



## Was the American Revolution Avoidable?

### Online Seminar

Texts from the forthcoming National Humanities Center toolbox

### Making the Revolution: America, 1763-1791

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## AN AMERICAN LOOKS BACK AT BRITISH VICTORY in the FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR, 1763



■ **DAVID RAMSAY**, *The History of the American Revolution*, 1789.

A South Carolina physician, Ramsay served as a surgeon in the Revolutionary Army. After the war, he served in the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation (1782-83, 1785-86), and wrote his Revolution history in the late 1780s, as the new nation was crafting its final Constitution.

The addition to the British empire of new provinces, equal in extent to old kingdoms, not only excited the jealousy of European powers but occasioned doubts in the minds of enlightened British politicians whether or not such immense acquisitions of territory would contribute to the felicity of the Parent State. They saw, or thought they saw, the seeds of disunion planted in the too widely extended empire. Power, like all things human, has its limits, and there is a point beyond which the longest and sharpest sword fails of doing execution. To combine in one uniform system of government the extensive territory then subjected to the British sway appeared, to men of reflection, a work of doubtful

practicability, nor were they mistaken in their conjectures.

The seeds of discord were soon planted and speedily grew up to the rending of the empire. The high notions of liberty and independence, which were nurtured in the Colonies by their local situation, and the state of society in the new world, were increased by the removal of hostile neighbors. The events of the war had also given them some experience in military operations and some confidence in their own ability. Foreseeing their future importance, from the rapid increase of their numbers and extension of their commerce, and being extremely jealous of their rights, they readily admitted, and with pleasure indulged, ideas and sentiments which were favorable to independence. While combustible materials were daily collecting in the new world, a spark to kindle the whole was produced in the old. Nor were there wanting [lacking] those who, from a jealousy [suspicion] of Great-Britain, helped to fan the flame. . . .

Till the year 1764, the [British commercial] colonial regulations seemed to have no other object but the common good of the whole empire. Exceptions to the contrary were few and had no appearance of system. When the approach of the Colonies to manhood made them more capable of resisting impositions, Great Britain changed the ancient system under which her Colonies had long flourished. When policy would rather have dictated a relaxation of authority, she rose in her demands and multiplied her restraints.

From the conquest of Canada in 1759, some have supposed that France began secretly to lay schemes for wresting those Colonies from Great Britain which she was not able to conquer. Others allege that from that period the colonists, released from all fears of dangerous neighbors, fixed their eyes on independence and took sundry [various] steps preparatory to the adoption of the measure. Without recurring to either of these opinions, the known selfishness of human nature is sufficient to account for that demand on the one side and that refusal on the other, which occasioned the revolution. It was natural for Great Britain to wish for an extension of her authority over the Colonies, and equally so for them, on their approach to maturity, to be more impatient of subordination and to resist every innovation for increasing the degree of their dependence.

The sad story of colonial oppression commenced in the year 1764. Great-Britain, then, adopted new regulations, respecting her colonies, which, after disturbing the ancient harmony of the two countries, for about twelve years, terminated in a dismemberment of the empire.

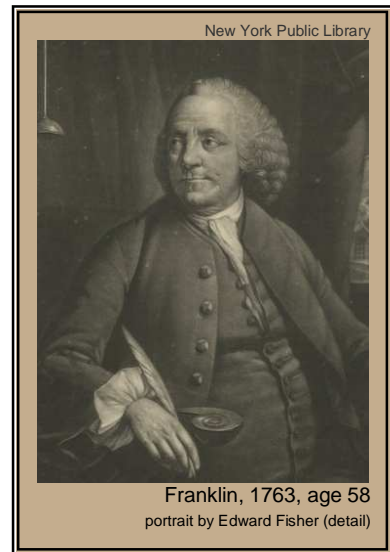
## ■ Benjamin Franklin on British victories in the French and Indian War<sup>1</sup>

No one can rejoice more sincerely than I do on the Reduction [defeat] of Canada; and this, not merely as I am a Colonist, but as I am a Briton. I have long been of Opinion that the Foundations of the future Grandeur and Stability of the British Empire lie in America, and tho', like other Foundations, they are low and little seen, they are nevertheless broad and Strong enough to support the greatest Political Structure Human Wisdom ever yet erected.

Letter to Henry Home (Lord) Kames, London, 3 January 1760

I congratulate you sincerely on the signing of the Definitive Treaty, which if agreeable to the Preliminaries, gives us a Peace<sup>2</sup> the most advantageous as well as glorious, that was ever before obtain'd by Britain. Throughout this Continent I find it universally approved and applauded, and am glad to find the same Sentiments prevailing in your Parliament and the unbiass'd Part of the Nation. Grumblers there will always be among you, where Power and Places are worth striving for, and those who cannot obtain them are angry with all that stand in their way. Such would have clamor'd against a Ministry not their particular Friends, even if instead of Canada and Louisiana they had obtain'd a Cession of the Kingdom of Heaven. But Time will clear all Things, and a very few Years will convince those who at present are misled by Party Writers that this Peace is solidly good, and that the Nation is greatly oblig'd to the wise Counsels that have made it.

Letter to William Strahan, Virginia, 9 May 1763



## ■ Clergymen on British victories in the French and Indian War<sup>3</sup>

. . . Immortal WOLFE! untimely but gloriously fallen! . . . Fallen far from thy native, beloved country and every near relative! Untimely for thy country, which needs such as thou wast to conduct and inspire her armies and lead them to victory! But still fallen gloriously for thy self and for that country which gave birth to such a commander! Fallen in the service of thy king, and of that country so dear to thee and for which thou wouldst readily have laid down more lives than one! . . .

. . . Yea, we may reasonably expect that this country, which has in a short time and under many disadvantages become so populous and flourishing, will, by the continued blessing of heaven, in another century or two become a mighty empire (I do not mean an independent one) in numbers little inferior perhaps to the greatest in Europe, and in felicity to none.

Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, sermon, Boston, 25 October 1759

Now commences the Era of our Quiet Enjoyment of those Liberties which our Fathers purchased with the Toil of their whole Lives, their Treasure, their Blood. Safe from the Enemy of the Wilderness, safe from the gripping hand of arbitrary Sway and cruel Superstition. Here shall be the late founded Seat of Peace and Freedom. Here shall our indulgent Mother, who has most generously rescued and protected us, be served and honored by growing Numbers with all Duty, Love and Gratitude, till Time shall be no more.

Rev. Thomas Barnard, sermon, Salem, Massachusetts, 25 May 1763

<sup>1</sup> The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, American Philosophical Society & Yale University, Doc. 624148; permission pending.

<sup>2</sup> Treaty of Paris ending the French and Indian War, signed 10 February 1763.

<sup>3</sup> Early American Imprints: Doc. #8417, 9334; courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society with ReadEx/NewsBank.



***“some new state of things arising . . . some new crisis forming”***

**Gov. Thomas Pownall — *The Administration of the Colonies* — 1764**

EXCERPTS

Thomas Pownall, an Englishman who had served as the royal governor of several colonies, designed the engraving above to represent the colonies' growth as from a rude settler's hut to an established farm (left to right). Observing the power struggles between the colonies and the Crown during the French and Indian War (1754-1763), he published *The Administration of the Colonies* as a warning to Britain — implement clear central governance over the colonies while respecting their treasured privileges, or jeopardize Britain's future as a global commercial power.

While convinced that the colonies would never revolt for independence, Pownall predicted their resistance to Britain's increased imperial authority and military presence after the war. Don't think of the colonies as "mere appendages to the realm," he counsels, but as loyal partners in "one organized whole, the *commercial dominion of Great Britain*." What must not happen, he emphasizes, is the colonies becoming *unified* as an entity in the commercial system.

**T**he several changes in interests and territories which have taken place in the colonies of the European world on the event of Peace<sup>4</sup> have give a general impression of some new state of things arising. One cannot but observe that there is some general idea of some revolution of events beyond the ordinary course of things, some general apprehension of something new arising in the world, of some new channel of business, applicable to new powers — something that is to be guarded against on one hand, or that is to be carried to advantage on the other. There is an universal apprehension

National Humanities Center, 2010: [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/). Spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing modernized by NHC for clarity. Full text online in Early Canadiana Online, Library and Archives Canada, at [www.canadiana.org/ECO/ItemRecord/20379?id=fc1d3e865afbb0d](http://www.canadiana.org/ECO/ItemRecord/20379?id=fc1d3e865afbb0d). Permission pending from Canadiana.org. Complete image credits at [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/imagecredits.htm](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/imagecredits.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Britain's victory in the French and Indian War (1754-1763).



of some new crisis forming: yet one does not find anywhere, in all these various impressions of this matter, any one precise comprehensive idea of this great crisis; and consequently all that is proposed is by parts, without connection to any whole, . . .

***“the spirit of commerce will become that predominant power”***

This has tempted me to hazard my sentiments on this subject. My particular situation gave me early opportunity of seeing and observing the state of things which have been long leading to this crisis. I have seen and mark'd where it was my duty, this nascent crisis at the beginning of this war, and may affirm, have foreseen and foretold the events that now form it. . . .

. . . [S]ince the people of Europe have formed their communication with the commerce of Asia; have been settling on all sides of the Atlantic Ocean and in America, and possessing every seat and channel of commerce, and have planted and raised that [commerce and imperial expansion] to an interest which has taken root; — since they now feel the powers that derive from this and are extending it to a combining it with others, the spirit of *commerce* will become that predominant power which will form the general policy and rule the powers of Europe; and hence a grand commercial interest, the basis of a great commercial dominion, under the present site and circumstances of the world, will be formed and arise. The rise and forming of this commercial dominion is what precisely constitute the present crisis. . . .

It is now the duty of those who govern us to carry forward this state of things . . . that our kingdom may be no more considered as the mere kingdom of this isle, with many appendages of provinces, colonies, settlements, and other extraneous parts, but as a grand marine dominion, consisting of our possessions in the Atlantic and in America united into a one interest, in a one center where the seat of government is. As the rising of this crisis above described forms precisely *the object* on which government should be employed, so the taking leading measures towards the forming all these Atlantic and American possessions into a one dominion, of which Great Britain should be the commercial center, to which it should be the spring of power, is the *precise duty* of government at this crisis. . . .

***“forming all these Atlantic and American possessions into a one dominion, of which Great Britain should be the commercial center, to which it should be the spring of power, is the precise duty of government at this crisis”***

It becomes the duty of the mother country to nourish and cultivate, to protect and govern the colonies, which nurture and government should precisely direct its care and influence to two essential points.

1st, That all the profits of the produce and manufactures of these colonies center in the mother country: and

2dly, That the colonies continue to be the sole and special proper customers of the mother country. It is on this *valuable consideration* (as Mr. Dummer, in his prudent and spirited defense of the colonies says<sup>5</sup>) they have a right to the grants, charters, privileges, and protection which they receive; and also on the other hand, it is from these grants, charters, privileges and protection given to them that the mother country has an exclusive right to the external profits of their labor and to their custom. . . .

It has been often suggested that care should be taken in the administration of the plantations [colonies], lest in some future time these colonies should become independent of the mother country. But perhaps it may be proper on this occasion, nay, it is justice to say it, that if by becoming independent is meant a revolt, nothing is further from their nature, their interest, their thoughts. If a defection from the

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah Dummer, *A Defense of the New England Charters*, 1721: a successful appeal to oppose Parliament's revoking the original New England charters—the documents that established the colonies' rights and privileges, including self-governance—and imposing closer more imperial authority over the colonies. Excerpts at [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/americantext2/text2read.htm](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/americantext2/text2read.htm).

alliance of the mother country be suggested, it ought to be and can be truly said that their spirit abhors the sense of such. . . nothing can eradicate from their hearts their natural, almost mechanical, affection to Great Britain, which they conceive under no other sense, nor call by any other name, than that of *home*. Besides, the merchants are, and must ever be, in great measure allied with those of Great Britain. Their very support consists in this alliance. The liberty and religion of the British colonies are incompatible with either French or Spanish government; and they know full well that they could hope for neither liberty nor protection under a Dutch one. No circumstance of trade could tempt them thus to certain ruin. Any such suggestion, therefore, is a false and unjust aspersion on their principles and affections, and can arise from nothing but an entire ignorance of their circumstances.

Yet again, on the other hand, while they remain under the support and protection of the government of the mother country, while they profit of the beneficial part of its trade, while their attachment to the present royal family stands firm, and their alliance with the mother country is inviolate, it may be worth while to

inquire whether they may not become and act in some cases independent of the *government and laws* of the mother country: — and if any such symptoms should be found, either in their government, courts, or trade, perhaps it may be thought high time, even now, to inquire how far these colonies are or are not arrived at this time at an independency of the government of the mother country: — and if any measure of such independency, formed upon precedents unknown to the government of the mother country at the time they were form'd, should be insisted on, when the government of the mother country was found to be so weak or distracted at home, or so deeply engaged abroad in Europe, as not to be able to attend to and assert its right in America with its own people. Perhaps it may be thought that no time should be lost to remedy or redress these deviations — if any such be found — or to remove all jealousies [suspicions] arising from the idea of them, if none such really exist.

***“it may be thought high time, even now, to inquire how far these colonies are or are not arrived, at this time, at an independency of the government of the mother country”***

If the colonies are to be possessed as of right and governed by the crown . . . then a revision of these charters, commissions, instructions, so as to establish the rights of the crown and the privileges of the people, as thereby created, is all that is necessary. But while the crown may, perhaps justly and of right, *in theory*, consider these lands and the plantations thereon as its domains, and as of special right properly belonging to it . . . — While this is the idea on one hand, the people on the other say that they could not forfeit nor lose the common rights and privileges of Englishmen by adventuring under various disasters and difficulties, under heavy expenses and every hazard to settle these vast countries, to engage in untried channels of labor, thereby increasing the nation's commerce and extending its dominions; but that they must carry with them, wherever they go, the right of being governed only by the laws of the realm, only by laws made with their own consent — that they must ever retain with them the right of not being taxed without their own consent or that of their representatives . . . .

. . . it is therefore that the people do and ever will, until this matter be settled, exercise these rights and privileges after the precedents formed here in England . . . and it is therefore also, in matters where laws, made since [the colonies']

establishment, do not extend to them by special proviso, that they claim the right of directing themselves by their own laws. While these totally different ideas of the principles whereon the government and the people found their claims and rights, remain unsettled and undetermined, there can be nothing but discordant jarring and perpetual obstruction in the exercise of them. There can be no government, properly

***“While these totally different ideas of the principles whereon the government and the people found their claims and rights, remain unsettled and undetermined, there can be nothing but discordant jarring”***

so called, but merely the predominancy of one faction or the other, acting under the mask of the forms of government. . . .

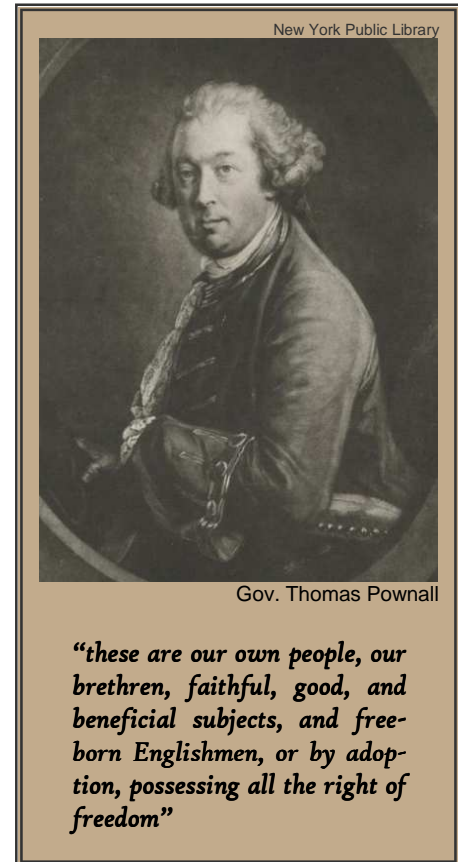
. . . it is essential to the preservation of the empire to keep [the colonies] disconnected and independent of each other. They are certainly so at present — the different manner in which they are settled, the different modes under which they live, the different forms of charters, grants, and frame of government they possess, the various principles of repulsion — that these create the different interests which they actuate, the religious interests by which they are actuated, the rivalry and jealousies which arise from hence, and the impracticability, if not the impossibility of reconciling and accommodating these incompatible ideas and claims, will keep them forever so. . . .

. . . Under the guidance of these principles, with a temper and spirit which remember that these are our own people, our brethren, faithful, good, and beneficial subjects, and free-born Englishmen, or by adoption, possessing all the right of freedom . . . let a revision be made on the general and several governments of the colonies, of their laws and courts of justice, of their trade, and the general British laws of trade . . . ; and then let those measures be taken which, upon such a review, shall appear necessary, and all which government can do, or ought to do at present, will be done. . . .

. . . [T]he people of the colonies say that the inhabitants of the colonies are entitled to all the privileges of Englishmen, that they have a right to participate in the legislative power, and that no commands of the crown . . . are binding upon them, further than they please to acquiesce under such and conform *their own actions* thereto; that they hold this right of legislature, not derived from the grace and will of the crown . . . that this right is inherent and essential to the community, as a community of Englishmen: and that therefore they must have all the rights, privileges, and full and free exercise of their own will and liberty in making laws which are necessary thereto, uncontrolled by any power of the crown or of the governor . . . .

. . . And if the colonies, under any future state of administration which they see unequal to the management of their affairs, once come to feel their own [commercial] strength in this way, their independence on government . . . will not be an event so remote as

our leaders may think, which yet nothing but such false policy can bring on. For, on the contrary, put their governments and laws on a true and constitutional basis, regulate their money, their revenue, and their trade, and do not check [limit] their settlements, they must ever depend on the trade of the mother country for their supplies . . . they must always remain subordinate to it, in all the transactions of their commerce, in all the operations of their laws, in every act of their government. . . — and the several colonies, no longer considered as domains of the crown, mere appendages to the realm, will thus become united therein, members and parts of the realm, as essential parts of a one organized whole, the *commercial dominion of Great Britain*. The taking leading measures to the forming of which, ought, at this juncture, to be the great object of government.



