

Petition of the Mechanics and Manufacturers of the City of New York

Petition of the Mechanics and Manufacturers of the City of New York, April 18, 1789, Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

To the honorable the Congress of the United States of America...The Petition of the Mechanics and Manufacturers of the City of New York, humbly sheweth

That on the fortunate issue of the late Revolution, your Petitioners relied for the enjoyment of that prosperity which attends the establishment of political and civil freedom. They contemplated this event as the point at which a happy era was to commence, and as the source whence a new system of blessings should spring. ----

They entertained a hope that the independence which they had sought and acquired would have been not merely a nominal but substantial acquisition; and Independence not only seen in speculation but felt and realized in practice. ----

Your petitioners were early led to fear, that those prospects were visionary, and that their country having gained the form of liberty had left in the hands of their enemies the instruments of oppression, and the spirit to exercise it. They soon perceived with the deepest regret, that their prospects of improving wealth were blasted by a system of commercial usurpation, originating in prejudices and fostered by a feeble government. ----

They saw the trade of these States laboring under foreign impositions and loaded with fetters forged in every quarter to discourage enterprise and defeat industry. In this situation they have been prevented from applying to those abundant resources with which nature has blessed this country. ----

Agriculture has lost its capital stimulus, and Manufacture, the sister of Commerce, has participated in all its distresses, and has languished, notwithstanding the spirit of individuals [page 2] and Societies exerted for its support. Thus in lamenting the misfortunes of a foreign intercourse, your Petitioners do but recite their own peculiar complaints, for in its prosperity or decay, they feel themselves deeply interested.

Your Petitioners conceive that their countrymen have been deluded by an appearance of plenty—by the profusion of foreign articles, which has deluged the Country, and thus have mistaken excessive importation for a flourishing trade. To this deception they impute the continuance of that immoderate prepossession in favor of foreign commodities which has been the principal cause of their distress and the subject of their complaint.

Wearied by their fruitless exertions, your Petitioners have long looked forward with anxiety for the establishment of a government which would have power to check the growing evil, and extend a protecting hand to the interests of commerce and the arts. ----

Such a government is now established. On the promulgation of the Constitution, just now commencing its operations, your Petitioners discovered in its principles the remedy which they had so long and so earnestly desired. They embraced it with ardor, and have supported it with persevering attachment. They view with the highest satisfaction the prospects new opening and adorning this auspicious period. ----

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To your Honorable Body the Mechanics and Manufacturers of New York look up with confidence, convinced, that, as the united voice of America has furnished you with the means, so your knowledge of our common wants has given you the spirit to unbind our fetters and rescue our country from disgrace and ruin.

Your petitioners have subjoined a list of such articles as can be manufactured in this State. And they are [page 3] encouraged to commend them to your attention, by this reflection, that the countenance of your Honorable Body to the useful Arts, so far from injuring other parts of the great Political system, must eventually operate to the general benefit of the community.

In your wisdom, your justice and patriotism we rest with an assurance only equaled by our profound respect.

On behalf of the Mechanics and Manufacturers of the City of New York

April 18, 1789