

You cannot question our right in common to those lands, or that the United States will not acknowledge that right, if properly urged and enforced. True policy and justice will induce them to make those lands common stock, from which a few states will never derive any considerable exclusive advantage. To render them useful to the whole of the United States, and to each state in particular, the authority of all must interpose, to regulate on what conditions the lands shall be purchased and held by the purchasers, to define the limits of such states as are not accurately defined, to erect new governments, and to prescribe the terms upon which they shall be admitted into the present union. These back or western lands, if they have been ceded to the British crown by the natives, or purchased from them, we have the right to subdue, and keep, as the public property of our enemy; so, unquestionably, we have a right to indemnify ourselves for the damages and expences of the war, out of that kind of property. Besides, the conquest and retention of this country is necessary to secure our independence, and cannot be given up consistently with our safety; and if so, that necessity will justify the measure. The difference between a right to seize the public property of an enemy (who never can become a subject) the possession of which is incompatible with our independence and safety, and that to take the private property of individuals, the enjoyment of which, upon their becoming subjects, is consistent with our safety, and strengthens our independence, is too obvious to need remarks.

We were at the last session of opinion, that even admitting we might rightfully have confiscated British property, yet a sale of it was impolitic, and this was one objection to the bill you then sent us. We still retain that opinion, and hope you and the rest of our fellow citizens are now convinced that we judged rightly in that particular at least, but we cannot grant that there was any thing in our message upon that occasion, which intimated an acquiescence in the justice of the proposed seizure, and the principle of your bill, unless you deduce that acquiescence, from our correcting an inference drawn from our message which it did not warrant.

You were restrained by your peculiar privilege from communicating your calculations to us, and therefore we cannot judge