***“the several colonies, no longer considered as domains of the crown, mere appendages to the realm, will thus become united therein, members and parts of the realm, as essential parts of a one organized whole, the commercial dominion of Great Britain.”***

## Parliament Debates the Stamp Act, February 1765

In early 1765 Parliament was struggling to meet the cost of defending its empire in North America—vastly expanded after the French and Indian War. The task required a standing army (fulltime soldiers maintained during peacetime) since the new territories lacked enough Englishmen to constitute local defense forces. Regular British troops were needed to keep the peace between the French and Indians and to deal with smuggling, land grabbing, and crime. Prime Minister George Grenville stated the matter in its simplest terms: “The money for these expenses must be raised somewhere.” To the British it was perfectly logical to raise the money in the colonies; they, after all, were the chief beneficiaries of Britain’s military exertions. Parliament settled on a simple way to obtain the needed funds, an easy-to-collect tax on documents, i.e., the paper on which they would be printed.

These selections from the debate on the Stamp Act in the House of Commons illuminate how British politicians viewed the issue of colonial taxation—especially the question of taxation without representation. Written in the clipped, abbreviated style of notes taken in haste, they record remarks made on February 6, 1765, eight days before Grenville formally presented the Stamp Act to the House of Commons for a vote.



### \_\_DEBATE, HOUSE OF COMMONS\_\_

#### *Committee of Ways and Means: Resolutions for colonial stamp duties.*<sup>6</sup>

#### 6 FEBRUARY 1765\_\_EXCERPTS

*Ordered*, That it be an Instruction to the Committee of the whole House, to whom it is referred to consider further of Ways and Means for raising the Supply granted to His Majesty, that they do consider of proper Methods for raising a Revenue in the *British Colonies and Plantations in America*, towards further defraying the necessary Charges of defending, protecting, and securing, the same. . . .

#### **George Grenville**

Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leader of the House of Commons

Mr. *Grenville*. Resolutions of last year read. Instruction to the Committee moved and passed to consider of means of raising tax upon North America to pay for the defense and protection of North America.

Proposed taxing America from public motive. Private considerations of his own choice would have prevented him if they had been consulted. Wishes those who had gone before him had marked out a path to him which he might more easily follow. His conduct would then have been less liable to misconstruction.

The reason of the delaying the proposal to this year was to gain all possible information and to give Americans an opportunity of conveying information to this House, whose ears are always open to receive knowledge and to act to it. The officers of the revenue have done their duty in gaining all possible knowledge of the subject.

Objection, he said last year, that if the right of taxing was disputed he would not delay the question a moment. Wished now to avoid that question if possible, because he thinks no person can doubt it.

National Humanities Center, 2010: [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/). *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783*, eds. R. C. Simmons & P. D. G. Thomas (London; Millwood, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1983), Vol. II: 1765-1768, pp. 8-17; permission pending. Some spelling and punctuation modernized by NHC for clarity. Complete image credits at [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/imagecredits.htm](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/imagecredits.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Sources: 1. Ryder Diary, pp. 253-61 2. Harris Diary 3. J. Ingersoll to T. Fitch, Fitch Papers, II, 317-26. [Simmons & Thomas, 9]



The objection of the colonies is from the general right of mankind not to be taxed but by their representatives. This goes to all laws in general. The Parliament of Great Britain virtually represents the whole Kingdom, not actually great trading towns. The merchants of London and the East India Company are not represented. Not a twentieth part of the people are actually represented.

***“The objection of the colonies is from the general right of mankind not to be taxed but by their representatives. This goes to all laws in general.”***

All colonies are subject to the dominion of the mother country, whether they are a colony of the freest or the most absolute government. As to their charter, the Crown cannot exempt them by charter from paying taxes which are imposed by the whole legislature, but in fact the Crown has not done it. . . .

The propriety and expedience of laying this tax. 1<sup>st</sup> with respect to the state of this country. 2<sup>nd</sup> with respect to the state of America.

What exemptions will go too. The western country desires an exemption from cider, the northern from a duty on beer. The mischief from the 4s[hilling]. land tax. The true way to relieve all is to make all contribute their proper share. . . .

The Navy used to cost about £7 or 8 hundred thousand, now it costs about £1,400,000 [£: English pounds]. The money for these expenses must be raised somewhere; however, contributors will be displeased. That this great increase of the Navy is incurred in a great measure for the service of North America. That the military force in North America is said by many military men to be not sufficient. He never heard anybody say there was more than necessary.

Second, whether it is proper with regard to America. It can only be improper from the injustice of the demand, or from the inability of the persons on whom it is imposed.

We have expended so much on the support and defense of North America; we have given them so great degree of security after they were before in continual wars; the French are now removed, but they still have some enemies against whom, however, Great Britain is employing her troops.

The ability of the plantations [colonies]. The state of the several payments for their establishment. The whole of North America consists perhaps of 16 or 1700000 inhabitants, pay only about £64,000 a year for its establishment, except North Carolina and Maryland, which he has not been able to get at.

West Indies establishments amount to about £77,000.

The debts of North America, except Pennsylvania of which he has not an account, amounted to £848,000; it did amount to about £2,000,000. . . .

The particular propriety of this mode of raising the tax. Objection, that this tax will produce disturbance and discontent and prevent improvement among the colonies. He has no motive, he can have no motive, for taxing a colony, but that of doing his duty. But as to this objection, when will the time come when enforcing a tax will not give discontent, if this tax does produce it after what we have done and suffered for America? And therefore if we reject this proposition now, we shall declare that we ought not to tax the colonies. And we need not declare after a year's time that we ought not, for then we cannot.

As to taxing themselves, how can so many colonies fix the proportion which they shall pay themselves? Supposing each county was to do this in England; supposing we were to assess the sum and let them tax themselves. What danger arises from this. While they remain dependent, they must be subject to our legislature. They have increased under former taxes and they will flourish under this. They have in many instances encroached and claimed powers and privileges inconsistent with their situation as colonies. If they are not subject to this burden of tax, they are not entitled to the privilege of Englishmen.

As to the propriety of this particular tax, the stamp tax takes in a great degree its proportion from the riches of the people. As in lawsuits and commercial contracts, it increases in proportion to the riches. No great number of officers, no unconstitutional authority in great Boards.

He has enquired from North America whether they objected to this particular species of tax and has not heard one gentleman propose any other. The tax in a

***“If they are not subject to this burden of tax, they are not entitled to the privilege of Englishmen.”***

great degree executes itself, as the instruments not stamped are null and void, and no person will trust that, especially as the case may be brought by appeal to this country.

Forgery is the only fright to be apprehended, but severe penalties may prevent it. The punishment is in this country death. . . .

This law is founded on that great maxim that protection is due from the Governor, and support and obedience on the part of the governed.

***“This law is founded on the great maxim that protection is due from the Governor, and support and obedience on the part of the governed.”***

### **William Beckford**

M. P. [Member of Parliament] representing London; owner of Jamaican sugar plantations

Admits right of taxing the imports and exports of the colonies, and says the colonies all admit this principle. . . .

The North Americans do not think an internal and external duty the same.

As to representation, all England is not represented, but it is a written part of our constitution that it is so. When the Cornish boroughs began to send representatives to Parliament, there were almost the only trading boroughs. They had the Stannaries, which furnished them with a flourishing trade while the rest of the country had scarce any trade.

No precedent found of foreign taxation but the Post Office, and that certainly for the convenience of the colonies themselves. If this principle was established, why not tax Ireland; the produce of this would be indeed considerable. . . .

The peace acquisition. No revenue arises from it, but on the contrary a great amount of expense. The North Americans would be glad to be rid of the troops from the Government and the expense of supporting them.

### **Col. Isaac Barré**

M. P., colonel in British army; had been wounded in Canada during the French and Indian War; supporter of American rights; coined phrase “Sons of Liberty” in the debate

. . . Is afraid that too much will be done on the one side and too much said on the other. Wishes to admire Grenville’s prevoyance [foresight] more and [. . .] less. We are working in the dark, and the less we do the better. Power and right; caution to be exercised lest the power be

abused, the right subverted, and 2 million of unrepresented people mistreated and in their own opinion slaves.

There are gentlemen in this House from the West Indies, but there are very few who know the circumstances of North America. We know not yet the effect of the Act passed last year. The tax intended is odious to all your colonies and they tremble at it. He will not go further upon this ground. He will not raise the feeling of the North American if he will yield to anything for the safety of this country.

He thinks part of the regulation passed last year very wise in preventing them from getting the commodities of foreign countries. We know not however the real effect of this. [*Several illegible words*] Many of the colonies are deeply indebted to this country. . . .

The North Americans will complain that they are suffering by impositions while Canada is emerging from slavery and poverty into liberty and riches. . . .

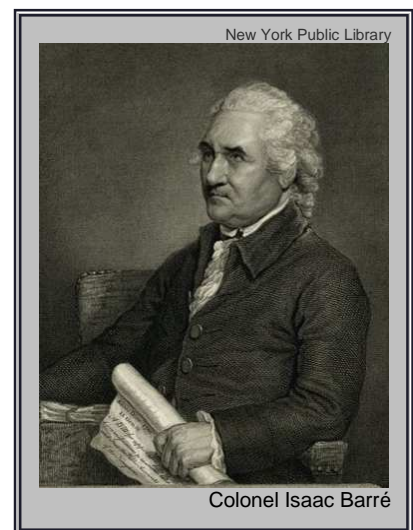
### **Sir William Meredith**

M. P., representing Liverpool

. . . The safety of this country consists in this with respect that we cannot lay a tax upon others without taxing ourselves. This is not the case in

America. We shall tax them in order to ease ourselves. We ought therefore to be extremely delicate in imposing a burden upon others which we not only not share ourselves but which is to take it far from us.

If we tax America we shall supersede the necessity of their assembling. . . .



How will they pay their debts if the first fruits of their commerce are to be applied to the purposes of maintaining our army? . . .

**Rose Fuller**

M. P., representing Maidstone;  
owner of Jamaican plantations

Admits the right but doubts the propriety of laying this tax. Is afraid of the discord and confusion which it may produce. The Post Office is a very small instance of a tax forced by this country. This tax is intended to be laid upon very different principles. . . .

**Charles Townshend**

M. P. representing Harwich; supported  
the repeal of the Stamp Act a year later

He would have put this debate off if the delay and the use that has been made of that delay if he had heard any good reason for it. But he has heard with great pleasure the right of taxing America asserted and not disputed. If disputed and given up, he must give up the word

“colony” for that implies subordination.

He judged the ability of the colonies from their trade and other circumstances which are the best pulses of their health and vigour, and thinks they can bear it perfectly well. If there is no doubt of the right or the ability to bear it, what other reason can there be for putting it off.

The former delay has produced no reasons but complaints, no proofs but questions of the right to be exempted.

State of the mother country. Planted with so much tenderness, governed with so much affection, and established with so much care and attention. Emancipate in the civil and domestic, not a servile connection. If America looks to Great Britain for protection, she must enable her to protect her. If she expects our fleets, she must assist our revenue.

***“If America looks to Great Britain for protection, she must enable her to protect her.”***

**Col. Isaac Barré**

The ability is not denied, but it is not proved. He believes they can pay it. His objection is that it creates disgust, I had almost said hatred.

We did not plant the colonies. Most of them fled from oppression. They met with great difficulty and hardship, but as they fled from tyranny here they could not dread danger there. They flourished not by our care but by our neglect. They have increased while we did not attend to them. They shrink under our hand. . . .

. . . We are the mother country, let us be cautious not to get the name of stepmother. . . .

**George Grenville**

. . . Then, as Chancellor of Exchequer he opened the business of the day, the American Tax by stamps, which had been in the votes 7<sup>th</sup> of March last. He told us it was a new subject, of which we must judge.

He spoke to our right of taxing them. No doubt (he said) of our right to bind as to laws and taxes. Objection: they have no representation here. Answer: Parliament represents all, as well non-electors, as electors. If not, not a twentieth part of England represented, not the great body of merchants, not the East India Company, possessed of such territories. . . .

As to expediency, no doubt of that; their aid was wanted, was wanted everywhere. Great and necessary increase of the peace establishment. If said, they do not like it, no more does the west like the cider tax; Scotland, the beer tax; the middle of England, the land-tax. The interest of all was mutual. The plan not unjust, nor above their ability, their present establishments in America and West Indies about £137,000 a year. In North America, a debt of about £800,000, and taxes appropriated to pay it off. Compare this to our debt and expenses here. If the objection be repeated of the uneasiness of the colonies, answer when the time when taxes will give no offence? Besides, were they to tax themselves, they could never agree. The tax could never be settled.

As for danger to their liberties, what is it? They have always been restrained by government here. Privileges and burdens must go together.

Mode of Stamps duty, an easy one to execute. Enforced itself in most instances in bonds, conveyances,

law-proceeding etc.

Concluded with remarking that protection and obedience were reciprocal. Governors owed the first to the governed; the governed owed obedience to their Governors; this, the great bond of all society. Himself on the present subject was ready to give all information. . . .

**Col. Isaac Barré**

[E]xpressed great tenderness for the Americans. Wished we did not go too far. Did not dispute our sovereignty.

**William Jackson**

. . . When we tax Great Britain, we tax our selves. When we tax America, it is *in ease of our selves*. Another reason was transiently given too by I know not whom, which might have been better dwelt on. You had no army in America, when there was an enemy at your backs. Why talk of money to support so large an army now, when your enemy is expelled? . . .

**Charles Townshend**

. . . Mr. *Charles Townshend* spoke in favour of the Bill, took notice of several thing Mr. Barré had said, and concluded with the following or like words: — And now will these Americans, children planted by our care, nourished up by our indulgence until they are grown to a degree of strength & opulence, and protected by our arms, will they grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden which we lie under?



**Col. Isaac Barré**

When he had done, Mr. *Barré* rose and having explained something which he had before said and which Mr. Townshend had been remarking upon, he then took up the beforementioned concluding words of Mr. Townshend, and in a most spirited and I thought an almost inimitable manner, said —

“They planted by your care? No! your oppressions planted them in America. They fled from your tyranny to a then uncultivated and inhospitable country — where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable, and among others to the cruelties of a savage foe, the most subtle and I take upon me to say the most formidable of any people upon the face of God’s Earth. And yet, actuated by the principles of true English liberty, they met all these hardships with pleasure, compared with those they suffered in their own country, from the hands of those who should have been their friends.

“They nourished up by *your* indulgence? They grew by your neglect of them: as soon as you began to care about them, that care was exercised in sending persons to rule over them, in one department and another, who were perhaps the deputies of deputies to some member of this House — sent to spy out their liberty, to misrepresent their actions and to prey upon them; men whose behavior on many occasions has caused the blood of those Sons of Liberty to recoil within them; men promoted to the highest seats of justice, some, who to my knowledge were glad by going to a foreign country to escape being brought to the bar of a court of justice in their own.

“They protected by *your* arms? They have nobly taken up arms in your defense, have exerted a valour amidst their constant and laborious industry for the defense of a country, whose frontier, while drenched in blood, its interior parts have yielded all its little savings to your emolument. And believe me, remember I this day told you so, that same spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first, will accompany them still. But prudence forbids me to explain myself further. God knows I do not at this time speak from motives of party heat, what I deliver are the genuine sentiments of my heart, however superior to me in



general knowledge and experience the reputable body of this House may be, yet I claim to know more of America than most of you, having seen and been conversant in that country. The people I believe are as truly loyal as any subjects the King has, but a people jealous of their liberties and who will vindicate them, if ever they should be violated, but the subject is too delicate and I will say no more.”

These sentiments were thrown out so entirely without premeditation, so forceably and so firmly, and the breaking off so beautifully abrupt, that the whole House sat awhile as amazed, intently looking and without answering a word.

I own I felt emotions that I never felt before and went the next morning and thanked Colonel Barré in behalf of my country for his noble and spirited speech.

However, Sir after all that was said, upon a division of the House upon the question, there was about 250 to about 50 in favor of the Bill.

***“They planted by  
your care? No! . . .  
They nourished up by  
your indulgence? . . .  
They protected by  
your arms? . . . And  
believe me, remember  
I this day told you so,  
that same spirit of  
freedom which  
actuated that people  
at first, will  
accompany them still.*”**

The Stamp Act was passed March 22, 1765. Nearly a year later, on March 18, 1766, Parliament repealed the Act.

Portraits courtesy of the New York Public Library.

- George Grenville, engraving by Richard Houston, mezzotint, ca. 1750-1775, after portrait by William Hoare. Digital ID 422888.
- Isaac Barré, engraving by John Hall, after portrait by Gilbert Stuart, 1787. Digital ID 465965.
- Charles Townshend, engraving by John Dixon, mezzotint, 1770, after portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Digital ID 465971.

## BRITISH MERCHANTS' WARNING TO BOSTON MERCHANTS, 1766

### On the Eve of the Repeal of the Stamp Act

■ **TWENTY-NINE LONDON MERCHANTS**, Letter to Boston merchants, 28 February 1766 (excerpts), encouraging them to repudiate intemperate and violent means of protest.<sup>7</sup>

GENTLEMEN. — After much anxiety we have at length the pleasure to acquaint you that a bill is now in the House of Commons for repealing the Stamp Act . . .

It has been a constant argument against the repeal that, in case it should take place, the parliamentary vote of Right<sup>8</sup> will be waste paper, and that the Colonies will understand very well that what is pretended to be adopted on mere commercial principles of expedience is really yielded thro' fear, and amounts to a tacit but effectual surrender of its Right . . .

The event [repeal of the Stamp Act] will justify those arguments in the strongest manner if the Colonies should triumph on the repeal, and affect to seize the yielding of Parliament as a point gain'd over Parliamentary authority. The Opposition (from whom the Colonies have suffered so much) would then throw in the teeth of our friends. *See your work, it is as we said, it is but too well prov'd, what use the Colonies make of your weak and timid measures.*

GEO. HAYLEY  
DANIEL VIALARS  
NICHOLAS RAY  
JOHN STRETTELL  
JOHN CLARK  
JOHN BUCHANAN  
JOHN STEWART  
ANTHONY MERRY  
JONATHAN BARNARD  
CHRISTOPHER CHAMBERS  
CHARLES CROKATT  
SAMUEL HANNAY  
EDWARD ATHAWES  
BARLOW TRECOTHICK  
CAPEL HANBURY  
DAVID BARCLAY, JR.  
GILBERT FRANCKLYN  
WILLIAM GREENWOOD  
DANIEL MILDRED  
WILLIAM NEATE  
THOMAS LANE  
T. HARRIS  
EDWARD BRIDGEN  
RICHARD NEAVE  
GILBERT HARRISON  
BROOK WATSON  
GREGORY OLIVE  
DENNIS DE BERDT  
CHARLES OGILVIE

On the contrary, if duty, submission, and gratitude be the returns made by the Colonies, then our friends may exult, they may say, *We are in the right, is it not as we said? see the Colonies regained to this country by our moderation, regained with their loyalty, their affection, and their trade.* . . .

