

have never yet been able to make, tho' I presume it must be by some Law of this Province; no less Authority being sufficient to make so considerable and pernicious an Alteration in our State of Trade as this must be; and you will give me Leave to observe, that any Act must be expressed in Terms so very clear and explicit, as to be void of all Ambiguity, before it can be allowed an Operation destructive to Two other Acts of Assembly, to a long uninterrupted Course of Trade (which of itself is always held as a Law in all Trading Countries) and so discouraging to the Trade of this Province.

L. H. J.
Liber No. 49
Dec. 16

The Act which I have heard mentioned as performing this Work, is that passed for his Majesty's Service in 1754, laying a Duty upon Servants, and other Commodities; the 9th Section of which is in the following Words:

"And be it likewise Enacted, That all Masters of Ships and Vessels, and Others, importing Servants into this Province, by Land or Water, to serve for the Term of Seven Years or upwards, at the Time of their Entry shall pay unto the Naval-Officer for the Time being, belonging to such Port or Place where they make their Entry, the Sum of Twenty Shillings Current Money p Poll for each Servant: And that all Masters of Ships or Vessels, and Others, importing Servants into this Province, by Land or Water, to serve by Indenture, or Custom of the Country, for a less Term than Seven Years, at the Time of their Entry shall pay unto the Naval-Officer for the Time being, belonging to such Port or Place where they make their Entry, the Sum of Five Shillings Current Money p Poll for each Servant: And that for every Negro imported into this Province, by Land or Water, the Importer or Importers of such Negro or Negroes shall pay to the said Naval-Officer, the Sum of Ten Shillings Current Money, over and above the Duties or Impositions already directed and appointed to be paid by any former Act or Acts of Assembly of this Province: And that there shall be paid a Duty of Two Pence Current Money p Gallon on all Madeira Wine imported into this Province by Land or Water, by the Importer or Importers, to the respective Naval-Officer of the Port or Place where the same shall be imported or brought into this Province by Land or Water as aforesaid."

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Upon the bare Perusal of which, a Reader of less Sagacity than the Representatives of the People, would immediately conclude, as I confess I did, that the Expression at the Time of Entry must naturally relate to what precedes, viz. Masters importing Servants to serve for Seven Years or upwards at the Time of Entry, and not to what follows, shall pay, &c. as it necessarily must (and that with some Degree of Absurdity) to make out the Construction contended for: But that this never could be the Intention of the Legislature, appears further from their not having placed those Words at the Time of Entry, in a different Position from that in which they now stand, naturally and