

CHAPTER DCCLXX.

AN ACT TO EMPOWER CERTAIN COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED BY CONGRESS TO TAKE VIGOROUS MEASURES FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE WESTERN FRONTIERS OF THIS STATE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES THEREIN MENTIONED.

(Section I, P. L.) Whereas inroads have been made on the western frontiers of this state and of the state of Virginia by some savage tribes of Indians, instigated thereto by the commandant of the British garrison of Fort Detroit and other British agents and emissaries and aided by many evil-disposed and disaffected persons on the said frontiers, wherein a number of helpless people have been cruelly massacred and the peaceable inhabitants driven from their homes and reduced to great distress:

And whereas the honorable the continental Congress have appointed commissioners to repair without delay to Fort Pitt to investigate the rise, progress and extent of the disaffection in the quarter aforesaid and take measures for suppressing the same and bringing the deluded people to a sense of their duty and for carrying the war into the country and against the towns of the enemies, both British and Indian, whereby the further progress of the invaders may be prevented and the frontier inhabitants may be secured from further ravages and depredations:

And [whereas] the said Congress have earnestly recommended to the legislatures of the states aforesaid to invest the commissioners with every necessary authority over their respective militias, with powers also to arrest and commit for trial such of their respective inhabitants as shall appear to have been concerned in any conspiracy or plot against the United States, and otherwise afford the said commissioners or other commissioners whom Congress may find it necessary hereafter to appoint for the salutary purposes aforesaid, in case of the death or refusal of the commissioners already appointed, such assistance

as shall be necessary to prosecute with vigor the measures that they may adopt in consequence of the resolves of Congress:

(Section II, P. L.) For furthering the important and necessary designs aforesaid:

[Section I] Be it enacted, and it is hereby enacted by the Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met, and by the authority of the same, That the lieutenants and sub-lieutenants, or a majority of them, of the counties of Bedford and Westmoreland in this state shall and they are hereby authorized, empowered and enjoined, upon application to them made by the commissioners appointed or to be appointed by Congress (provided always [that] the said commissioners who may hereafter be appointed by Congress be approved of by the general assembly of this state, or by the president and council thereof in the recess of assembly), to take the most speedy and effectual measures for raising and embodying, whether by classes or otherwise, such parts of the militia of their countries respectively as shall from time to time be deemed necessary and be required by the said commissioners either for the protection of their respective frontiers or for the reduction of any British or Indian town or post, which corps shall be paid, subsisted and provided as continental troops and be detained in service no longer than two months at any one time, unless their service for a further space of time be judged necessary for carrying on an expedition against such town or post, in which case such additional time of service shall be settled and agreed upon with the troops when they are engaged for such expedition.

(Section III, P. L.) Provided always, That those of the militia engaged for two months shall not be again called into service before the remaining militia of their respective counties shall have performed service for an equal space of time and those who shall have been employed for a longer term on any expedition into the Indian country or against any British post shall be exempted from the service for two succeeding tours of duty in the militia, or for a space of time equal to the time in which they shall be employed in such expedition.

[Section II] (Section IV, P. L.) And be it further enacted by

the authority aforesaid, That the commissioners aforesaid be empowered and they are hereby empowered to call on the lieutenants of the counties of Bedford and Westmoreland respectively for such quotas of their respective militias as they the said commissioners shall deem necessary for the defense and protection of their respective frontiers; and the said lieutenants respectively are hereby required and enjoined to furnish with all possible dispatch the militia that may from time to time be required by the said commissioners for the purposes aforesaid.

[Section III.] (Section V, P. L.) And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the commissioners aforesaid are hereby authorized and empowered to arrest the persons and seize the papers, letters and other writings belonging to or found in the possession of any of the inhabitants of the counties aforesaid within this state who have been or shall be in any wise concerned in any plot, conspiracy or combination against the United States, and if after examination they shall see cause to commit such persons to any gaol or place of safe custody within this state or elsewhere in order to their trial for the offenses wherewith they shall be charged.

[Section IV.] (Section VI, P. L.) And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That this act shall be and continue in force until the end of the first session of the next general assembly unless sooner repealed and no longer.

Passed December 20, 1777. See the Acts of Assembly passed December 22, 1781, Chapter 956; August 11, 1784, Chapter 1104; September 6, 1785, Chapter 1171; November 10, 1787, Chapter 1326; March 17, 1791, Chapter 1535; January 20, 1792, Chapter 1602; April 3, 1793; Chapter 1668; February 28, 1794, Chapter 1715; September 3, 1794, Chapter 1787; April 1, 1795, Chapter 1821.