

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.**

*The Committee to whom was referred the Message of his Excellency, with the Documents accompanying the same, respectfully REPORT in part—*

**THAT** the ruinous war, declared against Great-Britain, has assumed an aspect of great and immediate danger to this Commonwealth. The persevering invasion of Canada, has, at length, produced, as by natural consequence, the invasion of our Atlantic, Frontier, and *River* towns. A portion of the territory of this state, is already in the actual occupation of the enemy; and the sea-coast, in all such parts as may be deemed assailable, is openly menaced with desolation. To defend our soil, and to repel the invader, no force or means, bearing any proportion to the emergency, have been provided by the national government. It was justly to have been expected, that before hostilities were provoked from a formidable enemy, or, at least that, at some period subsequent to their commencement, means of defence and protection would have been afforded to a sea-coast so extended, and so exposed to the ravages of an enemy, as that of Massachusetts. But events forbid a reliance on any such expectation. The principal part of the regular force raised, or at any time quartered, in this state, has been withdrawn for the war on the Canada border. The fortifications, until lately strengthened by the exertions of our own citizens, were essentially defective; and the navy in a situation calculated to invite, rather than repel, aggression; and to require protection, instead of affording it. Indeed, when the circumstances under which the war was declared, and has been prosecuted, are viewed in connexion with the utter neglect of the ordinary preparation for such a state, the inference is fairly warranted, that the American cabinet intended no other means of defence for this state, but such as a brave and free people would feel themselves impelled to make, by their own sense of danger and love of country. That it relied upon the passions and sufferings, incident to a state of war, to overcome the repugnance so universally felt by our citizens to the unjust and ruinous contest; and to leave them at liberty to drain our population and our treasures for the prosecution of their favorite enterprises. But when the Commonwealth was found to be in danger of invasion, the people have not paused to consider the motives or objects of their national rulers, in leaving them defenceless; but at the summons of their Governor, they have repaired to the standard of their country, with a zeal and alacrity which demonstrate, that the principles which unite men of every class and description in the determination to conquer or die in its defence, are not enfeebled by our party divisions. Thousands of brave and hardy yeomanry, composing a part of a well provided and well disciplined militia, have hastened to the post of danger, and other thousands are ready to follow, at a moment's warning.—The most liberal and effectual aid has been afforded in erecting forts and batteries; and but one spirit animates the whole mass of our citizens, with the invincible resolution of defending their native land against the incursions of the enemy. It is, however, a fact, not to be disguised, that while the people of this state, with the blessing of heaven, have confidence in the sufficiency of their resources, for defending their own soil, if applied exclusively to this object; yet, they cannot be supposed equal to this, and also competent to respond to the heavy and increasing demands of the national government.

The state of the national Treasury, as exhibited by the proper officer, requires an augmentation of existing taxes, and if, in addition to these, the people of Massachusetts, deprived of their commerce, and harassed by a formidable enemy, are compelled to provide for the indispensable duty of self-defence, it must soon become impossible for them to sustain this burden. There remains to them, therefore, no alternative but submission to the enemy, or the control of their own resources, to repel his aggressions. It is impossible to hesitate in making the election. This people are not ready for conquest or submission. But being ready and determined to defend themselves, and having no other prospect of adequate means of defence, they have the greatest need of all those resources derivable from themselves, which the national government has hitherto thought proper to employ elsewhere.

Your Committee are also of opinion, that if the war is to continue, provision for a military force, in addition to the ordinary militia, must be resorted to; that a considerable force must be constantly embodied and maintained, ready to meet the enemy in his varied and distant enterprises; that the continual calls upon great bodies of militia, to march from home, at all seasons, and to remain at a distance from their families, will be the most oppressive, and least economical of any mode of defence which can be devised, in a protracted warfare.

But while your Committee think, that the people of this Commonwealth ought to unite, and that they will unite, under any circumstances, at the hazard of all that is dear, in repelling an invading foe, it is not believed, that this solemn obligation imposes silence, upon their just complaints against the authors of the national misfortunes. It is, on the contrary, a sacred duty to hold up to view, on all occasions, the destructive policy, by which a state of unparalleled national felicity, has been converted into one of humiliation and danger; believing, that, unless an almost ruined people will discard the men and change the measures which have induced this state of peril and suffering, the day of their political salvation is past. It should never be forgotten, that this disastrous condition of public affairs has been forced upon Massachusetts, not merely against her consent, but in opposition to her most earnest protestations. From the moment that the administration, yielding to its own passions and calculations of party power, commenced its system of commercial hostility to Great-Britain, and of conformity to the views of the late tyrant of France, its tendency to involve the nation in the most needless and cruel embarrassments, was distinctly foreseen, and declared by former Legislatures. The insufficiency of our youthful, though flourishing commerce to cope with that of Great-Britain in a struggle of restrictions, was announced by the united warning of those best versed in a knowledge of this subject. It was never doubted by these persons, that a war with Great-Britain, would be accompanied by an extinction of commerce; by the banishment of our sailors; the desolation of our coast; the blockade and invasion of our sea ports; the failure of national credit; the necessity of oppressive taxes; and the consummation of national ruin, by an alliance with the late despot of Europe; from which greatest of all calamities, we have been preserved only by his fall. Of all these evils, were our rulers forewarned by Massachusetts, whose vital interests were thus put in jeopardy; and they were implored by every consideration of policy and humanity, to stay their hands from the cruel and wanton sacrifice of the interests of those, who asked from them, nothing but the privilege of pursuing their own industrious callings. But government, deaf to this voice, and listening to men distinguished in their native state, only by their disloyalty to its interests and the enjoyment of a patronage, bestowed upon them as its price, have affected to consider the patriotic citizens of this great state as tainted with disaffection to the union and with predilection for Great-Britain, and have lavished the public treasure, in vain attempts to fix, by evidence, this odious imputation. Thus dishon-

ored and deprived of all influence in the national councils, this state has been dragged into an unnatural and distressing war, and its safety, perhaps its liberties, endangered.

