

# “There is No Idea of Submission, here in any Bodies head”

## COLONISTS RESPOND TO THE COERCIVE ACTS & THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

### 1774

\_A Selection from Newspaper Reports, Pamphlets, Letters, Resolutions, Sermons, Histories, &c.\_

1773\_\_\_\_\_

Dec. 16: BOSTON TEA PARTY climaxes protests against the Tea Act in the northern colonies.

1774\_\_\_\_\_

March-June: COERCIVE ACTS (“Intolerable Acts” to the colonists) and the Quebec Act are passed by Parliament to punish and solidify imperial control of the colonies, especially Massachusetts. They are:

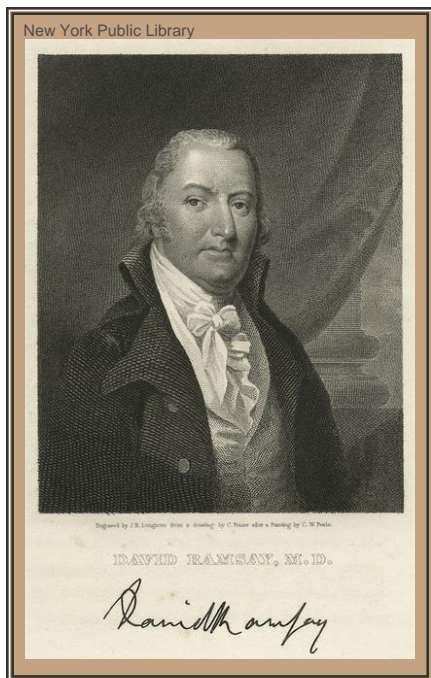
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Boston Port Act</li> <li>- Massachusetts Govt. Act</li> <li>- Administration of Justice Act</li> <li>- Quartering Act</li> <li>- Quebec Act</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closed Boston harbor to shipping until full payment made for destroyed tea.</li> <li>Placed colony under direct British rule; strictly limited town meetings.</li> <li>Allowed British officials accused of murdering colonists (or of other capital offenses) in line of duty to be sent to another colony or to Britain for trial.</li> <li>Allowed governor to house British soldiers in unoccupied private buildings.</li> <li>Extended boundaries of Quebec, formerly a French territory, to include Ohio River Valley where many Americans hoped to settle. Allowed province to maintain French law and the official state religion of Roman Catholicism.</li> </ul> |
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Sept-Oct.: FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS is held in Philadelphia with delegates from all colonies except Georgia; organizes a “Continental Association” to boycott British goods after Dec. 1 if the Intolerable Acts are not repealed; agrees to meet the following May if necessary; sends a petition to King George III that is rejected.

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## AN AMERICAN DESCRIBES THE “PATRIOTIC FLAME” OF OPPOSITION TO THE COERCIVE ACTS, 1774

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

A South Carolina physician, Ramsey 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.

. . . These three acts of Parliament [Coercive Acts], contrary to the expectation of those who planned them, became a cement of a firm union among the colonies from New Hampshire to Georgia. They now openly said, “our charters and other rights and immunities must depend on the pleasure of Parliament.” . . .

The patriots who had hitherto guided the helm knew well that if the other Colonies did not support the people of Boston, they must be crushed; and it was equally obvious that, in their coercion, a precedent injurious to liberty would be established. It was therefore

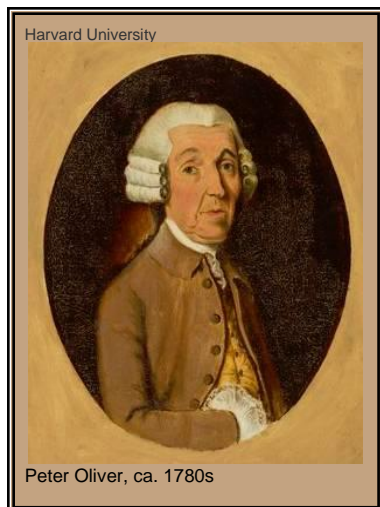
the interest of Boston to draw in the other Colonies. It was also the interest of the patriots in all the Colonies to bring over the bulk of the people to adopt such efficient measures as were likely to extricate the inhabitants of Boston from the unhappy situation in which they were involved. To effect these purposes, much prudence as well as patriotism was necessary. The other provinces were but remotely affected by the fate of Massachusetts. They were happy and had no cause on their own account to oppose the government of Great Britain. . . .

. . . To convince the bulk of the people that they had an interest in foregoing a present good and submitting to a present evil — in order to obtain a future greater good and to avoid a future greater evil — was the task assigned to the colonial patriots. But it called for the exertion of their utmost abilities. They effected it in a great measure by means of the press. Pamphlets, essays, addresses and newspaper dissertations were daily presented to the public, proving that Massachusetts was suffering in the common cause, and that interest and policy, as well as good neighborhood, required the united exertions of all the colonies in support of that much injured province. . . .

In the counties and towns of the several provinces, as well as in the cities, the people assembled and passed resolutions expressive of their rights and of their detestation of the late American acts of Parliament. These had an instantaneous effect on the minds of thousands. Not only the young and impetuous, but the aged and temperate joined in pronouncing them to be unconstitutional and oppressive. They viewed them as deadly weapons aimed at the vitals of that liberty which they adored, as rendering abortive the generous pains taken by their forefathers to procure for them in a new world the quiet enjoyment of their rights. . . .

A patriotic flame, created and diffused by the contagion of sympathy, was communicated to so many breasts and reflected from such a variety of objects, as to become too intense to be resisted. . . .

This season of universal distress exhibited a striking proof how practicable it is for mankind to sacrifice ease, pleasure, and interest, when the mind is strongly excited by its passions. In the midst of their sufferings, cheerfulness appeared in the face of all the people. They counted everything cheap in comparison with liberty, and readily gave up whatever tended to endanger it. A noble strain of generosity and mutual support was generally excited. A great and powerful diffusion of public spirit took place. The animation of the times raised the actors in these scenes above themselves, and excited them to deeds of self-denial which the interested prudence of calmer seasons can scarcely credit.