You must be sensible what friends the Colonies have had in the present Ministry,<sup>9</sup> and are doubtless informed what pains they have taken to serve them. It is justice likewise to them to inform you that they had had great difficulties to encounter in the cause, the principal of which were unhappily thrown in by the Colonies themselves: we mean the intemperate proceedings of various ranks of people on your side of the water, and the difficulties of the repeal would have been much less if they had not, by their violence in word and action, awakened the honor of Parliament and thereby involved every friend of the repeal in the imputation of betraying the dignity of Parliament. . . If, therefore, you would make the proper returns to your country, if you have a mind to do credit to your friends and strengthen the hands of your advocates, hasten, we beseech you, to express filial duty and gratitude to your parent country. . . .

But if violent measures are continued and triumphs on the point gain'd, if it is talked of as a victory, if it is said the Parliament have yielded up the Right [to exercise its legitimate power], then indeed your enemies here will have a complete triumph. Your friends must certainly lose all power to serve you, your tax masters probably be restored and such a train of ill consequences follow as are easier for you to imagine than for us to describe . . . We have no doubt that you will adopt the contrary conduct and inculcate it to the utmost of your influence, to which we sincerely wish the most extensive regard may be paid, and that uninterrupted mutual affection may continue between Great Britain and her Colonies to the latest ages. We are with unfeigned regard, Gentlemen,

Your affectionate friends, and humble servants, [Signatures]

<sup>7</sup> *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Series, Vol. XI (1896, 1897), 446-448. Acknowledgement is due Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763-1775* (Hackett, 1968, 2004), for reference to this document.

<sup>8</sup> I.e., Parliament's authority to legislate for the nation, free from the arbitrary power of the monarch.

<sup>9</sup> King George III dismissed George Grenville as head of the government ministry in July 1765, replacing him with Charles Watson-Wentworth.

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN EXPLAINS THE AMERICANS' "ILL HUMOUR" TO THE BRITISH, 1768

In an essay published in *The London Chronicle* (January 5-7, 1768) known later as "Causes of the American Discontents before 1768," Franklin, serving in Britain as the colonial agent of several colonies, attempts to explain the Americans' increasing resistance to British rule, especially after the Townshend Acts of 1767 and 1768.

Sir,

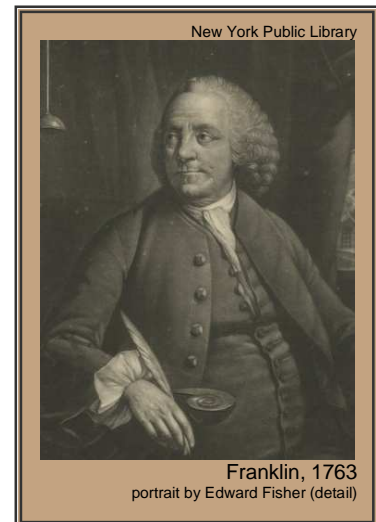
As the cause of the present ill humor in America, and of the resolutions taken there to purchase less of our manufactures, do not seem to be generally understood, it may afford some satisfaction to your Readers if you give them the following short historical state of facts. . . .

. . . [They say the Governors are] generally strangers to the Provinces they are sent to govern, have no estate, natural connection, or relation there to give them an affection for the country; that they come only to make money as fast as they can; are sometimes men of vicious characters and broken fortunes, sent by a Minister [member of the king's cabinet] merely to get them out of the way; that as they intend staying in the country no longer than their government continues, and purpose to leave no family behind them, they are apt to be regardless of the good will of the people, and care not what is said or thought of them after they are gone. Their situation at the same time gives them many opportunities of being vexatious, and they are often so, notwithstanding their dependence on the Assemblies for all that part of their support [salary] that does not arise from fees established by law, but would probably be much more so if they were to be supported by money drawn from the people without their consent or good will, which is the professed design of this new act. That, if by means of these forced duties, Government is to be supported in America without the intervention of the Assemblies, their Assemblies will soon be looked upon as useless, and a Governor will not call them [into session], as having nothing to hope from their meeting, and perhaps something to fear from their enquiries into and remonstrances [petitions/declarations] against this Mal-administration. That thus the people will be deprived of their most essential rights. . . .

As to *Judges* they allege that, being appointed from hence [Britain] and holding their commissions *not* during *good behavior*, as in Britain, but during *pleasure*,<sup>10</sup> all the weight of interest or influence would be thrown into one of the scales (which ought to be held even) if the salaries are also to be paid out of duties raised upon the people without their consent and independent of their Assemblies' approbation or disapprobation [approval or disapproval] of the Judges' behavior. That it is true, Judges should be free from all influence; and therefore, whenever Government here will grant commissions to able and honest Judges during good behavior, the Assemblies will settle permanent and ample salaries on them during their commissions. But at present they have no other means of getting rid of an ignorant or an unjust Judge (and some of scandalous characters have, they say, been sometimes sent them) but by starving him out. . . .

The colonists being thus greatly alarmed, as I said before, by the news of the Act for abolishing the Legislature of New York,<sup>11</sup> and the imposition of these new duties professedly for such disagreeable purposes (accompanied by a new set of revenue officers with large appointments, which gave strong suspicions that more business of the same kind was soon to be provided for them, that they might earn these salaries), began seriously to consider their situation and to revolve afresh in their minds grievances which, from their respect and love for this country, they had long borne and seemed almost willing to forget. . . . They reflected how lightly the interest of all America had been estimated here, when the interest of a few inhabitants of Great Britain happened to have the smallest competition with it.

That thus the whole American people were forbidden the advantage of a direct importation of wine, oil, and fruit from Portugal, but must take them loaded with all the expenses of a voyage 1000 leagues round



<sup>10</sup> I.e., at the pleasure of the king; with no set term.

<sup>11</sup> For refusing to fully comply with the Quartering Act that required colonial legislatures to supply funds for the food, provision, and housing of British troops in the colonies.

about, being to be landed first in England to be re-shipped for America, expenses amounting in war time at least to 30 per cent more than otherwise they would have been charged with, and all this merely that a few Portugal merchants in London may gain a commission on those goods passing through their hands. . . .

That on a slight complaint of a few Virginia merchants, nine colonies had been restrained from making paper money [which had] become absolutely necessary to their internal commerce from the constant remittance [payment] of their gold and silver to Britain. But not only the interest of a particular body of merchants, the interest of any small body of British tradesmen or artificers has been found, they say, to outweigh that of all the King's subjects in the colonies. There cannot be a stronger natural right than that of a man's making the best profit he can of the natural produce of his lands, provided he does not thereby hurt the state in general. Iron is to be found everywhere in America, and beaver furs are the natural produce of that country; hats and nails and steel are wanted there as well as here. It is of no importance to the common welfare of the empire whether a subject of the King's gets his living by making hats on this or that side of the water. Yet the Hatters of England have prevailed to obtain an Act in their own favor, restraining that manufacture in America in order to oblige the Americans to send their beaver to England to be manufactured, and purchase back the hats, loaded with the charges of a double transportation. . . .

Added to these, the Americans remembered the Act authorizing the most cruel insult that perhaps was ever offered by one people to another, that of emptying our gaols [jails] into their settlements, Scotland too having within these two years obtained the privilege it had not before of sending its rogues and villains also to the plantations.<sup>12</sup>

I say, reflecting on these things, they said to one another (their newspapers are full of such discourses) these people are not content with making a monopoly of us, forbidding us to trade with any other country of Europe and compelling us to buy everything of them . . . Thus they get all our money from us by trade, and every profit we can anywhere make by our fisheries, our produce, or our commerce, centers finally with them; but this does not signify. It is time then to take care of ourselves by the best means in our power. Let us unite in solemn resolutions and engagements with and to each other, that we will give these new officers as little trouble as possible by not consuming the British manufactures on which they are to levy the duties. Let us agree to consume no more of their expensive gewgaws. Let us live frugally, and let us industriously manufacture what we can for ourselves: Thus we shall be able honorably to discharge the debts we already owe them, and after that we may be able to keep some money in our country, not only for the uses of our internal commerce but for the service of our gracious Sovereign whenever he shall have occasion for it and think proper to require it of us in the old *constitutional* manner.

For notwithstanding the reproaches thrown out against us in their public papers and pamphlets, notwithstanding we have been reviled in their Senate as *Rebels* and *Traitors*, we are truly a loyal people. Scotland has had its rebellions and England its plots against the present Royal Family, but America is untainted with those crimes. There is in it scarce a man, there is not a single native of our country who is not firmly attached to his King by principle and by affection. But a new kind of loyalty seems to be required of us, a loyalty to P[arliament], a loyalty that is to extend, it is said, to a surrender of all our properties whenever a H[ouse] of C[ommons], in which there is not a single member of our choosing, shall think fit to grant them away without our consent, and to a patient suffering the loss of our privileges as Englishmen if we cannot submit to make such surrender. We were separated too far from Britain by the Ocean, but we were united to it by respect and love, so that we could at any time freely have spent our lives and little fortunes in its cause: But this unhappy new system of politics tends to dissolve those bands of union and to sever us forever.

These are the wild ravings of the at present half distracted Americans. To be sure, no reasonable man in England can approve of such sentiments, and, as I said before, I do not pretend to support or justify them. But I sincerely wish, for the sake of the manufactures and commerce of Great Britain, and for the sake of the strength which a firm union with our growing colonies would give us, that these people had never been thus needlessly driven out of their senses. I am, yours, &c.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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<sup>12</sup> As indentured servants.



## \_\_THE MASSACHUSETTS CIRCULAR LETTER, 1768\_\_

[EXCERPTS]

In February 1768 the Massachusetts House of Representatives sent to all colonial assemblies a letter, written by Samuel Adams,\* promoting the unified opposition of the colonies to the Townshend Acts, and asserting that *only* the colonial assemblies, not Parliament, had the authority to tax the colonists — an early statement of this radical concept. When the British ordered the retraction of the letter, the Massachusetts House refused and was promptly dissolved by the governor, a fate shared by the Virginia assembly the following spring when it issued resolutions in support of the Massachusetts resolutions.

The House have humbly represented to the ministry [British cabinet] their own sentiments:

- that his Majesty's high court of Parliament is the supreme legislative power over the whole empire;
- that in all free states the constitution is fixed, and as the supreme legislative derives its power and authority from the constitution, it cannot overleap the bounds of it without destroying its own foundation;
- that the constitution ascertains and limits both sovereignty and allegiance, and, therefore, his Majesty's American subjects, who acknowledge themselves bound by the ties of allegiance, have an equitable claim to the full enjoyment of the fundamental rules of the British constitution;
- that it is an essential, unalterable right in nature, engrafted into the British constitution, as a fundamental law, and ever held sacred and irrevocable by the subjects within the realm, that what a man has honestly acquired is absolutely his own, which he may freely give but cannot be taken from him without his consent;
- that the American subjects may, therefore, exclusive of any consideration of charter rights, with a decent firmness, adapted to the character of free men and subjects, assert this natural and constitutional right.

It is moreover their humble opinion, which they express with the greatest deference to the wisdom of the Parliament, that the Acts made there imposing duties on the people of this province, with the sole and express purpose of raising a revenue, are infringements of their natural and constitutional rights; because, as they are not represented in the British Parliament, his Majesty's commons in Britain, by those Acts, grant their property without their consent.

This House further are of opinion that their constituents, considering their local circumstances, cannot by any possibility be represented in the Parliament, and that it will forever be impracticable that they should be equally represented there and, consequently, not at all, being separated by an ocean of a thousand leagues. That his Majesty's royal predecessors, for this reason, were graciously pleased to form a subordinate legislature here, that their subjects might enjoy the unalienable right of a representation; . . .

. . . They have also submitted to consideration whether any people can be said to enjoy any degree of freedom if the Crown, in addition to its undoubted authority of constituting a governor, should appoint him such a stipend as it may judge proper without the consent of the people and at their expense; and whether, while the judges of the land and other civil officers hold not their commissions during good behavior, their having salaries appointed for them by the Crown, independent of the people, hath not a tendency to subvert the principles of equity and endanger the happiness and security of the subject.

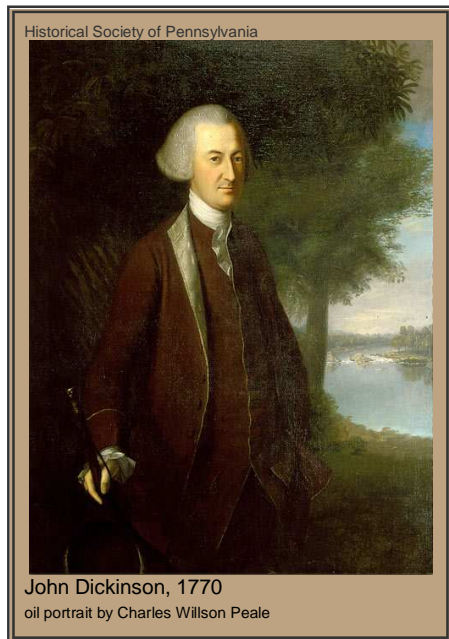
### **Response from the Earl of Hillsborough, British Secretary for Colonial Affairs, to the Governors in America, 21 April 1768 [EXCERPTS]**

As his Majesty considers this Measure [the Massachusetts circular letter] to be of a most dangerous & factious tendency calculated to enflame the minds of his good Subjects in the Colonies, to promote an unwarrantable combination and to excite and encourage an open opposition to and denial of the Authority of Parliament, & to subvert the true principles of the constitution, it is his Majesty's pleasure that you should, immediately upon the Receipt hereof, exert your utmost influence to defeat this flagitious [heinous/criminal] attempt to disturb the Public Peace by prevailing upon the Assembly of your Province to take no notice of it, which will be treating it with the contempt it deserves.

The repeated proofs which have been given by the Assembly of their Reverence and respect for the laws, and of their faithful Attachment to the Constitution, leave little Room in his Majesty's Breast to doubt of their showing a proper Resentment of this unjustifiable Attempt to revive those distractions which have operated so fatally to the prejudice of this Kingdom and the Colonies; and accordingly his Majesty has the fullest confidence in their Affections. But if, notwithstanding these expectations and your most earnest endeavors, there should appear in the Assembly of your Province a disposition to receive or give any Countenance to this Seditious Paper, it will be your duty to prevent any proceeding upon it by an immediate Prorogation or Dissolution [of the colonial assembly].

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\* Full text in The Avalon Project (Yale Law School) at [avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/mass\\_circ\\_let\\_1768.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/mass_circ_let_1768.asp).



## “To divide, and thus to destroy”

### LETTERS from a FARMER in PENNSYLVANIA

To the INHABITANTS of the BRITISH COLONIES

*John Dickinson*\_\_\_\_\_

### LETTERS ONE & TWO, Dec. 2 & 7, 1767

*Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*

In twelve essays widely read in colonial newspapers and soon printed as a pamphlet, John Dickinson urged firmer American resistance to Britain's increased restrictions and bemoaned the complacency exhibited by Americans after the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766. Perhaps the hated stamp tax was history, but Parliament had passed new laws and begun to enforce existing laws that would become as reviled as the Stamp Act. First, in the Declaratory Act of 1766, Parliament affirmed its authority to legislate for the colonies and “bind the colonies and people of America . . . in all cases whatsoever.” A clear statement of who's boss.

Then, with the Townshend Acts of 1767, Parliament placed “direct” taxes on specific British goods, a first in the commercial relationship between Britain and the American colonies. Finally, when the New York assembly failed to fully comply with Quartering Act of 1765, which required colonial authorities to house British troops in unoccupied buildings and furnish them with food and supplies, Parliament suspended the power of the assembly until it complied in full. (The Quartering Act is the prime reason for the Third Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.<sup>13</sup>)

The son of a prominent Quaker family, John Dickinson (1732-1808) was born on his family's tobacco plantation in Maryland. A lawyer and colonial legislator, he served in the First and Second Continental Congresses but refused to sign the Declaration of Independence because he believed the colonies were not ready to sever themselves from Great Britain. Nonetheless, he fought against the British as an officer in the Pennsylvania Militia and after the Revolution played a significant role in the life of the nation.

### ■ LETTER ONE, Dec. 2, 1767, *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*

Many Americans saw the demand to feed and house British soldiers as a tax upon the colonists, no less pernicious than the tax imposed by the Stamp Act. When the New York Assembly refused to comply fully with the Quartering Act (partly due to a budget shortfall), Parliament in effect dissolved the assembly until it would capitulate. In his first letter, Dickinson spells out the implications of the punishment Parliament visited upon New York. “If they [the people of New York] may be legally deprived . . . of the privilege of legislation, why may they not, with equal reason, be deprived of every other privilege?” Parliament, Dickinson argues, is attempting to compel the people of New York to submit to its will. He sees no difference between such legislative compulsion and the use of troops. Making his case with careful logic, he continually points out that what affects one colony affects all of them.

*My dear COUNTRYMEN,*

I am a *Farmer*, settled, after a variety of fortunes, near the banks of the river *Delaware* in the province [colony] of *Pennsylvania*. I received a liberal education, and have been engaged in the busy scenes of life, but am now convinced that a man may be as happy without bustle as with it. My farm is small; my servants are few and good; I have a little money at interest; I wish for no more; my employment in my own affairs is easy; and with a contented, grateful mind, undisturbed by worldly hopes or fears relating to myself, I am completing the number of days allotted to me by divine goodness.

BEING generally master of my time, I spend a good deal of it in a library, which I think the most valuable part of my small estate; and being acquainted with two or three gentlemen of abilities and learning who honor me with their friendship, I have acquired, I believe, a greater knowledge in history

National Humanities Center, 2010: [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/). As published in pamphlet form; Early American Imprints, Doc. 10875, courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society with ReadEx/NewsBank. Some spelling and punctuation modernized by NHC for clarity. Numbered footnotes added by NHC. Complete image credits at [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/imagecredits.htm](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/imagecredits.htm).

<sup>13</sup> No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law. [U.S. Constitution, Third Amendment]

and the laws and constitution of my country than is generally attained by men of my class, many of them not being so fortunate as I have been in the opportunities of getting information.

FROM my infancy I was taught to love *humanity* and *liberty*. Enquiry and experience have since confirmed my reverence for the lessons then given me, by convincing me more fully of their truth and excellence. Benevolence toward mankind excites wishes for their welfare, and such wishes endear the means of fulfilling them. *These* can be found in liberty only, and therefore her sacred cause ought to be espoused by every man, on every occasion, to the utmost of his power. As a charitable but poor person does not withhold his *mite*<sup>14</sup> because he cannot relieve *all* the distresses of the miserable, so should not any honest man suppress his sentiments concerning freedom, however small their influence is likely to be. Perhaps he “may touch some wheel”<sup>15</sup> that will have an effect greater than he could reasonably expect.

