The National Intelligencer,

AND

WASHINGTON ADVERTISER.

Vol. I. WASHINGTON CITY, PRINTED BY SAMUEL HARRISON SMITH, NEW-JERSEY AVENUE, NEAR THE CAPITOL. No. L.

Five Dolls. per ann. WEDNESNDAY, FEBRUARY 25th 1801. Paid In Advance.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

House of Representatives.

SEDITION ACT.

General Lee roſe to expreſs his great pleaſure at the very fair and candid manner in which his colleague (Mr. Nicholas) and the gentleman from Pennſylvania, (Mr. Gallatin) had conducted themſelves towards the ſtate he repreſented. But, he could not wholly approve of the ſentiments expreſſed by them.

With reſpect to the conſtitutionality of this law, after what had been ſo ably advanced by his friends in its behalf, he would only obſerve that even with the ſuſpenſion of thoſe ſentiments, or without any other ſupport, the deciſion of the ſub-court ought to be with every gentleman, and effectually was with him, ſufficient to remove every poſſible doubt. From the moment of that deciſion, every doubt ought to have ceaſed, and the queſtion never again to have agitated the Congreſs of the United States. Thoſe who had been taught to obey the conſtitution, muſt approve of its deciſions, and nothing could be more evident than that the reference to the judiciary of our government was the preciſely accurate mode of aſcertaining the veracity of a legiſlative meaſure.

The gentleman from Pennſylvania had told the houſe that this law was the offspring, and had become a part of a defenſive ſyſtem, adopted when the aggreſſion of a foreign foe raiſed into action every meaſure of repulſion within the power of the country, and that it was ſo conſidered at a ſucceeding ſeſſion of the houſe. Not having the honor of a ſeat in the houſe at that time, Mr. Lee ſaid he did not know; but whether that was the reaſon of its adoption, or whether not, he could not agree with that gentleman that the occaſion for this law was at an end. He would not heſitate for a moment to ſay that this law ought to be perpetual. It was from this impreſſion that he ſhould vote for the report, and with pleaſure would go farther and make it a perpetual law.

In order to examine the propriety of this opinion, it would be neceſſary to examine the law. What were its proviſions, and what its object? Its object is to ſupport your government—not by ſuppreſſing the truth—not by ſuppreſſing information proper to be known to your people—not by violating the rights of even the humbleſt of your citizens; but by giving the truth and the truth only its dominion. The gentlemen muſt pardon him in contradicting them when they ſaid that it operated to the injury of our citizens. He muſt deny the aſſertion that the honeſt well-intentioned citizen could poſſibly receive the leaſt inconvenience from this law. He owed it to himſelf and to his friends with whom he uſually voted, to declare that it was their moſt ſincere deſire to give every truth and every act to the community.—He would contend that this law went to adopt, as far as a law could do, meaſures for the expreſs protection of truth. After a proviſion againſt unlawful and forcible combination, the law provided a protection to the government, by guarding it from the conſequences of falſe and malicious defamation.

He would aſk gentlemen to conſider candidly whether, if the eſtabliſhment of an oligarchy, of a monarchy, or of an ariſtocracy, was deſired in this country, how the object could be more eaſily attained than by beginning with undermining the government, and how could the government be undermined but by removing, by every poſſible manoeuvre, the public confidence from that government? Would not prudence dictate to ſuch characters to bring the government into contempt? This was too plain to be anſwered negatively: it muſt be anſwered affirmatively. If theſe efforts then might produce ſuch a reſult, if ſuch meaſures could lead to it, would [illegible] not be highly unbecoming thoſe whoſe [illegible]ty it was to watch and repel every avenue [illegible]d attempt that could poſſibly tend in ſuch an event to ſupport the authorities of the country by uſing every effort to the deſtruction of ſuch meaſures? moſt undoubtedly ſo. He contended that it was a moſt important duty, without the performance of which the houſe of repreſentatives would be traitors to that people whoſe good ought to reſt upon the heart of every man, and whoſe intereſt could never be more faithfully effectuated than in the perpetuating of a law which would effectually go to protect the government of their choice.

He was ſurpriſed at his colleague's objection, and that of the gentleman from Pennſylvania, when it was made ſo evidently to appear by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. Dennis) that ſuch a protection was afforded by their own ſtate conſtitution and law! This truth was too ſtrong to be reſiſted. He believed it to be the caſe in almoſt every ſtate. And if ſo in the individual ſtates, why ſhould not ſo valuable a remedy be afforded to the government of the union? This was the charter of our venerable ſires, and what principle ſhould withhold this diſpoſition from their enlightened and experienced ſons? Why ſhould that be denied to the ſupreme government which every member of the houſe, and which every individual in the union enjoyed? Why ſhould gentlemen deny that to the federal government which was denied to the ſeparate governments?