## A LOYALIST DESCRIBES THE “WILD FIRE” OF OPPOSITION TO THE COERCIVE ACTS, 1774

### ■ PETER OLIVER, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 1781.

For his staunch defense of British imperial authority and power to tax the colonies, Oliver was harassed by Sons of Liberty, forced from his judgeship, and forever resented the destruction of his brother's house by a Boston mob. He left America with the British evacuation of Boston in 1776, living in Britain until his death in 1791.

After the Destruction of the Tea [Boston Tea Party, Dec. 1773], the *Massachusetts* Faction found they had passed the *Rubicon*:<sup>1</sup> it was now Neck or Nothing. They therefore went upon Committees of Correspondence & drew up what they called a Solemn League & Covenant, whereto everyone was to subscribe not to import from *England*, nor to deal with anyone that did, & to renounce all Connection with those who sold English Goods. . . This Scheme was formed & executed by *Saml. Adams* & his Myrmidons,<sup>2</sup> who were an Overmatch for a whole Conclave of Arch Demons, at any Thing that was subversive to the Foundations of moral Virtue, or that tended to the Destruction of the Creation of the supreme Being. Hand Bills were sent from the Select men & Committees of *Boston* to all the Country Towns to come into this Scheme, & there was such a Connection of Trade between those Towns and *Boston* that few dared to refuse the Invitation. . . .

The Parliament of this Year 1774, having taken into their Consideration the disordered State of the *Massachusetts* — that they refused to reimburse the *East India* Company for the destruction of their Tea; & that the Council of the Province was composed of Men who were inimical to British Legislation; for these & otherwise Reasons, which were like to have a Tendency to establish Government had they been as well pursued — passed several Acts: for diminishing the Charter, for shutting up the Port of Boston, & for regulating Trials at Common Law. . . .

The People now went upon modeling a new Form of Government, by Committees & Associations. The County of *Suffolk* met & passed a Number of high Seasoned Resolves in the Month of *September*, sufficiently peppered to carry them through the approaching Winter. The wild Fire ran through all the Colonies. They all interested their Selves in the *Boston* Port Bill &, in a pretended Compassion to the Sufferers of that Town, shipped Cargoes of Provision; but it was thought that those who had the Distribution of them fared full as sumptuously upon them as many of those did for whom they were designed. The Lava from this Volcano at last settled into a Congress of 52 Men from the different Provinces who met in *September* 1774 & pass'd several notable Resolutions about Importation, non Importation & Exportation; all which, with their other after Resolves, have been so often printed that the Pastry Cooks may furnish their selves with any Stock they may want, at every Book Stall in London, for their patriotic Pies; by which Means the Patriots may have the Advantage of eating their own Words again, without having them crammed down their Throats by Force of Law.

The People began now to arm with Powder & Ball, and to discipline their Militia. Genl. *Gage*, on his Part, finding that Affairs wore a serious Aspect, made Preparations for Defense. He began to fortify the Town. He sent for Troops from *Quebec* & *New York*, & collected a respectable Force. The other Provinces dismantled the King's Garrisons, there being no Force to oppose them. . . . The People were continually purchasing Muskets, Powder & Ball in the Town of *Boston*, & carrying them into the Country, under the Pretense that the Law of the Province obliged every Town & Person to be provided with each of those Articles.

. . . They also secured Cannon from Vessels & some of the Kings Forts, & acted with great Vigor in all their Preparations; & thus passed the Remainder of the Year 1774, in Offense on one Side & in Defense on the other. \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Passed the Rubicon, i.e., passed the point of no return, referring to Julius Caesar leading his army in 49. B.C.E. across the Rubicon River in northern Italy as he progressed toward his ultimate conquest of Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Myrmidons (Greek mythology): fierce warriors. The term came to signify the loyal and unquestioning followers of a leader.

## PUBLIC PROTESTS AGAINST THE COERCIVE ACTS, 1774

After the Boston Tea Party of December 1773, Parliament singled out Massachusetts for punishment and imperial control via the Coercive Acts, passed in the following spring. Vehement protest escalated throughout the colony, especially upon the arrival of new judges appointed by the governor instead of the colonial assembly. Massachusetts newspapers proudly reported the resistance of its residents as well as support from other colonies—donations of food and money, public acts of defiance, commitments of solidarity, and punishment of unsympathetic Americans.

### ■ *The Boston News-Letter*, 1 September 1774.

We hear from Bridgewater that when the new unconstitutional<sup>3</sup> Counselor, Josiah Edson, Esq. (who is also a Deacon) stood up and read the Psalm at one of the Meeting Houses [churches] there Yesterday se'nnight,<sup>4</sup> the Congregation would not Sing: — It was said a great number of People intended to wait on him the Wednesday following [to demand that he resign his royal appointment to the court].

Letters from Philadelphia say that City only has raised £4000 [English pounds], that currency for the support of the Town of Boston under its present Difficulties; and that every other Town in that Government [Pennsylvania] are doing the same, as were also those in New Jersey where 'tis said 6000 Bushels of Grain was already collected for that charitable Purpose.

It is reported from Worcester that last Week 2 or 3000 Men mustered there and obliged the Honorable Timothy Paine, Esq. of that Place (who had lately taken the Oath of Counselor upon the new Plan<sup>5</sup>) to declare that he would not act in that Capacity for the future. . . .

We hear from Berkshire that vast numbers of the people assembled to attend the last Session of the County Court in Great Barrington and, unarmed, filled the Court House and Avenues to the Seat of Justice, so full that no Passage could be found for the Justices to take their Places. — The Sheriff commanded them to make way for the court, but they gave him to understand that they knew no court on any other establishment [legal basis] than the ancient laws and usages of their country, & to none other would they submit or give way on any terms.

