

Should follow 2329  
Ld Sandrich

Fortescue 1809

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Admiralty Jan: 11. 1776

Your Majesty's great goodness in mentioning to me some things that have been thrown out, intimating that it has been hinted that the naval department has not been so expeditious in the equipment of the Southern expedition as they might have been, will I hope incline you to forgive the liberty I take in explaining that matter in which I think your Majesty has been in some part misinformed

When the first orders were sent to prepare transport for the expedition, they were ordered to be ready the beginning of December; they were ready at the time. The men of war were also ready except the Bristol, which was delayed in the dock only four or five days after the time fixed for her being fit for sea; and I fear your Majesty will never have a sea expedition that will be in readiness so near the given time as this has been. What delay has been

since the Bristol sailed from the Nore, has been occasioned by contrary winds & accidents, and I am certain by nothing that human wisdom could guard against; the Boreas one of the Squadron run ashore in going out of Spithead, and received considerable damage; she was immediately replaced by another ship and no time lost on her account. The ships that were left behind in the river were the armed transport, the Hospital ship for the army, and the Bomb tender; the former of these was taken up when the others were ready for the sea, therefore could not go at the same time; the second was delayed principally by the Physical people with whom we have no business, the Bomb tender is entirely under the direction of the Ordnance, and they best know why she was not ready; however that no time might be lost to the expedition, Sir Peter Parker was directed, if they did not join him before he was ready to sail from Cork, to sail without them, & to leave one of his Squadron to follow him as soon

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as the missing ships arrived.

The elements have certainly warred against us most cruelly, for the Acteon, Thunder Boat, & Deal Castle that sailed with Sir Peter Parker have been driven back to Plymouth, and the latter run ashore and <sup>was</sup> saved with the utmost difficulty, having lost all her masts, and greatly damaged in her hull, so that she will require a considerable time to refit, and must be replaced by some other ship.

The Acteon is put again to sea, and the Thunder will sail in a day or two at furthest, but I am persuaded Sir Peter Parker will not stay for them, as they will overtake him on account of his being obliged to keep company with the transports.

I do not mean the word unprecedented as a complaint; I readily acknowledge every office must exert itself to the utmost, & that rules must not be attended to, unless they are such as would prejudice the immediate purpose if they were broken thro: my whole meaning is conveyed in what your Majesty has seen in Sir Hugh Pallipers Letter, namely that

if we do get the transports required at 10 short  
a notice, it is more than ever was done before,  
& your Majesty may be assured, that whatever  
constant attention & money can do, shall be done  
in the whole of this important business.

The second assistant to the Surveyor of the Navy  
& the Boatwain of Deptford yard are ordered  
to repair to Glasgow to procure transports for the  
men that are to come from Scotland, and  
to attend to their equipment; & every ship  
that can be got in the river, or the out  
ports will be taken; I hope & believe these  
endeavours will answer the purpose, but  
if ships are not to be got for money, your  
Majesty will permit me to say that it is out  
of the reach of this department to provide the  
means of supplying that want at 10 short  
a notice. however as I have already said, I do  
believe we shall be ready in time with all  
the transports that are wanted.

Your Majesty has had the goodness to make  
an excuse for us to which we are not entitled  
as no ship of Sir Peter Parkers Squadron has been  
delayed a single moment for want of men,  
& I hope that such measures are taken as

will prevent any of the ships that are fitting, from lying in Port an hour after they are wanted for service: when I foresee a want of seamen I will apply in time for leave to prep, but I still hope to do without it.

The marine recruiting goes on so well, that when I have the honour of paying my duty to your Majesty, I propose to ask whether a further addition might not be made to that usefull corps, an additional second lieutenant to each company & ten private would add considerably to our strength & without much expence, but I doubt whether that would enable us to have an additional Battalion on shore; however I shall put this calculation into writing in order to be prepared to lay the whole properly before your Majesty.

The *Arethusa* & *Thetis* of 32 guns each are ordered to be fitted for the protection of the India ships, they are both ready for the sea, & have nothing to take in but their additional provisions & stores.

Reinforcements are ordered to the two Southern Squadrons, where the services your Majesty

points out deserve and are met with the utmost attention from this board, and therefore we were rather surprized that orders were sent to us to direct admiral Gaxton to proceed with his whole Squadron to Pensacola in case of an attempt being made upon that place, we have therefore thought proper to write ~~our~~ opinion to the Secretary of State upon this subject.

one armed <sup>transport</sup> is gone with Sir Peter Parker, two others will go to Quebec but <sup>the two last</sup> are not colliers, but there are many proper vessels among the transports that the commanders in chief may arm if they think proper, and so much call for colliers for the transport service that I am unwilling to take them from the more immediate & material service.