

MR. CHAIRMAN : The honorable member, who spoke yesterday, went into an explanation of a variety of circumstances to prove the expediency of a change in our national government, and the necessity of a firm union ; at the same time, he described the great advantages which this State, in particular, receives from the Confederacy, and its peculiar weaknesses when abstracted from the Union. In doing this, he advanced a variety of arguments, which deserve serious consideration. Gentlemen have this day come forward to answer him. He has been treated as having wandered in the flowery fields of fancy ; and attempts have been made to take off from the minds of the committee that sober impression which might be expected from his arguments. I trust, sir, that observations of this kind are not thrown out to cast a light air on this important subject, or to give any personal bias on the great question before us. I will not agree with gentlemen who trifle with the weaknesses of our country, and suppose that they are enumerated to answer a party purpose, and to terrify with ideal dangers. No ; I believe these weaknesses to be real, and pregnant with destruction. Yet, however weak our country may be, I hope we shall never sacrifice our liberties. If, therefore, on a full and candid discussion, the proposed system shall appear to have that tendency, for God's sake let us reject it. But let us not mistake words for things, nor accept doubtful surmises as the evidence of truth. Let us consider the Constitution calmly and dispassionately, and attend to those things only which merit consideration. . . .

Sir, it appears to me extraordinary, that while gentlemen in one breath acknowledge that the old Confederation requires many material amendments, they should in the next deny that its defects have been the cause of our political weakness, and the consequent calamities of our country. I cannot but infer from this, that there is still some lurking, favorite imagination, that this system, with corrections, might become a safe and permanent one. It is proper that we should examine this matter. We contend that the radical vice in the old Confederation is, that the laws of the Union apply only to States in their corporate capacity. Has not every man who has been in our legislature experienced the truth of this position ? It is inseparable from the disposition of bodies who have a constitutional power of resistance, to examine the merits of a law. This has ever been the case with the federal requisitions. In this examination, not being furnished with those lights which directed the deliberations of the general government, and incapable of embracing the general interests of the Union, the States have almost uniformly weighed the requisitions by their own local interests, and have only executed them so far as answered their particular convenience or advantage. Hence there