

# **National Humanities Center**

## **My Neighbor, My Enemy: How American Colonists Became Patriots and Loyalists**

### **The Association of the First Continental Congress, Philadelphia, October 20, 1774**

In October of 1774 the First Continental Congress issued the Association, a set of regulations curtailing commerce with Great Britain. Although the Congressional Delegates called for a general boycott of trade with the mother country, they also set up a structure for an insurgent government to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of royal authority. Specifically, Congress authorized committees that in the fullness of time turned their attention away from commercial violations and demanded loyalty to the American cause.

Most of the Association's articles are aimed directly at merchants and ship owners and deal explicitly with non-importation and non-consumption of British goods and the non-exportation of American goods. One even takes into account the Association's implications for sheepraising. However, two go beyond commerce and authorize local committees to intrude deeply into the lives of ordinary Americans. Article eight discourages "every species of extravagance and dissipation" and even prescribes proper mourning dress. Article eleven establishes local committees to enforce the Association by keeping watch on behavior and exposing to public condemnation people who, in the committee's view, violate its provisions. With the Association, the First Continental Congress imposed revolutionary discipline on the local level and forced Americans to take sides in the deepening conflict with Great Britain.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Whom do the delegates blame for the current state of affairs between Great Britain and the colonies?
2. How do the delegates present themselves?
3. Why do the delegates feel the need to control such activities as horse races, plays, and gambling?

of his prime minister, whom we esteem the most determined foe to royalty; and from an ardent love to our country, which nothing but death can abate, we do promise and engage to pay, by the 1st day of October next, the respective sums to our names annexed, to James Mitchell Varnum, Esq.; Messrs. Preserved Pearce, A. Mumford and William Pearce, to be laid out and expended in such articles of provisions, for our said distressed brethren, as the majority of us shall agree upon, to be sent to the committee of ways and means for employing the poor in Boston, by the first conveyance.—  
*Providence Gazette.*

Bartlett, John Russell: Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, vol. 7: 1770-1776. New York 1862, p. 303.

[The Association of the First Continental Congress, Philadelphia, Pa., October 20, 1774]

We, his Majesty's most loyal subjects, the delegates of the several colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the three lower counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, deputed to represent them in a continental congress, held in the city of Philadelphia, on the 5th day of September, 1774, avowing our allegiance to his Majesty, our affection and regard for our fellow-subjects in Great Britain and elsewhere, affected with the deepest anxiety and most alarming apprehensions, at those grievances and distresses, with which his Majesty's American subjects are oppressed; and having taken under our most serious deliberation the state of the whole continent, find that the present unhappy situation of our affairs is occasioned by a ruinous system of colony administration, adopted by the British ministry about the year 1763, evidently calculated for enslaving these colonies, and with them, the British Empire. In prosecution of which system, various Acts of Parliament have been passed for raising a revenue in America, for depriving the American subjects, in many instances, of the constitutional trial by jury, exposing their lives to danger, by directing a new and illegal trial beyond the seas, for crimes alleged to have been committed in America; and in prosecution of the same system, several late, cruel and oppressive Acts have been passed, respecting the town of Boston and the Massachusetts Bay, and also an Act for extending the province of Quebec, so as to border on the western frontiers of these colonies, establishing an arbitrary government therein, and discouraging the settlement of British subjects in that wide extended country; thus, by the influence of civil principles and ancient prejudices, to dispose the

inhabitants to act with hostility against the free Protestant colonies, whenever a wicked ministry shall choose so to direct them.

To obtain redress of these grievances which threaten destruction to the lives, liberty, and property of his Majesty's subjects, in North America, we are of opinion that a non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreement, faithfully adhered to, will prove the most speedy, effectual, and peaceable measure: and therefore, we do, for ourselves, and the inhabitants of the several colonies whom we represent, firmly agree and associate, under the sacred ties of love of our country, as follows:

1. That from and after the first day of December next, we will not import into British America, from Great Britain or Ireland, any goods, wares or merchandise whatsoever, or from any other place, any such goods, wares, or merchandise, as shall have been exported from Great Britain or Ireland; nor will we, after that day, import any East India tea from any part of the world; nor any molasses, syrups, paneles, coffee, or pimento, from the British plantations or from Dominica; nor wines from Madeira, or the Western Islands; nor foreign indigo.

