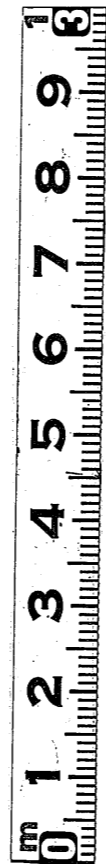


203-1-5



2192

A. 1786.

D E B A T E S.

3

“ George R.

“ It gives His Majesty great concern that it has not been found possible to confine the necessary expences of his civil government within the annual sum of eight hundred and fifty thousand pounds now applicable thereto. A farther debt has been necessarily incurred, an accompt of which he has ordered to be laid before the House.

“ His Majesty relies on the zeal and affection of his faithful Commons, that they will take the same into their early consideration, and make such provision as the circumstances may appear to them to require.

“ G. R.”

Mr. Chancellor Pitt observed, that he would lay upon the table on the morrow some papers relative to the arrear alluded to in the King's message; intimating at the same time that he intended to move on the ensuing Wednesday some propositions respecting the subject.

The House having resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House, to consider of so much of His Majesty's most gracious speech to both Houses of Parliament, upon the 24th day of January last, as recommends to this House the establishment of a fixed plan for the reduction of the national debt, and Mr. Gilbert having taken the chair,

Mr. Chancellor Pitt rose and said:

Mr. Chancellor Pitt.

S I R,

The object I have to refer to this Committee is, to consider of the means of decreasing the national debt. To attempt to recommend this purpose by any words would surely be very superfluous. The situation of this country, loaded with an enormous debt, to pay the interest of which every nerve has been stretched, and every resource nearly drained, carries with it a stronger recommendation than any arguments I could possibly adduce.

That something should be done to relieve the nation from the pressure of so heavy a load is indeed acknowledged by all; and, I trust, that in this House there is only one feeling upon the subject.

To you do the public turn their eye, justly expecting, that from the trust you hold you will think it your duty to make the most serious efforts, in order to afford them the long-wished-for prospect of being relieved from an endless accumulation of taxes, under the burden of which they are ready to sink. Upon the deliberation of this day do they place all their hopes of a full return of prosperity, and that public security which will give confidence and vigour to those exertions in trade and commerce, upon which the flourishing

B 2

state

PARLIAMENTARY

A. 1786.

state of this country so much depends: yet not only the Public and this House, but other nations look to the business of this day; for, by the establishment of what is now proposed, our rank will be decided among the powers of Europe. To behold this country emerging from a most unfortunate war, which added such an accumulation to sums before immense, that it was the belief of surrounding nations, and of many among ourselves, that our powers must fail us, and we should not be able to bear up under it: to behold this nation instead of despairing at its alarming condition, looking boldly its situation in the face, and establishing upon a spirited and permanent plan the means of relieving itself from all its incumbrances, must give such an idea of our resources and of our spirit of exertion, which will astonish the nations around us, and enable us to regain that pre-eminence to which we are on many accounts so justly intitled.

The propriety and the necessity of adopting a plan for this purpose is not only universally allowed, but it is also admitted that *immediate* steps ought to be taken to make provision for this purpose. And I am persuaded, that whatever differences of opinion we may have in this House upon political points, no difference of opinion will this day be entertained that effectual provision be immediately made to reduce the debt of this nation.

The chief subject then before the House is, not whether the recommendation in His Majesty's speech should be complied with; nor even is it a matter of dispute what sum ought to be allotted for this purpose; for it seems agreed, by common consent of all, that one million annually ought to be laid aside as the means of gradually accomplishing this desirable purpose.

The great points which we have to consider are,

In the first place, what measures ought to be taken to acquire a million for this purpose.

Secondly, what is the way of applying it.

I must here congratulate this nation upon the arrival of this wished-for day, when all despondency and gloomy fear may be laid aside, and our prospects brightened with joy and hope. With how much pleasure am I able to add, that this can be carried into effect without laying any heavy new burdens upon the People. This is beyond the hopes of almost every man, and is indeed a subject of the greatest rejoicing to every friend of this country.

In order to be acquainted with our real situation, to see what we have and what we want, I mean to state to the Committee the annual income and the annual expenditure of the nation, as the ground upon which we are to proceed with regard to the object before us.

This

A. 1786.

D E B A T E S.

This has already been done by the Select Committee, who were appointed for the purpose of examining into the subject, and whose Reports are now upon your table. It is a matter of much satisfaction that this mode has been taken to ascertain the sums of the revenue, and the expence of the nation. You have not the word of an individual, but the report of a Committee of this House, who have given an authentic, an accurate, and a clear statement of the whole. This has been long enough published to have put it in the power of every gentleman to examine it with attention, and I hope none have neglected it. It is so much better that every thing of that kind, every thing that contains so many figures, should be stated on paper, than be trusted to the memory, that it will not be necessary for me to detain the House long with that part of the subject.

The Committee have very properly arranged their inquiries under two heads, taken from different periods. The first is, from Michaelmas 1784 to Michaelmas 1785; and the second, from the 5th of January 1785 to the 5th of January 1786. In the first period the annual receipt appears to be 15,379,182l.; in the second period, in the year ending the 5th of January 1786, the amount is 15,397,471l.

There never was a report upon any subject, nor upon such a subject as this, of so much consequence to the nation*. The manner in which it has been brought up speaks the praise of the Committee much higher than I am able to do by any words I could use. The clear, the precise, the accurate mode they have observed throughout the whole; the great attention which they have paid to the object for which they were appointed, deserves the highest encomiums. The care with which they have avoided all sanguine conclusions from the premises before them can never be too much applauded. Rigorous in calculating all contingencies which might arise to baulk the hopes of the nation, and tend to disappoint their hopes of the expected surplusses; most faithful to their trust, most scrupulous with regard to the truth of their statements, shewing at once their respect for the House, their sense of the importance of the business into which they had been deputed to examine, they have proceeded to deliver in a Report which, in point of clearness, precision, just and fair deduction, stands eminently distinguished above every Report I have ever seen.

The first sum they have stated is the whole revenue that has been received into the Exchequer from the 5th of January 1785 to the 5th of January 1786, is 12,499,916l. After this, next follow two sums, which they have thought

* Vide Report from the Select Committee to whom it was referred to examine, "That the several Accounts and other Papers," &c. &c. Printed for J. Debrett.

proper

PARLIAMENTARY A. 1786.

proper to deduct from this sum, which has been received into the Exchequer.

First are the arrears due from the East-India Company, which ought to have been paid before, but had been respited to them, and amounts to 401,118l. The other sum, which in the same manner is deducted, is the excess of the window duties, but which, from the alteration of the assessments, will not be paid any longer. These two articles therefore being considered only as contingencies, are not reckoned as part of the yearly revenue. These two sums therefore amounting to about 457,200l. being deducted leave a remainder of 12,042,690l. This sum, which has been paid into the Exchequer, is considered as a part of our stated yearly income, it being each article of it made up by taxes which are payable every year.

The rest of the sums which they have stated as the amount of the public revenue, which is something above 3,300,000l., arise from taxes which, though payable yearly, have not yet been all received into the Exchequer in such a manner as to have with them their proper vouchers; but the Committee thought right to add them to the sums that had been received. Of these sums there can be little doubt or uncertainty. They are collected by the officers in different parts of the kingdom according to assessments made and returned to them; where therefore these taxes have not actually been received, the assessments are taken, and a calculation made from them, with which there is the greatest human probability of their agreeing: indeed no other method more clear and conclusive could have been suggested. Of this kind is the additional window tax, commonly known by the name of the commutation tax: this amounts to 380,000l. from Michaelmas 1784 to Michaelmas 1785, and 253,000l. from the 5th of January 1785 to the 5th of January 1786. The additional tax also upon two-wheel and four-wheel carriages—107,000l. for the latter, and 59,281l. for the former. The added duty on male servants, 42,000l. for the latter period, and 26,000l. for the former. Farther duty on horses, waggons, and carts, 73,610l. to January 1786, and 56,829l. to Michaelmas 1785.

It is impossible to say all these taxes have been received, but they have stated them in so cautious and guarded a manner, that there is little reason to doubt of their equalling, if not exceeding, the statement.

After these follow the taxes which have not been all received into the Exchequer. Those which were laid on in 1784 and 1785, and not having had time for their fair and full operation. The produce of those laid on in the year 1784, at Michaelmas, amounted to 103,000l., and in January to 22,000l.; the produce of those laid on in 1785, at Michael-

mas

A. 1786. D E B A T E S.

mas last, including the improvement of the medicine duty, amounts to 265,000l., and at the 5th of January 242,000l.

To these is added the sum of 14,000l., which is yearly paid at the Excise and Alienation Office in part of the civil list; and also the land and malt tax, which, being yearly voted, came under this head, and amount to 2,600,000l.

All these sums added, made together, at Michaelmas 1785, 3,365,000l., which added to the receipts for that year, viz: 11,874,000l., would produce a sum of 15,379,000l. But in January 1786 the whole of the sums amounted to 3,354,000l., which, added to the amount of the receipts for the year, made 15,397,000l., only a difference of about 20,000l.

This then is the annual income of this country, and upon the true statement of which there is every reason to rely. There is indeed a small difference in the two statements, the one ending at Michaelmas, and the other at January; but although I should take the smallest, it would not make any difference in the deductions I shall draw from this subject. Indeed it is well known to those who, from their official situations, have had an opportunity of observing, that it is some time before new taxes can fairly operate. So many evasions are at first formed, and so many frauds committed, that it generally takes some time before they can be levied to their full extent; and it is owing to this circumstance chiefly that there is a difference between the two terms.

Many of the taxes laid on in the year 1784, and almost all those in 1785, are under the description I have given; and I have the greatest reason to believe they will greatly increase in their produce, when evasions are detected, and more effectual means made use of to collect them fully: and although none of them have been actually paid into the Exchequer, nor is it possible from receipt to form any judgement with regard to them, yet I am persuaded that the particular character which the Committee have maintained will appear, with regard to them, that they are stated cautiously and within their true limits. There is one tax which I may just mention as an instance of the truth of what I have observed with regard to new taxes; that is the duty on game licenses, which has produced 20,000l. more since the alterations it received. There is only one error that I can perceive, and that is only 4140l., which ought to be deducted from the produce of the taxes imposed in 1785 only. Surely on a subject of this kind the sum of 4000l. is not a great deal. Some of the taxes in 1785 are stated upon very sure ground, and from what has been received since January, though not received soon enough to be laid before the Committee, give reason to believe they will produce more than they are rated

at,

at. Among these particularly is the shop tax, the house tax, and the servants' tax; the other taxes are stated on more uncertain grounds, such as the duty on pawnbrokers, and some others. Upon the whole, I do conceive that we may rely upon this account as the real revenue of the country, and the Committee have stated every thing upon the best grounds the nature of the case admitted; and I have stated their results more for the sake of recalling them to gentlemen's minds than to add any thing new.

My object is to shew that it is a fair deduction, and may be taken as the produce of the year from January 1785 to January 1786.

Whether or not we can rely upon this as an annual income to continue at the same rate to this nation, is another question.

I do think we may rely upon it so far as to look upon this annual income as a fund for an annual decrease of our debt; yet I do not look upon it as a certain income.

Events may happen to swell this produce beyond the most sanguine calculation; and it may also happen that a disappointment may take place upon subjects so complicated in their nature. The trade and wealth of the nation is too fluctuating to admit that any average can be taken. A sudden disaster may blast all our hopes; and it may happen even that, without any disastrous event to this country, we may cut a poor figure for a year, or a number years.

I therefore do not take the liberty to make any other statement but what the Committee have made, and would therefore read what the Committee have said at the beginning of their report.

For the reasoning stated by the Committee you (as much as they expect) have reason to, that this flourishing condition of our revenue will continue. We need not indeed fear. We may lay despondent thoughts aside. Every thing depends upon the spirit of this House, and the resolution, the good sense, and the industry of the country, to put these things out of all doubt.

It was more than could be thought possible that, within a single year, such a success would happen. But it is not confined to one year; ever since the happy era of the restoration of the peace, this has been more or less the case. The increase was slow at first, but constant; and the happy progress of last year shews, from pleasing experience, that we have no reason to fear its being stationary, or becoming retrograde.

A great part of this flourishing appearance which trade has of late put on, and the great influx into the Exchequer, has been owing to the regulations that have been taken to crush clandestine

clandestine trade. This was the more to be believed, as the increase of revenue chiefly appeared from the Customs; and this gave room to hope that farther great and essential improvements of the revenue might arise from wholesome regulations with regard to articles of illicit traffic.