It is therefore with great concern, that your Committee are obliged to declare their conviction, that the constitution of the United States, under the administration of the persons in power, has failed to secure to this Commonwealth, and as they believe, to the eastern section of this union, those equal rights and benefits, which were the great objects of its formation, and which they cannot relinquish without ruin to themselves and posterity. These grievances justify and require vigorous, persevering and peaceable exertions, to unite those who realize the sufferings, and foresee the dangers of the country, in some system of measures, to obtain relief, for which the ordinary mode of procuring amendments to the constitution, affords no reasonable expectation, in season to prevent the completion of its ruin. The people, however, possess the means of certain redress; and when their safety, which is the supreme law, is in question, these means should be promptly applied. The framers of the constitution, made provision to amend defects which were known to be incident to every human institution; and the provision itself was not less liable to be found defective upon experiment, than other parts of the instrument. When this deficiency becomes apparent, no reason can preclude the right of the whole people, who were parties to it, to adopt another; and it is not a presumptuous expectation, that a spirit of equity and justice, enlightened by experience, would enable them to reconcile conflicting interests, and obviate the principal causes of those dissensions, which unfit government for a state of peace and of war, and so to amend the constitution, as to give vigor and duration to the union of the states. But as a proposition for such a convention from a single state, would probably be unsuccessful, and our danger admits not of delay, it is recommended by the Committee, that in the first instance, a conference should be invited between those states, the affinity of whose interests is closest, and whose habits of intercourse, from their local situation and other causes, are most frequent; to the end, that by a comparison of their sentiments and views, some mode of defence, suited to the circumstances and exigencies of those states, and measures for accelerating the return of public prosperity, may be devised; and also to enable the delegates from those states, should they deem it expedient, to lay the foundation for a radical reform in the national compact, by inviting to a future convention, a deputation from all the states in the union.— They therefore report the following Resolves—which are submitted.

H. G. OTIS, *Per order.*

**RESOLVED**, That the calamities of war being now brought home to the territory of this Commonwealth, a portion of it, being in the occupation of the enemy, our sea coast and rivers being invaded in several places, and in all exposed to immediate danger, the people of Massachusetts are impelled by the duty of self defence, and by all the feelings and attachments which bind good citizens to their country, to unite in the most vigorous measures for defending the state and expelling the invader; and no party feelings, or political dissensions can ever interfere with the discharge of this exalted duty.

**Resolved**, That provision be made by law for raising by voluntary enlistment for twelve months or during the war, a number of troops not exceeding ten thousand rank and file, to be organized and officered by the Governor, for the defence of the state.

**Resolved**, That the Governor be authorized to accept the services of any volunteers, and to organize them as part of the aforesaid troops, who shall hold themselves in readiness to march at a moment's warning, to any part of the

Commonwealth, who shall be entitled to full pay and rations, when in actual service, and to a just compensation short of full pay, to be provided by law, during the entire term of their enlistment.

*Resolved*, That the Governor be authorized to borrow from time to time, for the use of the Commonwealth, a sum not exceeding one million of dollars, at an interest not exceeding six per cent, and that the faith of this Commonwealth be pledged to provide funds at the next session of this Legislature at furthest for the payment of the interest on the sums borrowed.

*Resolved*, That twelve persons be appointed as Delegates from this Commonwealth, to meet and confer with Delegates from the other states of New England, or any of them upon the subjects of their public grievances and concerns, and upon the best means of preserving our resources and of defence against the enemy, and to devise and suggest for adoption by those respective states, such measures as they may deem expedient; and also to take measures, if they shall think proper, for procuring a convention of Delegates from all the United States, in order to revise the constitution thereof, and more effectually to secure the support and attachment of *all* the people, by placing *all* upon the basis of fair representation.

*Resolved*, That a circular letter from this Legislature, signed by the President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives, be addressed to the executive government of each of said states, to be communicated to their Legislatures, explaining the objects of the proposed conference, and inviting them to concur in sending Delegates thereto.

*Resolved*, That on the eighteenth day of October instant, this Legislature will, by joint ballot, elect twelve persons to meet such Delegates as may be appointed by the said states, or either of them, at Hartford, in the state of Connecticut, on the fifteenth day of December next.

In Senate, October 12, 1814.

Read and accepted. Sent down for concurrence.

JOHN PHILLIPS, *President*.

In the House of Representatives, Oct. 15, 1814.

Read and concurred,

TIMOTHY BIGELOW, *Speaker*.

October 15, 1814.

Approved,

CALBB STRONG.

Secretary's Office, } A true Copy.  
20<sup>th</sup> October, 1814. }

ATTEST:

*Adin Bradford*  
*Secy. of Common<sup>ts</sup>*

*Given me by my  
friend John P. Bigelow,  
13<sup>th</sup> March  
1857*