

facture into flour for the use of the public; and that the said Baker was the first person who engaged to give the rise of the market in the neighbourhood where he purchased. And it further appears to your committee, by the paper No. 19, that the aforesaid Clark, one of the millers for whom said Baker has purchased wheat, has sent a quantity of flour to Philadelphia, and sold it for a higher price than it would come to under his stipulation with colonel Ewing.

It appears to your committee, that the present very high price of wheat, flour, and other provisions, is in a great measure to be attributed to the number of purchasers under a variety of denominations, such as assistant commissaries of purchases, their deputies, and others acting under them, millers and their agents, real or pretended purchasers for the French, and an agent for the state of Virginia; such a variety of interests naturally occasions a competition, and have been productive of the most mischievous consequences; for though the assistant commissaries are confined to certain districts, yet their deputies, persons who purchase for the millers with the public money, and a number of others spread over the whole country, many of whom may have been anxious to supply the pressing demands, yet were in some measure compelled to follow the example of a few others, who, perhaps less attentive to the public interest, or stimulated by an immoderate thirst of gain, endeavoured to encrease their profits by making as large purchases as possible, and in order to effect their purpose at any rate, did not hesitate to outbid one another, as the more they could purchase, and the higher the price, the more their commission would amount to. Your committee understand, that the deputy commissaries are allowed 2 per cent. commission, and it is acknowledged in one instance, that it has been agreed to pay those who act under them 5 per cent. but this is not permitted to appear on the face of the accounts, but included by charging an advanced price, and such charge is not provided for in the commissaries department; yet it is probable this may not be the worst of it, as there is but too much reason to believe, in many instances heretofore, that the public have paid much more, where persons have such an opportunity to carve for themselves.

It further appears to your committee, that it is almost impossible, in the present situation of affairs, for your assistant or deputy commissaries within their several districts to make purchases, collect and forward wheat, flour, or other provisions, without employing persons under them to purchase and receive those articles from the farmer, at such times and at such places as are most convenient and customary. It also appears to your committee, that many persons, either being or pretending to be purchasers under Mr. William Smith, agent in this state for supplying his most christian majesty's fleet and army with flour and other necessaries, have contrived in a great degree to advance the price of those articles, by outbidding the continental purchasers, which has tended not only to retard the supplies and distress the army, but must also prove injurious to our great and good ally, who is engaged in a common cause with us to carry on the war against our most inveterate enemy, in order to secure our independency and the dearest rights and privileges of the good people of this and the United States; strict justice and sound policy therefore require, that we should consider his interest as our own, and such supplies as we are able to afford should be furnished on the most liberal and reasonable terms.

Your committee therefore beg leave to suggest it as their opinion, that the most probable and effectual way to prevent those abuses in future, would be to authorise the governor and council to appoint one or more persons of character and fortune in each county (not to exceed three in any one county) to purchase wheat, flour, and other provisions and forage, for the use of this and the United States; and that they be allowed a commission of 5 per cent. for their trouble, which your committee apprehend would be a sufficient inducement to engage gentlemen of reputation to undertake the business, and who would execute it with fidelity; that the governor and council give the persons so appointed such orders, and supply them with so much money as they may think necessary from time to time out of the money they may receive for that purpose from the continental treasury; and that no millers or other persons be allowed to purchase under severe penalties; by this means a known saving of 2 per cent. would be made on all purchases, as the present deputy commissaries would be unnecessary; and your committee apprehend abuses would be avoided, speedy and ample supplies provided for your army and navy, and our allies and the neighbouring states which stand in need of it might be readily furnished out of the public magazines.

All which is submitted to the consideration of the honourable house.
Signed per order committee,

A. GOLDR, clk.

Which was read.

A petition of sundry inhabitants of Somerset county, praying an augmentation of the salaries of civil officers, &c. was preferred and read.

The bill, entitled, An act relating to public roads, sent to the senate by Mr. Lethbury and Mr. Keene.

The bill, entitled, An act for the relief of William Whetcroft, of the city of Annapolis, sent to the senate by Mr. Quynn and Mr. Maccubbin.

The bill, entitled, An act relating to the Marsh-causeway in Caroline county, sent to the senate by Mr. Lethbury and Mr. Keene. K The