### ■ *The Boston Post-Boy*, 5 September 1774 [news from Hartford, Connecticut].

Last Tuesday se'nnight,<sup>4</sup> Col. Willard, one of the new Council came to Union to do some Business, when two Gentlemen belonging to [from] Windham who had been his Attorneys in a Case, met him and publicly refused to assist him any more, as they looked upon him as a Traitor to his Country. The People rose, took and confined him One Night, then carried him to Brimfield where the Province People, about 400 in Number, met them! They called a Council of Themselves and condemned Col. Willard to Newgate Prison in Simsbury, and a Number [of men] set off with & carried him six Miles on the Way thither. Col. Willard then submitted to take the oath they required, on which they dismissed him. One Capt. Davis of Brimfield was present who, showing Resentment, and treating the People with bad Language, they strip'd him and gave him the New Fashion Dress of Tar and Feathers.

### ■ *The Boston Evening-Post*, 5 September 1774 [news via a letter from Wilmington, North Carolina].

No sooner was a Subscription put about for the Relief of our suffering Brethren in Boston than, in a few Days, I am told, Two Thousand Pounds our Currency was raised, and it is expected something very considerable will be contributed at New Bern and Edenton for the same noble Purpose, as Subscriptions are set on foot in every County in the Province. You will receive this by Mr. Parker Quince, who generously made an Offer of his Vessel to carry a Load of Provisions to Boston, Freight free, and what redounds to the Honor of the Tars [North Carolinians], the Master and Mariners navigate her without receiving One Farthing Wages (truly patriotic!)

### ■ *Essex Gazette*, Salem, Massachusetts, 13 September 1774.

By letters from Connecticut, and by several credible gentleman arrived from thence, we are informed that there were not less than 40,000 men in motion, and under arms, on their way to Boston on Saturday,

<sup>3</sup> I.e., appointed without regard to the colonists' rights under the English constitution and their colonial charters.

<sup>4</sup> *Se'nnight*: seven nights, a week.

<sup>5</sup> The Massachusetts Government Act; see p. 1.

Sunday, and Monday last, having heard a false report that the troops had fired upon Boston and killed several of the inhabitants. Twelve hundred arrived at Hartford from Farmington and other places forty miles beyond Hartford on Sunday last on their way to this place, so rapidly did the news fly. But being informed by expresses that it was a false report, they returned home, declaring themselves ready at a minute's warning to arm again and fight for their country and distressed brethren of Boston.

■ **Essex Gazette, Salem, Massachusetts, 13 September 1774.**

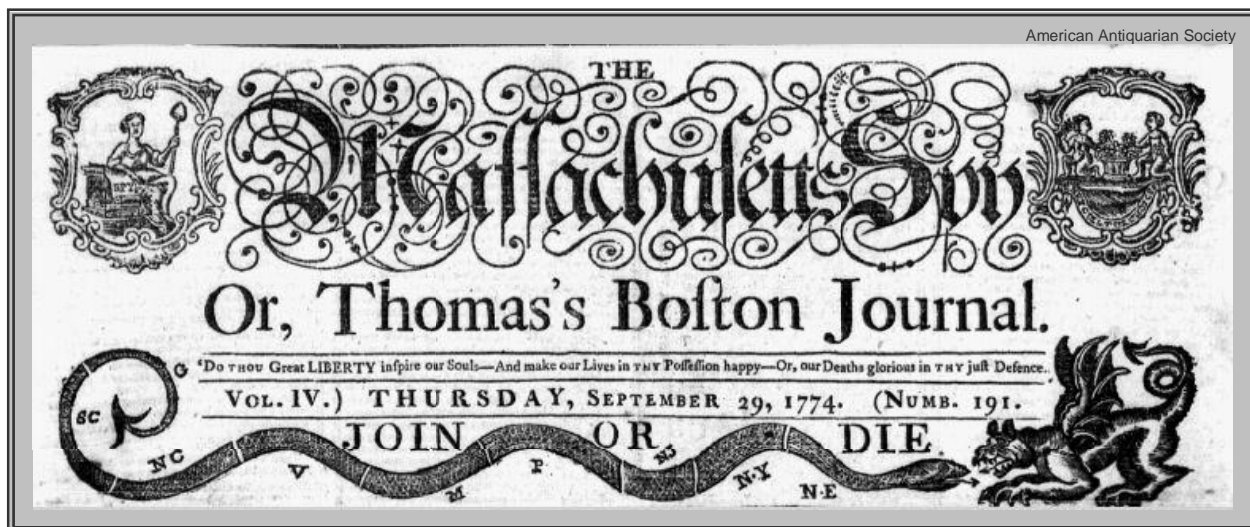
On Tuesday last, being the Day the County Court was to set at Springfield, a great Concourse of people, judg'd to be about 3000, assembled at the Court House in that Place and appointed a Committee to wait on the Court, and request their appearance among the People, which they immediately complied with, when they very willingly signed the following Engagement, viz. [namely]

**W**E the Subscribers [signers] do severally Promise and solemnly engage to all People now assembled at Springfield, in the County of Hampshire on the 30<sup>th</sup> Day of August 1774, that we never will take, hold, execute, or exercise any Commission, Office, of Employment whatsoever under, or by Virtue of, or in any Manner derived from any Authority pretended or attempted to be given by a late Act of Parliament entitled "An Act for the better regulating the Government of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England."

Israel Williams, Oliver Partridge, Timothy Dwight, Thomas Williams, John Worthington, Joseph Hawley, William Williams, Simeon Strong, Moses Bliss, Jonathan Ashley, Elisha Porter, William Billings, John Phelps, Solomon Stoddard, Justus Ely, Caleb Strong, Samuel Fowler, Jonathan Bliss.