Driven from its strong hold of tea, it lurks in other petty trenches, from whence it may be effectually chased. Every thing that is done to effect this is introducing a permanent source of revenue by making trade return into a regular channel.

What has been done in this way cannot as yet have had its full operation; because, as great capitals were employed in this clandestine business, the occupation will subsist for a while, even although it is a losing trade. The measures taken two years ago under the articles of tobacco and spirits have caused the smuggling of these to subside to a great degree, and have much increased our revenue.

In the article of salt the frauds are very considerable, and ought immediately to be redressed. But with regard to wines the frauds arise to so great, to so enormous a pitch, that, if we will take the effectual measures to repress them, all the deficiencies will be made up in what is stated as the annual progress of the revenue. If we have the means of doing this in our power, and do not make use of them, we must certainly suffer just blame. I intend, for my part, to bring forward very soon a plan for that purpose, which I mean to submit to the consideration of the House, and flatter myself, that if it meets with their approbation it will occasion a very great increase to the revenue of the kingdom.

After having in this manner represented every thing in the fairest light, I am able to enable you to form a just view of the whole of the real and probable sources of our national income; I shall now proceed upon the idea that this is a true statement of our revenue which has been laid upon your table by the Committee, and that we may expect (with as much certainty as can attend any thing of this kind) that we shall enjoy an increasing revenue of 15,397,000*l.* per annum.

The next subject of our discussion is what may be the annual expenditure of the nation.

This the Committee have also stated, and it amounts to 14,478,000*l.*

There is a great part of the particular items, of which this sum is made up, that the Committee have omitted to mention, because the sums charged have been previously stated by act of Parliament. This they considered as permanent expences, and therefore distinguish them from what is fluctuating. In the former description they considered the interest

of the national debt which is 9,275,760*l.*, and with the Exchequer bills, make a sum of 9,532,000*l.*: this part contains also the civil list, 900,000*l.*; the charges on the aggregate fund, 64,000*l.*; and the appropriated duties, 66,500*l.*: the whole of this division is 10,554,000*l.*

The other class of expences include the different establishments for the defence of the nation; as the army, the navy, the ordnance, and the militia. There may be extraordinary charges for these purposes; but that, the Committee had not any thing to do with in their present estimate; they have stated the expence only that must be occasioned by a peace establishment; and this they have done on a very enlarged and liberal footing.

They have allowed for the navy, during peace, 18,000 men, which is more than ever had been kept up during any peace; and they allowed for this 1,800,000*l.* It must be observed that the Committee did not go to state what ought to be the expence of our navy, but only what, after the deduction of all our expences, would remain as a surplus; and therefore their business is to state every thing on the largest probable footing. They have taken the army upon the same mode of reasoning; and they allow for the charge of it a sum of 1,600,000*l.* much greater than was in the peace establishment before the last war, when we had so numerous, but distant possessions to defend: and it is extremely probable that this may be reduced, in a short time, considerably under the sum stated in the Report. The ordnance, also, is stated largely; this, however, we shall be under the necessity of keeping up: it was found that we were very wanting in this respect in the beginning of the last war; and it would be very hazardous to allow ourselves to run a similar risque in any other.

The miscellaneous services are stated upon an average of some years back; but I think it is very probable that they too have been stated higher than they will be found to be: these arose chiefly from addresses of this House to the King for particular grants; and also from the establishments of our colonies abroad, and from bills of exchange drawn by their Governors upon the treasury: these services were stated at 74,000*l.* Deducting the whole of the expenditure from the annual income, there remained a surplus of 900,000*l.*

This, then, is the sum which remains to be applied to the purpose of decreasing the annual debt: but as the fund for this purpose ought to be a million annually, I shall move, in this committee, such taxes as will produce the sum of 100,000*l.* And I am happy to say that this may be done without laying fresh burdens upon the People; I shall move that an additional duty be laid upon spirits: they were formerly

merly charged in what is called the wash, with seven pence per gallon, that was afterwards decreased to five pence; I shall now raise it to six pence per gallon, which will produce about 70,000*l.*, without being any encouragement to smuggling. Another I mean to lay is only a modification of a tax; a duty upon the importation of two species of timber, deals and battens: I will rate this at 30,000*l.* I shall lay another upon an article of mere luxury; upon perfumery and hair powder: these I will rate at 15,000, or 20,000*l.* So that altogether the sum wanted to complete the million will be made up.

After I have now stated these things to you, I must observe that although this is stated to be the annual expenditure, some time must intervene before the expenditure can be reduced to this point. It must be attended to, that we are only just emerged from the most ruinous and expensive war in which this country was ever engaged. Many of the heavy burdens we incurred during that war, had not ended with the conclusion of it, but still continued, and must be expected some time to continue to hang upon us.

Under the head of the navy, many ships that had been laid upon the stocks were to be finished. They had been built too far to allow them to go back, and to be lost to the Public; and they were, besides, necessary to increase our naval strength to an equality with our powerful neighbours. This was so considerable, that although the Committee had stated the peace establishment of the navy at 1,800,000*l.*, yet the expence attending this present year was 600,000*l.* above it, though it may not, perhaps, be more than 500,000*l.*

In the army also, the exceedings were much above the common run of the expence on that establishment; and this amounted to nearly 300,000*l.* This is chiefly expended in a way where justice and humanity forbid economy—to the reduced officers on half pay, and to the widows of officers: a part of the navy extraordinary is taken up in the same way. These two sums would go almost to annihilate the surplus, if it was to be applied to these purposes within the year. But in truth and fact they are not annual charges, they are only the remaining sums of the expences of last war, and must cease altogether in a few years. It would, therefore, be unfair and unwise to charge them as annual expenditures. In four years the great burden of them, that of the ship building, will cease: nor can this be effected sooner. I conceive, therefore, that you must look to a future average to come at your expence. It appears to me that this may be done with great safety; and I have not a doubt but that resources are to be found that will justify this mode of proceeding, and be sufficient to keep every thing well without burdening the nation. And if we judge in this manner, there

can be no doubt that the expectations raised by the Public will be amply satisfied.

Now, therefore, I wish to call the attention of the Committee to this object. I am clear that we immediately appropriate this million to the payment of the debt, even although the time when we shall have this surplus free from all other expences cannot be exactly ascertained. I myself am persuaded that, as I have already intimated, we have certain extraordinary resources to which we may apply to liquidate this sum without the addition of new taxes.

Let us then examine what sums it is for which we have to provide the means of payment.—This extraordinary expence chiefly arises from the navy: and it was occasioned by the very large contracts into which we had entered for the building of ships. On this account 2,400,000l. had been called for this year, as the extraordinary expence of the navy; but this would not continue to be required after the ships now building were completed. This would decrease each year, and would be, in every probability, reduced to a standing sum for a peace establishment in the year 1790. This expence, and the very liberal establishment of 1,800,000l. would enable us to possess a marine the most flourishing this country ever beheld. As the estimate for the navy stands this present year, it is 600,000l. above what is stated as the settled peace expence in the year 1790. But it is to be noticed, that after two new ships have been completed, which will be in the course of this year, this extra sum will be reduced to 400,000l.; this, in four years, amounts to the sum of 1,600,000l.; and with the additional expence of this year, to 1,800,000l.

With regard to the army the expences also had been very great, but were of a nature which also tended to diminish in time, but which it was impossible to restrict. What this chiefly arose from was, as I mentioned before, from pensions to officers' widows, and to the officers upon half pay; and this sum amounted to about 260,000l. Under this head of expence come also that occasioned by bills of exchange from our colonies abroad: these amounted to very considerable extra sums, of late years. But when we recollect, that we are not now obliged to keep up the immense establishments abroad that we have been accustomed to do, we may expect these would diminish very rapidly. Our chief expence at present arises from Canada; and from the well-known prudence, honour, œconomy, and disinterested spirit of the gallant officer who is now appointed to that command, we have every reason to hope that a very considerable saving of expence will be produced. I need only mention his name to enforce conviction of whatever I say in his praise: the great and gallant officer I speak of, is Sir Guy Carleton. Those who

are

are acquainted with his military talents and military conduct, deservedly hold him high indeed. But from his no less acknowledged dispositions to œconomy, from his vigilance and activity, we may say that whatever can be done by care and attention, will be effected. And at present even the extraordinary expence is not very considerable, as far as it has come to our knowledge; but we have reason to think that a saving may be produced on this establishment.

Another matter of expence comes properly under this head; and it is what the House have already acknowledged to be a just demand upon the justice and generosity of this nation, that is, a provision for the American sufferers. Their situation demands the most tender consideration. Nor would I chuse to mention any sum for this purpose: if it was a great one, it would raise the expectations of those unhappy people; and I would not wish to say any thing more to them than that I hope there will be a generous and liberal regard paid to their melancholy and unfortunate circumstances.

Another matter of extra expence under this head, is the ordnance; but as Parliament have not decided what is to be the expence of it, and have already disapproved going into large additions to this part of the national establishment, I shall not say what sum will be necessary for this purpose.

All these different subjects of expence are, in a great measure, uncertain; nor is it possible at present to say, with minute accuracy, to what particular sum they will amount: but I think a sum of 3,000,000l. is likely to be the call for those purposes, and to be provided for in the course of two or three years.

There is another matter of expence which the Committee have not mentioned in their Reports, and which is the subject of the King's message this day; this will be a matter before Parliament, whether the Exchequer bills are to be paid: the arrears amount to about 210,000l. The impossibility of reducing the civil list within the sum of 900,000l. allowed by Parliament proceeded chiefly from that part being mortgaged for the payment of certain Exchequer bills, by annual payments of 50,000l., which reduced it from 900,000 to 850,000l. Of these Exchequer bills there remains due about 180,000l. and there was besides, an arrear against the civil list of about 30,000l. more. The Crown had long been embarrassed by this incumbrance; and that it may be entirely removed, I shall move, on this day se'nnight, when His Majesty's message shall be taken into consideration, for the sum of 210,000l.

The whole, therefore, that we are now to find the means of providing for is, the extra expences of the navy and army, which I have stated liberally at 3,000,000l. This is to be accounted for in the course of four years, after which time we shall

have

have a clear annual surplus of a million, unincumbered with any demands upon the national income. Although this sum should be funded, and ways and means found to answer the interest of it, it would not occasion any great burden upon the People; but the state of this country is at present so very flourishing, that I am happy to say that it will not be necessary to burden the People with any taxes upon this account, but certain extraordinary resources are to be found within ourselves that will abundantly answer what is here required.

The Committee first make mention of lotteries; which are a resource indeed that Government can have recourse to, but which is in itself so encouraging to a spirit of gambling, that it is doubtful whether it ought to be adopted. The spirit of gambling is indeed so deeply rooted, that I am afraid it is of little consequence whether a lottery be withholden or not, and it is always a resource equal to 140,000l.; however as it is not resolved by Government whether there shall be one this year, I shall not put it to account.

The next head they mention is that of army savings, and this bears the appearance of being very considerable: and indeed a very considerable sum under this description had been paid into the Exchequer; this consisted chiefly of money that had been appropriated to different services and which had not been expended. This had been very considerable in the peace following the war before the last; and from the extent of the immense grants during this war we might expect much more. Of these sums, together with the surplus of several funds, the amount of 450,000l. had already been paid into the Exchequer. There is besides this, immense sums in the hands of former paymasters, which, it is to be expected, we shall be able in a little time to come at. The mode hitherto of keeping the army accounts has been extremely open to abuse; and accordingly paymasters have taken every advantage to keep the public money in their hands. Notwithstanding this, it was to be hoped that as soon as the Commissioners had time to call in the out-standing accounts, they will be enabled to collect a very great sum: this is justified as far as they had gone; but the labour is extremely great, as they have to go through no less than one hundred and eighteen regiments of foot, and as many regiments of horse and dragoons whose accounts for non-effective men had not been examined into for twenty years together.

One regiment they had gone through already had produced 22,000l. for the use of Government; and although I cannot be so sanguine as to hope that every regiment will produce as much, yet I think I may state the total, including contracts and other articles of abuse, at the sum of 7,000,000l.

the

The next source mentioned by the Committee, is a balance due from the East-India Company for the subsistence of troops in India, and on account of victualling the navy. This amounted to 600,000l.; and there was a probability of its being paid in a very short time. The Committee also mentioned the unclaimed dividends in the funds, that a part of them might be applied consistently with the safety of the public creditors to the public use.