There was however, Mr. Lee ſaid, a point of view which this ſubject aſſumed to him, of a very important nature, and which he had not heard from any gentleman. Unleſs this deluge of falſehood and defamation was impeded in its courſe or prevented by wholeſome and timely proviſions, the confidence of the people is removed, and even beyond poſſibility of relief; the fatal blow once given to the confidence of the people, all efforts to re-eſtabliſh that confidence is in vain.

But gentlemen ſay that unleſs this law is ſuffered to fall, you reſiſt the voice of the people. How do they eſtimate this fact? in what way the voice of the people has been heard on that ſubject, it is in favor of the law, for expreſſion of the public approbation has been experienced in the re-election of men whoſe principles are in perfect accordance with thoſe who firſt enacted it. Added to this, has not Virginia, after expreſſing her pointed diſapprobation of this meaſure, ſubmitted her arguments and her definitive vote to all her ſiſter ſtates; and out of them how many were there found to approve of her meaſures? very few indeed—he believed out of the ſixteen not more than two or three!

Mr. Lee could not but admire the ſoothing manner in which his colleague conſoled the houſe on the change of politics that was about to take place. For the firſt time ſince he had the honor of a ſeat in the houſe, had he heard ſuch harmonious and highly grateful accents drop from the lips of that gentleman. As this meaſure would, moſt undoubtedly, tend to increaſe and eſtabliſh the happineſs and ſecurity of the government, and all its well diſpoſed citizens, he hoped that gentleman's harmonious diſpoſition would let us be ſo for life, and to retain to the government their wonted protection, notwithſtanding the change of men and of politics. Whoſoever of the two great characters ſhould direct the helm of our ſtate veſſel—whether he be taken from the ſouth, or whether from the fertile fields of the Hudſon, he would be willing to give him all the opportunity of tranquility, ſo ſweetly promiſed by his honourable colleague.

But how ſhort lived were theſe pleaſing accents! How ſoon did we hear from the aſſociates of that gentleman, the moſt poignant anathemas againſt the judiciary of our country? Such as could ſcarcely be thought poſſible to eſcape their lips, againſt men who have no opportunity of vindicating themſelves! Where are vaniſhed thoſe pleaſing forebodings of political happineſs? Is it the way to make the people happy, to depict the ſupreme judiciary of our country—men who hold their offices—not for a day—not during executive pleaſure—but for life—to depict thoſe men in colors ſo unworthy their high characters! But certain he was that the gentlemen were incorrect in their opinions; was he not well aſſured that they were in an error, and believed with them that the judiciary, were partial and corrupt, his duty would excite him to join them; not perhaps in attacking men who were not able to anſwer in the houſe, but in taking meaſures whereby a full and fair examination ſhould be had. This he knew to be the mode which true candor would point out.

True it was that a great change had been made in the direction of our affairs; he did hope (though he did not believe) this change would be productive of much good to the people. Believing that this law would be a protection to the adminiſtration in the ways of truth and virtue—wiſhing to do unto others as he deſired they ſhould do unto him, how could gentlemen on the other ſide ſuppoſe that they would violate their principles of honor and integrity ſo much as to depart from a ſyſtem they had raiſed for themſelves? What better attachment could be diſplayed than to afford the future adminiſtration the ſame aid which was afforded to one more peculiarly approved of by a majority of the preſent houſe?

Mr. Lee concluded by expreſſing a moſt ſincere hope that the ſucceſs under the operation of this law, and a full ſatiſfaction of its being ſtrictly conſtitutional, in the opinion of the judges, which our government ſtamped its authority, might operate to continue to the government every neceſſary protection, and evince to the world that the political ſitting of the federal ſide of the houſe was as bright at its riſing, and their laſt acts devoted to the public good.

SATURDAY, Feb. 21, 1801.

On the engroſement of the Sedition Law.

Mr. Dawson ſaid,

When the law which this bill is intended to continue was firſt paſſed, I gave to it my diſſent; I did it from a conviction on my mind, that it does violate that conſtitution which I have ſworn to ſupport, and from a perſuaſion that the *then* ſtate of things did not require it; that while it begat an unjuſt ſuſpicion of the American character, it was a ſtain on our code of legiſlation.

If theſe were my impreſſions at that time, ſome reflection ſince, aided by the productions of men, whoſe names and talents will be long remembered, and a knowledge of the ſentiments of the ſtate from which I come, and of the people whom I repreſent, have confirmed thoſe impreſſions, have reſolved me to vote againſt that bill in every ſhape and in every ſtage, and I hope that it will not be ſuffered to be ingroſſed.

