

Our objections to the principles of your bill, we thought sufficiently pointed out by the principles, nature, and extent, of the bill which we originated, and which soon followed the rejection of yours. Under this impression, we did not imagine that a message explaining the motives of our conduct, and stating our objections, would have been expected, or deemed necessary; but as you have intimated that such is your expectation, we cannot but wish you had imparted it to us earlier in the session, and when we had little business before us; we could then have stated our objections more fully, and with greater perspicuity, than the shortness of time, and the necessary attention to the bills sent us with your message, will admit.

The preamble of the bill for seizing and confiscating British property, disclosed the principles upon which the enacting clause was grounded; and though the latter seemed in appearance to confiscate the property of British subjects only, yet when coupled to the preamble, ever a key to the construction of an act, it really included, all those who are called absentees, and must have been so taken by any court of judicature; for the criterion, by which a British subject was to be distinguished, being once drawn by the preamble, and admitted, no court could have determined in opposition to this rule, that a person who left Maryland, before the declaration of independence, was not a British subject, notwithstanding prior laws had considered them as subjects of this state; so that the enacting clause of your bill, compared with and explained by the preamble, would have the same effect, as if the absentees had been expressly taken in and named; therefore this class of people are determined to be British subjects by your bill as strongly, though indirectly, as if the same thing had been pointedly expressed in the enacting clause. This is so exceedingly clear, that we are not a little surpris'd at the suggestion, that your bill did not affect the question, whether these absentees were British subjects, but that the same would be determined by pre-existing law, upon the same rules, without your bill, as would be done under it. The acts of our legislature, entitled, An act to punish certain crimes and misdemeanors, and to prevent the growth of toryism, and the act for the better security of the government, consider these people, as