The crown lands are also a source of produce; but as it is not determined how to dispose of them, I will not mention them in the account; and that perhaps it might be thought right to apply them to the relief of the American Loyalists.

The great article upon which the Committee dwell, and upon which they founded their expectations of a permanent surplus, is the improvement of our revenue by proper regulations to discourage smuggling, and give room to the fair trader to reap those advantages which are due to his labours, and which must in every light add to the amount of the customs: this, both by encouraging the legal merchant, and bringing those goods to a regular entry that would have been clandestinely disposed of. The regulations which had been already made in this respect, had not had room for their full operation, and yet they have occasioned a very great addition to the revenue of the nation, and might be expected still to increase, as this increase is regular and progressive, and not the sudden effect of the suppression of our warlike operations. It is indeed not easy to be conceived, by those not conversant in those subjects, how numerous and how artful the frauds are which are daily put in practice in every subject of the national revenue. One article, that of wine, required immediate remedy; and I flatter myself with very great sums indeed from this branch. The consumption of wine in this country is not diminished, and yet it does not appear that the average of last year compared with the year 1746, is equal to it in produce of revenue, so far that it sinks below it no less than 240,000l. Without laying a burden upon the country, there are many regulations to be made in the article of spirits that will increase the revenue from that branch of trade. The article of tobacco is another object that attention must be paid to: and I have no doubt that from the regulations that will be proposed in these articles, at least 300,000l. annually may be produced. In another session of Parliament I intend also to bring about a consideration of the customs, which will undoubtedly add greatly to the produce of the revenue: we shall not, however, enter upon this at present: I have stated enough to the House. And those who compare our annual sums to our annual expenditure, may here see sums equal to apply to the deficiencies without

without any new demands, or any new burdens upon the People.

I have stated what these deficiencies may be, as matters of uncertainty; but if it be about 3,000,000*l.* the whole may be provided for without any new burdens of any sort. Why, it may be said, do I not fund this? For this good reason; that I shall not, in all probability, have occasion to raise it: even if it were funded now there could be little hazard of its being made good.

I may now proceed to lay apart the million: but before I enter upon that part of the discussion which relates to the particular mode of applying this annual sum, it will be proper to consider the effect it will have.

If this million, to be so applied, is laid out, with its growing interest, it will amount to a very great sum in a period that is not very long in the life of an individual, and but an hour in the existence of a great nation: and this will diminish the debt of this country so much as to prevent the exigencies of war from raising it to the enormous height it has hitherto done. In the period of twenty-eight years the sum of a million, annually improved, would amount to four millions per annum.

But care must be taken that this fund be not broken in upon: this has hitherto been the bane of this country; for if the original sinking had been properly preserved, it is easy to be proved that our debts at this moment would not have been very burdensome: this has hitherto been, in vain, endeavoured to be prevented by acts of Parliament: the Minister has uniformly, when it suited his convenience, gotten hold of this sum, which ought to have been regarded as most sacred. What then is the way of preventing this? The plan I mean to propose is this: that this sum be vested in certain Commissioners, to be by them applied quarterly to buy up stock; by this means, no sum so great will ever lie ready to be seized upon on any occasion; and the fund will go on without interruption. Long, and long has this country struggled under its heavy load, without any prospect of being relieved: but it may now look forward to an object upon which the existence of this country depends: it is, therefore, proper it should be fortified as much as possible against alienation. By this manner of paying 250,000*l.* quarterly into the hands of Commissioners, it would make it impossible to take it by stealth; and the advantage would be too well felt ever to suffer a public act for that purpose. A Minister could not have the confidence to come to this House and desire the repeal of so beneficial a law, which tended so directly to relieve the People from their burdens.

The

The persons who should be appointed to this commission should be of rank and distinction, to secure them from suspicion, and to give, as far as character could go, a belief of their discharging it with faithfulness.

In the first place, I think it right that the respectable commoner, whoever he shall be, who fills the chair of this House, should be placed at the head of it. Parliament, in instituting a commission of so much importance towards the support of national credit and prosperity, could not more solemnly, nor more pointedly promulgate its high sense of the duty by which that commission is bound, than by appointing the first member of this House to be at the head of it. I think also, without ascribing any thing to myself, that the person who holds an office so intimately connected with finance as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, ought to have a place in this commission. There is another person, who, from his high rank, as well as from his virtues and reputation, I think ought to have a share in this business, and he is also, at present, a member of this House: this is, the Master of the Rolls. The Governor and the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England I think ought also to be of the number. Also the Accountant General of the High Court of Chancery, who, by virtue of his office was already employed in the money of all suitors and wards in the funds; and increasing, by that means, the capital, by the accumulation of compound interests.

Such as these persons I shall propose to be appointed to this trust, when the bill comes before the Committee. There might be some difficulty in determining how to regulate the conduct of the Commissioners in the purchase of stock: but that might, perhaps, be left to their own discretion. But although it might be proper to leave the manner of doing this to their own prudence, it would not be so proper, by any means, to leave to them the regulation of the time when they were to purchase: this, I think, ought to be on every transfer day in the quarter, at regular periods, and in equal sums.

I am very far from ascribing any merit to myself in suggesting this scheme. But, I cannot but think myself very happy in having a task to perform so very different from any of my predecessors. And that instead of expending the money of the Public, I should have the great good fortune to be led to set about to diminish our burdens. This plan which I have now the honour to bring forward, has long been the wish and the hope of all men; and I am uncommonly happy to flatter myself that my name may be inscribed on that firm column now about to be raised to national faith and national prosperity.

VOL. XX.

D

I shall

0200

I shall not detain the House much longer; because, I am persuaded that they must be already tired of the tedious detail upon which I was under the necessity of entering.

The time when the operation of this fund is to begin, I think should be upon the 5th of July. At that time let 250,000l. be paid into the hands of the Commissioners for this purpose; and after that, continued quarterly: this will make 750,000l. to be expended during the three quarters.

I shall now mention upon what I found the expectations of having a surplus this year, of 750,000l. after paying the current expences of the year: by which there will appear a surplus over and above the stipulated annual one of some hundred thousand pounds.

£5,580,261	{	The House had voted for seamen,	936,000
		Ordinary of navy,	1,645,000
		Extraordinary,	800,000
		-----	3,281,000
		Army plantations, extraordinaries, &c.	1,966,261
		Ordnance,	333,000
		-----	8,956,261
		Civil list, &c. making the sum voted,	2,500,000
		Exchequer bills,	810,824
		Sum not yet voted,	-----

The total of the supplies would then be £. 12,477,085

The ways and means are as follow:

Land and malt tax,	2,750,000
Exchequer bills,	5,500,000
Surplus of the sinking fund, in hand,	582,000
Estimated produce of 1786,	3,444,000
Arrears from East-India Company life annuities, &c.	1,886,000
-----	13,362,480

Amount of ways and means for the current year 1786, 13,362,480
 From which deduct the surplus, as above, 12,477,085

Remainder, £. 885,395

From this sum deduct the three quarterly payments, beginning on the 5th of July, of 250,000l. per quarter, for the reduction of our debts, amounting to 750,000

And there would be a neat surplus of £. 135,395

Comparison between the sum expended on the Army, Navy and Ordnance in the year 1786 and the sum reported by the Committee as adequate to those Services

But if, as the Committee stated the revenue do rise according to the latest experience, there would still be a farther difference in our favour of

313,699

Making in this case a clear excess accruing at Christmas next, (above the regular surplus) of the sum of

£. 449,093

I shall now move, "That a sum of one million be annually granted to certain Commissioners to be by them applied to the purchase of stocks, towards discharging the public debt of this country, which money shall arise out of the surplusses, excesses, and overplus monies, composing the fund commonly called the sinking fund."

Sir Grey Cooper observed, that great powers of reasoning were far from being necessary for the purpose of explaining the proportions and degrees of the accumulation of money at compound interest. On this subject an enlightend author (Baron Maseres) had copiously written, and much had been said about a proposition perfectly simple, and obvious to every capacity. He rose, therefore, not to advance a word upon that circumstance, but to remark that the Committee had proceeded to form their report on principles extremely novel, and directly opposite to those that the wisest men in former times had thought the most certain guides to their judgement, and the most to be depended upon, as leading to the true state of the object of inquiry. The Committee had founded their report on the present year's amount of the receipt of the public income, because it had proved a remarkably favourable year, and they had not stated the real expenditure of the year; for, that opposed to the receipt, would not certainly have afforded any surplus on the balance. On former occasions, the rule had been, invariably to proceed in a different road, and by a fair average of a number of years income and expenditure, taking good and bad years together, to strike a balance upon such an average and consider that balance as a footing not likely to prove fallacious; but as firm and to be relied on with security. He held in his hand, a publication, that came out two years after the end of the war before last, and which it was well known, was printed under the protection of, and corrected by a great minister of that day (Mr. George Grenville). The pamphlet was entitled, *Considerations on the State of the Finances of the Nation*. In that pamphlet the opposite doctrine to that on which the report on the table was founded, was laid down and maintained. Sir Grey stated the instance, and argued upon it to prove how differently Mr. Grenville had reasoned, compared with

Sir Grey Cooper.

Com. 1786	£ 5,580,261	D 2	the
Excess	3,748,000		5,580,261
	-----		4,123,842
	1,832,261		-----
			1,456,419

the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt). Sir Grey said, the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) himself was not a more sincere friend to the idea of diminishing the national debt, nor more anxious to have its diminution effectually secured, than he was; but it was his duty to examine the means by which the right honourable gentleman wished that House to proceed, and to point out the particulars, in which he thought those means premature or inadequate. When the right honourable gentleman had introduced the question of fortifications, he remembered, he had talked in the same sanguine manner of his certainty of accomplishing a speedy and effectual reduction of the national debt, that he had done that day. He had said the wish of his heart was to have his name inscribed on a pillar, to be erected in honour of the man, who did his country the essential service of effectually reducing the national debt. This was a magnificent idea; it was, however, his duty not to be dazzled with its splendour, but when the first stone of its basis was going to be laid, coolly and carefully to examine the ground on which it was proposed to be erected, to see whether it was firm, solid, and stable, or loose, hollow and uncertain? With this view he had risen, and if it was not laid down by the House as a rule, that nobody was to be heard in reply to any thing said by the right honourable gentleman—[*The House had at that moment been so disorderly, that Sir Grey could scarcely be heard*] he would endeavour to convince the Committee, that it behoved them to proceed with caution; and great, important and necessary as the business recommended to them was, to take no one step farther in it, before they were certain that they were proceeding on good ground, and that the path they were advised to pursue, would lead to success. Sir Grey next adverted to the manner in which the right honourable gentleman had talked of the Exchequer bills, [*Mr. Pitt having said, the three millions of Exchequer bills to be paid off need not be taken into the account, as they made an article under each distinct head of supply, and ways and means, those to be paid off ranging under the head of the former, and three millions more, that were to be issued in discharge of them, ranging under the head of the latter*] declaring that it appeared to him a little extraordinary that the right honourable gentleman should mention Exchequer bills in so light a way. Was he aware that they would be a great inconvenience, and materially depress the market, under certain circumstances, at least possible? There were at present more Exchequer bills unfunded, than ever were left unfunded by the noble Lord in the blue ribband during the whole course of the war. The data given in the Report, were unsafe for the House to act upon in so important a particular. To illustrate this point, let it be supposed that

a man

a man has a hop ground, and wants to raise a sum of money; he has a fortunate year, and has reaped a profit of 500l. that season; he goes to a neighbour and offers his hop ground at a mortgage; he tells the neighbour his profits, and shews him his books; the neighbour naturally says, "this is a very good account, but how am I sure the same success will attend the ground and its produce another year? the season may be unpropitious; a variety of incidental and unavoidable circumstances may occur." In vain would the owner of the hop ground boast of his superior skill in the cultivation of hops; that he had manured his ground, and prepared his vines so as to defy the accidents of chance, and that he had put the harvest and its consequences beyond a hazard, by securing the integrity of his pickers, and the care of his servants employed in the cultivation and management of the hops, both before and after picking; his neighbour, if he had any common sense, would say, "No, I won't lend my money on any such risque as the success of a single year; prove to me by the average of a number of years, some good, some bad, that the profits yielded by the hop ground *communibus annis* are sufficient to secure me from danger, and you shall have the money you want." This case would apply to the subject in question; one favourable year's receipt was not a sufficient ground for the Committee to proceed upon; greatly to be wished therefore as it must be by every man present, that the national debt could be effectually reduced, he had his fears that if they proceeded prematurely, and upon the plan suggested, mischiefs (not benefits) would arise; every design would be defeated, and bring on a multitude of obstacles, instead of lightening the burdens of the nation.