■ **The Massachusetts Spy, Or, Thomas's Boston Journal, 22 September 1774.**

FREDERICK COUNTY (*Virginia*) July 23. Yesterday being the day appointed by our sheriff for the election of burgesses [assemblymen], a great part of the county assembled at Winchester, among whom it was universally agreed to show their detestation to the presumption of the G——r [Governor] of Massachusetts Bay [Gen. Gage], that his effigy should be first hanged and then suffer the flames, accompanied by his darling proclamation. An image was fabricated truly like him, as he must appear to the mind's eye of every American, grim as Pluto and deformed as Vulcan. It was decorated with a soldier's coat, a grenadier's cap, and a wooden sword. Thus accoutred, with a rope round his neck, in the fatal cart, supported by an African, he was conducted through the town, attended by a rejoicing multitude, and then suspended on the highest gallows an American G——r was ever yet honored with. The proclamation was read by Mr. A. White, attorney at law, who made a very spirited and handsome speech to the people, exhorting them to be unanimous as the certain means to preserve their liberties. The torch was then applied and the flame, as if pleased to destroy the base destroyer of liberty, embraced him with uncommon ardor and devoured him in an instant.





# FOUNDING FATHERS on the FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington: May-November 1774

- **JOHN ADAMS**, delegate, letters to his wife, Abigail Adams, before & during the First Continental Congress, EXCERPTS.<sup>6</sup>

**12 May 1774.** We live my dear Soul, in an Age of Tryal. What will be the Consequence I know not. The Town of Boston, for ought I can see, must suffer Martyrdom: It must expire: And our principal Consolation is, that it dies in a noble Cause. The Cause of Truth, of Virtue, of Liberty and of Humanity: and that it will probably have a glorious Reformation, to greater Wealth, Splendor and Power than ever.

**6 July 1774.** These Bickerings of opposite Parties, and their mutual Reproaches, their Declamations, their Sing Song, their Triumphs and Defyances, their Dismals, and Prophecies, are all Delusion.

We very seldom hear any solid Reasoning. I wish always to discuss the Question, without all Painting, Pathos, Rhetoric, or Flourish of every Kind. And the Question seems to me to be, whether

the american Colonies are to be considered, as a distinct Community so far as to have a Right to judge for themselves, when the fundamentals of their Government are destroyed or invaded? Or Whether they are to be considered as a Part of the whole British Empire, the whole English Nation, so far as to be bound in Honour, Conscience or Interest by the general Sense of the whole Nation?

*AT THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS (Philadelphia)*

**8 Sept. 1774.** When or where this Letter will find you, I know not. In what Scenes of Distress and Terror, I cannot foresee. — We have received a confused Account from Boston, of a dreadful Catastrophy. The Particulars, We have not heard. We are waiting with the Utmost Anxiety and Impatience, for further Intelligence.

The Effect of the News We have both upon the Congress and the Inhabitants of this City, was very great — great indeed! Every Gentleman seems to consider the Bombardment of Boston, as the Bombardment, of the Capital of his own Province. Our Deliberations are grave and serious indeed.

**14 Sept. 1774.** The Congress will, to all present Appearance be well united and in such Measures, I hope will give Satisfaction to the Friends of our Country.

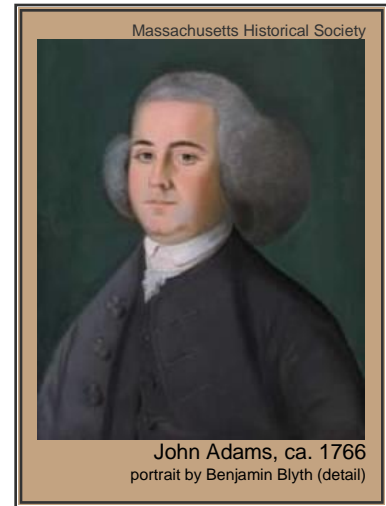
A Tory [Loyalist] here is the most despicable Animal in the Creation. Spiders, Toads, Snakes, are their only proper Emblems. The Massachusetts Councillors, and Addressers are held in curious Esteem here, as you will see.

The Spirit, the Firmness, the Prudence of our Province are vastly applauded, and We are universally acknowledged the Saviours and Defenders of American Liberty.

**18 Sept. 1774 [letter #1].** The Proceedings of the Congress, are all a profound Secret, as yet, except two Votes which were passed Yesterday, and ordered to be printed. You will see them from every Quarter. These Votes were passed in full Congress with perfect Unanimity.

The Esteem, the Affection, the Admiration, for the People of Boston and the Massachusetts, which were expressed Yesterday, And the fixed Determination that they should be supported, were enough to melt an Heart of Stone. I saw the Tears gush into the Eyes of the old, grave, pacific Quakers of Pennsylvania. . . .

We have a delicate Course to steer, between too much Activity and too much Insensibility, in our critical interested situation. I flatter myself however, that We shall conduct our Embassy in such a manner as to merit the Approbation of our Country.

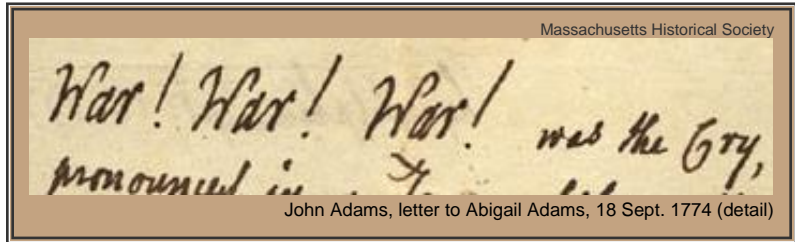


<sup>6</sup> The Papers of John Adams, Massachusetts Historical Society; reproduced by permission.

It has taken Us much Time to get acquainted with the Tempers, Views, Characters, and Designs of Persons and to let them into the Circumstances of our Province. My dear [illegible] do, intreat every Friend I have to write me. Every Line which comes from our Friends is greedily enquired after, and our Letters have done us vast service.

