kept us in the practice of going to a very few places, for all our importations. But they have trusted us in many instances at a dear rate indeed, and however useful credit may be as a supplement to our means of trade in this young country, it is very certain that we should first lay out to the best advantage our funds in hand.

These are the principal encouragements to foreign commerce, which occur to me at present as proper to form a part of a permanent system for the United States. Regulations for temporary purposes, such as restrictions and prohibitions affecting particular nations, I do not mean to speak of here. I must however observe, that they should be adopted with great prudence and deliberation, as they may affect us very unfavorably, if they should be  
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tried in vain. In taking measures to promote manufactures, we must be careful that the injuries to the general interests of commerce do not exceed the advantages resulting from them. The circumstances of the country, as they relate to this business, should be dispassionately and thoroughly examined. Tho' it is confessed, that the United States have full employment for all their citizens in the extensive field of agriculture, yet as we have a valuable body of manufacturers already here, as many more will probably emigrate from Europe, who will chuse to continue at their trades, and as we have some citizens so poor as not to be able to effect a little settlement on our waste lands, there is a real necessity for some wholesome general regulations on this head. By taking care not to force manufactures in those states, where the people are fewer, tillage  
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much more profitable, and provisions dearer than in several others, we shall give agriculture its full scope in the former, and leave all the benefits of manufacturing (so far as they are within our reach) to the latter. South-Carolina, for instance, must manufacture to an evident loss, while the advancement of that business in Massachusetts will give the means of subsistence to many, whose occupations have been rendered unprofitable by the consequences of the revolution. A liberal policy on this subject should be adopted, and the produce of the southern states should be exchanged for such manufactures as can be made by the northern, free from impost.

Another inducement to some salutary regulations on this subject, will be suggested by considering some of our means of conducting manufactures. Unless business

finess of this kind is carried on, certain great *natural powers* of the country will remain inactive and uselefs. Our numerous mill seats, for example, by which flour, oil, paper, snuff, gunpowder, iron-work, woolen cloths, boards and scantling, and some other articles are prepared or perfected, would be given by providence in vain. If properly improved, they will save us an immense expence for the wages, provisions, cloathing and lodging of workmen, without diverting the people from their farms—Fire, as well as water, affords, if I may so speak, a fund of assistance, that cannot lie unused without an evident neglect of our best interests. Breweries, which we cannot estimate too highly, distilleries, sugar houses, potteries, casting and steel furnaces, and several other works are carried on by this powerful element, and attended

tended with the same savings, that were particularized in speaking of water machines—'Tis probable also that a frequent use of steam engines will add greatly to this class of factories. In some cases where fire and water are not employed, horses are made to serve the purpose as well and on much lower terms than men. The cheapness and the easy increase of these serviceable animals insure us this aid to any extent that occasion may require, which however is not likely to be very great.

The encouragement to agriculture, afforded by some manufactories, is a reason of solid weight in favor of pushing them with industry and spirit. Malt liquors, if generally used, linseed oil, starch (and were they not a poison to our morals and constitutions I might add corn, spirits)

(spirits) would require more grain to make them, than has been exported in any year since the revolution---I cannot omit to observe here, that beer strengthens the arm of the labourer without debauching him, while the noxious drink now used enervates and corrupts him---The workers in leather too of every kind, in flax and hemp, in iron, wood, stone and clay, in furs, horn, and many other articles employ either the spontaneous productions of the earth or the fruits of cultivation.

If we are convinced by these considerations, that regular factories of many kinds should be promoted in the most suitable parts of the Union, let us next consider whether the encouragements now held out to them are both sufficient and proper. The nearest rivals of our  
 manufacturers

manufacturers are those of Europe, who are subjected to the following charges in bringing their goods into our market—The merchant's commission for shipping and the same for selling, cost of packages, custom house papers in Europe, and the same with a duty of 5 per cent. here, portrages, freight, insurance, damage, interest of money, waste, and loss on exchange—These may be rated at 25 per cent on the least bulky of our manufactures†. Here is a solid premium, operating

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† We have no manufacture more compact than a piece of yard wide linen, equal to what costs 15*l.* sterling in Europe. The following minute calculation will shew the charges, under which a package of 100*l.* sterling value of that article can be imported.

