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The following is published at the request of Mr. Stoddert.

TO THE PUBLIC.

Georgetown, May 1, 1802.

A committee of Congreſs, ſtyled, 'the Committee of Inveſtigation,' was appointed early in the preſent ſeſſion, for purpoſes which the reſolution for their appointment will beſt explain. A majority of this committee after conſuming nearly five months, in enquiring into the frauds alledged to have been committed by former adminiſtrations, have at length at the cloſe of the ſeſſion, made a report, when it is too late to vindicate in debate on the floor of Congreſs, the fair fame of men, who have performed meritorious ſervices for their country, from the foul aſperſions contained in the report.

From the chairman of this committee I received a letter at 3 o'clock on the 27th of April, dated that day, deſiring to know by what authority ſix navy-yards had been purchaſed, while I was Secretary of the Navy; and obſerving that my anſwer muſt be in writing, and muſt be delivered to him by 10 o'clock the next morning, as the committee would report in the courſe of the day.—The ſubject was familiar to me; no time for deliberation was neceſſary. I anſwered him the ſame evening; but as it would be ſwelling to an unreaſonable length a newſpaper addreſs, to inſert my anſwer here, I omit it, contenting myſelf with the ſingle obſervation, that I doubted not the explanation it contained was ſufficient to ſatisfy gentlemen of candid minds, and converſant with public affairs, that not a ſingle navy-yard had been purchaſed, nor a ſingle ſhilling of money expended on their improvement, without full and ample legal authority.

This letter produced no effect on the majority of the committee; it had been previouſly determined that the purchaſe of navy yards ſhould at all events be condemned, and it was urged in vain by gentlemen on the committee, who concurred not with the majority, and whoſe utmoſt abhorrence could not fail to be excited by the conduct of that majority, that the letter ſhould at leaſt be ſuffered to accompany the report to Congreſs, that the defence might be as public as the accuſation.—But this would have been fair proceeding, and ſuited not the views of the majority, that the poiſon it was their purpoſe to inſtil into the public mind, ſhould be attended by its antidote, and the letter was ſuppreſſed.—From this inſtance of the uncandid courſe of the majority of this committee, in relation to a perſon on the ſpot to anſwer them, a juſt eſtimate may be made of the treatment which former ſervants of the public, abſent, and at a diſtance from the ſeat of government, have experienced at their hands.

Fortunately for the free citizens of the United States, a report of a majority of a committee of Congreſs is not condemnation—is not even proof of guilt. No perſon laments more than I do, the too great probability that ſuch reports will ſoon loſe the power of creating even the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of guilt, in the perſon, they ſhall accuſe.

As far as their power extended, the majority of this committee have gone, to rob me of that which is dearer than fortune or life—reputation—in reward for having, at a criſis portentous and alarming, to the neglect and infinite injury of my private concerns, devoted, and moſt zealouſly, a ſmall portion of my life to the public ſervice.—From their unjuſt deciſion I make my appeal to that tribunal where truth will be heard and will not be ſuppreſſed; and where reaſon and juſtice will prevail; before the tribunal of the public, I am as ſure of an acquittal the moſt complete and the moſt honorable, becauſe my conduct has been right, as I am that the men, who, to indulge party rancour, have dared to accuſe me, will quickly find the public deluſion is rapidly on the decline. It is for theſe men to reflect on the eſtimation in which their preſent conduct will be held, when this deluſion ſhall have paſſed entirely away.

But it is time to attend to a report of the majority of the committee, with their reaſons for an unqualified condemnation of the late Secretary of the Navy.

