

Thomas Stone, Esq; from the senate, delivers to Mr. Speaker the following message :

By the S E N A T E, December 14, 1778.

Gentlemen,

IT gives us concern to find ourselves reduced to the necessity of going into a train of messaging at this late hour in the session, whereby it may be prolonged, to the inconvenience of many and at a considerable expence to the public. We are sorry to find you so much alarmed at the dreadful effects, which you suppose may arise, from not allowing the members of assembly forty shillings per day : We really did not foresee, nor can we yet conceive it to be a matter of such momentous consequence, and pregnant with such dire necessity. Our form of government does not, we hope, altogether depend on granting to ourselves a further diurnal sum of fifteen shillings, and we are well satisfied that (as now) so we shall in future have a sufficient number of upright, capable and independent persons, to undertake the power of legislation. We therefore do not conceive that our conduct in refusing to encrease the allowance of the members of assembly, can justify your comments respecting it, or warrant a supposition of those consequences, you are pleased to intimate. We coincide with you in opinion, that in a moral view, poverty should not exclude honesty from trust or consequence ; though we cannot help remarking, that for political considerations, the independence of legislators has ever been esteemed by the most approved writers on government, and was deemed by the framers of ours, as the best security for their integrity, and of course the most probable means of guarding against that partiality and oppression, the effects of which you seem so much to apprehend. Our form of government, which justly merits, and has received your approbation, has adopted this idea, and expressly excludes from the legislature, persons not having real or personal property, above the value of five hundred pounds current money. As you think assistance may be proper, we are willing to provide relief in necessary cases. It, therefore, on account of the indigent circumstances of some individuals, who from their exalted abilities, and superior virtue, may be thought worthy of public confidence, an addition may be hereafter necessary to their pay, they should be discriminated from those, who are not in want of such relief, and the intended addition should be proportionate to the different degrees of the necessity of those claiming it. The man of competent fortune is more comfortably situated, than he who is almost destitute of property, and therefore, on the principles premised by your house, not justifiable in claiming the same augmentation. Those in affluent circumstances, it seems, neither desire, or ought to lay such additional burthens on the public. Let not the provision, then, be more extensive, than the reasons assigned for making it : where the cause ceases it annihilates the effect.

If you are desirous of adopting some plan, by which particular persons, honoured with a seat in either house, may have their allowance encreased, on making it appear that they are incapable from indigence to serve on the present terms, we shall have no objection to the measure. This will answer every purpose of humanity and justice, obviate the eccentric notion of an impending aristocracy, provide for the relief of those, who may appear to require it, and prevent an unwarrantable expenditure of the public monies resulting from a general encrease of the present allowance. This may be done at some future period, as we are satisfied that the supposed cases cannot apply to any part of the present assembly.

When we consider the heavy taxes that the people must for some time labour under to terminate the present just and necessary war, we think it our indispensable duty, not unnecessarily to encrease their burthens. After having augmented the salaries of civil officers, we are inclined to think, that were we to accede to your propositions for enlarging the pay of those who compose the assembly, it may be insinuated, that the additions of the former, were meant as a ground, whereon to justify a claim to the latter. The privileges and exemptions of the several members of the legislature, may, perhaps, be thought of some consequence with respect to their private affairs, and not an inadequate compensation for a supposed deficiency. A further attachment to their emoluments and convenience may create disagreeable surmises and disgusts, which, we think, it will not be improper to avoid.

We entertain a due sense of your polite assurance, that you cannot impute our rejection of the resolve to any unworthy motive. Permit us to assure you in return, that our opinion of your public spirit and virtue will not suffer us to impute your persevering in this resolve to any view or expectation of private interest, and that we are willing to believe, the apprehensions you entertain of the dreadful effects flowing from an aristocratical government, are the principal inducements which stimulate you to request our concurrence.

In full confidence that a little reflection will remove your inquietudes and anxiety on this subject, and as we cannot conceive the propriety of agreeing to your resolve, and thus rapidly raising from time to time our respective allowances, and considering also the delicacy, which ought to be observed by men, who have a power of settling their own rewards, we have again rejected it. If in this instance we act contrary to the sense of your constituents, we shall hereafter be willing to recede from our opinion, on your receiving instructions from them, manifesting a desire to grant the