	Currency.
64 pieces of linen of 25 yards each, will be 1600 yards, which at 15 <i>l.</i> amount to 100 <i>l.</i> sterling,	} 166 13 4
Outward entry, debenture certificate, and searchers fees, portrage, wharfage, bill of lading, in Europe are 15 <i>s.</i> sterling, or in currency	} 1 5 0
Insurance to cover charges, commission for effecting and part policy, £. 3 3 0 sterl. or currency,	} 5 5 0
Cost of case, ropes, and packing, 15 <i>s.</i> sterling,	1 5 0
Carried over,	174 8 4



ing like a bounty, while it happily costs the consumer nothing, for the charges of importation are unavoidable and the duty being merely for the purpose of revenue, is applied to pay the public debts and expences of which he owes his proportion.

	Currency.
Brought over,	174 8 4
One years interest on first cost, and European charges } on the goods, £. 5 sterl.	8 15 0
	183 3 4
Duty on value of goods in America estimated at } 160l. currency for 100l. sterl. cost at 5 per cent.	8 0 0
Commission on shipping, £. 183 4 4 in Europe, at } 2½ per cent.	4 11 7
Part custom house bond and permit, and primage,	0 1 6
Commission on the sales and remitting, supposing } the goods to sell for 210l. currency, per 100l. sterling cost, at 7½ per cent.	11 5 0
Freight of 13 1-3 feet, at 1/3 sterling per foot,	1 7 9
Porterage,	0 1 0
	£. 208 0 2½
Deduct the first cost as above,	166 13 4
	£. 41 16 10

In this calculation, waste, which of some articles is great, damages below 5 per cent. which the underwriters do not pay, injuries not within the risque insured, difference of exchange now 6 per cent. above par, and other losses on remitting, postages of letters, and bad debts on sales at a long credit, as well as the profit of the importer are not taken notice of, though several of them really occur in every importation.

portion. This encouragement can only be increased by exempting raw materials from duty, which may be very safe and proper and by additional duties and prohibitions, which would induce the loss of the revenue and an injury to morals from smuggling, and would throw upon the other members of the commercial interest and the cultivators and improvers of our lands an unnecessary burden. The manufacturers are a just and sensible body of men, and love their country. I feel a perfect confidence therefore, that when they see a substantial advantage of 25 per cent. in favour of their goods, which cannot be taken from them, they will desire that government should refrain from further duties and prohibitions. This estimate being made upon the finest of our manufactures, it is evident that the more bulky

bulky and weighty would shew the advantages of our own workmen in a yet stronger light.

The clear air and powerful sun of America is another advantage our manufacturers enjoy. When the linen and cotton branches shall become considerable, a great saving of time and money will be made by the climate, and where bleaching is effected principally by the sun and water, the quality of the cloth is known to be more excellent. The European process by drugs and machines impairs the strength. Ireland, I confess, with a climate very different from ours, is remarkable for the quality of its linens, but they do not equal the American homespun in strength. In confirmation of the above opinion, I may mention that there was a plan formed before the revolution, by a  
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number of English merchants of establishing a company with a large capital, to import the brown linens of Europe to be bleached here for the supply of our markets.

In this country the consumer's money follows the delivery of the manufacture, therefore less capital is required. In every part of Europe extensive credits are given upon their goods. For though some nations have not got into the habit of trusting us, their own merchants are known to buy on easy terms of payment. France is perhaps as little accustomed to give these indulgencies as any other great country in Europe, yet nothing is paid for there, in less than two months, and the credits are extended from that time to twelve months according to the article. At the expiration of the term an accepted bill at sixty days is considered

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ed as prompt payment, so that the actual term of credit is from four months to fourteen.

To these might be added several other little advantages, the joint benefits of which are sensibly felt, but I trust enough has been said to satisfy the just and patriotic mind, though concerned in the business, that a further addition of duties would not promote the general interests of the country. I must here beg leave however strenuously to recommend, that every duty on American produce or manufactures, impolitically and unkindly imposed by the laws of several of the states, should be taken off, and that the justice and sound policy of the alteration should be declared and admitted in some public instrument: And as ships may be very properly considered as the greatest article  
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we make, the tonnage on our own bottoms should be equalized throughout the Union, and the extra duties on goods imported in vessels not belonging to the state in which they are landed, should be done away—Complaints against the trade laws of foreign nations come not consistently from those who lay similar burdens on their sister states.