THESE being my sentiments, I am encouraged to offer to you, my countrymen, my thoughts on some late [recent] transactions that appear to me to be of the utmost importance to you. Conscious of my defects, I have waited some time, in expectation of seeing the subject treated by persons much better qualified for the task; but being therein disappointed, and apprehensive that longer delays will be injurious, I venture at length to request the attention of the public, praying that these lines may be *read* with the same zeal for the happiness of *British* America with which they were *wrote*.

WITH a good deal of surprise I have observed that little notice has been taken of an act of Parliament as injurious in its principle to the liberties of these colonies as the *Stamp Act* was: I mean the act for suspending the legislation of *New York*.

THE assembly of that government complied with a former act of Parliament requiring certain provisions to be made for the troops in *America* in every particular, I think, except the articles of salt, *pepper* and vinegar. In my opinion they acted imprudently, considering all circumstances, in not complying so far as would have given satisfaction, as several colonies did. But my dislike of their conduct in that instance has not blinded me so much that I cannot plainly perceive that they have been punished in a manner pernicious to *American* freedom and justly alarming to all the colonies.

IF the *British* Parliament has a legal authority to issue an order that we shall furnish a single article for the troops here, and to compel obedience to *that* order, they have the same right to issue an order for us supply those troops with arms, clothes, and every necessary, and to compel obedience to *that* order also; in short, to lay *any burdens* they please upon us. What is this but *taxing* us at a *certain sum* and leaving us only the *manner* of raising it? How is this mode more tolerable than the *Stamp Act*? Would that act have appeared more pleasing to *Americans* if, being ordered thereby to raise the sum total of the taxes, the mighty privilege had been left to them of saying how much should be paid for an instrument of writing on paper, and how much for another on parchment?

AN act of Parliament commanding us to do a certain thing, if it has any validity, is a *tax* upon us for the expense that accrues in complying with it, and for this reason, I believe, every colony on the continent that chose to give a mark of their respect for *Great Britain*, in complying with the act relating to the troops, cautiously avoided the mention of that act, lest their conduct should be attributed to its supposed obligation.

THE matter being thus stated, the assembly of *New York* either had or had not a right to refuse submission to that act. If they had, and I imagine no *American* will say they had not, then the Parliament had *no right* to compel them to execute it. If they had not *this right*, they had *no right* to punish them for not executing it, and therefore *no right* to suspend their legislation, which is a punishment. In fact, if the people of *New York* cannot be legally taxed but by their own representatives, they cannot be legally deprived of the privilege of legislation, only for insisting on that exclusive privilege of taxation. If they

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<sup>14</sup> English coin of low monetary value, i.e., his small charitable contribution.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Pope (British poet), *Essay on Man*, 1732-1734, 1738, “So man, who here seems principal alone, / Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown, / Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal; / ’Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.”

may be legally deprived in such a case of the privilege of legislation, why may they not, with equal reason, be deprived of every other privilege? Or why may not every colony be treated in the same manner, when any of them shall dare to deny their assent to any impositions that shall be directed? Or what signifies the repeal of the *Stamp Act* if these colonies are to lose their *other* privileges by not tamely surrendering *that* of taxation?

THERE is one consideration arising from this suspension, which is not generally attended to, but shows its importance very clearly. It was not *necessary* that this suspension should be caused by an act of Parliament. The Crown might have restrained the governor of *New York* even from calling the assembly together, by its prerogative in the royal governments. This step, I suppose, would have been taken if the conduct of the assembly of *New York* had been regarded as an act of disobedience *to the Crown alone*; but it is regarded as an act of “disobedience to the authority of the BRITISH LEGISLATURE.” This gives the suspension a consequence vastly more affecting. It is a parliamentary assertion of the *supreme authority* of the *British* legislature over these colonies in *the point of taxation*, and is intended to COMPEL *New York* into a submission to that authority. It seems therefore to me as much a violation of the liberties of the people of that province, and consequently of all these colonies, as if the Parliament had sent a number of regiments to be quartered upon them, till they should comply. For it is evident that the suspension meant as a *compulsion*, and the *method* of compelling is totally indifferent. It is indeed probable that the sight of red coats and the hearing of drums would have been most alarming, because people are generally more influenced by their eyes and ears than by their reason. But whoever seriously considers the matter must perceive that a dreadful stroke is aimed at the liberty of these colonies. I say, of these colonies, for the cause of *one* is the cause of *all*. If the Parliament may lawfully deprive *New York* of any of *her* rights, it may deprive any or all the other colonies of *their* rights; and nothing can possibly so much encourage such attempts as a mutual inattention to the interests of each other. *To divide, and thus to destroy*, is the first political maxim in attacking those who are powerful by their union. He certainly is not a wise man who folds his arms and reposes himself at home, viewing with unconcern the flames that have invaded his neighbor’s house, without using any endeavors to extinguish them. When Mr. *Hampden*’s ship-money case for *Three Shillings* and *Four-pence* was tried, all the people of *England*, with anxious expectation, interested themselves in the important decision; and when the slightest point touching the freedom of one colony is agitated, I earnestly wish that *all the rest* may with equal ardor support their sister. Very much may be said on this subject, but I hope more at present is unnecessary.

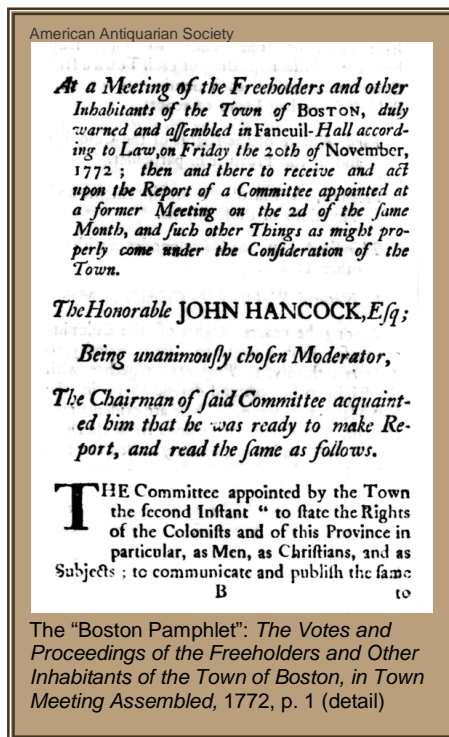
WITH concern I have observed that *two* assemblies of this province have sat and adjourned without taking any notice of this act. It may perhaps be asked: what would have been proper for them to do? I am by no means fond of inflammatory measures; I detest them. I should be sorry that anything should be done which might justly displease our sovereign or our mother country: But a firm, modest exertion of a free spirit should never be wanting [lacking] on public occasions. It appears to me that it would have been sufficient for the assembly to have ordered our agents to represent to the King’s ministers their sense of the suspending act and to pray [petition] for its repeal. Thus we should have borne our testimony against it, and might therefore reasonably expect that, on a like occasion, we might receive the same assistance from the other colonies.

*Concordia res parvae crescent.*  
Small things grow great by concord.

***If the Parliament may lawfully deprive New York of any of her rights, it may deprive any or all the other colonies of their rights; and nothing can possibly so much encourage such attempts as a mutual inattention to the interests of each other. To divide, and thus to destroy, is the first political maxim in attacking those who are powerful by their union.***

A FARMER





## BOSTON COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE

Document known as

### The "BOSTON PAMPHLET"

- A. *The Rights of the Colonists*
- B. *Violations of Those Rights*
- C. *A Letter of Correspondence*

**1772**

EXCERPTS

Alarmed by Britain's decision to remove the colonial assembly's right to pay the governor's and judges' salaries—thus removing any power it might wield over royal officials—a group of Boston citizens led by Samuel Adams, James Otis, and Joseph Warren formed a citizens' committee to oppose the action. The committee compiled a three-part document soon known as the "Boston Pamphlet" and distributed it throughout the colony. The document (1) asserted the colonists' rights as men under natural law, as Christians under God's law in the New Testament, and as British subjects under the British constitution; (2) listed twelve violations of those rights by Britain; and (3) invited response from other Massachusetts towns. Soon over one hundred new town "committees of correspondence" had been formed in Massachusetts.

The Committee, appointed by the Town the second Instant [of the month] "to state the Rights of the Colonists and of this Province in particular, as Men, as Christians, and as Subjects; to communicate and publish the same to the several Towns in this province and to the World, as the Sense of this Town, with the Infringements and Violations thereof that have been, or from Time to Time may be made. Also requesting of each Town a free Communication of their sentiments on this Subject——beg leave to report.

*First, A State of the Rights of the Colonists and of this Province in particular.*

*Secondly, A List of the Infringements and Violations of those Rights.*

*Thirdly, A Letter of Correspondence with the Other Towns.*

### \_\_[The Rights of the Colonists]\_\_

#### I. *Natural Rights of the Colonists as Men.*

Among the natural Rights of the Colonists are these: First, a Right to *Life*; secondly, to *Liberty*; thirdly, to *Property*; together with the Right to support and defend them in the best Manner they can. Those are evident Branches of, rather than Deductions from, the Duty of Self-Preservation, commonly called the first Law of Nature.

All Men have a Right to remain in a State of Nature as long as they please: And in case of intolerable Oppression, civil or religious, to leave the Society they belong to and enter into another.

When Men enter into Society, it is by voluntary Consent, and they have a Right to demand and insist upon the performance of such Conditions and previous Limitations as form an equitable *original Compact*.

National Humanities Center, 2010: [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/). *The Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston, In Town Meeting Assembled, According to Law*, Boston, 28 October 1772; Early American Imprints, Doc. 12332; American Antiquarian Society with Readex/Newsbank; permission pending for digital image. Reprinted in *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904-1908), Vol. II: 1770-1773, pp. 350-374. Spelling and punctuation modernized by NHC for clarity. Numbered footnotes and bracketed annotations added by NHC. Complete image credits at [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/imagecredits.htm](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/imagecredits.htm).

Every natural Right not expressly given up or, from the nature of a Social Compact, necessarily ceded, remains.

All positive and civil Laws should conform, as far as possible, to the Law of natural Reason and Equity.

As neither Reason requires nor Religion permits the contrary, every Man living in or out of a State of civil Society has a Right peaceably and quietly to worship GOD according to the Dictates of his Conscience.

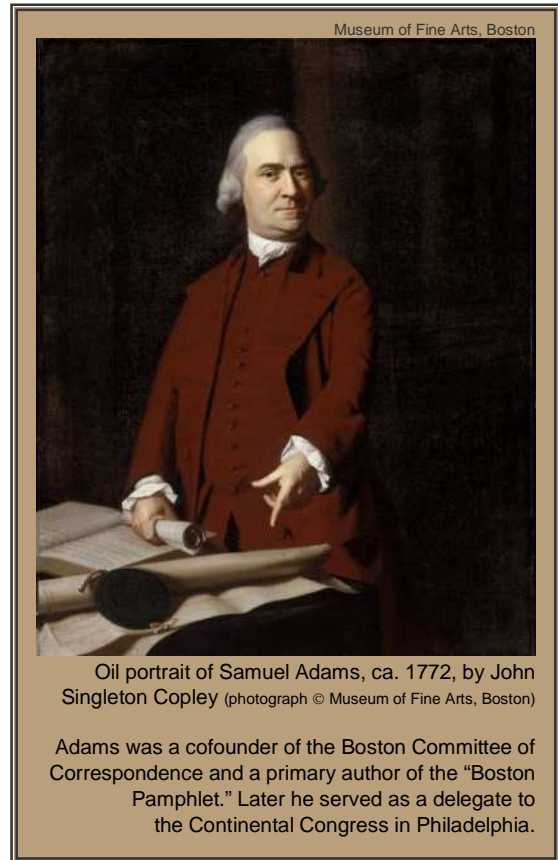
“*Just and true Liberty, equal and impartial Liberty*”<sup>16</sup> in Matters spiritual and temporal is a Thing that all Men are clearly entitled to by the eternal and immutable laws of GOD and Nature, as well as by the Law of Nations, & all well-grounded municipal Laws, which must have their Foundation in the former.

In Regard to Religion, mutual Toleration in the different Professions [denominations] thereof is what all good and candid Minds in all Ages have ever practiced, and, both by Precept and Example, inculcated on Mankind. And it is now generally agreed among Christians that this Spirit of Toleration, in the fullest Extent consistent with the Being of Civil Society, “is the chief characteristic Mark of the true Church.”<sup>\*</sup> Insomuch that Mr. Locke has asserted and proved, beyond the Possibility of Contradiction on any solid Ground, that such Toleration ought to be extended to all whose Doctrines are not subversive of Society. The only Sects which he thinks ought to be, and which by all wise Laws are excluded from such Toleration, are those who teach Doctrines subversive of the civil Government under which they live. The Roman Catholics, or Papists, are excluded by Reason of such Doctrines as these, “that Princes excommunicated may be deposed, and those that they call *Heretics* may be destroyed without Mercy”; besides their recognizing the Pope in so absolute a Manner, in Subversion of Government, by introducing as far as possible into the States under whose Protection they enjoy Life, Liberty and Property, that Solecism [error in language] in Politics, *Imperium in imperio*,<sup>†</sup> leading directly to the worst Anarchy and Confusion, civil Discord, War and Bloodshed.

The natural Liberty of Man, by entering into Society, is abridg’d or restrain’d so far only as is necessary for the great End of Society, the best Good of the Whole. . . .

“The *natural* Liberty of Man is to be free from any superior Power on Earth and not to be under the Will or legislative Authority of Man, but only to have the Law of Nature for his Rule.”<sup>\*\*</sup>

In the State of Nature, Men may, as the *Patriarchs* did, employ hired Servants for the Defense of their Lives, Liberties and Property, and they should pay them reasonable Wages. *Government* was instituted for the purposes of common Defense, and those who hold the Reins of Government have an equitable natural Right to an honorable Support from the same Principle “that “the Laborer is worthy of his Hire”; but then the same Community which they serve ought to be the Assessors of their Pay. Governors have no Right to seek and take what they please; by this, instead of being content with the



<sup>16</sup> A *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 1689, by John Locke (1632-1704), English philosopher whose Enlightenment theories, especially his concept of the social contract, are reflected in the ideology and rhetoric of the American revolution. [Numbered footnotes added by NHC]  
 \* See Locke’s Letters on Toleration [1689, 1690, 1692].

<sup>†</sup> A Government within a Government.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Locke on Government. [Two *Treatises of Government*, 1690].

Station assigned them, that of honorable Servants of the Society, they would soon become Absolute *Masters, Despots, and Tyrants*. Hence, as a private Man has a Right to say what Wages he will give in his private Affairs, so has a Community to determine what *they* will give and grant of their Substance for the Administration of public Affairs.<sup>17</sup> And in both cases, more are ready generally to offer their Service at the proposed and stipulated Price than are able and willing to perform their Duty.

In short, it is the greatest Absurdity to suppose it in the Power of one or any Number of Men, at the entering into Society, to renounce their essential natural Rights or the Means of preserving those Rights, when the grand End of civil Government, from the very Nature of its Institution, is for the Support, Protection and Defense of those very Rights: The principal of which, as is before observed, are *Life, Liberty, and Property*. If Men through Fear, Fraud, or Mistake should *in Terms* renounce or give up any essential natural Right, the eternal Law of Reason and the grand End of Society would absolutely vacate such Renunciation: the Right to Freedom being *the Gift* of GOD ALMIGHTY, it is not in the Power of Man to alienate this Gift and voluntarily become a Slave.

## II. *The Rights of the Colonists as Christians.*

These may be best understood by reading and carefully studying the Institutes of the great Lawgiver and Head of the Christian Church, which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the *New Testament*.

By the Act of the British Parliament commonly called the Toleration Act, every Subject in England [every English citizen] except Papists [Roman Catholics], &c., was restored to and re-established in his natural Right to worship GOD according to the Dictates of his own Conscience. And by the Charter of this Province it is granted, ordain'd and establish'd (that is, declared as an original Right) that there shall be Liberty of Conscience allow'd in the Worship of GOD to all Christians, except Papists. . . .

## III. *The Rights of the Colonists as Subjects [of England].*

A Commonwealth or State is a Body politic or civil Society of Men united together to promote their mutual Safety and Prosperity by Means of their Union.\*

The *absolute Rights* of Englishmen and all Freemen in or out of civil Society are principally *personal Security, personal Liberty, and private Property*.

All Persons born in the British American Colonies are, by the Laws of GOD and Nature and by the common Law of England, *exclusive of all Charters from the Crown*, well entitled, and by Acts of the British Parliament are declared to be entitled to all the natural, essential, inherent and inseparable Rights, Liberties and Privileges of Subjects born in Great Britain or within the Realm. Among those Rights are the following, which no Man or Body of Men, consistently with their own Rights as Men and Citizens, or Members of Society, can for themselves give up or take away from others.

*First*, "The first fundamental positive Law of all Commonwealths or States is the establishing the Legislative Power: As the first fundamental *natural* Law also, which is to govern even the Legislative Power itself, is the Preservation of the Society."<sup>†</sup>

*Secondly*, The Legislative has no Right to absolute arbitrary Power over the Lives and Fortunes of the People: Nor can Mortals assume a Prerogative not only too high for Men but for Angels, and therefore reserv'd for the Exercise of the *Deity* alone. . . .

**The *absolute Rights* of Englishmen and all Freemen in or out of civil Society are principally *personal Security, personal Liberty, and private Property*.**

<sup>17</sup>Referring to the issue that spurred the creation of the Boston Committee: that the salaries of the governor, lieutenant governor, and judges would be paid directly by Britain and not by the colonial assembly, thus eliminating the assembly's "power of the purse."

\* See Locke and Vattel [Swiss philosopher Emerich de Vattel (1714-1767): *The Law of Nations or the Principles of Natural Law Applied to the Conduct and to the Affairs of Nations and of Sovereigns* (1758)].

<sup>†</sup> Locke on Government. *Salus Populi Suprema Lex esto*. ["The welfare of the people shall be the supreme law."]

*Thirdly*, The Supreme Power cannot justly take from any Man any Part of his Property without his Consent in Person or by his Representative.