Mr. Fox observed, that the elaborate and far-extended speech of the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) whilst it reminded him how much time had elapsed, suggested also a conviction of the impropriety of trespassing, at the present advanced hour, too long upon the attention of the House; but in the outset of what he had to say, he begged leave to declare that no man in existence was, or ever had been, a greater friend to the sinking fund than he was, and ever had shewn himself from the first moment of his political life. He agreed most perfectly with the right honourable gentleman in his ideas of the necessity of establishing an effective sinking fund for the purpose of applying it in diminution of the national debt, however much he might differ with him in respect to the most prudent and useful mode of making the application, and however much he might differ with him as to many parts of his speech, and a variety of observations it contained. As to the conduct of the Committee to whom

the

the papers had been referred, he should not scruple to declare that their mode of taking averages had been not only different from that of every former Committee, but totally the reverse of that which has ever been deemed the fairest mode of taking an average. In illustration of this remark, he instanced the produce of the tax on malt, in averaging which, for six years, the Committee had stated, that a particular year (the year 1782) was uncommonly deficient. Now the use of an average had ever been supposed to arise from the averaging a number of years produce, among which years there might be years of extraordinary deficiency, or years of extraordinary plenty. He next pointed out the fallacy of stating the receipt of the present year, which happened to be a year of uncommon rise of revenue, and opposing to it, not the actual expenditure of the present year grounded on the votes of that House; but the probable expenditure of the year 1790. He asked whether that was a fair comparison of the annual receipt with the annual expenditure, and whether (as the right honourable gentleman had admitted, what indeed no person could deny, viz, that 600,000l. more had been voted for the navy, and 400,000l. more for the army, this year, than appeared under the head of expenditure) it was not manifest, that so far from there being a surplus of 900,000l. there was not a deficiency? He reminded the Committee of the difference last year between him and the right honourable gentleman, respecting their reasoning upon the balances of certain quarters, which had been selected as the most favourable quarters, and said, it plainly now appeared, that if he had at that time calculated the balances, that would result upon the whole of the four quarters, when the year should be completed somewhat too low, the right honourable gentleman (it was evident) had calculated them much more too high. He reminded them also, that when he had said in argument, on one of those occasions, that he believed there would be some balance, the right honourable gentleman had echoed the words *some balance* with an air of disdain, as if he (Mr. Fox) had talked with ridicule or with contempt of a matter which it was certain would turn out to be a monstrous balance. The fact was now before the Committee, and he begged leave to ask whether it was not true, that so far from there being some balance for the present year there was any? Though it had turned out to be in both particulars exactly as he had stated that it would turn out, he mentioned them not with any view to triumph over the right honourable gentleman, but merely to shew that he had been right before. The right honourable gentleman had observed, that 18,00,000l. for the navy, included 18,000 seamen, a larger number than had ever been known in a permanent peace establishment

establishment in the most flourishing state of this country. He could wish to know what the right honourable gentleman saw in the situation of the affairs of Europe that could induce him to imagine that a less numerous establishment of seamen would be sufficient, or a more contracted navy than 1,800,000l. could provide against all emergencies? For his part he saw much, that served to prove that a still greater naval establishment was necessary; for, much had of late happened, which looked as if all Europe was designing to form engagements hostile to this country, and detrimental to its interests at present, and its efforts in case of a future war; while no transaction that had lately taken place in any of the foreign courts wore a favourable aspect. Under such a period to say we had a more powerful navy than had ever been known in time of peace, in the most flourishing of former periods, was saying nothing. Had we a navy sufficient to cope with the combined marine of the maritime powers? If we could not effect such a purpose, we fell short of what was (in his opinion) indispensably necessary to our immediate safety and our future security and well being as a naval power. He agreed nevertheless in the propriety of dedicating the surplus fund to the diminution of the national debt, and whether the whole of the report was true or whether it was erroneous, he should still be of opinion, that it was right to pay off a part of the national debt, and highly proper to begin doing it immediately, even if the consequence were, that the sinking fund were not found equal to it; in which case, he held it to be the duty of that House to make good the sum so appropriated to that important service, and to continue so to do, even if they were annually obliged to impose new taxes on the subject. When he said this, however, he begged to be rightly understood, as to how far he agreed in respect to the present plan; it was merely to the commencement of some plan; and a better one than that proposed, might easily be adopted. The parts of the plan that he disapproved were two-fold, the one, making the sum appropriated unalienable in the time of war, the other, making the obligation to pay off the debt general, and not pledging or binding it closer. He pointed out various disadvantages that might result from tying up the sum in time of war, and contended, that as the Committee and the object of their institution was not bound down to any specific point, both were liable to be annihilated by a future Parliament. He reminded the House of the mode of the original institution of a plan for paying off a part of the national debt, which had been by a subscription of individuals, to whom the faith of Parliament had been pledged to pay off certain specific portions at stated periods. He dwelt on the difference between the two

two modes, observing that when the nation or when Parliament stood bound to individuals, the pledge was held as sacred as the pledge to pay the interest of the national debt at present, or the annuities now payable; and, undoubtedly, nothing short of a national bankruptcy would prevent the sums engaged to be paid to individual subscribers; whereas upon the conditions on which the Committee would stand, what should hinder a future Minister, in a future war, when the exigency of affairs might require additional burdens to be imposed on the subject, from coming down to that House and proposing to repeal the act authorising the institution of the Committee, and enabling Government to apply all the money and stock in their hands to the public service? What should hinder the House from agreeing to the proposition, or was it at all likely that, under the exigency of the moment, they would not immediately agree to it, when so much money could be easily gotten at, and when they could so readily save themselves from the odious and unpleasant task of imposing new taxes on themselves and their constituents? With regard to the Chancellor of the Exchequer being one of the Commissioners, he thought it perfectly right, that whoever held that office should be one at least in such a commission. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was an officer in whom that House reposed great confidence in respect to matters of finance, and who certainly ought to have an immediate connection with the diminution of that debt, the creation of which had unavoidably been an act of his own, in the necessary discharge of his official duty. From the various guards which the right honourable gentleman had suggested it to be his intention to put upon the Committee, it was obvious that he saw the suspicions to which it would be liable, and therefore (Mr. Fox declared) the more guards put upon it the better. Unfortunately, however, the more the guards, the less the œconomy of its system. He expressed some doubts whether the compelling them to lay out the money on certain days might not raise the market, and whether it might not happen on some of those days when they might be obliged to buy, there might be no sellers, and consequently the Committee become compelled to force the market, and by so doing, raise the price so high, that in such instances all the benefit would be lost to the public. The right honourable gentleman had talked of spreading the money into several sums, and by that means reducing each so small as to avert as much as possible the effects he had stated as probable to happen. Of that he approved, but he could by no means agree that the Committee were to act a public part. The fact was, they were to become private stock brokers with the public money. His reason for wishing their acts to be as public

public as possible, were, he said, the only means that he knew of to save them from a good deal of that suspicion to which it was easy to see they would be exposed. Mr. Fox again adverted to the report and statements made by Mr. Pitt in his speech, several of which he combated, and endeavoured to disprove. He mentioned the necessity of providing new taxes in lieu of such as had failed, that should produce the sums for which they had been given, and by that means preserve the sinking fund whole and entire. In order the more amply to point out the necessity for this, he animadverted for some time on the actual produce of the different taxes of the last year. The shop tax for instance (which he said he should ever hold to be an odious, oppressive, and unjust personal tax) had been nominally given for 120,000l. whereas it appeared from the assessments that if they were all paid, (which undoubtedly was not likely to be the case,) the produce would amount to no more than 70,000l. and when the modifications lately made to it, came into operation, that 70,000l. would be reduced to 50,000l. so that a tax given for 120,000l. would produce no more than 50,000l. In that case, and in all cases like it, he held it to be the duty of a Chancellor of the Exchequer to propose either a new tax that would be efficient for 120,000l. and repeal the shop tax, or a tax that would be efficient for the 70,000l. the sum which the produce of the shop tax fell short of producing. During the war he had repeatedly held language urging the necessity for the deficiencies of the new taxes being made good by other taxes, and the answer of the noble lord in the blue ribband had always been, that during the war, they must get on as well as they could; but that when peace should come, that would be the fit opportunity for making good the deficiencies on the war taxes. In that answer there was some reason; but the right honourable gentleman had not the same excuse; and yet all his taxes did not produce much more than the one half of the sums for which they had been given. As to the Commutation tax, he must desire to ask the right honourable gentleman if the greater consumption of tea that it had occasioned in this kingdom, as well as the greater consumption of a far greater proportion upon the whole than ever of teas of the higher sort, quality and price, which increased the necessity of the East-India Company to send out to China and expend considerably more in the purchase of teas than ever had gone to China, was any matter of solid satisfaction to him, as guardian of the commerce and revenues of Great Britain? Was it by such extensions of trade, that he wished to be considered as a friend to the revenue or commerce of the kingdom? Or would he assume any merit for having extended a trade before so disadvantageous to this country

country, in respect to exports and imports? He thought it fair to warn the right honourable gentleman on so important a consideration; and he would leave it to himself to draw the necessary conclusion from the circumstance. The right honourable gentleman had said, he observed, that our resources were near cracking just before the war was brought to a conclusion: for his part, he never had been of that opinion, nor ever stated that he was: but what sort of melancholy reflection was held out to the Public by his Committee, when it was the clear deduction from their statements, that the permanent peace establishment was not to be expected before the year 1791, eight years after the conclusion of the war! He (Mr. Fox) declared it as his opinion, that with good management, the expences of the war might have been sooner wound up. He recapitulated his principal objections to the plan proposed, and said, he thought they were considerably weakened by not making the fund unalienable in time of war. He entered into a good deal of argument to prove, that twenty-seven years was too long a period to look forward to for the effect of the plan; as, before that period, it was not improbable we might have another war; and a variety of circumstances might occur which would operate as temptations to a future Chancellor of the Exchequer, to propose to a future House of Commons to repeal the act, annul the institution, and divert the appropriation of its stock to the immediate services of the year: he therefore must again recommend the other mode of proceeding, by individual subscription. However difficult the House might think the present subject, and therefore be loth to listen to it, or to endeavour to make themselves masters of it, nothing was more easy; there was not the smallest conjuration in it; and he that ran might read.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt answered, that as two or three things had fallen from the right honourable gentleman, it became necessary for him to say a few words; and first, in regard to the statement of the balances of the quarters amount of receipt, about which they had differed last year, and respecting which the right honourable gentleman had now been so good as to say the Report proved that he had been in the right, but that he forbore to assume it as a matter of triumph to himself: for this forbearance he was much indebted to the right honourable gentleman, but still more for his having put him in mind of the difference; because, upon a reference to the Report it would be found, whether the right honourable gentleman had, as he had himself that day declared, stated the amount of those balances somewhat too low; or whether he (Mr. Pitt) had stated them a great deal too high. Mr. Chancellor Pitt then reminded the Committee, that he had stated

stated the probable amount of the balances when the four quarters should have been completed in four different modes; upon one mode he had at that time declared, that he was not sanguine enough to place much reliance; upon the next mode he had calculated, that the amount would be the specific sum of 12,600,000l.; upon the third mode a smaller sum; and on the fourth a still smaller. The second was the amount to which he had been tied down by the right honourable gentleman, and upon reference to the Committee's statement of the actual receipt, it would be found that the amount was twelve millions five hundred and odd thousand pounds; which, in a matter consisting of such various and complicated sums, and amounting to so much, was surely coming as near the real total of the year's receipt as it could reasonably be expected any man should come by uncertain calculation. He hoped that the right honourable gentleman would not consider it as any disparagement of him, if he declared, that the idea of paying off a part of the debt by a subscription of individuals, had been suggested to him by many others, and that he himself approved it, but would not adopt it on account of certain inconveniencies to which it was liable. With regard to preserving the fund to be invariably applied in diminution of the debt inalienable, it was the essence of his plan to keep that sacred, and most effectually so in time of war. He must contend, that to suffer the fund at any time, or on any pretence, to be diverted from its proper object, would be to ruin, defeat, and overturn the whole of his plan. He hoped therefore, when the bill he should introduce should pass into a law, that House would hold itself solemnly pledged, not to listen to a proposal for its repeal on any pretence whatever.

Mr. Fox.

