

The supplement to the act, entitled, An act to improve and repair the streets in Frederick-town, in Frederick county, and for other purposes therein mentioned, endorsed; "By the senate, December 17, 1796: Read the first time and ordered to lie on the table.

"By the senate, December 19, 1796: Read the second time and will pass.
"By order, A. VAN-HORN, clk."
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Ordered to be engrossed.

Mr. Robins, from the committee of claims, brings in and delivers to the speaker the following report:

By the COMMITTEE of CLAIMS.

YOUR committee, conceiving themselves bound by their duty to suggest any improvements in the finance of the state which may strike them, beg leave to mention, that in an account laid before your committee by John Gwinn, Esquire, clerk of the general court on the western shore, the state stands charged with 8195 pounds of tobacco, amounting to the sum of £. 51 4 4, for making out and recording commissions to the chief justices, associate justices and justices of the peace, in the several counties; upon inquiry your committee find, that it has been the practice of the clerk of the general court to write all blank commissions, which are sent to the council, and filled up by them when the commissions are issued. Your committee are of opinion, that the salary given to the clerk of the council is fully adequate to compensate him for all his duties as such, and conceive that the making out of commissions ought to constitute a part of his duty, and submit the propriety of passing a law, declaring it to be the duty, in future, of the clerk of the council, and no longer the duty of the clerk of the general court, to make out and record the said commissions. Your committee further beg leave to observe, that inasmuch as the above duties have been performed by the clerk of the general court, they conceive themselves bound to make him the usual allowance, but that by passing the law above mentioned you will save to the state an annual sum of at least £. 50. All which is submitted to the house.

By order,

Z. HUGHES, clk.

Which was read

A petition from Mary Goodrich, widow of Aaron Goodrich, praying a sum of money may be levied on the inhabitants of said county for the support of her child, who is insane, was preferred, read, and referred to the next session of assembly.

A petition from William Brogden, of Anne-Arundel county, praying the treasurer may be directed to credit his bond for the sum of £. 15 1 10 sterling, with interest, for a debt due to him from James Russell, whose property has been confiscated, was preferred, read, and referred to Mr. Robins, Mr. W. Thomas and Mr. Ridout, to consider and report thereon.

On motion, ORDERED, That the bill permitting the proprietors of lots binding on the water at the west end of the basin in Baltimore-town to extend and improve the same be committed for amendment.

On the second reading the bill relating to negroes, and to repeal the acts of assembly therein mentioned, agreeably to the order of the day, the question was put, That the following words be struck out of the said bill, "become the right and property of the county into which such slave or slaves shall be first brought," and insert the words "shall be free?" Resolved in the affirmative.

On progression in reading the said bill, the question was put, That the following clause be struck out? "And be it enacted, That no person brought into this state from any of the United States, who is bound to service for a term of years only by the laws of the state from which such person is brought, shall be considered as a slave for life in this state, but such person, brought into this state, shall serve for the time which the laws of the state from which such person is brought oblige him or her to serve, and no longer." Determined in the negative.

On further progression in reading the said bill, the question was put, That the following words be inserted in the said bill after the word "life" in the 10th line of the 14th clause? "To be recovered by action of debt or bill of indictment, and if the said sum be not paid, or secured to be paid as herein directed, within thirty days after judgment, then such person or persons shall and may be adjudged by the court to serve on the roads for any period not exceeding five years." Resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. Merryman appeared in the house.

The clerk of the senate delivers the resolution in favour of Daniel Buffard, and the following message:

BY THE SENATE, DECEMBER 20, 1796.

GENTLEMEN,

WE have received your message of this day upon the subject of a reconsideration of the resolve in favour of Daniel Buffard, and cannot reconsider as requested. We are not sensible of the propriety of distinguishing any individual applicant from all other persons in the same situation. The law against which relief is prayed for has for a long time existed, and many have been subject to its operation. The recency of the fact may interest the passions, but ought not to influence the judgment. The propriety or justice of the law upon the subject as now existing, is certainly a distinct consideration. Whatever may be the proper idea as to future costs, it appears to us that policy, and a due respect to former legislatures, ought to prevent us from passing laws similar to that requested. If the principle of a retrospect of this kind is once admitted, precedent is established, which we conceive may lead to the most serious and alarming consequences.

By order,

A. VAN-HORN, clk.

Which was read.