These are some of the first Principles of natural Law and Justice, and the great Barriers of all Free States and of the British Constitution in particular. It is utterly irreconcilable to these Principles, and to many other fundamental Maxims of the common Law, common Sense, and Reason, that a British House of Commons should have a Right, at Pleasure, to give and grant the Property of the Colonists. That these Colonists are well entitled to all the essential Rights, Liberties and Privileges of Men and Freemen born in Britain is manifest, not only from the Colony Charters in general, but Acts of the British Parliament. . . .

Now what Liberty can there be where Property is taken away without Consent? Can it be said with any Color of Truth and Justice that this Continent of three Thousand Miles in Length, and of a Breadth as yet unexplored, in which, however, it is supposed there are five Millions of People, has the least Voice, Vote, or Influence in the Decisions of the British Parliament? Have they, all together, any more Right or Power to return a single Member to that House of Commons who have not inadvertently but deliberately assumed a Power to dispose of their Lives,\* Liberties and Properties, than to choose an Emperor of China! . . . The Colonists have been branded with the odious Names of Traitors and Rebels, only for complaining of their Grievances. How long such Treatment will or ought to be borne is submitted.

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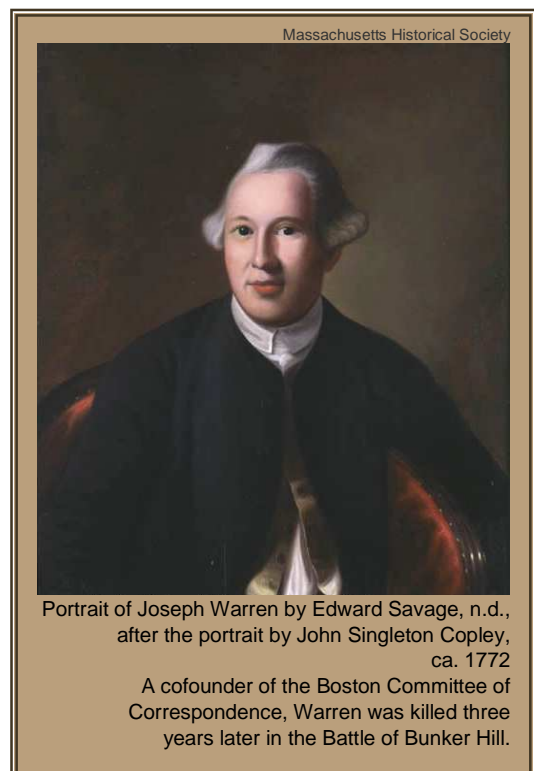
### \_\_A List of Infringements & Violations of Rights\_\_

**W**e cannot help thinking that an Enumeration of some of the most open Infringements of our Rights will, by every candid Person, be judged sufficient to justify whatever Measures have been already taken, or may be thought proper to be taken, in order to obtain a Redress of the Grievances under which we labor. Among many others, we humbly conceive that the following will not fail to excite the Attention of all who consider themselves interested in the Happiness and Freedom of Mankind in general, and of this Continent and Province in particular.

**1st.** The British Parliament have assumed the Power of Legislation for the Colonists in all Cases whatsoever without obtaining the Consent of the Inhabitants, which is ever essentially necessary to the right Establishment of such a Legislative.

**2dly.** They have exerted that assumed Power in raising a Revenue in the Colonies without their Consent, thereby depriving them of that Right which every Man has to keep his own Earnings in his own Hands until he shall, in Person or by his Representative, think fit to part with the Whole or any Portion of it. . . .

**3dly.** A Number of new Officers, unknown in the Charter of this Province, have been appointed to superintend this Revenue, whereas by our Charter the Great and General Court or Assembly of this Province has the sole Right of appointing all Civil Officers, excepting



\* See the Act of the last Session relating to the King's Dock [illegible].



only such Officers, the election and constitution of whom is, in said Charter, expressly excepted; among whom these Officers are not included.

**4thly.** These Officers are, by their Commission, invested with Powers altogether unconstitutional and entirely destructive to that Security which we have a right to enjoy, and to the last degree dangerous not only to our property but to our lives: . . his Majesty gives and grants unto his said Commissioners . . . full Power and Authority . . . to enter and go on board any Ship, Boat, or other Vessel . . . and also in the daytime to go into any House, Shop, Cellar, or any other Place where any Goods, Wares or Merchandizes lie concealed, or are *suspected* to lie concealed, whereof the customs and other duties have not been or shall not be duly paid . . . .

Thus our Houses and even our Bed-Chambers are exposed to be ransacked, our Boxes, Trunks and Chests broke open, ravaged and plundered by Wretches, whom no prudent Man would venture to employ even as menial Servants, whenever they are pleased to say they *suspect* there are in the House, Wares, &c. for which the Duties have not been paid. Flagrant instances of the wanton exercise of this Power have frequently happened in this and other seaport Towns. By this we are cut off from that domestic security which renders the Lives of the most unhappy in some measure agreeable. These Officers may under color of Law and the cloak of a general warrant break through the sacred Rights of the *Domicil* [private household], ransack Men's Houses, destroy their Securities, carry off their Property, and with little Danger to themselves commit the most horrid Murders. . . .

**5thly.** Fleets and Armies have been introduced to support these unconstitutional Officers in collecting and managing this unconstitutional Revenue, and Troops have been quartered in this Metropolis for that purpose. Introducing and quartering Standing Armies in a free Country in times of Peace without the consent of the People, either by themselves or by their Representatives, is and always has been deemed a violation of their Rights as Freemen, . . .

**6thly.** The Revenue arising from this Tax . . . has been in part applied to the most destructive purposes. It is absolutely necessary in a mixt Government like that of this Province that a due proportion or balance of Power should be established among the several Branches of the Legislative. . . .

In particular it has always been held that the dependence of the Governor of this Province upon the General Assembly for his support [i.e., salary] was necessary for the preservation of this *Equilibrium*; nevertheless his Majesty has been pleased to apply Fifteen Hundred Pounds Sterling annually out of the American Revenue for the support of the Governor of this Province independent of the Assembly, . . .

And we look upon it highly probable, from the best intelligence we have been able to obtain, that not only our Governor and Lieutenant Governor, but the Judges of the Superior Court of Judicature, as also the King's Attorney and Solicitor General are to receive their Support from this grievous tribute. This will, if accomplish'd, complete our Slavery. For if Taxes are to be raised from us by the Parliament of Great Britain without our consent, and the Men on whose opinions and decisions our Properties, Liberties, and Lives in a great measure depend, receive their Support from the Revenues arising from these Taxes, we cannot, when we think on the depravity of mankind, avoid looking with horror on the danger to which we are exposed! . . .

**7thly.** We find ourselves greatly oppressed by Instructions sent to our Governor from the Court of Great Britain whereby the first branch of our legislature is made merely a ministerial Engine. And the Province has already felt such effects from these instructions as we think justly entitle us to say that they

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threaten an entire destruction of our Liberties and must soon, if not check'd, render every branch of our government a useless burden upon the people. We shall point out some of the alarming effects of these Instructions which have already taken place.

In consequence of instructions, the Governor has called and adjourned our General Assemblies to a place highly inconvenient to the Members . . .

In consequence of Instructions, the Assembly has been prorogued [postponed; suspended] from time to time when the important concerns of the Province required their meeting.

In obedience to instructions, the General Assembly was Anno [in the year of] 1768 dissolved by Governor Bernard because they would not consent to *rescind* the Resolution of a *former* House and thereby sacrifice the Rights of their Constituents. . . .

**8thly.** The extending the power of the Courts of Vice-Admiralty<sup>18</sup> to so enormous a degree as deprives the people in the colonies in a great measure of their inestimable right to trials *by Juries*, which has ever been justly considered as the grand Bulwark and Security of English property. . . .

. . . We may be harassed and dragged from one part of the Continent to the other (which some of our Brethren here and in the country towns already have been) and finally be deprived of our whole property by the arbitrary determination of one biased, capricious Judge of the Admiralty.

**9thly.** The restraining us from erecting Slitting-Mills<sup>19</sup> for manufacturing our Iron, the natural produce of this Country, is an Infringement of that Right with which God and Nature have invested us to make use of our skill and industry in procuring the necessaries and conveniences of Life. And we look upon the Restraint laid upon the Manufacture and Transportation of Hats to be altogether unreasonable and grievous. Although by the Charter all Havens, Rivers, Ports, Waters, &c. are expressly granted the Inhabitants of the Province and their Successors, to their only proper use and behoof [benefit] forever, yet the British Parliament passed an act whereby they restrain us from carrying our Wool, the produce of our own Farms, even over a ferry, whereby the Inhabitants have often been put to the expense of carrying a Bag of Wool near an

### Infringements & Violations

- 1**  
BRITAIN is passing laws for the colonies without their consent.
- 2**  
BRITAIN is imposing taxes on the colonies without their consent.
- 3**  
BRITAIN is appointing officials to supervise colonial taxation despite the colonies' authority to do so.
- 4**  
BRITAIN has authorized revenue officials to search colonists' homes, ships, etc., for goods on which they suspect duties (taxes) have not been paid.
- 5**  
BRITAIN has sent military troops in peacetime to support the revenue officials in their unconstitutional duties.
- 6**  
BRITAIN has upset the governmental balance of power by usurping the legislature's authority to pay the salaries of the governor, lieutenant governor, and judges.
- 7**  
BRITAIN has further diminished the legislature's authority by postponing and re-sitting sessions, and in 1768 by dissolving the legislature—all threatening "an entire destruction of our liberties."
- 8**  
BRITAIN has deprived the colonists of their right to trial by jury by prosecuting cases involving colonists' property in the vice-admiralty courts, where decisions are rendered solely by the judge.
- 9**  
BRITAIN has placed unreasonable limits on the colonies' manufacturing and transporting of goods, thus infringing on their right to "make use of our skill and industry."
- 10**  
BRITAIN has ordered that colonists accused of arson or other damage to the British navy and naval supplies may be taken to Britain for trial.
- 11**  
BRITAIN threatens the colonists' freedom of religion by proposing to send an Anglican bishop to Boston to administer the colonial Church of England.
- 12**  
BRITAIN has violated colonists' property rights by granting to others land developed by settlers in the past, and by redefining colonial boundaries, thus forcing landowners at great inconvenience to recertify their holdings.

<sup>18</sup>In vice-admiralty courts, decisions were made by the judge without a jury. Colonists, accustomed to jury trials, resented Britain's increasing use of vice-admiralty courts in the 1760s and '70s to prosecute a wider range of offenses, usually related to taxation and navigation acts. [NHC note]

<sup>19</sup>Slitting mill: a mill in which iron bars are slit into narrow strips. [NHC note]

hundred miles by land, when passing over a River or Water of one quarter of a mile, of which the province are the absolute proprietors, would have prevented all that trouble.

**10thly.** The Act passed in the last Session of the British Parliament entitled *An Act for the better preserving his Majesty's Dock-Yards, Magazines, Ships, Ammunition and Stores*, is, as we apprehend, a violent Infringement of our Rights. By this Act any one of us may be taken from his Family and carried to any part of Great Britain, there to be tried whenever it shall be pretended that he has been concerned in burning or otherwise destroying any Boat or Vessel, or any Materials for building &c. any naval or victualling Store, &c. belonging to his Majesty. . . Thus we are not only deprived of our grand Right to *Trial by our Peers in the Vicinity*, but any Person suspected, or pretended to be suspected, may be hurried to Great Britain to take his Trial in any County the King or his Successors shall please to direct; where, innocent or guilty, he is in great danger of being condemned, and, whether condemned or acquitted, he will probably be ruined by the Expense attending the Trial, and his long Absence from his Family and Business . . . .

**11thly.** As our Ancestors came over to this Country that they might not only enjoy their civil but their religious Rights . . . we cannot see without concern the various attempts, which have been made and are now making, to establish an American Episcopate. Our Episcopal brethren of the Colonies do enjoy, and rightfully ought ever to enjoy, the free exercise of their Religion, but as an American Episcopate is by no means essential to that free exercise of their Religion, we cannot help fearing that they who are so warmly contending for such an Establishment have views altogether inconsistent with the universal and peaceful enjoyment of our Christian privileges: . . .

**12thly.** Another Grievance under which we labor is the frequent Alteration of the Bounds of the Colonies by Decisions before the King and Council . . . This not only subjects Men to live under a Constitution to which they have not consented, which in itself is a great Grievance, but moreover under Color that the *Right of Soil* is affected by such Declarations. Some Governors, or Ministers, or both in Conjunction, have pretended to Grant . . . many Thousands of Acres of vacant and appropriated Lands near a Century past and rendered valuable by the Labors of the present Cultivators and their Ancestors. There are very notable Instances of Settlers who, having first purchased the Soil of the Natives, have at considerable Expense obtained Confirmations of Title from this Province; and on being transfer'd to the Jurisdiction of the Province of *New-Hampshire* have been put to the Trouble and Cost of a new Grant or Confirmation from thence; and after all this there has been a third Declaration of the Royal Will that they shou'd thenceforth be considered as pertaining to the Province of *New-York*. The Troubles, Expenses and Dangers which Hundreds have been put to on such Occasions cannot here be recited; but so much may be said, that they have been most cruelly harassed and even threatened with a military Force to dragoon them into a compliance with the most unreasonable demands.

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harassed and even threatened  
with a military Force to  
dragoon them into a  
compliance with the most  
unreasonable demands.**

Benjamin Franklin  
**R U L E S**  
*by which a GREAT EMPIRE*  
*may be reduced to a SMALL ONE*

*The Public Advertiser*, London, 11 September 1773,  
as printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 15 December 1773

Franklin wrote this satirical piece while serving in London as the colonial agent for several colonies. His numerous letters to London newspapers presenting the colonists' point of view were often reprinted in colonial newspapers.

An ancient Sage boasted that tho' he could not fiddle, he knew how to make a *great city* of a *little one*. The science that I, a modern simpleton, am about to communicate is the very reverse.

I address myself to all Ministers<sup>20</sup> who have the management of extensive dominions [empires], which from their very greatness are become troublesome to govern because the multiplicity of their affairs leaves no Time for *fiddling*.



- I. In the first place, gentlemen, you are to consider that a great Empire, like a great cake, is most easily diminished at the edges. Turn your attention, therefore, first to your remotest provinces, that as you get rid of them, the next may follow in order.
- II. [So] that the possibility of this separation may always exist, take special care the provinces are never incorporated with the mother country, that they do not enjoy the same common rights, the same privileges in commerce, and that they are governed by *severer* laws, all of *your enacting*, without allowing them any share in the choice of the legislators. By carefully making and preserving such distinctions, you will (to keep to my simile of the cake) act like a wise gingerbread baker who, to facilitate a division, cuts his dough half through in those places where, when baked, he would have it *broken to pieces*.
- III. These remote provinces have perhaps been acquired, purchased, or conquered at the *sole expense* of the settlers or their ancestors without the aid of the mother country. If these should happen to increase her *strength* by their growing numbers ready to join in her wars, her *commerce* by their growing demand for her manufactures, or her *naval power* by greater employment for her ships and seamen, they may probably suppose some merit in this, and that it entitles them to some favor. You are therefore to *forget it all* or resent it as if they had done you Injury. If they happen to be zealous Whigs, friends of liberty, nurtured in revolution principles, *remember all that* to their prejudice and resolve to punish it: for such principles, after a revolution is thoroughly established, are of *no more use*; they are even *odious* and *abominable*.
- IV. However peaceably your colonies have submitted to your government, shown their affection to your interests, and patiently borne their grievances, you are to *suppose* them always inclined to revolt and treat them accordingly. Quarter troops among them, who by their insolence may *provoke* the rising of mobs, and by their bullets and bayonets *suppress* them. By this means, like the husband who uses his wife ill *from suspicion*, you may in time convert your *suspensions* into *realities*.

distance of  
colonies  
from  
Britain

rights &  
privileges  
of colonists  
as British  
subjects;  
legislation  
without  
representation  
in Parliament

contribution  
of colonies  
to economic  
and military  
power of  
British empire

colonists'  
motives &  
allegiance  
to Britain;  
treatment as  
potential  
rebels

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<sup>20</sup> Officials in the king's cabinet; not referring to clergymen.

- V. Remote provinces must have *Governors* and *Judges* to represent the Royal Person and execute everywhere the delegated parts of his office and authority. You ministers know that much of the strength of government depends on the *opinion* of the people; and much of that opinion on the choice of rulers placed immediately over them. If you send them wise and good men for governors, who study the interest of the colonists and advance their prosperity, they will think their king wise and good and that he wishes the welfare of his subjects. If you send them learned and upright men for Judges, they will think him a lover of justice. This may attach your provinces more to his government. You are, therefore, to be careful who you recommend for those offices. — If you can find prodigals who have ruined their fortunes, broken gamesters or stock-jobbers, these may do well as *Governors* for they will probably be rapacious and provoke the people by their extortions. Wrangling Proctors and pettyfogging Lawyers, too, are not amiss, for they will be forever disputing and quarrelling with their little parliaments. If withal, they should be ignorant, wrong-headed and insolent, so much the better. Attorneys Clerks and Newgate Solicitors will do for *Chief Justices*, especially if they hold their places *during your pleasure*.<sup>21</sup> And all will contribute to impress those ideas of your government that are proper for a people *you would wish to renounce it*.
- VI. To confirm these impressions and strike them deeper, whenever the injured come to the capital with complaints of mal-administration, oppression, or injustice, punish such suitors with long delay, enormous expense, and a final judgment in favor of the oppressor. This will have an admirable effect every way. The trouble of future complaints will be prevented, and Governors and Judges will be encouraged to further acts of oppression and injustice, and thence the people may become more disaffected *and at length desperate*.
- VII. When such Governors have crammed their coffers and made themselves so odious to the people that they can no longer remain among them with safety to their persons, recall and *reward* them with pensions. You may make them *Baronets* too, if that respectable order should not think fit to resent it. All will contribute to encourage new Governors in the same practices and make the supreme government *detestable*.
- VIII. If when you are engaged in war, your colonies should vie in liberal aids of men and money against the common enemy upon your simple requisition, and give far beyond their abilities. Reflect that a penny taken from them by your power is more honorable to you than a pound presented by their benevolence. Despise, therefore, their voluntary grants, and resolve to harass them with novel taxes. They will probably complain to your parliaments that they are taxed by a body in which they have no representative, and that this is contrary to common right. They will petition for redress. Let the parliaments flout their claims, reject their petitions, refuse even to suffer the reading of them, and treat the petitioners with the utmost contempt. Nothing can have a better effect in producing the alienation proposed, for though many can forgive injuries, *none ever forgave contempt*.
- IX. In laying these taxes, never regard the heavy burdens those remote people already undergo in defending their own frontiers, supporting their own provincial governments, making new roads, building bridges, churches, and other public edifices, which in old countries have been done to your hands by your ancestors, but which occasion [cause] constant calls and demands on the purses of a new people. Forget the *restraints* you lay on their trade for *your own* benefit and the advantage a *monopoly* of this trade gives your exacting merchants. Think nothing of the wealth those merchants and your manufacturers acquire by the colony commerce, their

quality and  
character of  
appointed  
governors  
and judges

critics of  
corrupt  
and unjust  
governors  
and judges

corrupt and  
distrusted  
governors

treatment  
of colonists'  
contributions  
in wartime  
and petitions  
for redress of  
grievances

taxation  
without  
consideration  
of colonies'  
economic  
burdens

<sup>21</sup> I.e., at your determination, with no official term limit.

increased ability thereby to pay taxes at home, their accumulating in the price of their commodities most of those taxes, and so levying them from their consuming customers. All this, and the employment and support of thousands of your poor by the colonists, you are *entirely to forget*. But remember to make your arbitrary tax more grievous to your provinces by public declarations importing that your power of taxing them has *no limits*, so that when you take from them without their consent one shilling in the pound, you have a clear right to the other nineteen. This will probably weaken every idea of *security in their property* and convince them that under such a government *they have nothing they can call their own*, which can scarce fail of producing *the happiest consequences*!

