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Debates in the Pennsylvania Convention, 4 December 1787 (excerpt)

JAMES WILSON: . . . I recollect, on a former day, the honorable gentleman from Westmoreland (William Findley) and the honorable gentleman from Cumberland (Robert Whitehill) took exceptions against the first clause of the 9th section, Article I, arguing very unfairly, that because Congress might impose a tax or duty of ten dollars on the importation of slaves, within any of the United States, Congress might therefore permit slaves to be imported within this state, contrary to its laws. I confess I little thought that this part of the system would be excepted to.

I am sorry that it could be extended no further; but so far as it operates, it presents us with the pleasing prospect, that the rights of mankind will be acknowledged and established throughout the Union.

If there was no other lovely feature in the Constitution, but this one, it would diffuse a beauty over its whole countenance. Yet the lapse of a few years and Congress will have power to exterminate slavery from within our borders. . . .

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