Thomas B. Wait to George Thatcher, Portland 8 January 1788 (excerpt)

. . . There is a certain darkness, duplicity and studied ambiguity of expression runing thro' the whole Constitution which renders a Bill of Rights peculiarly necessary.—As it now stands but very few individuals do, or ever will understand it.—Consequently, Congress will be its own *interpreter*—The article respecting taxation and representation is neither more or less than a *puzling Cap*; and you, my friend, had the pleasure of *wearing* it, at my office, an hour or two—and then pulled it off, *just as wise* as when you put it on.—But you will now perhaps tell me that you can explain it entirely to my satisfaction—possibly you can; but that may not happen completely to satisfy Congress—if it should not, why they will put a different one,—one that may not satisfy *either you or me*—But Some persons have *guessed* the meaning to be this—that *taxation and representation should be in proportion to all the freemen and slaves in each state—counting five of the latter to three of the former*—If these were the ideas of the Convention, what a strange collection of words do we find in the Constitution to express them!—Who, in the name of God, but the *majority* of that honl. body, would ever have tho't of expressing like ideas in like words!—But bad as may be the *mode* of *expression*, the *ideas*, in my opinion, are worse—

By this *interpretation* the article in question is an egregious imposition on the northern states—Tell me, if you can, why a southern *negro*, in his present debased condition, is any more intitled to representation, than a northern *Bullock*?—Both are mere pieces of property—and nothing more!—The latter is equally a *free agent* with the former. . . .

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