After quoting the act directing ſix 74 gun ſhips to be built within the United States, and not to be built *or purchaſed* as they wiſh to have the act underſtood; and two other acts, which had no more connection with the building of ſhips than of houſes—one of them authoriſing two docks to be erected for the purpoſe, as expreſſed in the act, of repairing ſhips; meaning, docks, into which ſhips might enter without unlading, and be left dry at the fall of the tide, or after the water ſhould be pumped out, and be repaired without the expenſive operation of heaving down; things totally different from building yards. And the other authoriſing a purchaſe of timber, not for the uſe of ſix 74 gun ſhips, as theſe gentlemen certainly meant to imply, if they underſtood their own meaning; but, as expreſsly ſtated in the act itſelf, to be preſerved for the future uſe of the navy; (all the acts were paſſed in Feb. 1799) I ſay, after quoting theſe ſeveral acts, theſe gentlemen proceed, "Under this authority *only*" meaning the three acts, "the then ſecretary of the navy expended the ſum of 135,846 dollars in the purchaſe of ſix navy yards. For this expenditure the committee conceive that *no authority was given by law, nor any appropriation made*, except for the two docks above mentioned, as the ſum of 1,000,000 of dollars was appropriated by the act of '99, for building or purchaſing the ſhips only—and the ſum of two hundred thouſand dollars for the purchaſe of timber, as public ſhips of war had been before built under a ſimilar authority for the uſe of the United States at private yards; and as Congreſs did, at the ſame time that they authoriſed the building or purchaſing the ſhips, provide for the erection of two docks only, the committee are of opinion that four of the navy yards were purchaſed without authority and the money miſapplied which was paid for them."

The then ſecretary of the navy informs theſe ſagacious gentlemen, the majority of the committee, that it never was contended or imagined, that the acts for procuring timber for future uſe, and for erecting docks, conferred any power to buy or even to hire building yards, or as they are more frequently called, navy yards—the whole power to buy ſuch yards, was communicated by the ſingle act, directing that ſix 74 gun ſhips ſhould be built within the United States, not *built or purchaſed* as they repreſent the act—If this act did not confer the power to purchaſe the yards, then the purchaſe was made without the authority of law, and the report of the majority of the committee, though malignant, is correct.

The ſhort queſtion then before the public is, did this act confer the power to purchaſe yards?

I will not labour to eſtabliſh a ſelf-evident poſition. Is there a man of common reaſon in the United States, who will believe, that an act of congreſs directing a thing to be done by the executive, and appropriating money for doing it, does not confer on the executive full and ample legal authority, not only to do the thing itſelf, but to do every thing incidental to it—every thing without which the thing directed by the act, could not be performed? In the preſent inſtance, an act had paſſed, directing that 74 gun ſhips ſhould be built—There was not a ſtick of timber, nor an article of any kind in the public arſenals, neceſſary to be employed in their building—they could not be built without the neceſſary materials—the act, then, intended to confer, and did confer, complete power to procure the materials. So of yards, in which to build the ſhips—there was not one yard in the United States, public or private, fit for building ſhips of ſuch a ſize—it was eſſential that ſuch yards ſhould be procured; and the act intended to give, and did give, full power to procure them:—and to procure them by hire, or by purchaſe as ſhould beſt comport with the public intereſt; the argument of the committee, that it would have been legal to hire, and was not legal to purchaſe, becauſe under the preceding adminiſtrations, yards had been hired, and had not been purchaſed, is really too puerile, to merit ſerious refutation, and I am not diſpoſed to trifle with the public. So much for the legality of the purchaſe of navy yards—and as the majority of the committee have attacked the meaſure on the ground of its illegality only: I might here cloſe my addreſs, but it may be proper to add ſome remarks to ſhew, that the meaſure of buying yards, was economical as well as legal.