2. We will neither import nor purchase any slave imported after the first day of December next; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our vessels, nor sell our commodities or manufactures to those who are concerned in it.

3. As a non-consumption agreement, strictly adhered to, will be an effectual security for the observation of the non-importation, we, as above, solemnly agree and associate, that from this day we will not purchase or use any tea imported on account of the East India Company, or any on which a duty hath been or shall be paid; and from and after the first day of March next, we will not purchase or use any East India tea whatever; nor will we, nor shall any person for or under us, purchase or use any of those goods, wares or merchandise we have agreed not to import, which we shall know, or have cause to suspect, were imported after the first day of December, except such as come under the rules and directions of the tenth article hereafter mentioned.

4. The earnest desire we have not to injure our fellow-subjects in Great Britain, Ireland, or the West Indies, induces us to suspend a non-exportation until the tenth day of September, 1775; at which time, if the said Acts and parts of Acts of the British Parliament hereinafter mentioned are not repealed, we will not, directly or indirectly, export any merchandise or commodity whatsoever to Britain, Ireland or the West Indies, except rice to Europe.

5. Such as are merchants, and use the British and Irish trade, will give orders, as soon as possible, to their factors, agents and correspondents, in Great Britain and Ireland, not to ship any goods to them, on any pretence whatsoever, as they cannot be received in America; and if any merchant residing in Great Britain or Ireland shall directly or indirectly ship any goods, wares, or merchandise for America, in order to

break the said non-importation agreement, or in any manner contravene the same, on such unworthy conduct being well attested, it ought to be made public; and on the same being so done, we will not, from thenceforth, have any commercial connection with such merchant.

6. That such as are owners of vessels will give positive orders to their captains, or masters, not to receive on board their vessels any goods-prohibited by the said non-importation agreement, on pain of immediate dismissal from their service.

7. We will use our utmost endeavours to improve the breed of sheep and increase their number to the greatest extent; and to that end we will kill them as seldom as may be, especially those of the most profitable kind; nor will we export any to the West Indies or elsewhere; and those of us who are or may become overstocked with, or can conveniently spare any sheep, will dispose of them to our neighbours, especially to the poorer sort, on moderate terms.

8. We will, in our several stations, encourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts, and the manufactures of this country, especially that of wool; and will discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of gaming, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shows, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments; and on the death of any relation or friend, none of us, or any of our families, will go into any further mourning-dress than a black crepe or ribbon on the arm or hat, for gentlemen, and a black ribbon and necklace for ladies, and we will discontinue the giving of gloves and scarves at funerals.

9. Such as are vendors of goods or merchandise will not take advantage of the scarcity of goods, that may be occasioned by this association but will sell the same at the rates we have been respectively accustomed to do for twelve months last past. And if any vendor of goods or merchandise shall sell any such goods on higher terms, or shall, in any manner, or by any device whatsoever violate or depart from this agreement, no person ought, nor will any of us deal with any such person, or his or her factor or agent, at any time thereafter, for any commodity whatever.

10. In case any merchant, trader, or other person, shall import any goods or merchandise after the first day of December, and before the first day of February next, the same ought forthwith, at the election of the owner, to be either reshipped or delivered up to the committee of the county or town wherein they shall be imported, to be stored at the risk of the importer until the non-importation agreement shall cease, or be sold under the direction of the committee aforesaid; and in the last mentioned case, the owner or owners of such goods shall be reimbursed out of the sales, the first cost and charges, the profit, if any, to be applied towards relieving and employing such poor inhabitants of the town of Boston as are immediate sufferers by the Boston Port Bill; and a particular account of all goods so returned, stored or sold to be inserted in

the public papers; and if any goods or merchandises shall be imported after the said first day of February, the same ought forthwith to be sent back again, without breaking any of the packages thereof.

