

*this time* on board the ship, but at the rendezvous. It naturally occurs to ask, why did not Lieutenant Sinclair, in obedience to the orders of the government, immediately discharge *these men*? If he had enlisted them *ignorantly*, the *spirit, nay, the letter of his orders*, obliged him to discharge them as soon as he knew from the highest authority, their *commanding officer*, that they were *deserters* from his ship. Many honest well meaning men have contended, that the word of a *publick officer* ought to be respected.

This is an excellent general principle, and the observance of it would tend very much to preserve the peace of nations: but we should not forget that this rule has a double application. It operates as much in favour of the officers of *other nations* as of our own. When, therefore, Lord James Townshend pledged his word to Lieutenant Sinclair, that the men whom he had enlisted, contrary to the orders of our government, were *his* sailors, and that the British government had a *property* in their services, it was as much the duty of Lieutenant Sinclair to give full faith to the word of Captain Townshend, as it was the duty of Captain Humphreys to give credit to the declaration of Captain Barron:—it was still stronger;—Lieutenant Sinclair *did not, could not* know that the declaration of Lord Townshend was untrue; but Captain Humphreys *did* know that the declaration of Commodore Barron was unfounded, and he turned out to be right in the fact.

Lieutenant Sinclair made an evasive answer to the application of Captain Townshend, and did not *deliver or discharge* the men. An application was then made to Captain Decatur, who referred him back to Sinclair. The British Consul applied to the Mayor of Norfolk for these men, but without effect—and lastly, the British Minister applied to our government, who replied, that they had on a former occasion stated their reasons for not complying with their request, and that moreover the men were Americans.

These men, who, with the exception of Hill, were all *native British seamen*, and had no claims from residence or other causes on our protection, were all continued on board the *Cheapeake*, while at Washington, under the eye of our government. No measures appear to have been taken to ascertain their claims to our protection. No evidence down to *this day* has ever been published in relation to