

Articles of Confederation Document 4 - Commerce

Journals of the Continental Congress
Friday, March 3, 1786

The committee...to whom were recommitted...documents relative to Commerce, and the acts passed by the States in Consequence of the recommendations of Congress of the 30th April, 1784, report:

That in examining the laws passed by the States, in Consequence of the Act of the 30 April, 1784, they find that four states, namely, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Virginia, have enacted Laws conformable to the recommendations contained in the Act, but have restrained their operation, until the other states shall have substantially complied.

That three States, namely, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Maryland, have passed laws conforming to the same, but have determined the time from which they are to commence...

That New Hampshire, by an Act passed the 23 June, 1785, have granted full powers to regulate their trade, by restrictions or duties, for fifteen years, with a proviso that the law shall be suspended until the other states have substantially done the same.

That Rhode Island, by Acts, passed in February and October, 1785, have granted power for the term of twenty five years, to regulate trade between the respective States, and of prohibiting, restraining or regulating, the importation only of all foreign goods in any ships or vessels other than those owned by Citizens of the United States...

That North Carolina, by an Act passed the 2d June, 1784, have granted powers similar to those granted by Rhode Island, relative to foreign commerce, but unrestrained in duration and clogged with a clause, that when all the states shall have substantially complied there with, it shall become an Article of Confederation and perpetual Union.

That they cannot find that the three other states, namely, Delaware, South Carolina and Georgia, have passed any laws in consequence of the Recommendations. The result is, that four States have fully complied; three others have also complied, but have determined the time of commencement, so that there will be a dissimilarity in the duration of the power granted; that three other states have passed laws in pursuance of the recommendations, but so inconsonant to them, both in letter and spirit, that they cannot be deemed compliances; and that three other States have passed no acts whatever.

...the Committee think it the duty of Congress, again to call the attention of the states to this subject, the longer delay of which must be attended with very great evils; whereupon,

Resolved, That the recommendations of the 30 of April, 1784, be again presented to the view of the States of Delaware, South Carolina and Georgia, and that they be most earnestly called upon to grant powers conformable thereto.

Resolved, That the States of New Hampshire, Rhode Island and North Carolina, be solicited to reconsider their Acts, and to make them agreeable to the recommendations of the 30 April, 1784.

Resolved, That the time for which the power under the recommendations of the 30 April, 1784, is to continue, ought to commence on the day that Congress shall begin to exercise it; and that it be recommended to the States of Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Maryland, to amend their Acts accordingly.¹

[Note 1: 1 This report, in broadside form, signed in ms. by Charles Thomson, is in the Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 24, 155. See ante, February 28.]