- X. Possibly, indeed, some of them might still comfort themselves and say, “Though we have no property, we have yet *something* left that is valuable; we have constitutional *liberty* both of person and of conscience. This King, these Lords, and these Commons,<sup>22</sup> who it seems are too remote from us to know us and feel for us, cannot take from us our *Habeas Corpus* right or our right of trial *by a jury of our neighbors*. They cannot deprive us of the exercise of our religion, alter our ecclesiastical constitutions, and compel us to be Papists [Roman Catholics] if they please, or Mahometans [Muslims].” To annihilate this comfort, begin by laws to perplex their commerce with infinite regulations, impossible to be remembered and observed. Ordain seizures of their property for every failure. Take away the trial of such property by jury, and give it to arbitrary Judges of your own appointing and of the lowest characters in the country, whose salaries and emoluments are to arise out of the duties or condemnations [of property], and whose appointments are *during pleasure*. Then let there be a formal declaration of both houses that opposition to your edicts is *treason*, and that persons suspected of treason in the provinces may, according to some obsolete law, be seized and sent to the metropolis of the empire for trial [London]; and pass an act that those there charged with certain other offenses shall be sent away in chains from their friends and country to be tried in the same manner for felony. Then erect a new Court of Inquisition among them, accompanied by an armed force, with instructions to transport all such suspected persons, to be ruined by the expense if they bring over evidences to prove their innocence, or be found guilty and hanged if they can’t afford it. And lest the people should think you cannot possibly go any farther, pass another solemn declaratory act that “King, Lords, and Commons had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the unrepresented provinces IN ALL CASES WHATSOEVER.”<sup>23</sup> This will include *spiritual* with temporal, and taken together must operate wonderfully to your purpose by convincing them that they are at present under a power something like that spoken of in the scriptures, which cannot only *kill their bodies* but *damn their souls* to all eternity by compelling them, if it pleases, to *worship the Devil*.
- XI. To make your taxes more odious and more likely to procure resistance, send from the capital a board of officers to superintend the collection, composed of the most *indiscrete, ill-bred, and insolent* you can find. Let these have large salaries out of the extorted revenue and live in open grating luxury upon the sweat and blood of the industrious, whom they are to worry continually with groundless and expensive prosecutions before the above-mentioned arbitrary revenue Judges, all *at the cost of the party prosecuted*, tho’ acquitted, because *the King is to pay no costs*. Let these men *by your order* be exempted from all the common taxes and burdens of the province, though they and their property are protected by its laws. If any revenue

removal of  
colonists’  
rights and  
privileges

regulation of  
colonial trade

appointment  
of judges

consequences  
of opposition

treatment of  
the accused

supreme  
authority of  
the king and  
Parliament

quality and  
character  
of customs  
officials; their  
salaries,  
special privi-  
leges, and  
treatment of  
colonists

<sup>22</sup> Parliament: House of Lords & House of Commons.

<sup>23</sup> From the Declaratory Act of 1764, passed by Parliament on the same day it repealed the Stamp Act.



officers are *suspected* of the least tenderness for the people, discard them. If others are justly complained of, protect and reward them. If any of the under-officers behave so as to provoke the people to drub [criticize harshly] them, promote those to better offices: this will encourage others to procure for themselves such profitable drubbings by multiplying and enlarging such provocations, and *all will work towards the end you aim at.*

- XII.** Another way to make your tax odious is to misapply the produce of it. If it was originally appropriated for the *defense* of the provinces, the better support of government and the administration of justice where it may be *necessary*, then apply none of it to that *defense*, but bestow it where it is *not necessary* in augmented salaries or pensions to every Governor who has distinguished himself by his enmity to the people, and by calumniating them to their Sovereign. This will make them pay it more unwillingly and be more apt to quarrel with those that collect it and those that imposed it, who will quarrel again with them, and all shall contribute to your *main purpose* of making them *weary of your government.*
- XIII.** If the people of any province have been accustomed to support their own Governors and Judges to satisfaction, you are to apprehend that such Governors and Judges may be thereby influenced to treat the people kindly and to do them justice. This is another reason for applying part of that revenue in larger salaries to such Governors and Judges, given, as their commissions are, *during your pleasure* only, forbidding them to take any salaries from their provinces, that thus the people may no longer hope any kindness from their Governors or (in Crown cases) any justice from their Judges. And as the money thus misapplied in one province is extorted from all, probably *all will resent the misapplication.*
- XIV.** If the parliaments of your provinces should dare to claim rights or complain of your administration, order them to be harassed with repeated *dissolutions*.<sup>24</sup> If the same men are continually returned by new elections, adjourn their meetings to some country village where they cannot be accommodated and there keep them *during pleasure*. For this, you know, is your **P R E R O G A T I V E**, and an excellent one it is, as you may manage it to promote discontents among the people, diminish their respect, and *increase their disaffection.*
- XV.** Convert the brave honest officers of your navy into pimping tide-waiters and colony officers of the customs. Let those who in time of war fought gallantly in defense of the commerce of their countrymen, in peace be taught to prey upon it. Let them learn to be corrupted by great and real smugglers; but (to show their diligence) scour with armed boats every bay, harbor, river, creek, cove or nook throughout the coast of your colonies. Stop and detain every coaster, every wood-boat, every fisherman, tumble their cargoes and even their ballast inside out and upside down, and if a penn'orth of pins is found unentered,<sup>25</sup> let the whole be seized and confiscated. Thus shall the trade of your colonists suffer more from their friends in time of peace than it did from their enemies in war. Then let these boats' crews land upon every farm in their way, rob the orchards, steal the pigs and poultry, and insult the inhabitants. If the injured and exasperated farmers, unable to procure other justice, should attack the aggressors, drub [beat] them and burn their boats, you are to call this *high treason* and *rebellion*, order fleets and armies into their country and threaten to carry all the offenders three thousand miles [to Britain] to be hanged, drawn and quartered. *O! This will work admirably!*

use of taxes  
raised for  
defense to  
augment  
governors'  
salaries

... especially  
salaries of  
governors  
respected  
by colonists

treatment  
of colonial  
assemblies  
resisting  
imperial  
orders

treatment of  
fishermen,  
merchant  
shippers,  
and coastal  
farmers by  
customs  
officials in  
search of  
smugglers

<sup>24</sup> As was done to the New York and Virginia assemblies.

<sup>25</sup> If a penny's worth of pins (i.e., a tiny portion of the ship's cargo) is not listed on the required cargo inventory. Customs officials in the 1770s often used an incomplete cargo inventory as the basis for arresting merchants and/or seizing entire ship cargoes.

- XVI.** If you are told of discontents in your colonies, never believe that they are general or that you have given occasion [cause] for them. Therefore do not think of applying any remedy or of changing any offensive measure. Redress no grievance lest they should be encouraged to demand the redress of some other grievance. Grant no request that is just and reasonable lest they should make another that is unreasonable. Take all your informations of the state of the colonies from your Governors and Officers in enmity with them. Encourage and reward these *leasing-makers*; secrete [keep secret] their lying accusations lest they should be confuted [refuted; proven wrong]; but act upon them as the clearest evidence and believe nothing you hear from the friends of the people. Suppose all *their* complaints to be invented and promoted by a few factious demagogues whom, if you could catch and hang, all would be quiet. Catch and hang a few of them accordingly, and the *blood of the Martyrs* shall *work miracles* in favor of your purpose.
- XVII.** If you see *rival nations* rejoicing at the prospect of your disunion with your provinces and endeavoring to promote it; if they translate, publish and applaud all the complaints of your discontented colonists, at the same time privately stimulating you to severer measures; let not that *alarm* or offend you. Why should it? since you all mean *the same thing*.
- XVIII.** If any colony should, at their own charge, erect a fortress to secure their port against the fleets of a foreign enemy, get your Governor to betray that fortress into your hands.<sup>26</sup> Never think of paying what it cost the country for that would *look*, at least, like some regard for justice; but turn it into a citadel to awe the inhabitants and curb their commerce. If they should have lodged in such fortress the very arms they bought and used to aid you in your conquests, seize them all; it will provoke like *ingratitude* added to *robbery*. One admirable effect of these operations will be to discourage every other colony from erecting such defenses, and so your enemies may more easily invade them to the great disgrace of your government and, of course, *the furtherance of your project*.
- XIX.** Send armies into their country under pretense of protecting the inhabitants, but instead of garrisoning the forts on their frontiers with those troops to prevent incursions, demolish those forts and order the troops into the heart of the country [so] that the savages may be encouraged to attack the frontiers and that the troops may be protected by the inhabitants. This will seem to proceed from your ill will or your ignorance, and contribute farther to produce and strengthen an opinion among them *that you are no longer fit to govern them*.
- XX.** Lastly, invest the General of your army in the provinces with great and unconstitutional powers, and free him from the control of even your own Civil Governors. Let him have troops enough under his command, with all the fortresses in his possession, and who knows but (like some provincial Generals in the Roman empire, and encouraged by the universal discontent you have produced) he may take it into his head to set up for himself. If he should, and you have carefully practiced these few *excellent rules* of mine, take my word for it, all the provinces will immediately join him, and you will that day (if you have not done it sooner) get rid of the trouble of governing them and all the *plagues* attending their *commerce* and connection, from thenceforth and forever.

response to  
complaints  
and petitions  
for redress of  
grievances

response to  
other nations'  
support of  
colonies'  
resistance

takeover of  
forts, built  
by colonists,  
for British  
use against  
colonists

use of  
British  
troops in  
frontier  
regions

power &  
autonomy  
of chief  
military  
officer in  
colonies

Q. E. D.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Referring to the fortress of Castle William in Boston harbor, taken over by General Gage for British use against the colonists.

<sup>27</sup> *Quod erat demonstrandum*: Latin phrase ("which was to be demonstrated") often placed at the end of a philosophical argument; Franklin's pseudonymous signature for this essay.

The First Continental Congress  
Philadelphia, October 1774

PETITION TO KING GEORGE III

EXCERPTS

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

WE your majesty's faithful subjects of the colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the counties of Newcastle, Kent and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, in behalf of ourselves and the inhabitants of those colonies, who have deputed us to represent them in general congress, by this our humble petition beg leave to lay our grievances before the throne.

- A standing army has been kept in these colonies ever since the conclusion of the late war [French and Indian War] without the consent of our assemblies; and this army, with a considerable naval armament, has been employed to enforce the collection of taxes.
- The authority of the commander in chief and, under him, of the brigadiers general, has in time of peace been rendered supreme in all the civil governments in America.
- The commander in chief of all your majesty's forces in North America has, in time of peace, been appointed governor of a colony.
- The charges of usual officers have been greatly increased, and new, expensive, and oppressive officers have been multiplied.
- The judges of admiralty and vice-admiralty courts are empowered to receive their salaries and fees from the effects condemned by themselves.
- The officers of the customs are empowered to break open and enter houses without the authority of any civil magistrate founded on legal information.
- The judges of courts of common law have been made entirely dependent on one part [of] the legislature for their salaries as well as for the duration of their commissions.
- Councilors, holding their commissions during pleasure, exercise legislative authority.
- Humble and reasonable petitions from the representatives of the people have been fruitless.
- The agents of the people have been discountenanced, and governors have been instructed to prevent the payment of their salaries.
- Assemblies have been frequently and injuriously dissolved, and commerce burdened with many useless and oppressive restrictions.
- By several acts of Parliament made in the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth years of your majesty's reign:
  - duties are imposed on us for the purpose of raising a revenue, and
  - the powers of admiralty and vice-admiralty courts are extended beyond their ancient limits, whereby our property is taken from us without our consent;
  - the trial by jury in many civil cases is abolished;



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- enormous forfeitures are incurred for slight offenses;
- vexatious informers are exempted from paying damages to which they are justly liable, and
- oppressive security is required from owners before they are allowed to defend their rights.

\_\_\_ Both houses of Parliament have resolved that the colonists may be tried in England for offenses alleged to have been committed in America, by virtue of a statute passed in the thirty-fifth year of Henry the eighth, and in consequence thereof attempts have been made to enforce that statute.

\_\_\_ A statute was passed in the twelfth year of your majesty's reign directing that persons charged with committing any offense therein described, in any place out of the realm, may be indicted and tried for the same in any shire or county within the realm, whereby inhabitants of these colonies may, in sundry cases by that statute made capital, be deprived of a trial by their peers of the vicinage.

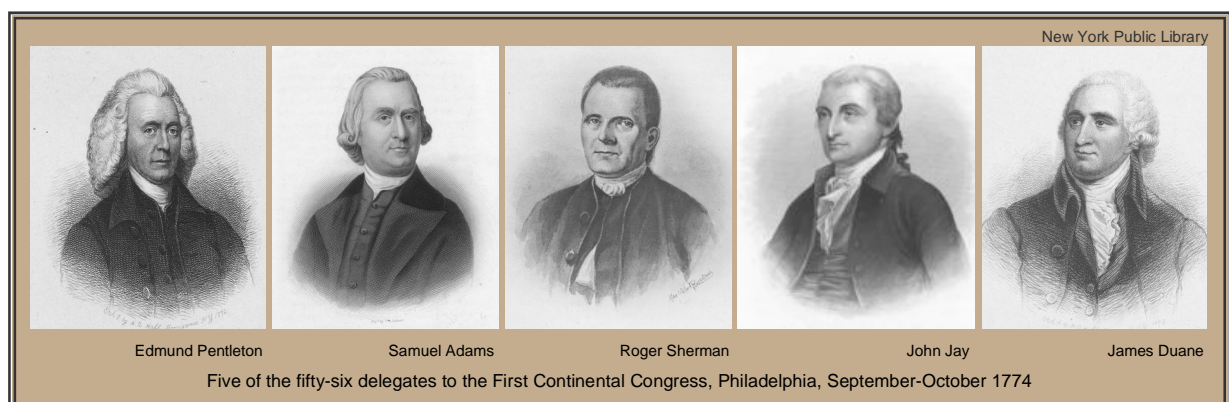
\_\_\_ In the last session of Parliament:

- an act was passed for blocking up the harbor of Boston;
- another empowering the governor of the Massachusetts Bay to send persons indicted for murder in that province to another colony, or even to Great Britain, for trial, whereby such offenders may escape legal punishment;
- a third for altering the chartered constitution of government in that province; and
- a fourth for extending the limits of Quebec, abolishing the English and restoring the French laws, whereby great numbers of British freemen are subject to the latter, and establishing an absolute government and the Roman Catholic religion throughout those vast regions that border on the westerly and northerly boundaries of the free Protestant English settlements; and
- a fifth for the better providing suitable quarters for officers and soldiers in his majesty's service in North America.

To a sovereign, who "*glories in the name of Briton*," the bare recital of these acts must, we presume, justify the loyal subjects who fly to the foot of his throne and implore his clemency for protection against them. . . .

Had our creator been pleased to give us existence in a land of slavery, the sense of our condition might have been mitigated by ignorance and habit; but, thanks be to his adorable goodness, we were born the heirs of freedom and ever enjoyed our rights under the auspices of your royal ancestors whose family was seated on the British throne to rescue and secure a pious and gallant nation from the popery and despotism of a superstitious and inexorable tyrant.<sup>28</sup> Your majesty, we are confident, justly rejoices that your title to the crown is thus founded on the title of your people to liberty, and therefore we doubt not but your royal wisdom must approve the sensibility that teaches your subjects anxiously to guard the blessing they received from divine providence, and thereby to prove the performance of that compact which elevated the illustrious house of Brunswick to the imperial dignity it now possesses.

The apprehension of being degraded into a state of servitude from the pre-eminent rank of English



<sup>28</sup> King James II, a Roman Catholic, was deposed in 1688 during the Glorious Revolution and replaced by William III of the House of Brunswick (Hanover).

freeman, while our minds retain the strongest love of liberty and clearly foresee the miseries preparing for us and our posterity, excites emotions in our hearts which, though we cannot describe, we should not wish to conceal. Feeling as men and thinking as subjects in the manner we do, silence would be disloyalty. By giving this faithful information, we do all in our power to promote the great objects of your royal cares, the tranquility of your government, and the welfare of your people.

Duty to your majesty and regard for the preservation of ourselves and our posterity — the primary obligations of nature and of society — command us to entreat your royal attention, and, as your majesty enjoys the signal distinction of reigning over freemen, we apprehend the language of freemen cannot be displeasing. Your royal indignation, we hope, will rather fall on those designing and dangerous men<sup>29</sup> who, daringly interposing themselves between your royal person and your faithful subjects, and for several years past incessantly employed to dissolve the bonds of society by abusing your majesty's authority, misrepresenting your American subjects, and prosecuting the most desperate and irritating projects of oppression, have at length compelled us, by the force of accumulated injuries, too severe to be any longer tolerable, to disturb your majesty's repose by our complaints. . . .

We ask but for peace, liberty, and safety. We wish not a diminution of the prerogative, nor do we solicit the grant of any new right in our favor. Your royal authority over us and our connection with Great Britain we shall always carefully and zealously endeavor to support and maintain.

