

REMARKS OF MR. CLAYTON OF GA.

In the House of Representatives on the Internal Improvement Bill.

Mr. Speaker: I feel very confident that no one will charge me with a want of proper regard for the State I have the honor in part to represent, or to be unmindful of its interest whenever the question of that interest comes properly before the House.— I think I have given, on a former occasion, proof sufficient for this body at least, whatever my constituents may think about it, that I hold the rights of the State wholly unassailable from any quarter, and I should therefore exceedingly regret that one among the first acts of kindness she has ever experienced from the General Government, should be at the expense of her virtue and integrity. I cannot agree to the amendment offered by my colleague, (Judge WAYNE,) because I believe the State I represent is entirely opposed to the whole system of appropriations of money for what is called internal improvements, or such improvements on the coast and at the mouths of rivers as the General Government has drawn to itself the right to make under the idea and forced construction that it belongs to the *regulation* of commerce. The revenues of the Government drawn principally from the south, are all to be expended in projects of this kind, and we all know where they are chiefly carried. Our repeated complaints on this subject have been totally disregarded; we have voted time after time against these prodigal expenditures, and such is the clamor connected with another great question relating to our oppression, that small appropriations, such as that now contemplated, are freely offered to us by way of lulling our apprehensions and quieting our complaints. I cannot consent to yield the principle upon such terms. If it is wrong

before we received any benefit from the system it must continue to be wrong, and I will not be so inconsistent, after having opposed the original bill on your table, and all its amendments now to vote for this amendment merely because it makes a pitiful provision for a river in my own State. My colleague says the approbation is asked to remove an impediment thrown into the river during the revolutionary war, to prevent the British from approaching the city of Savannah, and a principle of justice should induce the Government to take away the obstructions which she herself had placed in that channel. I cannot perceive the difference between an artificial obstruction, and a natural one, between one thrown into the river by the hand of man, and that which would result from a higher power, especially when it is recollected that this was done before the formation of the present government. But, Sir, I object to it upon principle; we have not the right to squander the public money upon such objects; and once win over the States to this system, first by the bait, and then by the committal, which inevitably results from such votes, and the Treasury will be inadequate to the profusion of expense called for in every part of the Union. See, Mr. Speaker, the extravagance of appropriation which

has attended the very bill to which my colleague has offered his amendment. When it was first reported by the Committee of Ways and Means, it asked a sum somewhere between twelve and thirty thousand dollars, for objects which that committee conceive to be the proper subjects of appropriation; now, by various amendments, it has swelled to the enormous sum of more than a million of dollars. Such a waste of public money cannot be borne by a frugal people; and, Sir, when we remember how the taxes come, how they are drawn to the Treasury by the consumption of the very necessaries of life, we ought to be extremely cautious how we deal it out in fruitless and useless projects, often not so much to promote the public interest, as to serve some local object, or advance some private views. If, Sir, we could trace, from the public treasury, the streams of taxes as they flow from the various quarters of the country, up to their sources, you will find many a sum wrung from the hard earnings of some destitute family, paid on the very salt that seasons their bread; and a proper recollection of such exactions should inspire a strong desire to expend the public resources with a sparing hand. It is from a conviction of this kind, that I have voted against all these wild appropriations, and shall continue to do it, not even allured from my purpose by an offer to share the spoils with my own State.