Middlesex and Suffolk have acquired unbounded Honour here.  
There is No Idea of Submission, here in any Bodies head.

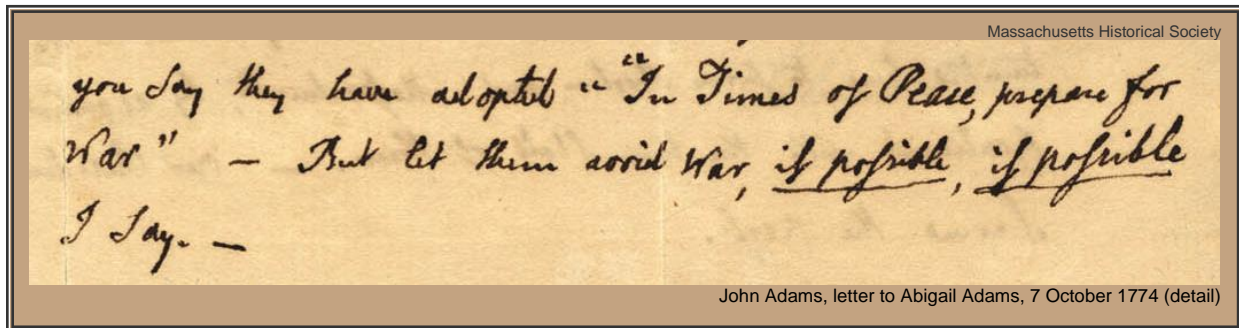
**18 Sept. 1774** [letter #2]. When the horrid News was brought here of the Bombardment of Boston [rumor], which made us compleatly miserable for two days, We saw Proofs both of the Sympathy and the Resolution, of the Continent.



WAR! WAR! WAR! was the Cry, and it was pronounced in a Tone, which would have done Honour to the Oratory of a Briton or a Roman. If it had proved true, you would have heard the Thunder of an American Congress. . . .

I confess the Kindness, the Affection, the Applause, which has been given to me and especially, to our Province, have many a Time filled my Bosom, and streamed from my Eyes.

**7 Oct. 1774.** There is a great Spirit in the Congress. But our People must be peaceable. Let them exercise every day in the Week, if they Will, the more the better. Let them furnish themselves with Artillery, Arms and Ammunition. Let them follow the Maxim, which you say they have adopted "In Times of Peace, prepare for War." But let them avoid War, if possible, if possible I say.



■ **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**, Writings while in London serving as colonial agent for New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Georgia, EXCERPTS.<sup>7</sup>

**7 Sept. 1774.** Letter to Peter Timothy, North Carolina.

If at the intended Congress your Deputies are nearly unanimous in Declaring your Rights; and in Resolving firmly against all Importations from hence till those Rights are acknowledged here; you cannot well fail of carrying your Point: This Ministry [British government] must go out, and give Place to Men of juster and more generous Principles.

If you divide you are lost.

**28 Sept. 1774.** Letter to Jonathan Williams.

The Unanimity and Resolution of the Colonies, astonishes their Enemies here, being totally unexpected. By its Continuance, you will undoubtedly carry all your Points: by giving way you will lose every thing. Strong Chains will be forg'd for you, and you will be made to pay for both the Iron and the Workmanship. I rejoice to see the Zeal with which your Cause is taken up by the other

<sup>7</sup> Letters from The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, American Philosophical Society & Yale University, 626579 & 626593; permission request submitted.

Colonies. But were they all to desert New England, she ought in my Opinion to hold the same Determination of defending her Rights, even if all Europe were to league with Britain in attempt-ing to enslave her. And I think she would finally succeed; for it is inconceivable what a small, virtuous, determin'd People may affect, with the Blessing of God, in defence of their Liberty, against Millions of Adversaries. History gives us many Instances of this kind. . . .

The Cry against America here is greatly abated; new Advocates for her are daily arising. The Manufacturers and Merchants begin to have their Apprehensions, and will soon begin to feel what they apprehend; they will then bestir themselves in Opposition to these absurd Measures. You have only to be firm united, and persevering.

**19 Nov. 1774.** Letter to the *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), addressed to the merchants of England: “The Question Discussed: or, Reasons why America should suspend all Trade with Great Britain.”<sup>8</sup>

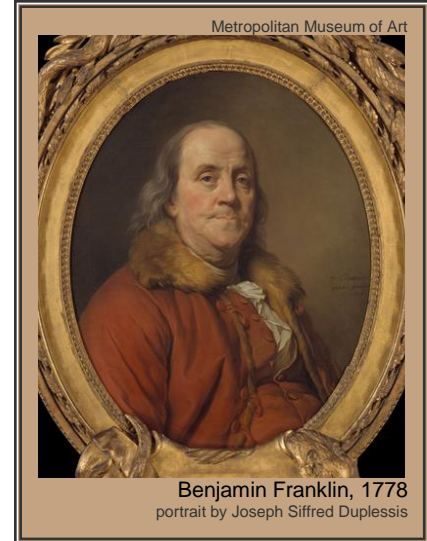
I look on the dignity of the American Congress equal to any assembly on earth, and their deliberations and resolutions more important in their nature and consequences than any which were ever before agitated in council. The value and character of America will be fixed, merely as the Congress shall estimate them, and if they assert the Rights and Liberties of America with that precision and effect which is universally expected from them, there can be no doubt but their resolves and advices will be honoured with universal Approbation [approval] and Obedience, and I hope and trust they will think it below their dignity, as well as inconsistent with their prudence, to degrade their importance by any weak humiliating concession or conduct.

I do not apprehend that all we can do will be too much. Our all is at stake, our enemies are powerful and determined, trifling expedients will be ridiculous, delays will ruin us, every moment is a moment of the utmost importance, all the world are now viewing and all posterity will look back on the proceedings of the Congress. An American.