A further encouragement to manufactures will result from improvements and discoveries in agriculture—There are many raw materials, that could be produced in this country on a large scale which have hitherto been very confined. Cotton for many years before the revolution was not worth more than nine-pence sterling in the West-India Islands. The perfection of the factories in Europe has raised it to such a pitch, that besides the prohibition against shipping it from

from the colonies to any foreign port, the price has risen fifty per cent. The consumers in Pennsylvania have paid near two shillings sterling for the importation of this year. This article must be worth the attention of the southern planters.

If the facts and observations in the preceding part of this paper be admitted to be true and just, and if we take into consideration with them the acknowledged superiority of foreign commerce, and the fisheries over our manufactories, we may come to the following conclusions—That the United States of America cannot make a proper use of the natural advantages of the country, nor promote her agriculture and other lesser interests without manufactures, that they cannot enjoy the attainable benefits of commerce and the fisheries, without some general restrictions

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ons and prohibitions affecting foreign nations, that in forming these restrictions and prohibitions, as well as in establishing manufactories, there is occasion for great deliberation and wisdom, that nothing may be introduced, which can interfere with the sale of our produce, or with the settlement and improvement of our waste lands.

Among the political considerations, which must necessarily be admitted in treating of this subject, the force that may be required for our protection is not to be forgotten. It is certainly the greatest that attends it. America, we may assume, can have no inducement to engage in European wars. From our local situation we may keep ourselves long disengaged from them. The principal European nations would find us an unprofitable and  
troublesome



troublesome enemy. The trade of France, Great-Britain, Spain, Holland and Portugal, which passes by our coasts, are a security against their hostilities. A war among them, in which we should take no part, would be more beneficial to our farmers, merchants and manufacturers than all the advantages we could obtain, if engaged in it ourselves. Our ships would carry for them, or instead of theirs, and our lands and manufactories would furnish the supplies of their fleets and islands in the West-Indies. To counterbalance these advantages, and to pay the expences of a war would require captures rich and numerous indeed, but what could compensate us for the drain of peasantry and the lost opportunity of cultivating commerce and the arts of peace. A war merely offensive cannot be apprehended. —The fortune of the British arms against

America undisciplined and divided, will instruct our enemies to beware of invasions after the military lessons taken from that long and serious contest. Having no foreign colonies whose situation and weakness would subject them to their attacks, and having all our resources at hand to defend our own coasts, and cut up their trade in its passage by our doors, no European power will be inclined to insult or molest us—should any of them be so insensible to their own interests, as to depart from the policy, which evidently ought to govern them, America, by acting in concert with the most powerful enemy of such hostile country, must commence a war, which however inconvenient and disagreeable to us, would be ruinous to their West-India trade, and fatal to their colonies. We are not destitute of resources and powers to injure them or defend

defend ourselves. Our inland navigation, coasting trade and fisheries, and the portion of foreign commerce we must inevitably enjoy, are no inconsiderable nurseries for seamen. Good naval officers we should not want; they have never been scarce, and one happy effect of the revolution has certainly been to raise the reputation of the marine life and to increase the talents and respectability of its followers. Foreign seamen too, would find great temptations to enter on board our privateers and ships of war, and might be hired in any numbers we could pay. The increase of the strength and riches of the country, by filling up our vacant lands, is the infallible method by which the necessary means may be acquired.

It will not be amiss to draw a picture of our country, as it would really exist  
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under the operation of a system of national laws formed upon these principles. While we indulge ourselves in the contemplation of a subject at once so interesting and dear, let us confine ourselves to substantial facts, and avoid those pleasing delusions into which the spirits and feelings of our countrymen have too long misled them.

In the foreground we should find the mass of our citizens the cultivators (and what is happily for us in most instances the same thing) the independent proprietors of the soil. Every wheel would appear in motion that could carry forward the interests of this great body of our people, and bring into action the inherent powers of the country. A portion of the produce of our lands would be consumed in the families or employed in the business

ness of our manufacturers – a further portion would be applied in the sustenance of our merchants and fishermen and other numerous assistants, and the remainder would be transported by those that could carry it at the lowest freight (that is with the smallest deduction from the aggregate profits of the business of the country) to the best foreign markets. On one side we should see our manufacturers encouraging the tillers of the earth by the consumption and employment of the fruits of their labours, and supplying them and the rest of their fellow citizens with the instruments of their occupations, and the necessaries and conveniencies of life, in every instance where it could be done without injuriously and unnecessarily increasing the distress of commerce, the labours of the husbandmen and the difficulties of changing our native wilds into scenes

scenes of cultivation and plenty. Commerce on the other hand, attentive to the general interests, would come forward with offers to range through foreign climates in search of those supplies, which the manufacturers could not furnish but at too high a price, or which nature has not given us at home, in return for the surplus of those stores, that had been drawn from the ocean or produced by the earth.