I know not how many years have elapſed, ſince congreſs authoriſed the building of three frigates. At that time, the buſineſs of building ſhips of war of large ſize, was new in this country; and it is not ſurpriſing that great errors were committed in making the arrangements for building theſe ſhips. One very great error, and for which the public have ſeverely paid, was, hiring, inſtead of buying ground to build them upon. After hiring the ground, it was found indiſpenſible that wharves and other improvements ſhould be made on the ground ſo hired, and at public expence—But the evil did not ſtop here, for the yards were too contracted, as all private yards are, to admit of ſuch diſtribution of the enormous quantities of timber, required for large ſhips, as to enable the workmen to get at the pieces hourly wanted in the progreſſion of the ſhips; hence it became neceſſary to employ great numbers of labourers merely for the purpoſe of removing timber. I have not ſuch accurate knowledge of the expence incurred in the improvements made on private property and uſeleſs to the public when the ſhips were finiſhed, and in the employment of labourers whoſe ſervices under a different ſyſtem, might have been diſpenſed with, as to pretend to an exactneſs in ſtating the ſum; but I have no heſitation in averring that it exceeded the whole coſt of the ſix navy yards, purchaſed by me.

With a full knowledge of theſe facts before me, would it have been a proper diſcharge of duty to have fallen into the ſame error? Would it not have been a ſhameful ſacrifice of the public intereſt, a wanton waſte of the public money? It is my pride that the error was avoided, and that ſuch a courſe was purſued, as will ſecure to the public, a large portion of the money expended on the yards, ſhould a meaſure, ſo pregnant with folly and madneſs be reſorted to as a ſale of them.

BEN. STODDERT.

National Intelligencer.

REPORT.

THE Committee of Ways and Means having taken into conſideration the ſubject of the Public debt, and the proviſions requiſite for effecting its ultimate redemption, thereupon

RESPECTFULLY REPORT:

THE propriety of purſuing efficient meaſures for the final extinguiſhment of the public debt is a poſition too obviouſly true, in the opinion of your committee, to require any illuſtration from them. The unexampled proſperity of our country, the flouriſhing ſtate of our finances, and the reſtoration of peace among the European powers, all contribute to render the preſent period peculiarly auſpicious to this important undertaking. Should, however, the United States neglect to avail themſelves of a peace which promiſes to be of no ſhort duration, if the length and deſtructive effects of the preceding war form any criterion by which to eſtimate the time neceſſary to reinvigorate the exhauſted belligerent parties; ſhould a ſeaſon of great and increaſing financial proſperity be ſuffered to paſs away without a vigorous exertion to exonerate the union from its preſent incumbrances, every hope may be abandoned that a nation ſhall ever be found to diſcharge the principal of a debt which ſhe has once funded: and the United States muſt reſt content to encounter, with embarraſſed reſources, any emergency which may hereafter ariſe. A juſt confidence is, however, entertained that every deſcription of perſons, as well thoſe who advocate extenſive warlike eſtabliſhments, as thoſe who are deſirous of leſſening the public contribution, will unite in ſupport of a meaſure, which, by liberating the revenues of the union from their preſent heavy incumbrances, can alone enable its government to launch into expenſive naval preparations, or to reduce the duties on imports.

That no effectual proviſion for the final redemption of the whole preſent debt of the United States does at this time exiſt, a recurrence to the letter of the ſecretary of the Treaſury, hereunto annexed, will readily demonſtrate. To the meaſures which have already been adopted in relation to this ſubject, their complexity forms an objection inferior only to their inefficiency. To eſtabliſh a plan as ſimple as the nature of the exiſting ſyſtem, on which it is neceſſarily engrafted, will permit, and altogether adequate in its operation, has been the deſign of the committee. To appropriate, permanently, ſo much of the annual revenue as may be requiſite, appeared the only meaſure calculated to effect this full and principal purpoſe. This ſum does not exceed the probable exceſs of the annual receipts beyond the current expenditure of the government. In making the neceſſary appropriation to the ſinking fund inſtead of leaving to it only ſuch ſurplus as the government might not chooſe to employ on any other object, an adherence to economy is ſecured, whilſt the reſources of the country to meet any extraordinary emergency, remain unimpaired. Nothing leſs than the regular operation of a permanent ſyſtem can induce the rational expectation that the debt will ever be extinguiſhed. Care, at the ſame time, has been taken that ſuch portion of the ſum appropriated as the commiſſioners may be unable annually to apply to the redemption of the debt ſhall be returned into the public treaſury. Various other proviſions have alſo been adopted, for an explanation of which the committee beg leave to refer to the annexed letter of the head of that department; and to ſubmit the following bill making proviſion for the redemption of the whole public debt of the United States.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
March 31, 1802.

