

state, within a reasonable and limited time, and become subjects thereof, or relinquish all claim to such property. This will be acting in a manner which all mankind must approve as just, and those who neglect to comply with those terms cannot with truth complain, that by a construction being given to the declaration of independence, which they never mistrusted could or would be given to it, and of which they had not the least notice, they have been stripped of their property, to the use of the state, against which they have not offended. You say the laws and practice of civilised nations will support a seizure of British property. Rules laid down in books, on the laws of nations, ought to be well weighed, and carefully attended to, before they are applied to the present case. We are now an independent nation, and all the rules applicable to independent nations apply to such of our transactions as respect and relate to objects, or rights, originating from and subsequent to our independence; but are, as we conceive, inapplicable, and improperly adduced, to affect and determine questions concerning the private rights of others, acquired antecedently to that event, and no ways repugnant or opposed to it.

This will be clearly discovered, if we attend to the difference between the property acquired by foreigners, in countries sovereign and independent, at the origin of a war, and that which persons subject to the same government acquire before a division and severance of the government and sovereignty. The latter could legally acquire property in every part of the dominions united under the same government, the faith of which was plighted, that property so acquired should be secured to and enjoyed by the acquirers; in case of a dismemberment of the society into two or more distinct or independent societies, the obligation to protect and secure private rights of property, not inconsistent with the safety of these newly formed societies, still subsists, and is equally binding on the new and the old, not by any positive law, for no government will provide for cases, springing out of and subsequent to its own dissolution, but that obligation, as we conceive, is founded on natural equity, which can never authorise the depriving of their property unoffending individuals, who once were unquestionably citizens, and who, as they could not foresee, so could they not prevent