

By the United States in Congress assembled. November 1, 1783

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THE committee consisting of Mr. Carroll, Mr. Duane and Mr. S. Huntington, to whom was referred a motion of Mr. Wilson, to devise means for procuring a full representation in Congress, having reported,

“That whether from the peculiar circumstances some of the states have been under during the war, or that the states in general were not sufficiently impressed with the importance of keeping up a constant representation in Congress, the committee cannot find on examining the journals, notwithstanding the repeated earnest recommendations for that purpose, that all the states have been represented at the same time: it appears that frequently there have not been more than nine states, and too generally not more than a competent representation for the lesser objects of the confederation. As the articles of confederation are silent upon this subject, any further than by fixing the number of delegates for each state, and by declaring how many shall constitute a representation, the committee presume such silence was in consequence of a firm reliance that the states could not be inattentive to a duty only essential to the interests of each state, but likewise to a principle on which the federal government itself rests.

The articles of confederation requiring, for certain purposes, the agreement of nine states, and as it has seldom happened more than that number have attended, the committee conceive, that not only the injury the public and individuals have suffered thereby, have been occasioned in many instances by the absence of the delegates of some of the states, but likewise that the spirit of the articles of confederation have been defeated, by making an unanimity necessary, whereas nine only out of thirteen are required. And the committee are further of opinion, that unless the states pursue effectual measures for keeping up a

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constant representation, another material object of the confederation will be frustrated. The delays unavoidable for want of a full representation, will they conceive, oblige Congress to remain sitting the whole year, whereas by the articles of confederation it appears, that it was expected part of the business of the United States, would be transacted by a committee of the states.

The committee therefore are of opinion, that it should be earnestly recommended to the respective states, to take the most effectual measures to maintain at all times while Congress are sitting, a full representation, that the delay of business, which has proved injurious to the public, and grievous to individuals, may no longer be a subject of complaint.

RESOLVED, That Congress agreed to the said report.

APRIL 19, 1784.

ON the report of a committee consisting of Mr. Gerry, Mr. Sherman and Mr. Lee, to whom was referred a motion of Mr. Gerry.

RESOLVED, That the legislatures of the several states be informed that whilst they are respectively represented in Congress by two delegates only, such an unanimity for conducting the most important public concerns is necessary as can be rarely expected. That if each of the thirteen states should be represented by two members, five out of twenty-six, being only a fifth of the whole, may negative any measures requiring the voice of nine states. That of eleven states now on the floor of Congress, nine being represented by only two members from each, it is in the power of three out of twenty-five, making only one eighth of the whole to negative such a measure, notwithstanding that by the articles of confederation, the dissent of five out of thirteen being more than one-third of the number, is necessary for such a negative. That in a representation of three members from each state, not less than ten of thirty-nine could so negative a matter requiring the voice of nine states. That from facts under the observation of Congress, they are clearly convinced

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that a representation of two members from the several states, is extremely injurious by producing delays, and for this reason is likewise much more expensive than a general representation of three members from each state. That therefore Congress conceive it to be indispensibly necessary and earnestly recommend that each state, at all times when Congress are sitting, be hereafter represented by three members at least; as the most injurious consequences may be expected from the want of such representation.