SIR,

In compliance with your letter of the 10th inſt. requeſting that a preciſe ſtatement of the exiſting proviſions for the redemption of the public debt, ſhould be prepared and tranſmitted to you; I beg leave to ſubmit the following details and to ſuggeſt at the ſame time, in what reſpect it ſeems neceſſary to explain or to reinforce thoſe proviſions.

I. The funds appropriated for the redemption of the debt, are:

1ſt. So much of the duties on tonnage, and merchandize, (ſpirits, and ſtills) as ſhall be equal to the intereſt annually accruing on the principal, of any part of the public debt, which has been, or, from time to time may be diſcharged, by payment, purchaſe, or any other means.

2d. So much of the ſame duties, as together with the preceding item ſhall be equal to the payment of the eight per cent annuity, on the ſix per cent ſtock, until the final redemption of ſaid ſtock in the year 1818; after which redemption this appropriation ſhall ceaſe; and the appropriation deſcribed by the preceding item, including therein, the intereſt on the whole amount of ſix per cent. ſtock thus redeemed, ſhall thereafter be applicable to the redemption or purchaſe of any other part of the public debt, exiſting on the 3d March 1795; (including any loans ſince contracted for the reimburſement of any part of the ſame,) which may remain unpaid at that time.

3d. The dividends on the ſhares in the bank of the United States, owned by the United States; now releaſed by the payment of the ſubſcription two millions loan, from the appropriation for that object.

4th. So much of the duties aforeſaid, as together with the ſaid dividends, ſhall be equal to the payment of the eight per cent. annuity on the deferred ſtock, until the final redemption of the ſaid ſtock in 1824: after which redemption this appropriation ſhall ceaſe, and only ſo much of the ſaid duties, as ſhall be equal to the intereſt on the deferred ſtock thus redeemed, ſhall remain appropriated, and be applicable to the ſame objects as the amount of intereſt on the other public debts redeemed heretofore mentioned.

5th. The nett proceeds of the ſales of the Weſtern lands.

6th. The amount of monies received in the Treaſury, on account of debts due to the United States, by reaſon of any matter prior to the preſent conſtitution.

7th. The ſurplus of revenue to the end of the year 1790, ſpecially appropriated to the purchaſe of the debt.

8th. All ſurpluſſes of the revenues of the United States, which ſhall remain, at the end of any calender year, beyond the amount of the appropriations charged upon the ſaid revenues, and which, during the ſeſſion of Congreſs next thereafter, ſhall not be otherwiſe ſpecially appropriated or reſerved by law.

All the monies accruing by virtue of the preceding proviſions are veſted, in truſt, in the commiſſioners of the ſinking fund, to be applied, according to the proviſions hereafter ſtated, to the reimburſement and redemption of the public debt; until the whole of the debt exiſting on the 3d of March, 1725, including loans thereafter made for redeeming, or reimburſing the ſaid debt, ſhall be diſcharged: And the faith of the United States is pledged that the ſaid monies or funds ſhall thus remain inviolably veſted and appropriated, until the ſaid redemption or reimburſement, ſhall have been effected: *Provided*, however, that if, after the whole of the other ſpecies of the ſaid debt ſhall have been redeemed, any part of the three per cent. ſtock ſhall remain unredeemed, Congreſs may, nevertheleſs, divert the ſaid funds to other purpoſes. Excluſively of the preceding proviſions, the commiſſioners of the ſinking fund are further authorized to raiſe money in the following manner:

1ſt. By borrowing, with the approbation of the Preſident of the United States, at an intereſt not exceeding ſix per cent. and to be reimburſed at the will of the United States, any ſums requiſite for the payment of any inſtalments, or parts of the public debt, which may become due.

