It has often been regretted by the decided friends of an efficient national government that Congress in the early stages of the revolution exercised the powers entrusted to them with too sparing and feeble a hand. It is earnestly to be hoped, after so much has been done for retrieving the prostrate affairs of the Union, that no similar cause of regret may be again furnished.

It may be laid down as an incontrovertible position, that all the powers contained in a constitution of Government, which concern the general administration of the affairs of a country, its finances, its trade, its defense…ought to be construed liberally in advancement of the general good. This maxim does not depend on the particular form of the government or on the particular delineation or demarcation of the boundaries of its powers, but on the condition of society, on the nature and objects of government. The means by which national exigencies are to be satisfied, national inconveniences obviated, national prosperity promoted are of such infinite variety, extent, and complexity that there must of necessity be great latitude of discretion in the selection and application of those means. It is essential to the public good that the power of providing for it should be commensurate with the diversity of circumstances by which it may be affected…. 