Mr. Fox answered, that he would at another opportunity state the outlines of a plan by which the diminution of the debt might be so commenced without being liable to the objections hinted by the right honourable gentleman. The beginning to pay off the four per cents. first, and then the three per cents. was undoubtedly right. He mentioned the reasoning upon the subject which they had formerly heard in defence of beginning to pay off the three per cents. first, and so proceeding to pay the others in regular progression upwards, upon the idea, that if the three per cents. were at par, it would cost the Public 30l. every 100l., and therefore the greater the loss upon that stock the wiser would it be to get rid of it first.

Mr. Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that there was, in point of fact, no surplus whatever in the present year; a circumstance evinced not only by the Report itself, but by the whole of the right

0205

right honourable gentleman's speech that day. The day had commenced in a very inauspicious manner, and when he used that phrase he meant no disrespect to His Majesty, but merely to hint at the Royal message relative to the Civil List, which was an extraordinary introduction surely to a business, the event of which the Public had been taught to look forward to with the pleasing expectation of finding a surplus in their favour. He was a little surprised, that the right honourable gentleman, who, when he two years ago asked for 60,000l. to clear the debt then due on the civil list, had in a manner pledged himself to the House, that no farther debts should arise, and that the House should not again be applied to for farther grants on the subject, should come again so soon for so large a sum of public money. [Mr. Chancellor Pitt said across the House, Oh no, I never said any such thing.] Mr. Sheridan replied, the right honourable gentleman must excuse him, words said at some distance might be forgotten, but he was clear in his recollection of the circumstances, and indeed it was evident he must have used some such argument, or else why should the right honourable gentleman have asked for 60,000l. two years ago, and come down again then and claim grants for an arrear of so large an amount as 210,000l.!

Mr. Chancellor Pitt.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt declared, that he considered this as the most extraordinary attack that was ever made upon him. The honourable gentleman had said words might be forgotten after they had been said; it was undoubtedly true; but it was also true, that words might be misrepresented, and if ever he had heard a gross misrepresentation of his words, it had been the charge stated by the honourable gentleman. He never had pledged himself not to come again to that House for any debts on the civil list: when he asked for the 60,000l. two years ago, he had expressly said, there was a farther arrear, but that he had not been in his office long enough to ascertain what the amount was. But it was evident, not only that words delivered two years ago might be misrepresented, but that words spoken a very few hours since, were also capable of misrepresentation. He was in the recollection of the House whether he had ever said there was now an arrear of 210,000l.; he had said, the civil list was in arrear 30,000l. and he had at the same time stated, that 180,000l. was wanted to pay off the remainder of the Exchequer bills, for which 50,000l. a year of the civil list was mortgaged.

Mr. Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan replied, that the right honourable gentleman might indulge himself as much as he pleased in throwing out charges of misrepresentation, but he had spoken what in his opinion, and in the recollection of several gentlemen in that House, was a true statement of the right honourable gentleman's

man's own words. If 60,000l. was asked for as the debt two years ago, how came it that 210,000l. was now wanted? As to the idea of redeeming a mortgage of 50,000l. a year on the civil list, why had not that been regularly paid, since Government were answerable for it?

Mr. Rose declared that it had been paid, and that regularly; but there still remained 150,000l. of it to pay, and that the civil list had run in arrear 60,000l. in the last year, which together made up the 210,000l. now asked for.

Lord North asked the amount of the total of the supplies, and total of the ways and means for the year 1786?

Mr. Chancellor Pitt stated their amount, and also the amount of the surplus upon the whole, exclusive of the 750,000l. to be paid this year, by way of establishing a permanent fund of a million a year, to be applied inalienably in diminution of the national debt.

The motion was then put and agreed to.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt now moved the following resolutions:

" That the sum of one million per annum be granted to His Majesty, to be vested in Commissioners, and to be by them applied to the reduction of the national debt, and that the same be charged upon and made payable out of the surplusses, excesses, overplus monies, and other revenues, composing the fund commonly called the sinking fund.

" That towards the purpose of securing the said annual sum of one million, every person in Great Britain, who shall utter, vend, or expose to sale, any sweet scents, odours, or perfumes, or any dentifrice or preparation for the teeth, or any pomatum, hair powder, or other preparation for the hair, shall annually take out a license for that purpose.

" That towards the same purpose, where the persons so uttering or vending such wares or articles, shall reside within the cities of London and Westminster, or within the distance of the bills of mortality, on every such license there shall be charged a stamp duty of five shillings.

" That towards the same purpose, where the persons so uttering or vending such wares or articles, shall reside in any other part of Great Britain, there shall be charged on every such license a stamp duty of two shillings and six pence.

" That towards the same purpose, for and upon every packet, box, bottle, phial, or other inclosure, that shall contain any sweet scents, odours, or perfumes, or any dentifrice, or other preparation for the teeth, or any pomatum,

" matum, hair powder, or other preparation for the hair,
 " uttered, vended, or exposed to sale in Great Britain, where
 " the price or value thereof shall not exceed eight pence,
 " there shall be charged a stamp duty of one penny; and
 " where the price shall exceed eight pence and not exceed
 " the price of one shilling, there shall be charged a stamp
 " duty of one penny halfpenny; and where the price shall
 " exceed one shilling and shall not exceed the price of two
 " shillings and six pence, there shall be charged a stamp duty
 " of three pence; and where the price shall exceed two shil-
 " lings and six pence, and be under the price of five shillings,
 " there shall be charged a stamp duty of six pence; and where
 " the price shall be of the value of five shillings, or upwards,
 " there shall be charged a stamp duty of one shilling.
 " That the rates now severally existing upon batters and
 " deals do cease and determine.
 " That towards the same purpose, the sum of three pounds
 " six shillings and eight pence for every hundred batters,
 " containing six score, shall be the rate according to which
 " the several duties heretofore payable on batters, shall in
 " future be computed and paid.
 " That towards the same purpose, the sum of five pounds
 " for every hundred deals, containing six score, shall be the
 " rate according to which the several duties heretofore
 " payable on deals shall in future be computed and paid.
 " That the rates and duties granted and imposed, or which
 " shall be payable upon low wines and spirits, for home
 " consumption, by any act or acts now in force, be discon-
 " tinued.
 " That towards the same purpose, a duty of six pence be
 " laid upon every gallon of fermented wort, or wash, brewed
 " or made for extracting spirits, for home consumption,
 " from any malt, corn, grain, or tilts, or any mixture with
 " the same.
 " That towards the same purpose, a duty of five pence be
 " laid upon every gallon of cider or perry, or other wash or
 " liquor made or brewed from any sort or kind of British
 " materials (except such as are before mentioned) or from
 " any mixture therewith, for extracting spirits for home
 " consumption.
 " That towards the same purpose, a duty of nine pence
 " be laid upon every gallon of fermented wort or wash, made
 " or brewed from melasses or sugar, or any mixture therewith,
 " for extracting spirits for home consumption.
 " That towards the same purpose, a duty of one shilling
 " be laid upon every gallon of wash composed of foreign re-
 " fused wine, or foreign cider, or wash prepared from fo-
 " reign

" reign materials, except melasses and sugar, or any mixture
 " therewith, for extracting spirits for home consumption."
 The motions passed, and the House adjourned.

Thursday, 30th March.

Mr. Gilbert having brought up the Report of the Committee of Supply, it was read a first time, and the question being put, "That these resolutions be read a second time,"

Mr. Pulteney said, that it would give him much satisfaction to know from the right honourable gentleman who presided at the Board of Treasury, whether the million to be applied annually, in diminution of the national debt, with all its accumulations of compound interest, &c. was intended to be appropriated solely to the payment of the present debt? What he should imagine as right would be to appropriate the fund intended to be created to the payment of the debt of the nation, as it now stood, and in case of occasion arising for a new debt to be incurred, to create a new fund to be applied in diminution of that new debt. Such a system would produce the happiest consequences; it would enable Government to borrow money whenever it wanted a loan, on much better terms than it otherwise could expect to do, and begetting confidence at home and abroad, it would give credit and character to the country. There was another part of the business to which he wished to advert, and that was, the intended increase of duty on spirits; a measure which he feared would operate in a directly inverse ratio to what the right honourable gentleman conceived. He doubted whether the high price of spirits would not become injurious to the revenue, since it appeared likely to operate almost as forcibly as a premium to the smuggler.

Mr. Dempster said, that immense quantities of spirits distilled in a neighbouring kingdom were run into Scotland already, and he was persuaded, that if the intended increase of duty took place, the quantity smuggled into that country would increase beyond all credibility. He therefore deprecated the idea of adopting a measure so pernicious to the morals, the health, the industry, and the interests of his countrymen.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt expressed his wishes to receive the support and assistance of his honourable friend (Mr. Pulteney) in putting into execution the detail of his plan, as he knew how well informed he was upon the subject of the Funds, and how anxious for the success of every measure calculated to promote and establish the public credit. His question was certainly very proper, and such as ought to be well considered; but it would prove the most seasonable to enter upon

upon that discussion before the Committee. As to the conversation relative to the tax on spirits, he imagined that the two honourable gentlemen had rather a view to a particular part of the kingdom than to the whole; but whatever might be the case in Scotland, he hoped that the measures to be pursued to check the contraband trade in general would have sufficient operation to give effect to the new tax. The duty of six pence to be added would be one penny less than what had formerly been imposed, and that at a time when this country derived her greatest revenue from the article of spirits.

Sir William Cunyng-hame.

Sir *William Cunyngbame* said, that the duties already imposed had produced such an effect, that although there were formerly many distillers in the county which he had the honour to represent, there was not one at present.

Mr. Jolliffe.

Mr. *Jolliffe* trusted that still more effectual means might be taken to diminish the debt of the nation. His wishes were for paying off at least three millions of the debt annually; not an impracticable idea, on account of the advanced price of the produce of land.

The resolutions were agreed to by the House.

The order of the day being read for the second reading of the bill introduced by Mr. *Marshall*, for disfranchising all voters employed by the Navy and Ordnance Boards.

Mr. Gascoyne.

Mr. *Gascoyne* rose, and asked what authority that House possessed to take away any man's franchise? He knew of none. He had voted against the bill of an honourable gentleman (Mr. *Crewe*) to take away the franchise of the revenue officers for the same reasons that he should vote against this, because he condemned the principle. What station in life, in public life at least, was exempted from a wish to advantage itself through the medium of Government? And was it there dishonourable to endeavour to arrive at preferment through that powerful influence? If it was improper in one rank of life, it was equally improper in another; and when a reform was set about, it ought not to be partial, but general. Gentlemen were anxious of preferment through the three different professions of the army, the navy, and the law. Was there an Ensign who did not wish to be a Lieutenant, a Lieutenant a Captain of a Company, a Captain a Major, a Major a Colonel, a Colonel to have a regiment, and then become a General? In like manner in the sea service; and again, in the law, was there a Barrister who did not languish for a silk gown, a silk gown to be a Welch Judge, a Welch Judge to be Attorney or Solicitor General, and after that to be a Baron of the Exchequer, or a Chief Justice? And how were these pursuits, perfectly honourable, to be accomplished but by the influence of the Crown? Even in the city,

city, did not men aspire after preferment? First they were Common Councilmen, then Deputies, then Sheriffs, then Aldermen, and lastly Lord Mayor; and in all this what was improper? And where was the culpability if an excellent workman in the dock yard, or a skilful clerk in an ordnance office, endeavouring to gain preferment? Nor would he consent that men so circumstanced should be treated so unjustly as the bill under consideration would treat them, if it were passed into a law. On this account he felt it his duty to oppose the motion.

Mr. Drake.

Mr. *Drake* censuring the bill, asked whether the House would wish to drive the workmen from the dock yards, and force them to take refuge in the dock yards of inimical France, or unfriendly Spain? The House had no right to take away their franchises, and therefore he should vote against the bill. He respected the worthy gentleman who differed upon the bill in question; but he could not be a friend to a measure which went to deprive several people of their franchises: the House had passed regulations for qualifying and admitting members into itself, but out of the House, he thought it should not be attempted to restrict the liberties of the individual. The influence of the Crown ought always to be kept within proper bounds: he wished to see it like a tree, of which the luxuriant branches should be pruned; but he never would desire the branches of the tree to be leafless, or the trunk stripped. When the vote was passed, declaring that the influence of the Crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished, Mr. *Crewe's* bill was the result; but that happened in a divided, undecided Administration, when the House was scarcely confident of the due reliance it had a right to repose in Administration: he was not always ready to give up his opinion to the ultimate view of any person *pedibus ire in sententiam*; but to propose an alternative to a man, between his interest and his duty, was cruel. The artificer who lived in the country, born free, must now be deprived of his birthright: What is then to be done? He must retire to another climate. Our enemies will receive our ship builders, who must be driven from us, by depriving them of their liberties at home.

