

INSTRUCTIONS of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY of MARYLAND, to George Plater, William Paca, William Carmichael, John Henry, James Forbes, and Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, Esquires.

Gentlemen,

HAVING conferred upon you a trust of the highest nature, it is evident we place great confidence in your integrity, abilities, and zeal to promote the general welfare of the United States, and the particular interest of this state, where the latter is not incompatible with the former. But to add greater weight to your proceedings in congress, and to take away all suspicion that the opinions you there deliver, and the votes you give, may be the mere opinions of individuals, and not resulting from your knowledge of the sense and deliberate judgment of the state you represent, we think it our duty to instruct you as followeth on the subject of the confederation; a subject, in which, unfortunately, a supposed difference of interests, has produced an almost equal division of sentiments among the several states composing the union. We say a supposed difference of interests, for if local attachments and prejudices, and the avarice and ambition of individuals, would give way to the dictates of a sound policy, founded on the principles of justice, (and no other policy but what is founded on those immutable principles deserves to be called sound) we flatter ourselves this apparent diversity of interests would soon vanish, and all the states would confederate on terms mutually advantageous to all, for they would then perceive that no other confederation than one so formed, can be lasting. Although the pressure of immediate calamities, the dread of their continuance from the appearance of disunion, and some other peculiar circumstances, may have induced some states to accede to the present confederation contrary to their own interests and judgments, it requires no great share of foresight to predict, that when these causes cease to operate, the states which have thus acceded to the confederation, will consider it as no longer binding, and will eagerly embrace the first occasion of asserting their just rights, and securing their independence. Is it probable that those states, who are ambitiously grasping at territories, to which in our judgment they have not the least shadow of exclusive right, will use with greater moderation the encrease of wealth and power derived from those territories, when acquired, than what they have displayed in their endeavours to acquire them? We think not; we are convinced the same spirit which hath prompted them to insist on a claim so extravagant, so repugnant to every principle of justice, so incompatible with the general welfare of all the states, will urge them on to add oppression to injustice. If they should not be incited by a superiority of wealth and strength to oppress by open force their less wealthy and less powerful neighbours, yet the depopulation, and consequently the impoverishment of those states, will necessarily follow, which by an unfair construction of the confederation, may be stript of a common interest in, and the common benefits derivable from, the western country. Suppose, for instance, Virginia indisputably possessed of the extensive and fertile country to which she has set up a claim, what would be the probable consequences to Maryland of such an undisturbed and undisputed possession? They cannot escape the least discerning. Virginia, by selling on the most moderate terms a small proportion of the lands in question, would draw into her treasury vast sums of money, and in proportion to the sums arising from such sales, would be enabled to lessen her taxes. Lands comparatively cheap, and taxes comparatively low, with the lands and taxes of an adjacent state, would quickly drain the state, thus disadvantageously circumstanced, of its most useful inhabitants; its wealth and its consequence, in the scale of the confederated states, would sink of course. A claim so injurious to more than one half, if not to the whole of the United States, ought to be supported by the clearest evidences of the right; yet what evidences of that right have been produced, what arguments alleged in support either of the evidence or the right? None that we have heard of deserving a serious refutation.

It has been said, that some of the delegates of a neighbouring state have declared their opinion of the impracticability of governing the extensive dominions claimed by that state; hence also the necessity was admitted of dividing its territory and erecting a new state under the auspices and direction of the elder, from whom, no doubt, it would receive its form of government, to whom it would be bound by some alliance, or confederacy, and by whose councils it would be influenced. Such a measure, if ever attempted, would certainly be opposed by the other states, as inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the proposed confederation, should it take place, by establishing a sub-confederacy, *imperium in imperio*. The state possessed of this extensive dominion must then either submit to all the inconveniencies of an overgrown and unwieldy government, or suffer the authority of congress to interpose at a future time, and to lop off a part of its territory, to be erected into a new and free state, and admitted into the confederation, on such conditions as shall be settled by nine states. If it is necessary for the happiness and tranquillity of a state thus overgrown, that congress should hereafter interfere, and divide its territory, why is the claim to that territory now made, and so pertinaciously insisted on? We can suggest to ourselves but two motives; either the declaration of relinquishing at some future period a portion of the country now contended for, was made to lull suspicion asleep, and to cover the designs of a secret ambition