

IN HIS OWN WORDS: ROBERT MORRIS ON STATES' RESPONSIBILITIES

Excerpts from *Circular to the Governors of the States*

Directions: *Robert Morris wrote this letter from Philadelphia, soon after assuming the office of superintendent of finance under the Articles of Confederation. Underline/circle words and phrases that reveal Morris' attitude toward the governors.*

Note: Capitalization, spelling, and punctuation have been modernized.

July 25, 1781

It gives me very great pain to learn that there is a pernicious idea prevalent among some of the States that their accounts are not to be adjusted with the Continent; such an idea cannot fail to spread a listless languor over all our operations. To suppose this expensive war can be carried on without joint and strenuous efforts is beneath the wisdom of those who are called to the high offices of legislation. . . . I shall never permit a doubt that the States will do what is right; neither will I ever believe that any one of them can expect to derive any advantage from doing what is wrong. It is by being just to individuals, to each other, to the Union, to all; by generous grants of solid revenue, and by adopting energetic measures to collect that revenue . . . that these States must expect to establish their independence and rise into power, consequence, and grandeur. . . .

I enclose you an account of the specific supplies demanded of your State as extracted from the Journals of Congress. . . . I am further to entreat Sir that I may be favored with copies of the several acts passed in your State since the 18th March 1780 for the collection of taxes and furnishing supplies or other aids to the United States. . . . I must also pray to be informed of so much of the internal police of your state as relates to the laying, assessing, levying and collecting of taxes. I beg leave to assure your Excellency that I am not prompted by an idle curiosity or by any wish to discover what prudence would dictate to conceal. It is necessary I should be informed of these things and I take the plain, open, candid method of acquiring information. . . .

I entreat your Excellency to undertake one more task which perhaps is far from being the least difficult. It is Sir that you write very fully as to the amount of the several paper currencies now circulating in your State. . . .

I know that I give you a great deal of trouble but I also know it will be pleasing to you because the time and the labour will be expended in the service of your country.

Source: "Robert Morris, Circular to the Governors of the States." The University of Chicago Press.
<<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch5s3.html>>.