

are to be assumed that it will become necessary for Congress to levy heavy taxes, not only on the people of the indebted States, but upon those of the whole Union. How the States involved would be relieved by this process is not perceivable. The tax-gatherers it is true, would be placed out of sight, but their exactions would not be on that account the less exorbitant. And our constituents, without experiencing any alleviation of their own burthens, would have only such consolation as might be derived from the conviction that they had assisted to extract from their fellow citizens in other States, large amounts of their means, not needed for the purposes of their governments, and therefore destined to be wasted in extravagant projects of improvement on objects even less advantageous. Besides, no article of the Federal Constitution, even by the most forced construction, can be called in aid of this bold undertaking. In all the precedents relied upon to justify such a measure, it will be found that Congress required, that the debts of the States to be assumed should have been contracted in the discharge of such duties, as the general government is authorized to perform for the whole Union. Such was the basis and character of the act of 1790.

If Congress will assume the payment of State debts, without regard to the purposes for which they were contracted, there will then be no limits to the power of the general government, worth preserving, except those to be found in the State Constitutions. In such an event, we would be already under a consolidated government, and the present generation would in all probability witness, a division of the Union into as many separate republics as there are contrarient and antagonists, now moving in perfect harmony around a common centre. If you concur with me that consequences like these may grow out of the proposed measure, it cannot be doubted but, that your deliberations will result in prompt rejection.

The annual communication of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company has been received, and will be laid before you. It makes an exhibit of its affairs by no means encouraging. The debt of this Company to the State, for interest, was on the 1st December \$1,104,368. Their debts to other parties on the same day, amount to \$886,677. They require to complete the canal to Cumberland, \$1,525,000. This bankrupt condition of the Canal Company, and the deep embarrassment of the State, may be, in a considerable degree, traced to the rejection, at Decession 1839, of the bill, intended and calculated to afford to the company to proceed without interruption, in the work then in progress. While we are prepared to point to the calamitous consequences of that act, the motives for it are not so palpable. Charity would teach us to trace it to most erroneous opinions of public policy.

That the canal ought to be completed to Cumberland is generally conceded. The work was originally undertaken, mainly, in the expectation that the transportation of coal, lying beyond and in the vicinity of Cumberland, would remunerate the stockholders, and greatly benefit the State, by developing its mineral resources. Under these impressions, one half of our whole internal improvement debt was contracted, to prosecute the undertaking, and that amount is now an unprofitable investment, and will continue so, until the canal constitutes a line of communication between the coal fields, the iron ore banks, and lumber regions of Alleghany, and tide water in the Potomac. The sum now required to complete