Sir, it is well remembered by me, nor can it be forgotten by any gentleman on what grounds this law was advocated when firſt paſt—it was then ſupported and preſſed upon us, as a neceſſary link in a chain of meaſures which a majority of the two houſes of congreſs thought proper to adopt, to meet a particular criſis—to guard againſt the ſuppoſed intrigues of a foreign nation—to give reſpectability and energy to our executive, to prevent it's falling into diſrepute with the people, and to puniſh factious individuals. The hiſtory of the laſt two years has, I am perſuaded, convinced gentlemen, how miſtaken were their opinions of the American character. With me they muſt now believe, that whatever difference there may be in our political principles, when the ſafety, freedom or honor of our country are threatened by a foreign nation, like a band of brothers we will rally round our government, and ſupport it by every means which the conſtitution of our country authoriſes, and which the energy of the caſe may require. How far this law has given reſpectability or energy to our adminiſtration, I will not pretend to ſay; the events of the preſent day, is an ample comment on that point; but after the experience which we have had, ſince ſome of the objects for which it was formed have paſt by, and others have not been anſwered, I did hope that no attempt would have been made to continue it, and that it would have been ſuffered to expire like its twin-brother the alien law. In this hope however, I have been diſappointed; gentlemen have come forward and ſupported it with a zeal, not uncommon to them on other occaſions, and unexpected in the preſent, when we were taught to believe that they were at leaſt indifferent about it, and new reaſons have been aſſigned for its continuance—formerly it was thought neceſſary to protect the adminiſtration againſt the people—and now, ſir, it is wanted to guard individuals againſt an adminiſtration which may be weak or wicked—Experience has I am perſuaded convinced gentlemen that it has not anſwered the firſt purpoſe, and I hope they will find it unneceſſary for the latter—into whatever hands the adminiſtration of our country may fall, its acts ought to be examined with that freedom which becomes freemen, and with that decency which becomes gentlemen—ſo long as they are guided by juſtice and wiſdom, they will be ſupported with deciſion and firmneſs by the friends to the adminiſtration—Whenever they ſhall deſcend from theſe great principles, the voice of the people will again ſweep the actors from the political theatre.

This law, ſir, has been advocated, becauſe it is ſaid to ameliorate the common law of England—and on this argument much dependence has been placed; however, admitting it to be true, on a moment's reflection it will not be found to merit any conſideration—for, ſir, let it be remembered that the opponents to this law are alſo the opponents to the adoption of that law as the law of the United States, and do not think it authoriſed by the conſtitution—this is the doctrine which they have uniformly contended for, and which pardon me if I ſay has been eſtabliſhed as fully as one point poſſibly can be—it is not therefore probable, nay I think it impoſſible that they ever ſhould appeal to it to ſhield them. No, ſir, ſupported by the juſtice and policy of their meaſures, I truſt they will need the aid of neither the Alien, Sedition or common law.

Sir, it will be unneceſſary for me to touch on the unconſtitutionality of this law; it has been proven over and over again in this houſe, and in every part of the continent, and if what has been ſaid and written has not convinced gentlemen, no effect would be produced by any thing which I could ſay—But, ſir, as ſome of the objects for which the law was at firſt enacted, have paſt by, and others have not been anſwered, as the friends to the approaching adminiſtration do not wiſh it for their protection, and the opponents will not need it for theirs, I do hope that thoſe gentlemen who *doubt* about the conſtitutionality will vote with us, and that the bill will not be permitted to be engroſſed.

The queſtion was th[illegible]en, and the engroſſment refuſed 53 [illegible]0.

JOHN BARNES,

FROM PHILADELPHIA,

Has juſt opened for ſale the following articles at his ſtore oppoſite Mr Semmes's tavern, in Georgetown, a general aſſortment of

Fresh Teas of the firſt quality, viz.

Imperial, Large Hyſon,
Young Hyſon, Hyſonſkin,
Souchong and Bohea.

SPICES,

Nutmegs, Mace,
Cinnamon. Cloves.
Four bags freſh Almonds.

LIQUORS.

Madeira, ſix years old, Dry Sherry & Port,
Brandy, 4th proof Jamaica Spirits, and Holland Gin.

Coffee,

Pennington's beſt refined ſugars.

With a handſome aſſortment of gentlemen's faſhionable London Hats and trimmings.

He has likewiſe for ſale, ten caſes well aſſorted Stationary, conſiſting of writing paper of different qualities, Quills, Wafers, and Ink powder, in packages from 80 to 180 dollars on the moſt reaſonable terms for caſh or approved notes.

English and American playing cards,
Paſteboard per groce,
Wrapping paper per ream,
A caſe of 7-8 and yard wide Iriſh Linen per piece.

Nov. 14th, 1800.