Mr. Marshall.

Mr. *Marshall* maintained that the object of the bill was to confer a favour, and not to inflict a punishment; to do no injury, but grant an obligation. The objects of it, he was persuaded, felt themselves relieved from a burden after it was passed. What right had gentlemen to conceive the bill would be deemed a hardship by the objects of it? Where were the petitions against it? Had any one petition been presented to that House against it? Gentlemen well knew the bill had been in agitation some time, and that no one petition had been sent

up against it, he was warranted therefore in presuming the objects of the bill were rather pleased than displeas'd with it. He knew that the honourable gentleman who spoke last was truly actuated by the best of motives. But why call the administration of the noble Marquis, now no more, an interregnum? He was certain that the principles of that nobleman were such as deserved the highest applause from his country. His maxims of government were to procure the applause and concurrence of the wisest and best men in the kingdom, and it was in his patriotic administration that the former bill had pass'd. If abuses, which it was declared exist'd, he knew no higher authority to govern the proceedings of that House than the House itself. Abuses exist'd by the influence which was known to be exerted in the dock yards, for gaining votes to return favourite members to Parliament; and such people were preferred to these stations as were able to serve a purpose. He had the opinion of a very able and experienced sea officer, who assur'd him that some of the most able and handy workmen were unemployed, whilst people of inferior merit were preferred. This was an heart-breaking circumstance; no petitions were presented against the bill by those interest'd, and he thought, if those people were anxious about their votes, they would have address'd Parliament. But if Ministry were not friends to the principle of the bill, why not avow it, and give it a direct opposition.

Mr. Drake. Mr. Drake observ'd, that the honourable gentleman had ask'd "where were the petitions *against* the bill?" That question he would answer by asking "where were the petitions *for* it?" He add'd, that of the noble Marquis (of Rockingham) his heart, so highly did he think of him in private and public life, compell'd him to say:

"Quando illum invenit parem?"
"Nullis ille quidem febilis occidit."
"Nullis febilior quam tibi" — ac inibi.

Mr. Chancellor Pitt. Mr. Chancellor Pitt said, that he thought it necessary to make some observations on a transaction of the noble Duke at the head of the ordnance, with respect to certain savings and retrenchments in the expenditure of his office. It had now been stated, that the defence alledg'd in favour of the noble Duke was, that he had only act'd as his predecessors had done before; but he perfectly remember'd that no such defence had been made, but that, on the contrary, he had been vindicated on the very grounds of his having differ'd with his predecessors in office.

With respect to the question before the House, he profess'd that he could by no means agree in principle with an honourable gentleman (Mr. Gascoyne) who had spoken against it; however,

however, on the present occasion, he should probably vote with him. The honourable gentleman had gone into a general reasoning on the unconstitutional tendency of depriving any person, or description of persons whatsoever, of their right of voting; for his own part, he should most willingly admit, that a deprivation of that sort was a thing to which recourse ought as seldom as possible to be had, and never, but in cases of great necessity, where it appear'd absolutely inconsistent with the freedom of election, and the independence of Parliament, that certain classes of men should be permitted to vote. To deny this doctrine would be to deny that the regulations, which mark'd out and limited the qualifications of voters, were justifiable or legal. The restriction impos'd by the bill on the officers of excise and customs, was one widely different, as well in itself as in its circumstances, from that now propos'd to be extend'd to the servants of the navy and ordnance. He had himself vot'd for that act, and he did not repent. But when the honourable gentleman call'd upon such persons as had support'd the former measure to give their assistance to the present, on the idea of consistency of conduct, he seem'd to him to have confounded together two objects in themselves extremely discordant; for he could see so broad a difference between the two cases as would fully reconcile him to the rejection of the one, without abandoning any of those principles which had induc'd him to support the other. At the period in which Mr. Crewe's bill was introduced, the House had very sufficient grounds for proceeding in the business in the manner in which they did—a short time before it had come to a resolution, which the circumstances of the times fully warrant'd, "that the influence of the Crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished." The truth of this position was indeed too apparent from the history of the times, and the people had imbib'd a conviction that the House of Commons, under the operation of that influence, were induc'd to lend their assistance towards the carrying on a most ruinous and disgraceful war, after it had long ceas'd to be, what he much fear'd it once had been, a favourite with the nation. The object of Mr. Crewe's bill was to give effect and life to the principle of that resolution, which otherwise must have remain'd a dead letter on the Journals. Nothing certainly could have been better calculat'd to reduce that influence of the Crown, so much complain'd of as a grievance, than the restrictions impos'd on the officers of the revenue by that bill; but was it to be laid down as a rule, that because it was necessary to reduce the influence of the Crown to a certain level, it would of course be an act of inconsistency to refuse to reduce it farther? If indeed the principle had been establish'd, that the influence,

influence of the Crown ought to be completely destroyed and overturned, (which, by the bye, was certainly true in matters of election,) then each step would be an argument in favour of the succeeding one, and the charge of inconsistency would have fairly applied against those who, having consented to go certain lengths, should decline to go the whole. The reason for passing that act then, was the necessity of reducing the influence of the Crown. Had that been accomplished? If not, why extend to a greater compass an invidious distinction, which having nothing to support it but its necessity, and beneficial operation, must lose all shadow of propriety, if that operation should be found to fail. But if it had proved successful, then the object for which it was adopted became obtained, and the influence of the Crown was diminished. Nor could the argument of consistency be any longer used to enforce a farther proceeding, unless it were contended that the diminution, already effected, was not sufficient. But it was not so much on those grounds, for he was willing to admit that any influence whatsoever, remaining in the Crown, in matters of election, might be effectually done away as much as it was possible, and would be consistent with the principles of justice and of right. It was on other grounds much stronger and more impregnable that his objections to the present bill were founded. If any descriptions of men whatsoever were improper, from the nature of their situations, to have any share in the constitution of that House, it was the very men who had been excluded from that privilege by Mr. Crewe's bill, while, on the contrary, there were none more deserving of such a privilege than those whom it was now proposed to deprive of it. The former persons being concerned in the collection of the public revenue, it followed that the extension of the public burdens must be conducive to their private interests, and therefore they were the most improper persons to be intrusted with a power of electing the members of an assembly, whose principal duty it was to prevent as much as possible the accumulation of impositions on the people. How different then in this point of view were the situations of the two classes of men—the one fattened on the distresses of the country, the other earning a livelihood by contributing to its defence! Besides this, there was another material discrimination to be observed from this circumstance, that the officers of the excise and customs were dispersed over every part of the island; there was not a nook or corner of it in which some of them were not to be found; and in many places also they were collected together in great numbers, and so formed a sort of phalanx which covered the whole kingdom; whereas the workmen belonging to the ordnance and navy were confined to a few parts of the kingdom,

dom, chiefly on the coast of Kent, Southampton, Devonshire, and Cornwall, and even on those to a few spots. But another distinction, and the most striking of all, between those persons, was, that the revenue officers were completely under the influence of Government, which could either serve them as their patron, or by depriving them of their employments, reduce them to beggary; and therefore, having no resource, they were under a necessity of submitting to the dictates of those who had the power of ruining them, if refractory. But on the contrary, the persons employed in the departments now under consideration had no reason even to thank their employers; for, by going into the service of a merchant, they might earn as comfortable a livelihood as they could in the service of the Public; and should they be exasperated by any ill treatment in consequence of non compliance with the mandate of their superiors to leave the kingdom, there was not a maritime nation in the world which would not be ready to receive them; and thus the benefit of their skill and industry would not only become lost to this country, but thrown into the scale of our rivals, or perhaps our enemies. Had there ever happened any real cause of complaint against any of the persons belonging to this class, for submitting to take their orders from Government at elections? The land victory of an honourable officer had been mentioned with triumph; but did that triumph argue any thing but this? Either that the influence of Government had not been exercised at all, or, if it had, that it had been exercised ineffectually. Gentleman would please to consider who were the representatives for those counties to which this supposed influence was wholly confined. Were they such as a Government possessed of influence, and wishing to use it, would be desirous of countenancing? No! From their independence, as well in fortune as in principles, they were the very men whom, of all others, such a Government would wish to keep out of that House. But it had been argued that, among the numbers of persons belonging to those departments, there were, comparatively, but few possessed of a right of voting. This, he apprehended, was a strong objection against the measure, because the evil, even if it existed in its utmost possible degree, must yet be extremely insignificant; whereas, by applying the remedy now proposed, a material injury would be done by stigmatizing a most useful, nay, an invaluable body of men, and consequently giving them cause for ill humour and discontents, which might lead to the most dangerous and destructive effects.

Some honourable members had thought proper to dwell much upon the subject of the borough of Queenborough; but did they mean this as a step to a parliamentary reform?

If they did, he should go hand in hand with them, provided that the borough in question was really so defective in its constitution as to call for reformation. He knew well that there were but too many boroughs, against which similar complaints might with justice be alledged; and in going to the reformation of Queenborough, he should only regret that it was a limited instead of a full remedy of that vice of our constitution, and the unfair and partial mode of election of members of Parliament! Let it be avowed whether such was the design; for, however he might be dissatisfied at the trifling extent of the reformation, he should notwithstanding gladly embrace it as a beginning. Yet gentlemen should take care whether by thus depriving a part of the electors for that borough of their franchises, they might not add to the evil which they meant to cure; whether they would not so far diminish the numbers of the electors, as to leave the disposal of the election in the hands of either some powerful man in the neighbourhood, or of a petty corporation, a prey to the most open and profligate venality, by which the very worst sort of members might become introduced into that House. If it could, however, be made appear that there had really existed any abuses in the elections for Queenborough which called for prevention, there was a method of doing away all danger of their recurring again, and at the same time of avoiding the bad consequences of throwing the whole power into the hands of a few; and this was a method that he should be happy to see adopted in more instances than that of Queenborough—the extending, instead of contracting, the privilege of voting, as in the case of New Shoreham. Such were his sentiments; and, consistently with these, he should not hesitate to meet with an opposing voice any act which menaced to deprive of the immunities of British citizens a multitude of valuable individuals.

Mr. Fox.

Mr. Fox contended, that when the right honourable gentleman who spoke last threw out insinuations against the borough of Queenborough, he seemed labouring, but vainly, to bring discredit against the honourable framer of the bill, as if he wished to destroy the influence of the Crown over it, only for the purpose of transferring the borough to one or more private individuals. The right honourable gentleman had at first seemed to imagine that there was some degree of influence proper to remain in the Crown, but he had afterwards recanted, and acknowledged that no such influence ought at all to exist; and if thus, the whole of the right honourable gentleman's argument, on the subject of consistency, went for nothing, for it was founded on the doctrine, that however proper it might have been to diminish the influence of the Crown, yet it might also prove inexpedient entirely

tirely to destroy it. This, however, being given up by the right honourable gentleman, the whole force of the charge of inconsistency would come home to him if he persisted in the opposition. If depriving the officers of the revenue of the right of voting tended to reduce the influence of the Crown over elections, the depriving those other servants of the Crown of the same right must necessarily reduce it still farther; and by the right honourable gentleman's own acknowledgement, it could not become reduced too low, because it ought to be wholly and completely abolished. The right honourable gentleman had pretended to make a distinction between the different persons concerned in the former and the present bill; he had first distinguished them by the circumstance of one body being extended over the whole kingdom, and the other being confined to a few places. He should not take upon himself to say which of the two bodies of men were most dangerous, but he would assert that the right honourable gentleman's argument only went to shew, that the officers of the revenue were a more dangerous set of voters, from being more diffused and numerous, than the servants of the ordnance and navy. Yet this argument, admitting it to be true, did not reach the principle of the measure, but only tended to prove, that although it was necessary and proper, yet it was not so necessary or so proper as the former regulation. He had also ventured to say, that no bad effects were ever felt from the interference of those men in elections under the influence of Government. There had been no contest for the county of Kent for many years back, and he hoped, while the present gentlemen continued to offer themselves, that no influence would be able to defeat them; but in the county of Southampton, there had been a most violent contest a few years back: and no gentleman who remembered the circumstances of the election would pretend to say, that no influence was used by Government on the people employed in the dock yards. The idea of arguing, that because the exercise of influence had been unsuccessful, the influence itself could not exist, was too ridiculous for reprobation; and on this occasion he should instance the cases of two honourable baronets, (Sir Henry Fletcher and Sir James Lowther,) in which the former triumphed over the latter in an election for Cumberland, and yet no person could say, that the latter had no influence in the county of Cumberland. The right honourable gentleman had objected to the exclusion of those persons from the right of voting at elections, on the supposition that it would prove a stigma upon their characters. Would any gentleman venture to avow, that in depriving the officers of excise of this right, he intended to affix a brand on that very useful body of men?

