

C. C.
Original.

[Gates to Gov. Johnson.]

War Office Feb^y 23rd 1778.

Sir

The Board have been favoured with your Excellency's Letter of the 18th inst & I am to express the due Sense they have of the Attention you & the Honourable Council have been pleased to pay to their several Requests on the Subjects mentioned in your Letter. We believe the Limitation of the Price of Pork operated strongly against our procuring it, & that the Commissary General with the best Intentions has injured rather than promoted the Business in this particular. Where Prices are limited they ought to be generous & to fall in with the Avarice of the Times in some Degree in order to check its Progress rather than to attempt the tearing it up by the Roots. There is so much to be said on both Sides this Question of limiting or leaving Prices to regulate themselves that it is difficult to determine which is right. At present the Wants of the Army must be supplied at any reasonable Price & we are happy in perceiving that your Excellency & the Honble Council are making those Exertions for its Assistance this Board expected from your known Zeal & Patriotism. We are obliged to you for your Advice as to Fish & it is so necessary that every Wheel should be set in Motion to get forward the great Machine that the Board would have closed with a less practicable Proposal than this. The Gentleman you mentioned is employed in the Business of procuring Shad on the Maryland side & Major Herbert is empowered to procure them on the Virginia Side of Potowmack. The Board have written to Col. Henry Hollingsworth to superintend the Bussiness of procuring Herrings at Charlestown & I am to entreat your Assistance to these Gentlemen or either of them where necessary, The obtaining Salt will be the Difficulty as they should not interfere with that Article if wanted for Pork ; but as the Season for this will be soon over they may e'er long appropriate the whole they can obtain for curing of Fish. The Board lament the Unwillingness of the Militia to guard the Prisoners ; but the yeomanry of the Country will be humoured. The Prisoners having heard too soon of the late Resolves of Congress for retaliating are escaping fast to the Enemy & even some Officers have gone in to General Howe & made the fitting up Fort Frederick a Pretext for their Breach of Honour. A general Exchange is however agreed upon between Generals Washington & Howe which will it is presumed be carried into Execution unless the Arts of the Enemy again elude it. We should be prepared at all Events. But as the Enemy will gain more Strength by the Exchange than will be added to ours, considering all Circumstances, it is