

Nicholson in consequence of his having followed the example c. c. of his Brother officer who have for sometime been Impressing men into the Naval Service of the Continent in this Port.

The practice of Impressing Seamen cannot be supported on any other principle then necessity and I am confident it is a practice as pernicious to the Commercial Interests of a Country as destructive of the Civil Liberty of those Individuals who become its Victims, under these opinions you will readily see I cannot advocate the measure, nothing but the prospect of great Public advantages to result from a well manned navy wou'd have induced me to be silent whilst these things were doing here, but it was properly the business of the Executive power of the State to notice & stop the practice, they have not interfered & that probably because they saw & considered the force of necessity, perhaps as great disadvantages might have resulted to the State of Maryl<sup>d</sup> had you only checked this business so far as it had come before you by Complaint from Individuals whose particular situations or Circumstances might have called for exemption & protection, remember I don't offer these as fixed Sentiments or as proper considerations in a settled peaceable Government, because I know they are inconsistant with it but in times of Invasion & War especially such a War as ours, it seems to me that forcing out Militia against their will which I believe to have been much practiced is an equal infringement of Liberty with the Impressing of them for a limited time per the Naval service yet is to be observed that, it has hitherto been the practice at the end of every Cruize or Voyage made by our Continental Ships the men have had their liberty again, in the British Navy they are generally impressed for Life. Thus much in Paliation only, with respect to Cap<sup>t</sup> Nicholson he certainly deserves severe reprehension, the terms of his letter are quite unwarrantable & not a single member of Congress offered to support him, you will see that the Resolves of Congress place him in your power so far as he values his Commission & at present he is at the head of the American Navy but I think the dispute unfortunate because I have been taught to believe him an excellent & Capable officer, the loss of such a one will be a real misfortune to the Continent & yet I think he ought to be dismissed unless by satisfactory submission he atones for the offensive Stile of his letter which I suppose to have been written in warmth inflamed by the Violence of that Species of Whiggism that savours more of passion than true Patriotism, I am told he is of a high Spirit and that it is doubtful if he will make the Confessions he ought. I wish not to be guilty of an improper interfrance & shall only repeat that if he was dismiss'd the service it will be a heavy