

May 21st 1797
Given to Wm. Smith.

In the debate upon the answer to the Presidents Speech, or in the course of discussing the defensive measures which it recommends, it may become a question, whether France has anything to fear from the U.S.

France it may be shown, has to fear 1st. The deprivation of those supplies of various kinds which she has heretofore received by American vessels, and the [??] of Amer. merchants and which are essential to the prosecution of her continental war. 2d. The clamours of her allies, (Spain & the United Netherlands) from the injuries they must experience should she oblige them to adopt similar measures to these she herself is pursuing. 3d. The critical situation to which she will in particular reduce Spain, should she drag her into the war, considering that the fate, at least of [??] the Floridas, and Louisiana depends upon her retaining the friendship of the U. S. 4th. The certain loss of her West India Islands from a want of our provisions and other necessary supplies, which must inevitably throw them into the hands of Great Britain.

What on the other hand has the U. S. to fear from France? It is not probable that in the present situation of the French Marine, that there can be spared from it a detachment adequate to make any impression on the U. S. should the measures of Defence contended for be adopted, we well know that she cannot furnish a fleet to protect her West India Islands, and shall we suppose her able to send a fleet to attack the U.S. that could [naturally?] destroy the United States? But admitting that she may make such an attempt, would not the armament be thought by England to be destined for the West Indies at least must make England get at least upon that supposition; and would it not therefore be watched, intercepted or dispersed without much or any agency whatever on the part of the U.S.

Such being the position of the U. S. relation to France and to all every thing pacific is to be hoped from negotiation should she see that our preparations are calculated to meet war.