Was

Was it also to be alledged that the exclusion of those persons, in whom the highest confidence was placed, the commissioners of excise and customs, was intended as a stigma upon them? If it were, that side of the House would indeed deserve all the ill language and all the calumnies which had been thrown upon them by the right honourable gentleman. But it was contended, that the advantage resulting from this regulation would prove very much confined, because very few of the persons concerned had a right of voting. The same argument would have applied to the excise and custom-house officers, because very few of them enjoyed that privilege. It was difficult to avoid smiling at the idea of supposing that the artizans, if deprived of their votes at elections, would go to foreign countries in resentment. What were they to do abroad? Were they to have voices in the appointment of members of Parliament in France? Were they to influence the elections of Spain? or were they to look for a share in the aristocracy of Holland? The influence of the Crown had not, in any degree, decreased since the time in which the celebrated resolution was entered into by that House. The circumstances of the late changes, on the contrary, too plainly proved that this influence had continued most rapidly to increase in such a degree as to fill every true friend to the constitution with the most alarming apprehensions. For the purpose therefore of bringing back such an enormous influence within the bounds of moderation, and not only to prevent the objects of the bill from continuing in a state of servitude under the improper violence of ministerial power, and to inspire them with the more pleasing and independent idea that, not to their venal votes in favour of secretly-disapproved representatives, but to their professional merit they must look for preferment, he was resolved to meet the bill with his sincere concurrence.

Lord Mulgrave.

Lord *Mulgrave* observed, that the right honourable gentleman who spoke last, wandering from the fair field of argument, had intermingled his remarks with personal attacks against the ministers; but their two characters were before the public, who would decide upon their respective merits. The objects of the bill were praise-worthy for not having petitioned the House; and therefore their interests ought not to fall less under their consideration. As to the conduct of a noble Lord (the Earl of Sandwich) while at the Admiralty Board, it was more than defensible. But who, indeed, had ever dared to grant a workman preferment when it was his turn, merely on account of his election interest? The man who did so deserved to die upon the scaffold. In conclusion, Lord *Mulgrave* declared that he should vote against the bill, because

because he regarded it as hostile to the principles of the constitution.

Mr. *Filmer Honeywood*, maintained that the bill could not be said to take away a franchise from a dock-yard workman; because that could not be termed a franchise, which the holder was not permitted to exercise freely. He saw, with pain, that the right honourable gentleman who voted for Mr. *Crewe's* bill, contended against the bill then before the House; but from his reserve upon the subject at first, he dreaded such a proceeding.

Mr. Filmer Honeywood.

Mr. *Rolle* said that he had voted for Mr. *Crewe's* bill, because at that time he was of opinion that the influence of the Crown was too great, and that it ought to be diminished; being at present of a contrary opinion, and thinking the bill an unjust bill, he should vote against it.

Mr. Rolle.

Mr. *Courtenay* said, that a noble Lord (Lord *Mulgrave*) had urged a most extraordinary argument on the question; but he had too high an esteem for the noble Lord's abilities to think him serious; for, the noble Lord had expressed great anxiety lest the constitution of the country might be endangered, and our rights and liberties destroyed, if this bill were passed into a law; as the large body of workmen in the dock yards, and ordnance artificers, might, at some future period, from mere resentment, take a decided part with the Crown, and enable some ambitious monarch to establish despotism and arbitrary power! The noble Lord had also explained and amended a position of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and maintained exactly the same principle and the same argument, by asserting that it would be of no advantage to the country if the influence of the executive power were reduced in some petty corporations, if by such means the influence was transferred to some leading gentlemen of fortune in the neighbourhood. The fallacy of this argument, and the obvious distinction between the two cases was so apparent, that he should not mispend the time of the House in pointing them out, but proceed on a principle more consonant to the professions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he should expect the right honourable gentleman's support; when he had proved (which he trusted he should be able to do) that the noble Duke at the head of the ordnance lavished away the public money, to maintain his interest in the borough of Queenborough. He had on a former occasion stated that a saving of 20000l. on the report of the superintendent of shipping, might have been made by adopting the scheme proposed and recommended. An honourable gentleman (the Surveyor General of the Ordnance) had, indeed, asserted, that the arrangement was not adopted, because it appeared to the noble Duke and the Board both

Mr. Courtenay.

expensive and useless. Still, Mr. Courtenay said, he was convinced that the building barges, &c. and disposing of the Queenborough boats, would, in the first instance, cost 3000l. yet the advance of the principal was amply compensated by an annual saving of 2000l. In fact, it was gaining 1850l. a year by paying 150l. interest. This saving, trifling as it might appear, would, on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's calculation, at compound interest, pay off the national debt in five or six hundred years, which period, long as it might seem, was no more than an hour in the existence of a nation. Mr. Courtenay said, that the late Master General of the Ordnance (Viscount Townshend) had proceeded on a suggestion of the noble Duke's in retrenching the expence of the Queenborough naval establishment; for, the noble Duke himself, in the year 1782, glowing with all the zeal of patriotic reformation, and the hopes of coming into office, had, in one of his declamatory invectives, pointed out Queenborough as a striking instance of the corrupt practices pursued by Administration, and of the lavish expenditure of the public money by the ordnance, to bribe the electors of that borough. On that ground, the late Master General (Viscount Townshend) had ordered an inquiry—had received its superintendant's report; and was determined to carry his plan into execution, and had actually given him express and decisive orders to do so on the 19th and 20th of December. On these orders, the Superintendant had actually proceeded, when the noble Duke thought proper to countermand him; and there the matter still rested. The Surveyor General had said, that the late Board had themselves put a stop to the business on the 23d of December; this Mr. Courtenay apprehended was a mistake, as they had not acted officially after the 20th. Probably the mistake arose from this, that the noble Duke, eager (as he always was) to serve his country, and to proceed immediately on business, had, after kissing hands, gone immediately down to the board room, and entered a minute on his own authority, to check the officious zeal of the Superintendant, and save the loyal freemen of Queenborough from destruction. The honourable gentleman, (Mr. Luttrell) not perhaps being acquainted with the official impetuosity and precipitation of the noble Duke, had, probably enough supposed, that the order of the 23d of December had been given by the late Board. On the closest examination, Mr. Courtenay apprehended this would be found strictly and correctly the fact; but, as he was informed, and from good authority, the noble Duke's kindness to this most favoured borough had not stopped there: he had since, preferably, employed the Queenborough sailmakers, and shipbuilders in the repair of the ordnance vessels, perhaps because they had offered lower terms;

terms; but this was not done by public advertisement, though the noble Duke had grounded a libel on the late Board for not pursuing this mode, and made a panegyric on himself for invariably adopting it.

Mr. Courtenay now begged leave to call on the attention of the House, as he would state a fact which would shew in the strongest light the noble Duke's practice contrasted with his professions; as he seemed to have a strong inclination to lay out the money of the Public, not alone to influence the electors at Queenborough, but likewise to purchase a seat for one of his friends in that House. The fact he alluded to was this: when the noble Duke first came into office, Sir C. Frederick, who had served in the ordnance above forty years, applied to the noble Duke for his recommendation to the King, for some adequate provision for his long and faithful services. The noble Duke's answer was very proper: he said, that certainly he could not comply with Sir Charles's request, as he had heard injurious reports of his official conduct, when acting as Surveyor General at the Ordnance. Some time after, the noble Duke wrote a letter, (which Mr. Courtenay had seen) and said he was happy to find, on a strict inquiry, that all those reports were false and groundless, and therefore he had recommended him to the King, for a pension of 500l. on the superannuated list, without ever mentioning a word, or even annexing any condition of Sir Charles's vacating his seat in Parliament. However, when the paper, signifying His Majesty's pleasure, was to be drawn up, it was so judiciously and artfully worded, that Sir Charles's seat was absolutely vacated, on his accepting this gracious provision for his long and faithful services. An honourable member of the House, (Mr. Kenrick) at that time one of the Board of Ordnance, knowing Sir Charles's intention, objected to the form in which the paper was drawn up, as unnecessary, and contrary to precedent on similar occasions. But finding his honourable and spirited remonstrances in vain, as the only resource, he acquainted his friend Sir Charles of the fact, who had just time to come down to the House to prevent a vacancy being declared, and a new writ issued for Queenborough. The noble Duke, in consequence of this, prevented the King's gracious intention from taking place, and Sir Charles was deprived of any provision until a change of Administration took place. Mr. Courtenay declared his resolution to vote for the bill.

Sir Charles Middleton said, that he should vote against the motion, the more particularly on account of a number of young men, some of whom were now apprentices, and others had served their time in the yards. Many of these were the sons of freemen in the neighbouring boroughs, or entitled to

small freeholds in the neighbouring counties. Sir Charles argued that it would be exceedingly wrong, considered as a matter of policy, to strip the franchise from this body of men, for no other reason but because they belong to the dock yards. He stated, that those useful young men who were paid but 2s. 4d. per diem, would, if they were cruelly and unjustly disfranchised of the right of voting, certainly fly from the service, and attach themselves to the merchants' yards.

Mr. Steele. Mr. Steele charged Mr. Courtenay with uttering calumnies against the noble Duke, to whom he had alluded. He stated, that Sir Charles Frederick had pleaded extreme poverty, and asked the noble Duke to procure him a pension. The Duke did; but it was deemed incompatible for him to sit in Parliament with a pension. The reason assigned by Sir Charles for not quitting his seat, was, he was so poor that he was afraid of the Fleet, or the King's-Bench Prison. Mr. Steele charged Mr. Courtenay with taking an unfair advantage of Mr. Luttrell's absence, and getting at ordnance secrets indirectly.

Mr. Courtenay. Mr. Courtenay begged leave to explain, and said, that if asserting truth and fact relative to the noble Duke was calumny, he undoubtedly was a calumniator—he should still persist in doing so. The letter he alluded to from the noble Duke to Sir Charles Frederick, he had read; it was still extant. The honourable gentleman in many points had coincided with him, and exactly stated the transactions as he had done. Where they had essentially differed, he was happy to appeal to a criterion which carried conviction, independent of the honourable gentleman's assertion or his. The honourable gentleman had positively said, that the vacating of Sir Charles's seat, was the inevitable and necessary consequence of his accepting the noble duke's provision. Was this so? Certainly not; for, on a change of administration, a noble Lord (Lord North) had actually obtained the same provision, charged on the ordnance establishment for Sir Charles Frederick, on the sanction of the noble Duke's avowed acknowledgement, that his long services justly entitled him to competent provision; and this was done without Sir Charles vacating his seat; for he still continued a member of that House till the dissolution of Parliament. As to what the honourable gentleman had talked of the manner in which he received information of the ordnance transactions, he should only say, that he scorned to receive, or look for any, in an underhand or covert manner; he would scorn to receive or encourage information by anonymous letters, or by meanly running up and down in disguise to pick up information, which it was said some people, high in rank and situation in the

the ordnance, had condescended to do. As to taking advantage of an honourable gentleman's absence, (Mr. Luttrell's) that insinuation he equally disregarded. He did not think he was obliged, on any debate in that House, to conceal any fact, and not make use of any argument which he thought proper, relevant to a question in debate, because any honourable gentleman was not in his place. The noble Duke's conduct, in respect to Sir Charles Frederick, was, in his opinion, strictly relevant; for it carried a strong suspicion, at least, that the noble Duke chose, at the same time that he rewarded service by a pension of 500l. a year, to manage with his usual economy of the public money, and to purchase a seat at Queenborough into the bargain.

Mr. Aldridge said, that the honourable gentleman who spoke last, appeared to stand in rather a delicate situation; because he (Mr. Aldridge) could, if the honourable gentleman chose, bring to the bar irrefragable proofs that some of his statements were groundless.

Mr. Pye took notice of what had been said in debate relative to the driving the workmen out of the dock yards of this country; declaring himself against the bill, as tending to deprive Englishmen of their birthright, without the least pretence of their having committed any crime; and added, that although the objects of it might not take refuge in France or Spain, they might in America, which, doubtless, was considerably more detrimental.

