

BY THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES, DECEMBER 13, 1791.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOURS,

THIS house, urged by motives of œconomy towards their constituents, and anxiously desirous to return to their respective families, propose to your honours to close the present session on Thursday the 22d instant. We flatter ourselves this proposition will meet the approbation of your honours, as we doubt not every salutary regulation, tending to the welfare and prosperity of our constituents, may be acted on before that period.

By order,

W. HARWOOD, clk.

Which was read, and the following message was prepared, agreed to, and sent to the house of delegates by the clerk of the senate.

BY THE SENATE, DECEMBER 13, 1791.

GENTLEMEN,

THE senate, in answer to your message of this day respecting the time of closing the session, assure you, that motives of œconomy, and a desire of being at their several homes, equally prompt them to wish the public business may permit the general assembly to rise at the time you propose, and we hope your house will forward such bills as are necessary and indispensable in due time for our consideration.

By order,

H. RIDGELY, clk.

The clerk of the house of delegates delivers a bill, entitled, An act to repeal an act, entitled, An act to ascertain the allowance to the members of the general assembly, and to defray the expences of their attendance, thus endorsed; "By the house of delegates, December 13, 1791: Read the first time and ordered to lie on the table.

"By order,

W. HARWOOD, clk.

"By the house of delegates, December 13, 1791: Read the second time by especial order and will pass.

"By order,

W. HARWOOD, clk."

Which was read the first time and ordered to lie on the table.

The resolution respecting Henry Sibell, was read the second time and dissented to.

The clerk of the house of delegates delivers the following address:

BY THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES, DECEMBER 13, 1791.

To the honourable JOHN HENRY and CHARLES CARROLL, of CARROLLTON, Esquires, representatives of the state of Maryland in the senate of the United States.

GENTLEMEN,

IN the journal of the proceedings of the senate of the United States, transmitted to us by authority, a proposition, that the doors of that honourable body should be open whilst sitting in their legislative capacity, appears to have been made and rejected. The reasons, however cogent, which led to a determination so opposite to the already declared sense of a considerable proportion of the confœdacy, remain suppressed in that secrecy which this vote seems designed to perpetuate. Lest silent acquiescence may be improperly construed into implied approbation, and as such tend to weaken the efforts of other states, we do not hesitate to declare our sense against this determination of that honourable body.

The legislative deliberations of these states, both under their colonial and national establishments, have been generally, if not universally, open: They derived the practice from that country whence they emigrated, and habit and prejudice are now strongly in favour of a custom hitherto uninterrupted. Innovations, which are at variance with long and approved usage, ought to be supported by substantial considerations; none such have been suggested; none such, we confess, occur to our own reflection, nor can we discern any reason why the motives of general and public acts should remain buried in silence and secrecy.

In free governments the authority and sanction of the laws in a great measure depend on the influence of opinion; the public mind, therefore, cannot be too thoroughly possessed of the reasons which influenced their adoption; and if the motives of measures fairly exposed and generally communicated, will not secure them public approbation, they generally furnish conclusive argument against their continuance. Mystery is the garb of tyranny, whilst free government, founded on reason, derives new strength from every inquiry.

On the formation of the federal constitution, a great proportion of America viewed, with a jealous eye, the union of legislative and executive powers in the senate of the United States; the declarations of rights of the several states had borne united testimony against this combination; and when the immense patronage, both in the foreign and home departments, attached to that body, is contemplated, it may create suspicion lest general laws may be calculated with reference to those persons who are to discharge their duties. Solicitation and canvass for office may possibly introduce a spirit of negotiation unfriendly to that disinterested conduct so indispensable to equal legislation. We know of no corrector of this effect of the constitution of the body so powerful as the admission or the public eye. Characters will always be there found both ready and capable to detect and expose improper motives, if any such should ever arise, and the press, that modern censor of public morals, would then permissively convey information to their constituents, which the dignity and security of the body cannot allow, whilst their debates, secluded from public inspection, admit of no impartial testimony.

The duration of the time for which they are elected, and the different periods at which their offices expire, render that body in effect permanent. They admit no constitutional mode by which an entire change could be effected, should ever corruption pervade the mass or taint their proceedings, and they afford but few opportunities of withdrawing confidence once improperly reposed in individual members.