11. That a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town by those who are qualified to vote for representatives in the legislature, whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons touching this Association; and when it shall be made to appear to the satisfaction of a majority of any such committee that any person within the limits of their appointment has violated this Association, that such majority do forthwith cause the truth of the case to be published in the gazette; to the end that all such foes to the rights of British America may be publicly known, and universally condemned as the enemies of American liberty; and thenceforth we respectively will break off all dealings with him or her.

12. That the committee of correspondence, in the respective colonies, do frequently inspect the entries of their custom houses, and inform each other, from time to time, of the true state thereof, and of every other material circumstance that may occur relative to this Association.

13. That all manufactures of this country be sold at reasonable prices, so that no undue advantage be taken of a future scarcity of goods.

14. And we do further agree and resolve that we will have no trade, commerce, dealings, or intercourse whatsoever, with any colony or province in North America which shall not accede to, or which shall hereafter violate this Association, but will hold them as unworthy of the rights of freemen, and as inimical to the liberties of their country.

And we do solemnly bind ourselves and our constituents, under the ties aforesaid, to adhere to this Association, until such parts of the several Acts of Parliament passed since the close of the last war, as impose or continue duties on tea, wine, molasses, syrups, paneles, coffee, sugar, pimento, indigo, foreign paper, glass, and painters' colours imported into America, and extend the powers of the admiralty courts beyond their ancient limits, deprive the American subject of trial by jury, authorize the judge's certificate to indemnify the prosecutor from damages, that he might otherwise be liable to from a trial by his peers, require oppressive security from a claimant of ships or goods seized, before he shall be allowed to defend his property, are repealed. And until that part of the Act of the 12 Geo. III, c. 24, entitled "An Act for the better securing his Majesty's dock-yards, magazines, ships, ammunition, and stores," by which any persons charged with committing any of the offences therein described, in America, may be tried in any shire or county within the realm, is repealed-and until the four Acts, passed the last session of Parliament, viz. that for stopping the port and blocking up the harbour of Boston-that for altering the charter and government of the Massachusetts Bay-and that which is entitled "An act for the better administration of justice,

etc."-and that "for extending the limits of Quebec, etc." are repealed. And we recommend it to the provincial conventions, and to the committees in the respective colonies, to establish such farther regulations as they may think proper, for carrying into execution this Association. The foregoing Association being determined upon by the Congress, was ordered to be subscribed by the several members thereof; and thereupon, we have hereunto set our respective names accordingly.

Jensen, Merrill (ed.): American Colonial Documents to 1776. Reprint London 1969 (First ed. 1955) [English Historical Documents vol. 9].

[Frances Town, N.H., October 21, 1774]

Province of New-Hampshire, County of Hillsborough, Oct. 21, 1774.

FRANCES TOWN RESOLVES

We the subscribers, being Inhabitants of Frances Town, having taken into our most serious consideration the alarming affairs of this Country at the present day, do most firmly enter into the following Resolutions, viz:

1st. That we will at all times defend our liberties and privileges, both civil and religious, even to the risk of our fortunes; and will not only disapprove of, but wholly despise, such persons as we have just and solid reason to think wish us deprived of the same.

2d. *Resolved*, That we do abhor and abominate all oppressive acts of persons in power, whether Magistrate or Officer, whereby the poor are distressed and unlawfully robbed of their properties in any unjust manner whatever; and we will always endeavour to treat them with such neglect and contempt as they justly deserve.

3d. *Resolved*, That we will at all times be ready to assist the Civil Magistrates in the due execution of their offices at the risk of our lives; and will at all times show our disapprobation of all unlawful proceedings of unjust men congregating together, as they pretend to maintain their liberties, and even trample under foot the very law of liberty and wholly destroy that law our whole land firmly wish, and desire to maintain. And we,

4thly. *Resolved*, They are bold despisers of law, and that their proceedings directly tend to the utter subversion of all regularity and good order among his Majesty's good subjects in this land.

Unterschieden von 23 Personen

American Archives, 4th Ser., vol. 1, p. 888.