■ **GEORGE WASHINGTON**, delegate, Letter to Bryan Fairfax, a longtime friend and military colleague who opposed the Continental Congress, EXCERPTS.<sup>9</sup>

**24 August 1774.** . . . the measures which [British] administration hath for some time been, and now are most violently pursuing, are repugnant to every principle of natural justice, whilst much abler heads than my own hath fully convinced me that it is not only repugnant to natural right, but subversive of the laws and constitution of Great Britain itself . . . .

For my own part, I shall not undertake to say where the line between Great Britain and the colonies should be drawn, but I am clearly of opinion that one ought to be drawn and our rights clearly ascertained. I could wish, I own [admit], that the dispute had been left to posterity to determine, but the crisis is arrived when we must assert our rights or submit to every imposition that can be heaped upon us, till custom and use shall make us as tame and abject slaves, as the blacks we rule over with such arbitrary sway.



<sup>8</sup> Verner W. Crane, ed., *Benjamin Franklin's Letters to the Press, 1758-1775* (Chapel Hill, NC, [1950]), pp. 270-276; permission pending.

<sup>9</sup> Courtesy of the University of Virginia Electronic Text Center.



# A “TRAGEDY OF FIVE ACTS,” 1774

## An Ex-Loyalist and A Loyalist Address the First Continental Congress

In September 1774, while the First Continental Congress was in session in Philadelphia, two essays were published in South Carolina addressing the core issue of the time: does Great Britain have the authority—the sovereignty—to legislate for the colonies? to tax the colonies? The first was written by a former Loyalist explaining his decision to support American resistance. As a rebuttal, the second was published by an anonymous Loyalist ostensibly from the Carolina backcountry.

Their arguments, based on interpretations of British history and law, mirror those in numerous essays and newspaper debates of the period. Do the colonies owe allegiance to the King only? to the King *and* Parliament? Are British leaders abusing their authority? To an extent that justifies American resistance? At what point is resistance treasonous? Note the insistent, often frenzied tone in both essays, written while ideological divisions were hardening in 1774. Also note that both men address their letters to the delegates of the First Continental Congress.

### ■ WILLIAM HENRY DRAYTON

Former Loyalist

*A Letter from Freeman of South Carolina to the Deputies of North America, Assembled in the High Court of Congress at Philadelphia, 1774, EXCERPTS.*

Drayton, a southern planter, opposed American resistance until 1774 when the Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act—the “Tragedy of five Acts”—sealed his opposition to British authority.

Hitherto I have opposed the local popular policy of this Colony. I thought the principles of action were unconstitutional. I am of the same opinion—I may be wrong—my judgment is my guide. But now! the *Tragedy of five Acts* composed in the last Session of Parliament, in my opinion, violates all the rules of the Political drama and incapacitates me from saying one word in favor of [British] Administration.—Nay, the same Spirit of indignation which animated me to condemn popular measures in the year 1769 because, although avowedly in defense of Liberty, they absolutely violated the freedom of Society by demanding men, under pain of being stigmatized and of sustaining detriment in property, to accede to Resolutions which, however well meant, could not *from the apparent constraint they held out* [i.e., intimidation] but be grating, very grating to a Freeman. So, the *same Spirit* of indignation, yet incapable of bending to measures violating Liberty, actuates me in like manner *now to assert my Freedom against the malignant nature of the late five Acts of Parliament*. . . . Thus, from *one and the same center of action and principle of conduct*, I opposed succeeding violations of my rights—*then*, by a temporary Democracy—*now* by an established Monarchy. . . .

The question now is not whether Great Britain has a right to *Tax America* against her consent—but whether she has a constitutional right to exercise

### ■ “A BACK SETTLER”

Loyalist

*Some Fugitive Thoughts on a Letter Signed Freeman, Addressed to the Deputies Assembled at the High Court of Congress in Philadelphia, 1774, EXCERPTS.*

Published by a Loyalist shortly after Drayton’s *Letter* and ostensibly written in the backcountry of South Carolina, this anonymous essay attacks Drayton’s motives and reasoning.

Fully convinced of the Necessity which exists that a strict Union between the Head and Members of the British Empire should take Place . . . I now attempt to expose the Imbecility of a Pamphlet signed *Freeman*, which lately made its Appearance, and point out a few of the many Absurdities with which it teems. . . .

As I solemnly declare that I do not wear the Features of any [political] Party, the impartial Public may safely rely on the Candor of such Reasons as will be used in investigating the Nature of that Right of Dominion which *Great Britain* claims over the Colonies of *North America*. . . .

The Sovereignty of a *British* Parliament over all the Dominions belonging to *Great Britain* is so essential a Part of the Constitution that the Right cannot be renounced with a Confusion of Ideas or a treasonable Surrender. . . . The Arguments advanced by *Freeman* to sustain Positions in direct Contradiction to the inherent Rights of a State are as incongruous as the Positions themselves are absurd. Since the first Establishment of Mankind into separate Societies, there was a supreme Power centered in some Part of the State or Society for the Purpose of forming necessary Regulations for the Good of the Whole. It was justly presumed that such Regulations, though essential for the Preservation of the Society, would not prove equally agreeable to each Individual, . . .

*Despotism* over America!—What can be more despotic in any government than in one Colony [Massachusetts Bay] to revoke Charter rights—to alter the law, to annihilate an essential branch of the Legislature *in favor of the People* and in its room to place an establishment existing but *at the Will of the Sovereign!* . . . At a stroke to annihilate the right of representation and the common law from among English subjects, nay *English People!*

Drayton continues to list British violations of Americans' rights as English subjects, similar to the lists in Thomas Jefferson's *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* of the same year and in the Declaration of Independence two years later.