Sir W. Cunyng-hame complained of certain persons belonging to the dock yards, having come down to Scotland, and interfered against him at his last election; and he appealed to Mr. Dundas as to the truth of the fact.

Mr. Dundas acknowledged that he certainly had opposed the honourable gentleman in the manner he had described, and it was entirely because of his party principles. No doubt but there was a gentleman of property in the county then under the influence of Government, who did take a journey to see his friends, and gave his vote against the honourable gentleman at the same time. Speaking also to the question, Mr. Dundas declared it to be highly indecent, in his opinion, for any gentleman, by bill or otherwise, to attempt to fix a stigma upon any set of men whatever, merely because they were employed in the King's service. He reprobated Mr. Crewe's bill, and desired any one to stand up and shew his face manfully and boldly in refutation of the arguments he had advanced. He contended that the idea of all reform bills of that sort, deserved a considerable degree of contempt and ridicule; declaring that whenever gentlemen of a particular description were out of place, they found it necessary every

every now and then to amuse the Public, by serving up a dish of disfranchisements.

Sir William Cunyng-
hame. Sir *William Cunyngbame* contended that the person who was sent into Scotland to give his influence against him was not a person of landed property, but quite the contrary.

Mr. Sheri-
dan. Mr. *Sheridan* declared that the right honourable and learned gentleman (Mr. Dundas) had truly said, that he never made an assertion without being ready to shew his face at the same time; for, he believed the House would agree with him, that the right honourable and learned gentleman had never advanced an argument, however irreconcilable with reason or logic, upon which he had not been perfectly ready to put a good countenance. With regard to the right honourable and learned gentleman's dish of disfranchisements, he, of all men, should not have set it before the House, who doubtless must well remember that the right honourable and learned gentlemen had not only, first, been induced to nibble a little at a plate or side dish filled with the same ingredients, but had afterwards been brought to sit down to a whole course of dishes of that sort, when the right honourable and learned gentleman's right honourable friend near him had served up his grand entertainment of parliamentary reform. The object of that reform had been, not to disfranchise a single description of men merely, but a large number of voters from many different boroughs. [Mr. Chancellor Pitt said, across the table, No such thing!] Mr. Sheridan thanked the right honourable gentleman for his correction, and said he recollected the People were to be paid for giving up their franchises, which suited his argument better, because every body knew where money was in the case, the right honourable and learned gentleman would be better pleased. But, how unconstitutional was the idea of purchasing with a bribe, that which it had ever been contended no Englishman could sell or part with for money—his unalienable right of voting at an election! He now alluded to what Lord Mulgrave had said respecting that man's deserving to lose his head who used the influence of the Crown improperly. [His Lordship rose to set Mr. Sheridan right, and repeated his words, declaring that he had said, that man ought to lose his head, who exercised the powers of Government in the manner alluded to.] Mr. Sheridan resumed his argument, and said, he was glad to find the expression was *ought* to lose his head, because if it had been *would* have lost his head, the right honourable and learned gentleman would not that day have had a face to have shewn in that House. Mr. Sheridan animadverted upon part of Sir Charles Middleton's speech, declaring that there must be something exceedingly pure and patriotic indeed in the blood of those shipwrights,

wrights, who condescended to work in the King's yards for 2s. 4d. per day, when the honourable baronet had stated that they could get 5s. per day in the merchants' yards.

Sir Charles Middleton. Sir *Charles Middleton* rose to explain, and said, that among other inducements for the shipwrights to prefer the King's yards, were their being situated near their friends and connections, the certainty of being taken care of when sick, and provided for in case of debility from accident or age, neither of which latter advantages those who worked in the merchants' yards were entitled to.

Sir Edward Deering. Sir *Edward Deering* declared, that the honourable member who introduced the bill, and his honourable colleague, would not have been returned at the last election, if they had not distinctly declared, three or four times, they would direct their conduct in Parliament to measures and not men.

Mr. Marsham and Mr. Honeywood. Mr. *Marsham* and Mr. *Honeywood*, both in their places, stated to the House what their declarations had been, and added that great numbers of the dock-yard men, wearing cockades in their hats, came to oppose them in their election, but they were returned by the voices of the independent freeholders of the county.

Mr. Bouverie. Mr. *Bouverie* informed the House, that he was present at the election for Kent, and that the case had exactly been as stated by the two honourable gentlemen who were representatives of that county.

Captain Macbride. Captain *Macbride* said there were not above one hundred of those persons, in whose favour so much compassion was professed, who would come within the reach of the bill, voters for the borough of Plymouth, which he had the honour to represent.

Mr. Jervoise. Mr. *Jervoise* observed, that because two of the dock-yard workmen had voted for him at the contested election which he stood some years since for Hampshire, they for their offence were discharged the dock yard, though it was in time of war, and their services were wanted.

Mr. Martin. Mr. *Martin* declared that he should vote for the bill, and he was not a little astonished to think how any gentleman who voted for Mr. Crewe's bill, could reconcile it to his own mind not to vote for the present bill.

Mr. Grenville. Mr. *Grenville* said, that it equally excited his astonishment and indignation to perceive that the authors of a bill, the object of which was to disfranchise certain voters, should venture to declare in the face of the House, that their reason for bringing in such a bill was, because the said voters dared to oppose their election.

Mr. Dempster. Mr. *Dempster* declared, that he had entertained great doubts which way he ought to have voted when Mr. Crewe's bill was

was pending, and that he could not bring his mind to consent to vote for the present bill.

Mr. Ald. Sawbridge.

Mr. Alderman *Sawbridge* supported the bill, and said that he had known of instances which fully justified it, on the grounds of humanity.

Sir W. Dolben.

Sir *W. Dolben* remarked that the influence of the Aristocracy was as unconstitutional in cases of election as the influence of the Crown, and that the one ought to be opposed as much as the other.

The House divided,	
Ayes	41
Noes	117

Majority - - 76

The House adjourned.

Friday, 31st March.

Mr. Dundas.

Mr. *Dundas* begged leave to bring back to the attention of the House, that at the first introduction of his bill to amend the act for regulating the East-India Company's concerns, he had expressed some doubts concerning the propriety of the disclosure of fortunes being demanded from persons returning to India. Other gentlemen had also objected to the judicature appointed to try delinquents in that country, and for those reasons he had divided his bill in two parts, in order that the other provisions of the bill which required a speedy determination might not be detained by a discussion of such as were liable to some doubt; but he had, since that period, satisfied his own mind on that part of the subject which had excited any doubts, and in consequence of the most diligent inquiry and consideration, he should not hesitate to declare himself ready to giving up the disclosure of property. As this circumstance, therefore would make a material alteration in his bill, he should move that the order of the day for going into a Committee upon it, as likewise the order for printing it, together with the bill itself, be withdrawn.

Mr. Francis.

Mr. *Francis* expressed his satisfaction at discovering that the learned and right honourable gentleman had given up so very obnoxious a part of his bill, but he feared he had only done it in consequence of the dispatches from India, and therefore there was room for apprehending that he might again change his mind. For his own part he had always remained in the same opinion on the subject, and should have continued to do so, let the reception of the bill in India have been what it might; but giving up one part of the bill, while another remained equally exceptionable, would have but little effect in quieting the minds of the people in India, and therefore

M. Sheridan now moved, "That the expected Annual Amount of the National income, stated in the Report of the Secret Committee appointed to enquire into the Public income and expenditure, appears in no respect to have been calculated upon the average receipts of the number of years, but is estimated upon the produce of One Year only, and fixed at the Amount of the same, with the addition of the probable increase upon the new Taxes"

That it appears that the Account of the annual expenditure, as opposed to the Amount of the public income so calculated, is not a statement of the present existent expenditure, or of that which must exist for some years to

to come, but is formed from the probable reductions which it is alleged will have taken place towards the end of 1791. in the prospect of a permanent peace."

That the different branches of Revenue, in the period upon which the future is calculated, appear to have been singularly productive particularly in the Customs, and greatly to have exceeded the amount of the preceding Year, with which alone it is contrasted."

That it does not appear that any means were taken, nor information called for, nor any examination entered into by the said Committee, in order to ascertain whether such increase

of

of Revenue had arisen from causes which were likely to have a permanent operation, or otherwise."

That such an investigation is indispensably necessary before this House can, with confidence, calculate by the produce of One Year the supposed future amount of the public income."

That the uncertainty of estimating, by such a criterion, the expected future produce of the revenue, is still more evident, upon a comparison of the quarter ending the 5th of April last, with the same quarter in the preceding Year, upon which the future income is calculated, by which comparison it appears that the amount of the latter quarter is inferior,

0217

inferior by the sum of £188,215,13.4.^d
in the branch of the Customs, to the
former." —

That in the said report there
are certain Articles of receipt
erroneously stated, as proper to be
added to the future annual income,
and other Articles of expense errone-
ously omitted to be added to the
expenditure."

That the sum voted and so
be voted, for the service of the Year
1786. including the interest and
charges of the Public debt con-
siderably exceeds the sum of £15,297,471.

That the means by which this
deficiency is to be made good arise
from aids and Debts which belong
to the present Year only." That

That there is no Surplus income what-
-ever applicable to the reduction of the
public debt now existing."

That a Surplus of Income in the
ensuing Quarter can arise only by the
renewal of a loan for an extraordinary
Million, borrowed upon Exchequer
Bills in the last, and charged upon
the Supply of the present Year, & which
loan it would be unnecessary to make
but for the purpose of procuring the
said Surplus."

That any extraordinary increase of
Exchequer Bills, contrary to former
practice in time of peace, is an
inexpedient anticipation of that
assistance which the Government
might receive in the case of any
circumstance rendering it necessary
to

to strengthen the state of our national preparation."

That the saving to the Public upon the interest of Money borrowed in this way is rendered improbable or precarious by the necessity which will arise for the more speedy issuing such Bills in order that the object for which the loan is made may be punctually and effectually answered, nor even should such savings accrue, will it compensate for the disadvantage above stated."

That admitting that, by the foregoing means, the expected Surplus will arise upon the three quarters next ensuing, and that there should be one Million annually is to be applied to the reduction of the debt,

It appears that there will then be an interval of nearly four years before the commencement of that permanent peace establishment, which is to furnish, in the reduction of its Services, a 900,000. of the expected Million Surplus."

That in this period it appears from the vouchers annexed to the said Report, and other papers before this House, that a sum, amounting to £4,010,000. besides two millions due to the Bank, making together the sum of £6,010,000. will be deficient and wanting, over and above the stated annual income."

That, for this sum of £6,010,000. there appears to be no adequate provision, or resource.

Supplies

For the Service of the Year 1786. —

Navy	2,381,526. 10. 8.
Buildings at the Admiralty.	6,000. — —
Army.	1,078,154. 15. — $\frac{2}{4}$
Ordinance	393,677. 17. 1
Miscellaneous Services	6,986,272. 10. — $\frac{2}{4}$
Deficiencies.	1,830,110. 10. 3 $\frac{5}{8}$
	<hr/>
	13,575,742. 11. 1 $\frac{5}{8}$

Ways & Means.

By Land Tax at 4 ^{sh} .	2,000,000. — —
By Duty on Salt.	750,000. — —
By Exchequer Bills	5,500,000. — —
By Lottery.	688,750. — —
By Surplus of Deductions of p. to the Crown of all pay ^{ts} from the Crown	82,386. — —
By Cash in the Exchq: 5 April 1786 of Duties on Wines for Amities on Lices granted 1745.	16,491. 5. —
Remaining in the Exchequer of Duties on Glass granted for D. 1746.	20,281. 15. —

Carried over £ 9,057,909. — —

Prot. sum	9,057,909.	-
Remaining in the Exchequer of States on Vellum for Amicitia on sum granted 1757	12,735.	15.-
Ditto of 2 ^d . 7 th . of Excheq.	110,414.	9.5 ³ / ₄ .
By Cash in the Exchequer.	100,508.	13.1 ³ / ₄ .
By S ^d . of Vellum granted in 1784.	290,810.	4.6 ² / ₄ .
By S ^d . of the Surplus of Vellum Voted for Chelsea Pensioners 1785	21,568.	13.2 ³ / ₄ .
By disposable Vellum of the Sinking fund 5 th . Jan. 1786	882,480.	15.9 ³ / ₄ .
By Debt of 5 April.	628,982.	..1
By Sinking fund.	2,600,000.	-
	<u>12,325,417.</u>	<u>11.3¹/₄</u>
Deficiency of Ways & Means.	240,324.	19.10 ³ / ₄ .
	<u>13,575,742.</u>	<u>11.1⁵/₈</u>