On a review of the preceding facts and observations there appears to me reason to believe, that the necessary measures might be taken to render our farms profitable and to improve our new lands, and that our manufactures, fisheries, navigation and trade, would still be considerable. The long voyage by which all interfering foreign articles must be brought to these markets, and the inevitable

able necessity for a revenue, give us, as hath been demonstrated, a virtual bounty of 25 per cent. in favor of our own commodities, and this in the least favorable instances. When *returning* economy, and the fall of rents, and provisions shall have reduced the expences of living, when our increasing farms shall have poured in their addition of raw materials, and we shall have felt the shortness of importation produced by the suffering of our credit abroad, and by the check which has been given to foreign adventurers in our trade, this difference of 25 per cent. will have a sensible effect. Being rated on the whole value of the article, that is, as well on the labour as the raw materials, it is in fact 50 per cent. on the labour in all cases where the workmanship is half the value of the manufactured goods, and so in proportion where it

is more. Beer, distilled liquors, potash, gunpowder, cordage, loaf sugar, hanging and writing paper, snuff, tobacco, starch, anchors, nail rods, and many other articles of iron, bricks, tiles, potters ware, millstones, and other stone work, cabinet work, corn fans, Windsor chairs, carriages, faddlery, shoes and boots, and other wearing apparel, coarse linens, hats, a few coarse woolen articles, linseed oil, wares of gold and silver tin and copper, some braziers, wool cards, worms and stills, and several other articles may be considered as established. These are tending to greater perfection, and will soon be sold so cheap as to throw foreign goods of the same kind entirely out of the market.

Many of the same circumstances, that favour the manufacturer will render the fisheries more profitable, and from the  
cheapness



cheapness of vessels, they will be carried on at less expence than in the few last years. The American market, where the consumption (with population) is increasing fast, may be entirely secured to them. Our manufactories and towns will annually make larger demands for candles, oil, whalebone and pickled fish, and it may be policy, in cities where meat is yet so dear, to introduce the consumption of the dried cod. The Danish and French Islands, and the free ports in the West-Indies, receive some of the produce of the fisheries—France is likely to take off a considerable quantity, as also are the Spaniards, Portuguese and Italians, and the English will always want certain articles for their manufactories, though not to any great amount—New-England, the seat of the fisheries, has the great advantage of being the cheapest and most populous part

of America. Its inhabitants are healthy, active and intelligent, and can be frugal ; wherefore I am very much disposed to believe, that many factories will in the course of a very few years revive their declining towns.

The commercial citizens of America have for some time felt the deepest distress—among the principal causes of their unhappy situation were the inconsiderate spirit of adventure to this country, which pervaded every kingdom in Europe, and the prodigious credits from thence given to our merchants. To these may be added the high spirits and the golden dreams that naturally followed such a war, closed with so much honor and success.—Triumphant over a great enemy, courted by the most powerful nations in the world, it was not in human nature that America should

should immediately comprehend her new situation—really possessed of the means of future greatness, she anticipated the most distant benefits of the revolution, and considered them as already in her hands. She formed the highest expectations many of which however, serious experience has taught her to relinquish, and now that the thoughtless adventures and imprudent credits from foreign countries take place no more, \* and time has been given for cool reflexion, she will see her true situation and need not be discouraged.

Our future trade may comprehend the fisheries with the exclusive benefit of supplying our own markets, as hath been already observed. The coasting trade will be entirely secured to us. The right of bringing the commodities of foreign countries may be divided with the ships  
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\* An application of the foregoing observations to the commercial subject, can only be admissible into this essay.

of the nation from whom they come, or in those cases where they have no native ships the carrying trade may be our own. The revolution has opened to us some new branches of valuable commerce. The intercourse with France was next to none before the war, and with Russia, India and China not thought of. With activity and strict œconomy we may pay Europe with some of the *produce* of India, for a part of the goods with which they supply us, and if we do not over-regulate trade, we shall be an *entrepot* of certain commodities for their West-India and south American colonies. Besides these objects all the manufacturing countries and many free ports will be open to us, and we may adventure in foreign ships to a considerable extent, though it would be more desirable to employ our own. As the proposed regulations would  
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compel the British or Dutch merchants, to import into the United States a part of the produce of France and Spain in American bottoms, so may ours serve the general interests of their country by sending tobacco to Sweden, or flour, rice and live stock to the British colonies in the vessels of the respective nations.