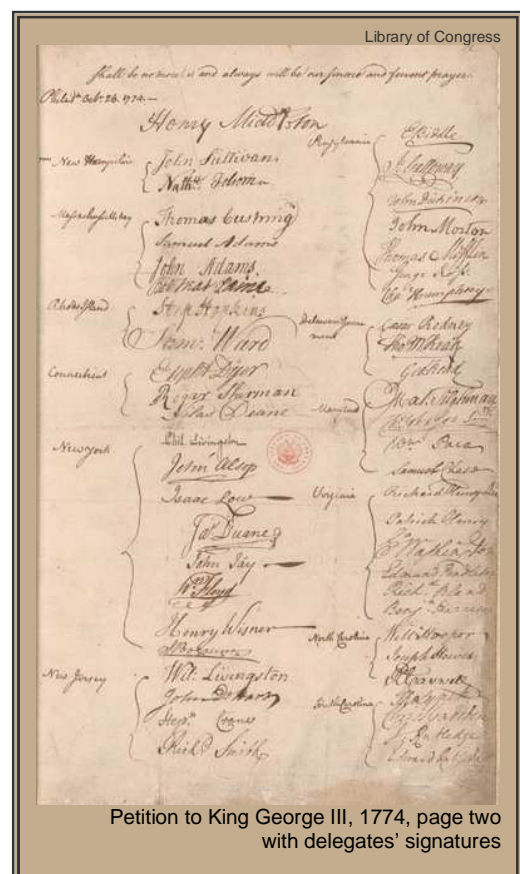
Filled with sentiments of duty to your majesty and affection to the parent state, deeply impressed by our education and strongly confirmed by our reason, and anxious to evince the sincerity of these dispositions, we present this petition only to obtain redress of grievances and relief from fears and jealousies [suspicions], occasioned by the system of statutes and regulations adopted since the close of the late war for raising a revenue in America, extending the power of courts of Admiralty and Vice-Admiralty, trying persons in Great Britain for offenses alleged to be committed in America, affecting the province of Massachusetts Bay, and altering the government, and extending the limits of Quebec by the abolition of which system the harmony between Great Britain and these colonies, so necessary to the happiness of both, and so ardently desired by the latter, and usual intercourses, will be immediately restored.

In the magnanimity and justice of your majesty and Parliament, we confide for a redress of our other grievances, trusting that when the causes of our apprehensions are removed, our future conduct will prove us not unworthy of the regard we have been accustomed in our happier days to enjoy. For appealing to that Being who thoroughly searches the hearts of his creatures, we solemnly profess that our councils have been influenced by no other motive than a dread of impending destruction. . . .

We therefore most earnestly beseech your majesty that your royal authority and interposition may be used for our relief, and that a gracious answer may be given to this petition. . . .

The delegates agreed that if the offending acts of Parliament were not repealed, the colonies would boycott British goods after December 1, and they would meet in a second continental congress the following May.

The petition, presented by Benjamin Franklin while serving as a colonial agent in London, was rejected by Parliament and the king.



<sup>29</sup> I.e., the British Prime Minister and cabinet officials.



## PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

September-October, 1774, as published in

*Extracts from the Votes and Proceedings of the American Continental Congress, Held at Philadelphia . . . Containing The Bill of Rights, A List of Grievances, Occasional Resolves, The Association, An Address to the People of Great Britain, and A Memorial to the Inhabitants of the British American Colonies, Oct. 1774, EXCERPTS.*

### [BILL of RIGHTS]

The good people of the several colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex on Delaware,<sup>30</sup> Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina,<sup>31</sup> justly alarmed at these arbitrary proceedings of Parliament and administration, have severally elected, constituted, and appointed deputies to meet and sit in general Congress in the city of Philadelphia in order to obtain such establishment as that their religion, laws, and liberties may not be subverted: Whereupon the deputies so appointed being now assembled in a full and free representation of these colonies, taking into their most serious consideration the best means of attaining the ends aforesaid, do in the first place as Englishmen, their ancestors in like cases have usually done, for asserting and vindicating their rights and liberties, DECLARE,

That the inhabitants of the English colonies in North America, by the immutable laws of nature, the principles of the English constitution, and the several charters or compacts, have the following RIGHTS:—

*Resolved, N. C. D.*<sup>32</sup> 1. That they are entitled to life, liberty and property: and they have never ceded to any sovereign power whatever a right to dispose of either without their consent.

life, liberty,  
and  
property

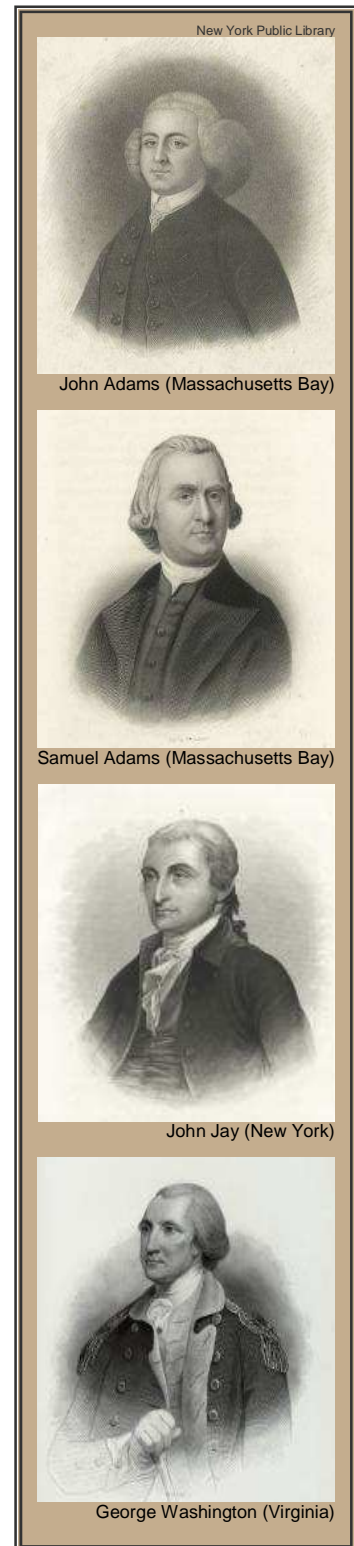
*Resolved, N. C. D.* 2. That our ancestors who first settled these colonies were, at the time of their emigration from the mother country, entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of free and natural born subjects within the realm of England.

rights as  
English  
subjects

*Resolved, N. C. D.* 3. That by such emigration they by no means forfeited, surrendered, or lost any of those rights, but that they were, and their descendants now are, entitled to the exercise and enjoyment of all such of them, as their local and other circumstances enable them to exercise and enjoy.

rights not  
lost by  
emigration  
to America

*Resolved,* 4. That the foundation of English liberty and of all free government is a right in the people to participate in their legislative council: and as the English colonists are not represented, and from their local and other circumstances



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<sup>30</sup> Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex: counties on the Delaware River became the self-governing state of Delaware in 1776.

<sup>31</sup> Georgia, being the newest colony (founded in 1730) and more dependent on Great Britain, did not send delegates.

<sup>32</sup> N.C.D.: unanimous [Latin: *nemine contra dicente* (no one dissenting)].



rights of  
American  
colonists,  
as English-  
men, to tax  
and pass  
laws for  
themselves  
in their own  
assemblies  
(subject  
only to  
king's veto)

cannot properly be represented in the British Parliament, they are entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their several provincial Legislatures, where their right of representation can alone be preserved in all cases of taxation and internal polity, subject only to the negative of their sovereign, in such manner as has been heretofore used and accustomed: But, from the necessity of the case, and a regard to the mutual interest of both countries, we cheerfully consent to the operation of such acts of the British Parliament as are bona fide, restrained to the regulation of our external commerce for the purpose of securing the commercial advantages of the whole empire to the mother country, and the commercial benefits of its respective members, excluding every idea of taxation internal or external, for raising a revenue on the subjects in America without their consent.

right to trial  
by jury of  
one's peers

*Resolved, N. C. D. 5.* That the respective colonies are entitled to the common law of England, and more especially to the great and inestimable privilege of being tried by their peers of the vicinage [surrounding district], according to the course of that law.

rights in  
long-esta-  
blished  
English law

*Resolved, 6.* That they are entitled to the benefit of such of the English statutes as existed at the time of their colonization, and which they have, by experience, respectively found to be applicable to their several local and other circumstances.

rights in  
royal  
charters  
& colonial  
laws

*Resolved, N. C. D. 7.* That these, his Majesty's colonies, are likewise entitled to all the immunities and privileges granted and confirmed to them by royal charters or secured by their several codes of provincial laws.

rights of  
assembly  
and petition

*Resolved, N. C. D. 8.* That they have a right peaceably to assemble, consider of their grievances, and petition the King; and that all prosecutions, prohibitory proclamations, and commitments for the same are illegal.

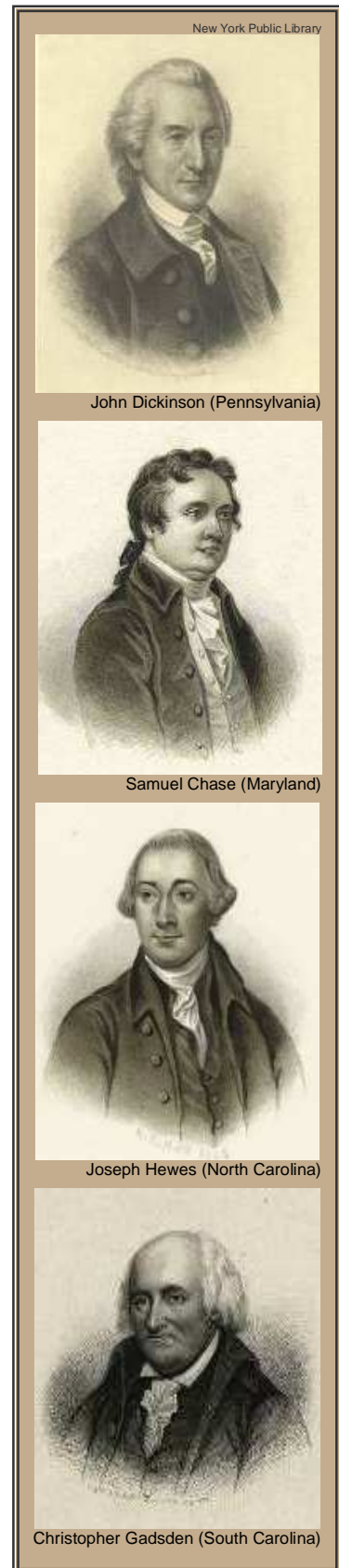
standing  
armies in  
peacetime  
illegal

*Resolved, N. C. D. 9.* That the keeping a standing army in these colonies in times of peace, without the consent of the legislature of that colony in which such army is kept, is against law.

legislative  
councils  
appointed  
by royal  
governors  
illegal

*Resolved, N. C. D. 10.* It is indispensably necessary to good government, and rendered essential by the English constitution, that the constituent branches of the legislature be independent of each other; that therefore the exercise of legislative power in several colonies by a council appointed, during pleasure by the crown, is unconstitutional, dangerous and destructive to the freedom of American legislation.

All and each of which the aforesaid deputies in behalf of themselves and their constituents do claim, demand, and insist on, as their indisputable rights and liberties, which cannot be legally taken from them, altered or abridged by any power whatever, without their own consent, by their representatives in their several provincial legislatures.



John Dickinson (Pennsylvania)

Samuel Chase (Maryland)

Joseph Hewes (North Carolina)

Christopher Gadsden (South Carolina)

In the course of our inquiry, we find many infringements and violations of the foregoing rights, which, from an ardent desire that harmony and mutual intercourse of affection and interest may be restored, we pass over for the present and proceed to state such acts and measures as have been adopted since the last war which demonstrate a system formed to enslave America.

*Resolved, N. C. D.* That the following acts of Parliament are infringements and violations of the rights of the colonists, and that the repeal of them is essentially necessary in order to restore harmony between Great Britain and the American colonies, viz. [namely]

The offending acts of Parliament from 1764 to 1774 are summarized, after which the delegates propose a Continental Association to enforce a non-importation agreement after December 1 if the named acts of Parliament have not been repealed. The Proceedings conclude with two letters, one addressed to the people of Great Britain, and one to the American colonists.

## To the PEOPLE of GREAT BRITAIN

*Friends and Fellow Subjects,*

When a Nation, led to Greatness by the hand of Liberty, & possessed of all the Glory, that heroism, munificence, and humanity can bestow, descends to the ungrateful talk of forging chains for her Friends & Children, and, instead of giving support to Freedom, turns advocate for Slavery and Oppression, there is reason to suspect she has either ceased to be virtuous or been extremely negligent in the appointment of her rulers.

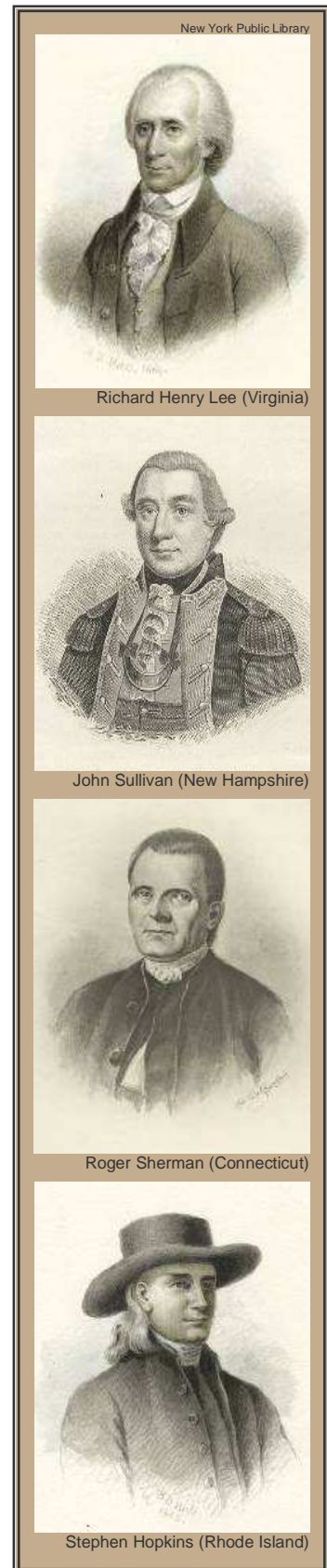
In almost every age, in repeated conflicts, in long and bloody wars, as well civil as foreign, against many and powerful nations, against the open assaults of enemies and the more dangerous treachery of friends, have the inhabitants of your Island, your great and glorious ancestors, maintained their independence and transmitted the rights of men and the blessings of liberty to you, their posterity.

Be not surprised, therefore, that we who are descended from the same common ancestors; that we, whose forefathers participated in all the rights, the liberties, and the constitution you so justly boast, and who have carefully conveyed the same fair inheritance to us, guaranteed by the plighted faith of government and the most solemn compacts with British Sovereigns, should refuse to surrender them to men who found their claims on no principles of reason, and who prosecute them with a design that, by having our lives and property in their power, they may with the greater facility enslave you.

The cause of America is now the object of universal attention. It has at length become very serious. This unhappy country has not only been oppressed but abused and misrepresented, and the duty we owe to ourselves and posterity, to your interest, and the general welfare of the British empire, leads us to address you on this very important subject.

*Know then,* that we consider ourselves, and do insist that we are and ought to be, as free as our fellow subjects in Britain, and that no power on earth has a right to take our property from us without our consent.

That we claim all the benefits secured to the subject by the English constitution, and particularly that inestimable one of trial by jury.



*“oppress our Hearts with unspeakable Grief”*

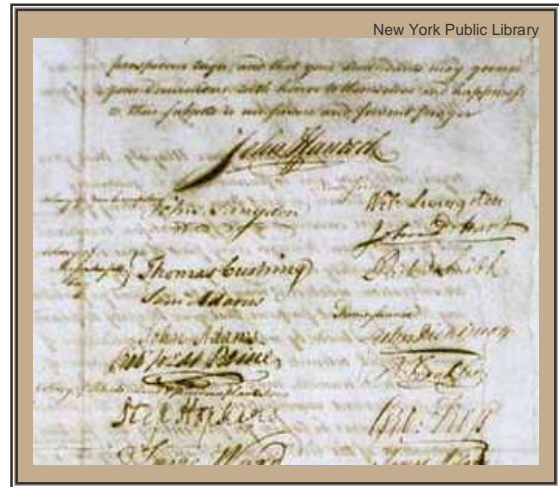
## The “Olive Branch Petition” of the Second Continental Congress July 1775

The Humble Petition of the Twelve United Colonies  
by Their Delegates in Congress to the King

approved 5 July 1775, sent 8 July 1775,  
rejected by King George III 23 August 1775

To the KING’s most excellent Majesty.

*Most gracious Sovereign!*



**W**E, your Majesty’s faithful Subjects of the Colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the Counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex, on Delaware [River], Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, in behalf of ourselves and the inhabitants of these Colonies, who have deputed us to represent them in General Congress, entreat your Majesty’s gracious attention to this our humble petition.

The union between our Mother Country and these Colonies, and the energy of mild and just Government, produced benefits so remarkably important, and afforded such an assurance of their permanency and increase, that the wonder and envy of other nations were excited while they beheld Great Britain rising to a power the most extraordinary the world had ever known.

Her rivals, observing that there was no probability of this happy connection being broken by civil dissensions, and apprehending its future effects if left any longer undisturbed, resolved to prevent her receiving such continual and formidable accessions of wealth and strength by checking the growth of those settlements from which they were to be derived.

In the prosecution of this attempt, events so unfavorable to the design took place that every friend to the interest of Great Britain and these Colonies entertained pleasing and reasonable expectations of seeing an additional force and exertion immediately given to the operations of the union hitherto experienced by an enlargement of the dominions of the Crown and the removal of ancient and warlike enemies to a greater distance.

At the conclusion, therefore, of the late war [French and Indian War], the most glorious and advantageous that ever had been carried on by British arms, your loyal Colonists, having contributed to its success by such repeated and strenuous exertions as frequently procured them the distinguished approbation of your Majesty, of the late King, and of Parliament, doubted not but that they should be permitted with the rest of the empire, to share in the blessings of peace and the emoluments of victory and conquest.

While these recent and honorable acknowledgements of their merits remained on record in the journals and acts of that august legislature, the Parliament, undefaced by the imputation or even the suspicion of any offense, they were alarmed by a new system of statutes and regulations, adopted for the administration of the Colonies, that filled their minds with the most painful fears and jealousies, and, to their inexpressible astonishment, perceived the danger of a foreign quarrel quickly succeeded by domestic dangers, in their judgment of a more dreadful kind.

