

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 authorised 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 contrariant and antagonist interests, now moving in perfect harmony around a common centre. If you concur with me that consequences like these may possibly grow out of the proposed measure, it cannot be doubted but, that your deliberations will result in its 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, \$1,545,000. 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 December session 1839, of the bill, intended and calculated to afford the means 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 Allegany, and tide water in the Potomac. The sum now required to complete this line, is estimated by the chief engineer of the company, as above stated, at one million five hundred and forty-five thousand dollars. This estimate is believed to be correct. How this money can be procured is a question, entitled to your most serious consideration. Upon its solution depends, in a great degree, the efficacy of all other mea-