

the value of the bills; on non-observance of the limitation prescribed, is also an usual, and perhaps the only, compulsory mode that can render such a regulation effectual; similar powers are invariably exercised by all governments with regard to the coin they may declare current; which, although so declared without limitation of time, they call in, recoin or decry, from time to time, as the preservation of the public from debased and counterfeited currency may appear to require.

The committee are farther of opinion, that a reasonable time was given, by the law of 1779, for bringing in those bills; but, had its duration been still more limited, the memorialists have no right now to complain; such an objection, then recently made, might have merited attention, but postponed to the conclusion of the war, it is now liable to an unfavourable construction; in every view, no pretence of want of notice can be admitted, as the time of redemption was limited by the original law of 1766, to a period that had then elapsed; the holders, who claim under the faith of that law, cannot plead ignorance of one of its most essential provisions.

In addition to the foregoing considerations, the committee were sensibly impressed with this reflection, that the three emissions, which constitute the claim of the memorialists, are all distinguished from any bills of credit emitted by authority of the United States or state of Maryland, by their having been issued under the authority, and upon the faith and credit, of the former provincial government; the discriminating, collecting and preserving, large sums of this description, may excite suspicions; at least, such holders of these old emissions, as neglected to comply with a law made during a doubtful contest, preserved a claim to compensation, and may be supposed to have calculated on an eventual restoration of the former government, or final subjugation of these states, events that must, in all probability, have proved fatal to the redemption of any emissions under an authority that must then have been deemed usurpation; in the opposite event, the American governments, although successful, have been unable to make adequate compensation to the holders of bills emitted under their immediate authority, and for the redemption of which, their faith had been pledged to those from whose obedience and confidence they derived their existence and support, and it would now appear unreasonable, that the enlarged efforts of our government should be directed to the purposes of persons, who, if they did not originally destine their application to, and expect compensation from, an antient authority, ought not to suppose that a legislature, whose laws they either neglected or despised, would extend a voluntary indulgence and liberality to them, whilst they remained unable to be just to their obedient and faithful citizens.

Upon the resolution, so far as it respects the emissions of 1769 and 1773, the committee submit to the consideration of the house the following remarks:

The emissions of paper money under the act of 1766, and those under the acts of 1769 and 1773, were borrowed on principles and funds extremely different.

The committee have already stated, that the bills of credit under the first mentioned law, were issued for the purpose of discharging the public debts, and completing public undertakings, and that the bank stock was pledged for their redemption.

But the paper money under the laws of 1769 and 1773 was emitted as a commercial medium on loan, and had no other fund for its redemption but what should be paid in by the borrowers.

The borrowers could discharge the principal and interest of their loan by bringing in bills of credit to the amount, or by paying bills of exchange on London, or specie.

Under the law of 1766, therefore, government received an equivalent for its paper in every instance in which it was thrown into circulation; but, under the laws of 1769 and 1773, the indemnification or equivalent depended on a future contingency, whether those who borrowed complied with the terms of their contracts.

Before any redemption of these bills of credit could take place, the exigencies of the war compelled the continent to emit large sums of paper money, which our legislature, in February, 1777, with the hope of supporting its credit, made a legal tender in discharge of all contracts.

That paper currency experienced a rapid depreciation, and while at its lowest ebb, was paid into the treasury, under the tender law, by many of the borrowers of the emissions of 1769 and 1773, in discharge of their bonds.

The amount thus paid, as far as the committee can ascertain it, is about £. 200,000, nearly equal to the total of the paper currency emitted by these two laws.

So that, although the funds upon which those bills of credit became current, were not wholly destroyed by payments to the state in continental paper, yet were they rendered greatly inadequate to their original destination.

Under these circumstances the act of October, 1780, chap. 5, was passed, and in the provisions of that law, we conceive, the legislature were well justified.

The second section of it enacts, that after the 20th day of March then next, no bills of credit issued by congress, or acts of assembly during the old government, or resolves of convention, should, within this state, be deemed paper money, or pass current, or be, in law or equity, a tender or payment for any debt, covenant, promise, contract or agreement.

The third section, in substance, declares, that any subject of this state, bona fide the possessor and proprietor of any bills of credit issued by congress, or acts of assembly during the old government, or resolves of convention, or bona fide trustee for any subject of this state, for the purpose of exchanging such bills of credit, might, at any time before the first of March then next, bring into the continental loan-office in this state, any of the said bills of credit, and be entitled, for every forty dollars thereof, to receive one dollar of the new bills emitted under the act of June, 1780, and that any person, after the said first day of March, and before the first day of April following, might bring into the said loan-office any of the said bills of credit, and be entitled to exchange them at the rate aforesaid, and that