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Nor were these anxieties alleviated by any tendency in this system to promote the welfare of their Mother Country. For though its effects were more immediately felt by them, yet its influence appeared to be injurious to the commerce and prosperity of Great Britain.

We shall decline the ungrateful task of describing the irksome variety of artifices practiced by many of your Majesty's ministers [cabinet officials], the delusive pretenses, fruitless terrors, and unavailing severities that have from time to time been dealt out by them in their attempts to execute this impolitic plan, or of tracing through a series of years past the progress of the unhappy differences between Great Britain and these Colonies that have flowed from this fatal source.

Your Majesty's Ministers, persevering in their measures, and proceeding to open hostilities for enforcing them, have compelled us to arm in our own defense, and have engaged us in a controversy so peculiarly abhorrent to the affections of your still faithful Colonists that, when we consider whom we must oppose in this contest and, if it continues, what may be the consequences, our own particular misfortunes are accounted by us only as parts of our distress.

Knowing to what violent resentments and incurable animosities civil discords are apt to exasperate and inflame the contending parties, we think ourselves required by indispensable obligations to Almighty God, to your Majesty, to our fellow subjects, and to ourselves, immediately to use all the means in our power, not incompatible with our safety, for stopping the further effusion of blood and for averting the impending calamities that threaten the British empire.

Thus called upon to address your Majesty on affairs of such moment to America, and probably to all your dominions, we are earnestly desirous of performing this office with the utmost deference for your Majesty, and we therefore pray that your Majesty's royal magnanimity and benevolence may make the most favorable constructions of our expressions on so uncommon an occasion. Could we represent in their full force the sentiments that agitate the minds of us your dutiful subjects, we are persuaded your Majesty would ascribe any seeming deviation from reverence in our language, and even in our conduct, not to any reprehensible intention but to the impossibility of reconciling the usual appearances of respect with a just attention to our own preservation against those artful and cruel enemies who abuse your royal confidence and authority for the purpose of effecting our destruction.

Attached to your Majesty's person, family, and government, with all devotion that principle and affection can inspire; connected with Great Britain by the strongest ties that can unite societies, and deploring every event that tends in any degree to weaken them, we solemnly assure your Majesty that we not only most ardently desire the former harmony between her and these Colonies may be restored, but that a concord may be established between them upon so firm a basis as to perpetuate its blessings, uninterrupted by any future dissensions, to succeeding generations in both countries, and to transmit your Majesty's name to posterity, adorned with that signal and lasting glory that has attended the memory of those illustrious personages, whose virtues and abilities have extricated states from dangerous convulsions and, by securing the happiness to others, have erected the most noble and durable monuments to their own fame.

We beg further leave to assure your Majesty that, notwithstanding the sufferings of your loyal Colonists during the course of this present controversy, our Breasts retain too tender a regard for the Kingdom from which we derive our Origin to request such a Reconciliation as might in any manner be inconsistent with her Dignity or her welfare. These, related as we are to her, Honor and Duty as well as inclination induce us to support and advance; and the apprehensions that now oppress our Hearts with unspeakable Grief, being once removed, your Majesty will find your faithful Subjects on this Continent ready and willing at all times, as they have ever been with their lives and fortunes, to assert and maintain the rights and interests of your Majesty and of our mother country.

We therefore beseech your Majesty that your royal authority and influence may be graciously interposed to procure us relief from our afflicting fears and jealousies occasioned [caused] by the system before-mentioned, and to settle peace through every part of our dominions, with all humility submitting to your Majesty's wise consideration whether it may not be expedient, for facilitating those important purposes, that your Majesty be pleased to direct some mode by which the united applications of your faithful Colonists to the Throne, in presence of their Common Councils, may be improved into a happy

and permanent reconciliation; and that, in the mean time, measures may be taken for preventing the further destruction of the lives of your Majesty's subjects, and that such statutes as more immediately distress any of your Majesty's Colonies may be repealed.

For such arrangements as your Majesty's wisdom can form for collecting the united sense of your American people, we are convinced your Majesty would receive such satisfactory proofs of the disposition of the Colonists towards their Sovereign, and the parent state, that the wished for opportunity would soon be restored to them of evincing the sincerity of their professions by every testimony of devotion becoming the most dutiful Subjects and the most affectionate Colonists.

That your Majesty may enjoy long and prosperous reign, and that your descendents may govern your dominions with honor to themselves and happiness to their subjects, is our sincere and fervent prayer.

JOHN HANCOCK

[President of the Congress]

Colony of New Hampshire  
JOHN LANGDON  
THOMAS CUSHING

Colony of Massachusetts Bay  
SAMUEL ADAMS  
JOHN ADAMS  
ROBERT TREAT PAINE

Colony of Rhode-Island  
and Providence Plantation  
STEPHEN HOPKINS  
SAMUEL WARD

Colony of Connecticut  
ELIPHALET DYER  
ROGER SHERMAN  
SILAS DEANE

Colony of New York  
PHILIP LIVINGSTON  
JAMES DUANE  
JOHN ALSOP  
FRANCIS LEWIS  
JOHN JAY  
ROBERT LIVINGSTON, JR.  
LEWIS MORRIS  
WILLIAM FLOYD  
HENRY WISNER

New Jersey  
WILLIAM LIVINGSTON  
JOHN DE HART  
RICHARD SMITH

Pennsylvania  
JOHN DICKINSON  
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN  
GEORGE ROSS  
JAMES WILSON  
CHARLES HUMPHREYS  
EDWARD BIDDLE

Counties of Newcastle, Kent, Sussex  
[Delaware]  
CAESAR RODNEY  
THOMAS McKEAN  
GEORGE READ

Maryland  
MATTHEW TILGHMAN  
THOMAS JOHNSON, JR.  
WILLIAM PACA  
SAMUEL CHASE  
THOMAS STONE

Colony of Virginia  
PATRICK HENRY, JR.  
RICHARD HENRY LEE  
EDMUND PENDLETON  
BENJAMIN HARRISON  
THOMAS JEFFERSON

North Carolina  
WILLIAM HOOPER  
JOSEPH HEWES

South Carolina  
HENRY MIDDLETON  
THOMAS LYNCH  
CHRISTOPHER GADSDEN  
JOHN RUTLEDGE  
EDWARD RUTLEDGE





## A DECLARATION

by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North America . . .

### Setting Forth the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms

Second Continental Congress, 6 July 1775

**I**F it was possible for men who exercise their reason to believe that the Divine Author of our existence intended a part of the human race to hold an absolute property in and an unbounded power over others, marked out by his infinite goodness and wisdom, as the objects of a legal domination never rightfully resistible, however severe and oppressive, the Inhabitants of these Colonies might at least require from the Parliament of Great Britain some evidence that this dreadful authority over them has been granted to that body. But a reverence for our great Creator, principles of humanity, and the dictates of common sense must convince all those who reflect upon the subject that government was instituted to promote the welfare of mankind and ought to be administered for the attainment of that end. The legislature of Great Britain, however, stimulated by an inordinate passion for a power, not only unjustifiable but which they know to be peculiarly reprobated by the very constitution of that kingdom, and desperate of success in any mode of contest where regard should be had to truth, law, or right, have at length, deserting those, attempted to effect their cruel and impolitic purpose of enslaving these Colonies by violence, and have thereby rendered it necessary for us to close with their last appeal from Reason to Arms. — Yet, however blinded that assembly may be by their intemperate rage for unlimited domination so to slight justice and the opinion of mankind, we esteem ourselves bound by obligations of respect to the rest of the world to make known the justice of our cause.

Our forefathers, inhabitants of the island of Great Britain, left their native land to seek on these shores a residence for civil and religious freedom. At the expense of their blood, at the hazard of their fortunes, without the least charge to the country from which they removed, by unceasing labor and an unconquerable spirit, they effected settlements in the distant and inhospitable wilds of America, then filled with numerous and warlike nations of barbarians. — Societies or governments, vested with perfect legislatures, were formed under charters from the crown, and an harmonious intercourse was established between the colonies and the kingdom from which they derived their origin. The mutual benefits of this union became in a short time so extraordinary as to excite astonishment. It is universally confessed, that the amazing increase of the wealth, strength, and navigation of the realm arose from this source, and the minister [cabinet official] who so wisely and successfully directed the measures of Great Britain in the late war,<sup>33</sup> publicly declared that these colonies enabled her to triumph over her enemies. — Towards the conclusion of that war, it pleased our sovereign to make a change in his counsels [advisors]. — From that fatal moment, the affairs of the British empire began to fall into confusion, and, gradually sliding from the summit of glorious prosperity to which they had been advanced by the virtues and abilities of one man [Pitt], are at length distracted by the convulsions, that now shake it to its deepest foundations. The new

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<sup>33</sup> William Pitt, Prime Minister during the French and Indian War, favorably judged by Americans as his successors were not.



ministry, finding the brave foes of Britain, though frequently defeated yet still contending, took up the unfortunate idea of granting them a hasty peace and of then subduing her faithful friends.

These devoted colonies were judged to be in such a state, as to present victories without bloodshed, and all the easy emoluments of statuteable plunder. The uninterrupted tenor of their peaceable and respectful behavior from the beginning of colonization, their dutiful, zealous, and useful services during the war, though so recently and amply acknowledged in the most honorable manner by his Majesty, by the late king, and by Parliament, could not save them from the meditated innovations. — Parliament was influenced to adopt the pernicious project and, assuming a new power over them, have in the course of eleven years given such decisive specimens of the spirit and consequences attending this power as to leave no doubt concerning the effects of acquiescence under it. They have undertaken to give and grant our money without our consent, though we have ever exercised an exclusive right to dispose of our own property. Statutes have been passed for extending the jurisdiction of courts of Admiralty and Vice-Admiralty beyond their ancient limits; for depriving us of the accustomed and inestimable privilege of trial by jury in cases affecting both life and property; for suspending the legislature of one of the colonies [New York]; for interdicting all commerce of another [Massachusetts Bay, through Boston]; and for altering fundamentally the form of government established by charter and secured by acts of its own legislature solemnly confirmed by the crown; for exempting the “murderers” of colonists from legal trial and, in effect, from punishment; for erecting in a neighboring province, acquired by the joint arms of Great Britain and America, a despotism dangerous to our very existence;<sup>34</sup> and for quartering soldiers upon the colonists in time of profound peace. It has also been resolved in Parliament that colonists charged with committing certain offenses shall be transported to England to be tried.

But why should we enumerate our injuries in detail? By one statute it is declared that Parliament can “of right make laws to bind us IN ALL CASES WHATSOEVER.”<sup>35</sup> What is to defend us against so enormous, so unlimited a power? Not a single man

*What is to defend us against  
so enormous, so unlimited a power?*

of those who assume it is chosen by us or is subject to our control or influence, but, on the contrary, they are all of them exempt from the operation of such laws, and an American revenue, if not diverted from the ostensible purposes for which it is raised, would actually lighten their own burdens in proportion as they increase ours. We saw the misery to which such despotism would reduce us. We for ten years incessantly and ineffectually besieged the Throne as supplicants. We reasoned, we remonstrated with Parliament in the most mild and decent language. But Administration, sensible that we should regard these oppressive measures as freemen ought to do, sent over fleets and armies to enforce them. The indignation of the Americans was roused, it is true; but it was the indignation of a virtuous, loyal, and affectionate people. A Congress of Delegates from the united colonies was assembled at Philadelphia on the fifth day of last September [1774]. We resolved again to offer an humble and dutiful petition to the King, and also addressed our fellow subjects of Great Britain. We have pursued every temperate, every respectful measure. We have even proceeded to break off our commercial intercourse with our fellows subjects [boycott; nonimportation] as the last peaceable admonition that our attachment to no nation upon earth should supplant our attachment to liberty. — This, we flattered ourselves, was the ultimate step of the controversy. But subsequent events have shown how vain was this hope of finding moderation in our enemies.

Several threatening expressions against the colonies were inserted in his Majesty’s speech. Our petition, though we were told it was a decent one and that his Majesty had been pleased to receive it graciously and to promise laying it before his Parliament, was huddled into both houses amongst a bundle of American papers, and there neglected. The Lords and Commons in their address in the month of February said that “a rebellion at that time actually existed within the province of Massachusetts Bay, and

<sup>34</sup> Referring to the Quebec Act, passed by Parliament in 1774, that allowed the laws and official religion (Roman Catholicism) of France to be maintained in conquered Canada, including the Ohio River Valley, alarming Protestant Americans who did not want an undemocratic Catholic administration west of the Appalachians where many hoped to settle.

<sup>35</sup> Declaratory Act of 1766, passed by Parliament on the same day that the Stamp Act was repealed.

that those concerned in it had been countenanced and encouraged by unlawful combinations and engagements entered into by his Majesty's subjects in several of the other colonies; and therefore they besought his Majesty that he would take the most effectual measures to enforce due obedience to the laws & authority of the supreme legislature." — Soon after, the commercial intercourse of whole colonies with foreign countries and with each other was cut off by an act of Parliament. By another, several of them were entirely prohibited from the fisheries in the seas near their coasts on which they always depended for their sustenance; and large re-enforcements of ships and troops were immediately sent over to General Gage.<sup>36</sup>

Fruitless were all the entreaties, arguments, and eloquence of an illustrious band of the most distinguished Peers and Commoners [in Parliament] who nobly and strenuously asserted the justice of our cause, to stay [stop] or even to mitigate the heedless fury with which these accumulated and unexampled outrages were hurried on. — Equally fruitless was the interference of the city of London, of Bristol, and many other respectable towns in our favor. Parliament adopted an insidious maneuver calculated to divide us, to establish a perpetual auction of taxations where colony should bid against colony, all of them uninformed what ransom would redeem their lives, and thus to extort from us at the point of the bayonet the unknown sums that should be sufficient to gratify, if possible to gratify, ministerial rapacity, with the miserable indulgence left to us of raising in our own mode the prescribed tribute. What terms more rigid and humiliating could have been dictated by remorseless victors to conquered enemies? In our circumstances to accept them would be to deserve them.

***What terms more rigid and humiliating could have been dictated by remorseless victors to conquered enemies?***

Soon after the intelligence [news] of these proceedings arrived on this continent, General Gage, who in the course of the last year had taken possession of the town of Boston in the province of Massachusetts Bay and still occupied it as a garrison, on the 19th day of April sent out from that place a large detachment of his army who made an unprovoked assault on the inhabitants of the said province at the town of Lexington, as appears by the affidavits of a great number of persons, some of whom were officers and soldiers of that detachment, murdered eight of the inhabitants and wounded many others. From thence the troops proceeded in warlike array to the town of Concord, where they set upon another party of the inhabitants of the same province, killing several and wounding more, until compelled to retreat by the country people suddenly assembled to repel this cruel aggression. Hostilities, thus commenced by the British troops, have been since prosecuted by them without regard to faith or reputation. — The inhabitants of Boston, being confined within that town by the General their Governor, and having, in order to procure their dismissal, entered into a treaty with him, it was stipulated that the said inhabitants, having deposited their arms with their own magistrates, should have liberty to depart, taking with them their other effects. They accordingly delivered up their arms, but, in open violation of honor, in defiance of the obligation of treaties, which even savage nations esteemed sacred, the Governor ordered the arms, deposited as aforesaid that they might be preserved for their owners, to be seized by a body of soldiers, detained the greatest part of the inhabitants in the town, and compelled the few who were permitted to retire to leave their most valuable effects behind.

By this perfidy wives are separated from their husbands, children from their parents, the aged and the sick from their relations and friends who wish to attend and comfort them; and those who have been used to live in plenty and even elegance are reduced to deplorable distress.

The General, further emulating his ministerial masters, by a proclamation bearing date on the 12th day of June, after venting the grossest falsehoods and calumnies against the good people of these colonies, proceeds to "declare them all, either by name or description, to be rebels and traitors, to supersede the course of the common law, and instead thereof to publish and order the use and exercise of the law martial." — His troops have butchered our countrymen, have wantonly burnt Charles-Town, besides a considerable number of houses in other places; our ships and vessels are seized; the necessary supplies of

<sup>36</sup> British military commander in Boston, Massachusetts.

provisions are intercepted, and he is exerting his utmost power to spread destruction and devastation around him.

We have received certain intelligence that General Carleton, the Governor of Canada, is instigating the people of that province and

the Indians to fall upon us, and we have but too much reason to apprehend that schemes have been formed to excite domestic enemies against us. In brief, a part of these colonies now feels, and all of them are sure of feeling as far as the vengeance of administration can inflict them, the complicated calamities of fire, sword, and famine. — We are reduced to the alternative of choosing an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers<sup>37</sup> or resistance by force. — The latter is our choice. — We have counted the cost of this contest and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery. — Honor, justice, and humanity forbid us tamely to surrender that freedom which we received from our gallant ancestors, and which our innocent posterity have a right to receive from us. We cannot endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to that wretchedness which inevitably awaits them if we basely entail hereditary bondage upon them.

Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great, and, if necessary, foreign assistance is undoubtedly attainable. — We gratefully acknowledge, as signal instances of the Divine favor towards us, that his Providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy until we were grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operation, and possessed of the means of defending ourselves. — With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before GOD and the world, declare that, exerting the utmost energy of those powers which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume, we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties, being with one mind resolved to die Free-men rather than to live Slaves.

Lest this declaration should disquiet the minds of our friends and fellow subjects in any part of the empire, we assure them that we mean not to dissolve that Union which has so long and so happily subsisted between us, and which we sincerely wish to see restored. — Necessity has not yet driven us into that desperate measure or induced us to excite any other nation to war against them. — We have not raised armies with ambitious designs of separating from Great Britain and establishing independent states. We fight not for glory or for conquest. We exhibit to mankind the remarkable spectacle of a people attacked by unprovoked enemies, without any imputation or even suspicion of offense. They boast of their privileges and civilization, and yet proffer no milder conditions than servitude or death.

In our own native land, in defense of the freedom that is our birthright, and which we ever enjoyed till the late violation of it — for the protection of our property, acquired solely by the honest industry of our forefathers and ourselves, against violence actually offered, we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors, and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before.

With an humble confidence in the mercies of the supreme and impartial Judge and Ruler of the universe, we most devoutly implore his divine goodness to protect us happily through this great conflict, to dispose our adversaries to reconciliation on reasonable terms, and thereby to relieve the empire from the calamities of civil war.

*By Order of CONGRESS,*  
**JOHN HANCOCK, President**

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<sup>37</sup> I.e., the British cabinet under the Prime Minister (not clergymen).