Thus it as clear as the Sun at Noon that

- the taxation of America;
  - the Constitution of Councils by mandamus and the manner of filling them;
  - the want [lack] of Constitutional Courts of Ordinary and Chancery and Appeals being under the jurisdiction of the King in Council;
  - the dependence of Judges upon the Crown;
  - the granting Writs of Assistance to the Customs [officials];
  - the oppressive powers vested in the Courts of Admiralty;
  - the British Parliament exercising a Power to bind the Colonies in all cases whatsoever, from the violation of private Property even up to the establishment of a Despotism in America; and
  - the billeting of Soldiers in America,
- are all unconstitutional, illegal, and oppressive.—Grievances!—crying aloud for redress and heightened by a keenly affecting sensation, arising from the appearance of the British Arms by Land and Sea, now threateningly advanced, to continue and to enforce such oppressions and to compel America to bow the Neck to Slavery! . . .

The Eyes and Attention of America, nay of Europe, are fixed upon the American Congress—O Deputies! I doubt not but that you will act worthy of such an expectation.—Calmly deliberate upon, then respectfully and boldly declare the Grievances and Rights of America.—Be wisely cautious what you determine, but let your determinations be as fixed as Fate. . . .

F R E E M A N

*South Carolina, Charles-Town, August 10, 1774.*

. . . The Colonies were peopled and planted by *British Subjects*. At their Departure for *America*, they brought with them their Allegiance, an indelible Mark of their Subjection to a *British Parliament*, a Token of Obedience derived from their Ancestors . . . which no Change of Climate, no after-Act of theirs, could erase from their Persons. . . .

*America* is not a Part of the King's hereditary Estates; it constitutes a Share of the *British Empire*. The Dominion of the King in *America* arises from Parliament, which hath appointed him supreme Governor over all the Dominions of the State . . . . It is a very unlucky Circumstance that Partisans for that Doctrine of Independence, lately broached by *Freeman* under a political Phiz, cannot avoid the sad Alternative of either maintaining that they are not Subjects to the King of *England*, or, if that be granted, of confessing their Dependence on a *British Parliament*, . . .

"Back Settler" refutes each of Drayton's arguments that "exempt *America* from Taxation by a *British Parliament*."

I believe now I may venture to affirm that *Magna Carta*, the *Petition of Rights*, the Bill of Rights, and the *Act of Settlement*\* serve but to show the unmeasurable Power of Parliament over the Crown and Dominions of the State. So distant are they from generating an Incapacity in the *British Senate* that they confirm its imperial Authority. . . .

I can now sincerely aver that nothing but a warm Wish of promoting a Union between the Mother Country and her Colonies induced me to answer the mad Arguments of a Man who, soured by Disappointment, would widen the Breach of Discontent. But, *Americans!* Resume your Understanding, and discountenance every Design of Faction. Famed as you are for Justice, Humanity and Honor, it would ill become Men, justly celebrated for such godlike Virtues, to submit their Judgment as a Prey for Artifice to sport with, or to suffer [allow] their Attention to be diverted into any Channel but that which alone can render them a great and flourishing People. . .

A BACK SETTLER

*Keowee* [S.C.], Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1774.

## A LOYALIST'S WARNING IN SATIRE, 1774

*A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse, on His Return from the Grand Continental Congress . . . ,*  
by "Mary V. V," 1774. EXCERPTS.

Written by a still-unidentified author, this satirical dialogue was published in New York soon after the adjournment of the First Continental Congress in October 1774. In these excerpts, the Loyalist wife warns her weak-willed husband-delegate of the dangers courted by those who would so brazenly oppose the king and Parliament in acts "little short of high Treason."

*HUSBAND.*

Psha! for God's Sake, what Hazard of that do I run?

*WIFE.*

Psha on, but beware, Dear, that you are not undone;  
'Twould soon break my Heart, tho' we do now and  
then jar [argue],  
Were you ruin'd, or taken, or killed in War.  
From the Love I bear you, and our dear Girls and Boys,  
I have examin'd this Book that makes so much Noise:  
Without seeing thro' Mill-stones, it's soon understood,  
As sure as you are born, this will at last end in Blood:  
A Cabal, which the high sovereign Power defies,  
No matter whether prompted by Truth or by Lies;  
No Matter for us whether without or with Reason,  
In Law, they say, deem'd little short of High Treason.  
Three thousand Miles distant, we may crow and exult,  
But can you hope, any State, will bear such Insult.  
To your high mighty Congress, the Members were sent,  
To lay all our Complaints before Parliament;  
Usurpation rear'd its head; from that fatal Hour,  
You resolv'd, you enacted, like a sovereign Pow'r.  
Acts tho' not enjoin'd on Pain of Gibbets and Flames,  
Disobey'd at the Price of our Fortunes and Fames.  
Your Non-Imports and Exports are full fraught with  
Ruin,  
Of thousands and thousands the utter Undoing:  
While without daring to bite, you're showing your  
Teeth,  
You've contriv'd to starve all the poor People to death.  
. . .  
Instead of imploring their Justice or Pity,  
You treat Parliament like a Pack of Banditti:  
Instead of Addresses fram'd on Truth and on Reason,  
They breathe nothing but Insult, Rebellion, and Treason;  
Instead of attempting our Interests to further,  
You bring down on our Heads Perdition and Murder.  
When I think how these Things must infallibly end,  
I am distracted with Fear, and my Hair stands on end.

*HUSBAND.*

You've been heating your Brain with Romances and  
Plays,  
Such Rant and Bombast, I never heard in my Days.

