

THURSDAY, February 15, 1821.

The house met, Present the same members as on yesterday, except Mr. R. T. Hall. The proceedings of yesterday were read.

The resolution in favour of Elizabeth Courts, was read the second time, and the question put, That the house assent to the same? Resolved in the affirmative, and the resolution sent to the senate.

On motion by Mr. Marriott, Leave given to bring in a bill, entitled, An act to direct the mode of collecting the several taxes imposed on proceedings in the court of chancery. Ordered, That Messrs. Marriott, Maulsby and T. Kennedy, report the same.

Mr. Marriott reports the said bill; which was read.

Mr. Archer presents the memorial of the judges of the 3d election district of Cecil county, which was read.

The speaker laid before the house the resignation of two of the commissioners appointed to take testimony relative to the Cecil election; which was read, and referred to the committee of elections. Ordered, That Messrs. B. Forrest, J. P. Kennedy, Wright and Lecompte, be added to the said committee, in the place of other members who are absent.

Mr. Polk delivers the following report:

The committee appointed to enquire into the expediency of establishing a loan office in this state, respectfully report—

That, on account of the late stage of the session, when the subject was submitted to their consideration, and being pressed with other and indispensable business, it has not been in their power to bestow on it all the attention it merits. Nevertheless, they have considered it their duty, briefly to state to this house their views of the subject.

When calamity or distress visits a people, it is natural that they should look around for comfort and relief; impressed with this idea, and inspired with wisdom and justice, the patriots of the revolution, when they formed our state's constitution, established this principle—"that every man hath a right to petition the legislature for the redress of grievances, in a peaceable and orderly manner;" and were we now to turn a deaf ear to their cries, or listening, were we to treat them with neglect, we should not only fail in the performance of our duty as private citizens, but as trustees of the public, as the guardians of the rights and liberties of the people; and as the end of legislation is their happiness and prosperity, we would violate the sacred trust reposed in us by our constituents, and would be in truth, unworthy and unprofitable servants.

Your committee have feelingly regarded the petitions of many persons, setting forth their distresses, but have viewed with much greater concern, the general distress of the community. Every portion of the state severely feels the calamities resulting from a reduced currency, while some parts of it are literally sinking under accumulated embarrassments. The pressure being so general, and so obvious, it is by no means a matter of astonishment that so few petitions have been preferred to the legislature, praying for relief; for why should we ask a bounty of those whose duty it is to give, when we know they have satisfactory evidence of our need? Knowing, as the legislature does, that almost every species of personal property has depreciated nearly one hundred per cent. and that land which a few years since was worth \$10,000, might now, if sold under execution, be bought in for \$1,000, will they wait for a more imperious demand for interposition between the creditor and debtor; the eyes of the unfortunate are turned towards this legislature, here is fixed their reliance, and here rests their hope of relief; they know their misfortunes are visible and well understood; silent, and almost in despair, they are looking to this legislature as the last resort, for alleviation of their sufferings; they have entrusted its members with their rights, their liberties, and every thing they hold dear; and they confidently rely on their wisdom, their justice and humanity, for protection. Something is necessary to be done, and the people expect something; they expect at least some expression of sympathy, and of a desire for their well doing.

That the people have a right to call on the legislature for relief, when they are in distress; that by their sufferings they do now call loudly; and that some remedy is necessary, it is presumed no one will deny.

In looking for a remedy, the committee naturally look for the cause of the necessity for it; for so long as the cause remains it is vain to prescribe a remedy for the disease; and they look upon the reduction of the currency as the present cause of the ills now complained of; they will not attempt to shew how the banks were the original cause, &c. for that is not their province, it would be supererogation in them.

Amidst the blessings of peace and plenty, we have the cries of distress; the soil is as productive as it was; the grain counties send as much grain to market as usual; persons who deal in the productions of the forest experience but little difference in the quantity disposed of; as much flour is exported as ever, and as much or more tobacco; and the citizens of our state are not less industrious than they formerly were. But the labour which a few years since would have produced \$100, will not now produce \$50; and the toil and property that was more than equal to a debt when it was contracted, will not now pay half the amount. Many of our citizens are compelled to forsake their usual occupations, and to turn their attention to the cultivation of the earth for support; and some are forced of necessity to leave their native soil, to seek subsistence on one more fertile. Were all the inhabitants of the state free from embarrassments, their situation would be by no means distressing; but unfortunately a great number, by some mishap, are involved in debts created when every thing was highest, every thing brisk.

To be stripped of the fruits of a life of toil for not half their value, to have one's family that is endeared to each other by every tie of affection, and which once flourished in the lap of plenty, driven out by a cruel Shylock, from friends and home, to encounter the rude buffetings of a pitiless world, is more than human patience alone can bear. All these are lamentable considerations, and worthy the attention of a legislative body.

The committee cannot think the restoration of the currency to its former amount would be a hindrance to, or would diminish exportations; for as merchants almost always receive foreign commodities in exchange for their cargoes, if they were, from the abundance of money here in circulation, to pay as much for a cargo as it would sell for at the port to which it should be sent, they would by the same reason be enabled to dispose of the goods received in exchange, at 100 per cent. profit; and thereby, instead