

**Thomas Jefferson to Hugh Williamson, February 11, 1798, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**TO HUGH WILLIAMSON J. MSS.**

Philadelphia Feb. 11. 98.

Dear Sir, —I have to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 2d. inst. I will with great pleasure sound opinions on the subject you mention & see whether it can be brought forward with any degree of strength. I doubt it however & for this reason. You may recollect that a report which I gave into Congress in 93. & Mr. Madison's propositions of Jan. 94. went directly to establish a navigation act on the British principle. On the last vote given on this (which was in Feb. 94.) from the three states of Massachusetts, Connecticut & Rhode Island there were 2. votes for it & 20. against it; & from the 3. states of Virginia, Kentucky, & N. Carolina, wherein not a single top mast vessel is, I believe owned by a native citizen, there were 25. votes for & 4. against the measure. I very much suspect that were the same proposition now brought forward, the northern vote would be nearly the same, while the southern one I am afraid, would be radically varied. The suggestion of their disinterested endeavors for placing our navigation on an independent footing & forcing on them the British treaty have not had a tendency to invite new offers of sacrifice & especially under the prospect of a new rejection. You observe that the rejection would change the politics of New England. But it would afford no evidence which they have not already in the records of Jan. & Feb. 94. However as I before mentioned I will with pleasure, sound the dispositions on that subject. If the proposition should be likely to obtain a reputable vote it may do good. As to myself I sincerely wish that the whole

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Union may accommodate their interests to each other, & play into their hands mutually as members of the same family, that the wealth & strength of any one part should be viewed as the wealth & strength of the whole. The countervailing act of G. Britain lately laid before us by the President, offers a just occasion of looking to our navigation. For the merchants here say that the effect of it will be that they themselves shall never think of employing an American vessel to carry produce to Gr. Britain after a peace. Not having as yet any conversation on this subject I cannot say whether it has excited sensibility either in the north or south. It shall be tried however. Accept assurances of the sincere esteem of Dear Sir your friend & servant.