The foundations of national wealth and consequence are so firmly laid in the United States, that no *foreign* power can undetermine or destroy them. But the enjoyment of these substantial blessings is rendered precarious by domestic circumstances. Scarcely held together by a weak and half formed fœderal constitution, the powers of our national government, are unequal to the complete execution of any salutary purpose, foreign or domestic. The evils resulting from this unhappy state of things have again shocked

shocked our reviving credit, produced among our people alarming instances of disobedience to the laws, and if not remedied, must destroy our property, liberties and peace. Foreign powers, however disposed to favor us, can expect neither satisfaction nor benefit from treaties with congress, while they are unable to enforce them. We can therefore hope to secure no privileges from them, if matters are thus conducted. We must immediately remedy this defect or suffer exceedingly. Defultory commercial acts of the legislatures, formed on the impression of the moment, proceeding from no uniform or permanent principles, clashing with the laws of the other states and opposing those made in the preceding year by the enacting state, can no longer be supported, if we are to continue one people. *A system which will promote*  
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*the general interests with the smallest injury to particular ones has become indispensably necessary.* Commerce is more affected by the distractions and evils arising from the uncertainty, opposition and errors of our trade laws, than by the restrictions of any one power in Europe. A negative upon all commercial acts of the legislatures, if granted to Congress would be perfectly safe, and must have an excellent effect. If thought expedient it should be given as well with regard to those that exist, as to those that may be devised in future. Congress would thus be enabled to prevent every regulation, that might oppose the general interests, and by restraining the states from impolitic laws, would gradually bring our national commerce to order and perfection. Such of the ideas suggested in the preceding part of this paper, as shall be

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be honored with the public approbation, may be better digested, and, if they appear worthy of it, may form new articles of confederation, which would be the foundation of the commercial system.

I have ventured to hint at prohibitory powers, but shall leave that point and the general power of regulating trade to those who may undertake to consider the political objects of the Convention, suggesting only the evident propriety of enabling Congress to prevent the importation of such foreign commodities, as are made from our own raw materials. When any article of that kind can be supplied at home, upon as low terms as it can be imported on, a manufacture of *our own produce*, so well established, ought not by any means to be sacrificed to the interests of foreign trade, or subjected to injury by  
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the wild speculations of ignorant adventurers. In all cases careful provision should be made for refunding the duties on exportation, which renders the impost a virtual excise without being liable to the objections against an actual one, and is a great encouragement to trade.

The restoration of public credit at home and abroad should be the first wish of our hearts, and requires every œconomy—every exertion we can make. The wise and virtuous axioms of our political constitutions, resulting from a lively and perfect sense of what is due from man to man, should prompt us to the discharge of debts of such peculiar obligation. We stand bound to no common creditors. The friendly foreigner, the widow and the orphan, the trustees of charity and religion, the patriotic citizen, the war-worn

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soldier, and a magnanimous ally—these are the principal claimants upon the feeling and justice of America. Let her apply all her resources to this great duty, and wipe away the darkest stain, that has ever fallen upon her. The general impost—the sale of the lands and every other unnecessary article of public property—restraining with a firm hand every needless expence of government and private life—steady and patient industry, with proper dispositions in the people, would relieve us of part of the burden, and enable Congress to commence their payments, and with the aid of taxation, would put the sinking and funding of our debts within the power of all the states.

The violence committed on the rights of property under the authority of tender laws in some of the states, the familiarity

arity with which that pernicious measure has been recurred to, and the shameless perseverance with which it has been persisted in after the value of the paper was confessedly gone, call aloud for some remedy. This is not merely a matter of justice between man and man; it dishonors our national character abroad, and the engine has been employed to give the *coup de grace* to public credit. It would not be difficult perhaps to form a new article of confederation to prevent it in future, and a question may arise whether fellowship with any state, that would refuse to admit it, can be satisfactory or safe. To remove difficulties it need not be retrospective. The present state of things instead of inviting emigrants, deters all who have the means of information, and are capable of thinking. The settlement of our lands, and the introduction of manufactories and  
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lines of trade yet unknown among us or requiring a force of capital, which are to make our country rich and powerful, are interrupted and suspended by our want of public credit and the disorders of our government.

**T H E E N D.**