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Centinel III, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 8 November 1787 (excerpt)

Section the 9th begins thus.—“The migration or importation of such persons, as any of the states, now existing, shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by Congress, prior to the year 1808, but a duty or tax may be imposed on such importation not exceeding ten dollars for each person.” And by the fifth article this restraint is not to be removed by any future convention. We are told that the objects of this article, are slaves, and that it is inserted to secure to the southern states, the right of introducing negroes for twenty-one years to come, against the declared sense of the other states to put an end to an odious traffic in the human species; which is especially scandalous and inconsistent in a people, who have asserted their own liberty by the sword, and which dangerously enfeebles the districts, wherein the laborers are bondmen. The words dark and ambiguous; such as no plain man of common sense would have used, are evidently chosen to conceal from Europe, that in this enlightened country, the practice of slavery has its advocates among men in the highest stations. When it is recollected that no poll tax can be imposed on *five* negroes, above what *three* whites shall be charged; when it is considered, that the impost on the consumption of Carolina field negroes, must be trifling, and the excise, nothing, it is plain that the proportion of contributions, which can be expected from the southern states under the new constitution, will be very unequal, and yet they are to be allowed to enfeeble themselves by the further importation of negroes till the year 1808. Has not the concurrence of the five southern states (in the convention) to the new system, been purchased too dearly by the rest, who have undertaken to make good their deficiencies of revenue, occasioned by their wilful incapacity, without an equivalent? . . .

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