



POLITICAL ARITHMETIC NO. I

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I HAVE often been surprized, that among the numerous and minute calculations submitted to the wisdom of Congress, by Messrs. Pinckney, Wolcott, McHenry, and Co. they have never favoured us with a comparison between the value of the *Commerce* we so much boast of in this country, and the expence of supporting it. I cannot promise to be accurate to a dollar, but perhaps the following statement of general facts may enable us to form an opinion on the subject, somewhat different from the sentiments that commonly prevail.

It appears, from the late account of the exports of the United States, that the gross amount for the last annual period was about *Sixty Millions of Dollars*. These exports consist of articles of the first necessity, Grain and Flour—Beef, Pork, and Fish—Lumber and Tobacco—Rice and Indigo. If we did not send them away in our own vessels, they would be fetched away by others, for they are not articles that depend on a forced market. The plated candlesticks or buckles of Birmingham, and the velvets and muslins of Manchester, may require to be known before they come into demand, and the wants of purchasers must frequently be excited and created by novelty, before the articles to be sold can find sufficient vent. But what fashion is there in a bushel of wheat or a cask of flour? The amount of exports from this country, would therefore be the same or nearly so, whether they were exported in American or European bottoms: Thus the only part of our Commerce really defended by the American ships of war, is the CARRYING TRADE.

The gross value of this trade will be *the amount of the freight on the produce carried*: This may be estimated at about 5 per cent. Five per cent. upon sixty millions, will be a 20th part, or three millions. If the merchant who fits out a vessel for this trade, gains 20 per cent. after deducting all expences, the profit on the American Commerce will be equal to 20 per cent. upon 3 millions, or 600,000 dollars per annum.

By the papers laid upon the table of Congress, it appears, that the expence of the navy now employed, and of the six frigates, and the projected seventy-fours, will probably amount to somewhat above four millions per annum: Hence it follows that we are contented to purchase 600,000 dollars at the price of 4 millions.

I wish this was the only expence which a naval establishment is likely to produce: But we must all have observed, that when a young fellow of spirit first hangs a sword by his side, he becomes much more *irritable* than before, and is impatient till he can find or make an opportunity of using it.

But whose gains are protected by this naval armament? Those of the agriculturist—the labouring farmer, or industrious mechanic? No. It is well known that much, if not the greater part of the carrying trade of this country, is in the hands of *British Agents* resident in our commercial towns, and trading under the sanction of our professed neutrality. It is *their* capital, therefore, and *their* property we are protecting at this expence—it is for them we are engaged in naval hostility, and take part in European quarrels—to them chiefly it is owing that we shall pay three millions to secure half a million—that our paper is stamped, our houses are measured, our windows are counted—and Americans are gravely told that all this expence is necessary for the support of AMERICAN Commerce!!!

I have no objection to our commerce being carried on by foreign capital, but the contrary; for I think our domestic capital can be much better employed; but I have great objection to the interest of the whole nation being sacrificed, our citizens and our property wasted by wars and taxes, and all the miseries of European policy entailed upon us and our posterity, to serve a few bold mercantile speculators whether foreign or domestic.

And *who* pays these taxes? The merchant who has employed his capital in the carrying trade? No—he lays the tax upon the freight. The merchant importer? No—he lays it upon the articles he sells. The retailer? No—he imitates the merchant. The consumer, the farmer, the mechanic, the labourer, they and *they alone* pay. Nor can the farmer, with any certainty, reimburse himself by laying these expences upon the produce of the land, for the sale of this produce depends on the existing demand and competition abroad, and a small advance of price may deprive him of the market.

But our commerce is said to be necessary to our revenue.—Of all modes of taxation, that which depends on commerce is the most burthensome and extravagant. Let a tax be laid of one hundred dollars, for instance. The importer must increase his capital 100 dollars; his capital brings him 20 per cent. and he requires this profit on the additional capital; the merchant who buys of him must increase *his* capital 120 dollars; he lays on 20 per cent. more, or 24 dollars. The retailer will have to lay his 30 per cent. on 144 dollars, if he means to do the same quantity of business as before; so that the farmer (Jack-Pay-for-all) by this ingenious management, contributes for every dollar paid into the treasury, *another dollar which the government never receives!*

Doubtless so many wise men, advocates for our commercial system, cannot be mistaken. It may, for aught I know, be a very fine thing for a country, whose population is about half a dozen persons per square mile, to increase the unproductive classes of the community, the merchants, the factors, the agents, the counting-house clerks, and revenue officers—to employ three millions of its capital on the sea, and 30,000 of its citizens abroad—to prohibit the influx of industry and wealth by Alien and Sedition bills, and by restrictions on the right of holding land—to raise a navy for the defence of *British capital*, or at best for that most insignificant branch of commerce, the *carrying trade*—and to defend the expediency of these measures in the anti-republican tone and language of the British Court—all this may be very proper in the most enlightened nation upon earth, but its policy is far from being apparent to a

BACK COUNTRY FARMER.