

Thomas Jefferson Congress, December 3, 1806, Act between U. S. and Great Britain, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

SPECIAL MESSAGE ON GREAT BRITAIN¹

1 In the Jefferson papers is the following draft:

Madison's Notes.

(Indorsed: "Message British. Rec. Nov. 27")

"I have the satisfaction to inform you that the negotiation on foot between the U. States & the govt of G. B, is proceeding in a spirit of friendship & accommodation which promises a result of mutual advantage. The delays which have taken place are to be regretted; but as they were occasioned by the long illness which ended in the death of the British Minister charged with that duty, they could not have been foreseen nor taken into calculation: and it appears that the commissioners appointed to resume the negotiation, have shown every disposition to hasten its progress. Under these circumstances our special ministers recommend a suspension of the acts prohibiting certain importations the commencement of which was postponed till the 15th of last month when it went into operation, and assured us that such a mark of candor and confidence in the temper & views with which they have been met in the negotiation will have a happy effect on the course of it; whilst a disregard of that friendly consideration may have a different tendency. Considering that justice & conciliation have been the real objects of all our measures, and that whatever will promote them will be most conformable to our wishes & our interests, I cannot but join in

Library of Congress

the recommendation that the operation of the act be suspended for such additional term as may be deemed reasonable. It is not known here &c.”

December 3, 1806.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States:

I have the satisfaction to inform you that the negotiation depending between the United States and the government of Great Britain is proceeding in a spirit of friendship and accommodation which promises a result of mutual advantage. Delays indeed have taken place, occasioned by the long illness and subsequent death of the British minister charged with that duty. But the commissioners appointed by that government to resume the negotiation have shown every disposition to hasten its progress. It is, however, a work of time, as many arrangements are necessary to place our future harmony on stable grounds. In the meantime, we find by the communications of our plenipotentiaries, that a temporary suspension of the act of the last session prohibiting certain importations, would, as a mark of candid disposition on our part, and of confidence in the temper and views with which they have been met, have a happy effect on its course. A step so friendly will afford further evidence that all our proceedings have flowed from views of justice and conciliation, and that we give them willingly that form which may best meet corresponding dispositions.

Add to this, that the same motives which produced the postponement of the act till the fifteenth of November last, are in favor of its further suspension; and as we have reason to hope that it may soon yield to arrangements of mutual consent and convenience, justice seems to require that the same measure may be dealt out to the few cases which may fall within its short course, as to all others preceding and following it. I cannot, therefore, but recommend the suspension of this act for a reasonable time, on considerations of justice, amity, and the public interests.