2d. By borrowing with the ſame approbation, a ſum not exceeding five millions of dollars, at a rate not exceeding ſix per cent. irredeemable till after the year 1819; and ſelling not more than one half of ſuch ſix per cent. ſtock, below par; the proceeds to be applied to the payment either of any part of the debt, due to the bank of the United States, and which was demandable before, or during the year 1796, or of any inſtalment of the foreign debt.

3d. By ſelling, inſtead of effecting the preceding loan, ſo many of the ſhares of the bank of the United States, as they may think proper, to be applied as aforeſaid.

In addition to the preceding funds the following appropriations have been made, but the monies ariſing from the ſame have not been ſpecially veſted in the commiſſioners, nor the faith of the United States pledged, that the appropriation ſhould not be changed, namely:

1ſt. The additional duties laid by the act entitled, "An act for raiſing a further ſum of money by additional duties on certain articles imported; and for other purpoſes," paſſed the 3d of March, 1797, are ſolely appropriated: Firſt, for the payment of the principal of the then exiſting foreign debt: Secondly, for the payment of the principal of the debt then due by the United States to the bank of the United States.

2d. So much of the duties on tonnage and merchandize, as may be neceſſary, is appropriated for the payment of the loans, obtained from the bank of the United States.

3d. So much of the ſurplus of the duties on tonnage and merchandize, beyond the permanent appropriations, as may be neceſſary, is appropriated for diſcharging the two eight per cent. loans, authorized by the laws of July 16th, 1728, and of May 7th, 1800; according to the terms and conditions of ſuch loans.

4th. The additional duties laid by the act entitled, "An act to lay additional duties on certain articles imported," paſſed the 13th of May, 1800, are ſolely appropriated for the diſcharge of the intereſt and principal of the debts of the United States, theretofore contracted, or to be contracted, during the year 1800.

Finally, in relation to the intereſt on any part of the public debt, other than the ſix per cent. and deferred ſtock; as much of the duties on tonnage and merchandize as may be *neceſſary*, is appropriated; and the commiſſioners of the ſinking fund, are authoriſed to borrow annually, with the approbation of the Preſident of the United States, one million of dollars, at a rate not exceeding ſix per cent. and to be reimburſed within one year from the time of each loan, in anticipation of the ſaid duties; to be applied to the payment of the intereſt on the public debt.

II. *Of the manner of applying the monies appropriated.*

So far as relates to funds veſted in the commiſſioners of the ſinking fund, the law contains two diſtinct proviſions; one ſpecifying the funds veſted in the manner already ſtated; the other deſignating, &, in one inſtance, abſolutely directing the manner in which the funds thus veſted ſhall be applied: and in this the law is ſimilar to all others which relate to the expenditure of public money, and which muſt alſo include the two diſtinct proviſions of authoriſing the expence, & of appropriating the money neceſſary to defray the ſame. The preceding proviſions are only appropriation clauſes, deſignating, and in relation to the ſinking fund, veſting certain funds applicable to the payment of the debt. The manner in which the funds veſted in the commiſſioners of the ſinking fund, ſhall be applied, is provided as followeth. They are directed:

1ſt. To pay annually the eight per cent. annuity on the ſix per cent. and deferred ſtocks; and in this reſpect, no diſcretion is left with them, the injunction being abſolute:

2d. To cauſe to be applied all ſuch ſurplus of the ſinking fund, as may at any time exiſt, after paying the ſaid annuity, towards the further redemption, or purchaſe of the debt of the United States, exiſting on the 3d March, 1795, including loans for the reimburſement thereof, until the ſaid debt ſhall be completely reimburſed or redeemed. And the application of this ſurplus is left to their diſcretion, provided that the purchaſes thus to be made, ſhall be at the loweſt price, either by open purchaſe, or by receiving ſealed propoſals; and ſhall not be made at a higher rate than the market price or value of the debt.

So far as relates to the appropriations not veſted in the ſinking fund, no provi-