*WIFE.*

Were your new-fangled Doctrines as modest and true,  
'Twould be well for yourselves and this poor Country  
too:  
But supposing *Great-Britain*, quite out of the Case,  
And you all should be sav'd by some high Act of Grace;  
Let's return to ourselves, if you've Eyes you will see  
Your Association big with rank Tyranny.  
It's hardly worth one's while to show Indignation  
At that foolish Bugbear, your Non-Importation;  
For Men do so hunger and so thirst after Pelf [wealth],  
That when thousands are starv'd, 'twill blow up of itself.  
You have read a great deal — with patient Reflection,  
Consider one Moment your Courts of Inspection:  
Could the Inquisition, *Venice, Rome, or Japan*,  
Have devised so horrid, so wicked, a Plan?  
In all the Records of the most slavish Nation,  
You'll not find an Instance of such Usurpation.  
If Spirits infernal for dire Vengeance design'd,  
Had been nam'd Delegates to afflict Humankind,  
And in Grand Continental Congress had resolv'd,  
"Let the Bonds of social Bliss be from henceforth  
dissolved,"  
They could not have plann'd with more exquisite Skill,  
Nor have found a tame Race more submissive to their Will.  
Let Fools, Pedants, and Husbands continue to hate  
The Advice of us Women, and call it all Prate:  
Whilst you are in Danger, by your good Leave, my Dear,  
Both by Night and by Day, I will ring in your Ear —  
Make your Peace — Fear the King — The Parliament  
fear.  
Oh! my Country! remember, that a Woman unknown,  
Cry'd aloud — like *Cassandra*,<sup>10</sup> in Oracular Tone,  
Repent! or you are forever, forever undone.

<sup>10</sup> In Greek mythology, goddess whose accurate prophesies of doom were ignored due to Apollo's curse that her predictions would forever be rejected.

# A PAMPHLET WAR on the CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, 1774-75

## —A Loyalist and A Patriot Debate—



Soon after the First Continental Congress adjourned in October 1774, a Loyalist and a Patriot published essays debating the legitimacy of the Congress and the legitimacy and wisdom of its proposals, especially the non-importation agreement. As was usual for political essays, they were published under pseudonyms. The Loyalist, writing as “A Westchester Farmer,” was a 68-year-old British-educated Anglican clergyman in Connecticut—Samuel Seabury. The Patriot, writing as “A Friend to America,” was a 19-year-old college student from the West Indies who first appears on the political scene with these essays—Alexander Hamilton. The six pamphlets totaled over two hundred



pages; a taste of their point-counterpoint debate is presented here.

Months after the widely read essays appeared, Seabury's identity was ascertained, and a Connecticut group of the Sons of Liberty rode into New York City, destroyed the press of printer James Rivington (who had printed both sets of pamphlets), and put Seabury under house arrest.

### ■ SAMUEL SEABURY

A Loyalist, writing as “A Westchester Farmer”

*Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress*, 16 Nov. 1774

MY FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

Permit me to address you upon a subject which, next to your eternal welfare in a future world, demands your most serious and dispassionate consideration. The American Colonies are unhappily involved in a scene of confusion and discord. The bands of civil society are broken, the authority of government weakened, and in some instances taken away. Individuals are deprived of their liberty, their property is frequently invaded by violence, and not a single Magistrate has had courage or virtue enough to interpose.<sup>11</sup> From this distressed situation it was hoped that the wisdom and prudence of the Congress lately assembled at Philadelphia would have delivered us. The eyes of all men were turned to them. We ardently expected that some prudent scheme of accommodating our unhappy dispute with the Mother Country would have been adopted and pursued. But alas! They are broken up [adjourned] without ever attempting it. They have taken no one step that tended to peace. They have gone on from bad to worse, and have either ignorantly misunderstood, carelessly neglected, or basely betrayed the interests of all the Colonies. . . .

Will you be instrumental in bringing the most abject slavery on yourselves?<sup>12</sup> Will you choose such Committees [like the Continental Congress]? Will you submit to them, should they be chosen by the weak, foolish, turbulent part of the country people? Do as you please, but, by HIM that made me, I will not. No, if I must be enslaved, let it be by a KING at least and not by a parcel of upstart lawless Committeemen. If I must be devoured, let me be devoured by the jaws of a lion and not gnawed to death by rats and vermin.

### ■ ALEXANDER HAMILTON

A Patriot, writing as “A Friend to America”

*A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Congress from the Calumnies of their Enemies . . .*, late Nov. 1774

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

It was hardly to be expected that any man could be so presumptuous as openly to controvert the equity, wisdom, and authority of the measures adopted by the Congress: an assembly truly respectable on every account!—whether we consider the characters of the men who composed it, the number and dignity of their constituents, or the important ends for which they were appointed. . . .

A little consideration will convince us that the Congress, instead of having “ignorantly misunderstood, carelessly neglected, or basely betrayed the interests of the colonies,” have, on the contrary, devised and recommended the only effectual means to secure the freedom and establish the future prosperity of America upon a solid basis. . . .

What then is the subject of our controversy with the mother country?—It is this: whether we shall preserve that security to our lives and properties which the law of nature, the genius of the British constitution, and our [colonial] charters afford us, or whether we shall resign them into the hands of the British House of Commons, which is no more privileged to dispose of them than the Grand Mogul?<sup>13</sup> What can actuate those men who labor to delude any of us into an opinion that the object of contention between the parent state and the colonies is only three pence duty upon tea?

The design [plan] of electing members to represent us in general congress was that the wisdom of America might be collected in devising the most proper and expedient means to repel this atrocious invasion of our rights. It has been accordingly done. Their decrees are binding upon all and demand a religious observance.

<sup>11</sup> Here Seabury is referring to acts committed upon Loyalists by Sons of Liberty groups and others supporting American resistance.

<sup>12</sup> I.e., by submitting to the non-importation agreement of the Continental Congress.

<sup>13</sup> I.e., a Mongol tyrant like Genghis Khan.



## ■ SAMUEL SEABURY

A Loyalist, writing as "A Westchester Farmer"

*A View of the Controversy between Great Britain and Her Colonies . . . in a Letter to the Author of A Full Vindication . . .*, 24 Dec. 1774

SIR,

You have done me the honor "to bestow some notion upon" a little pamphlet which I lately published entitled *Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress*. . . My present business shall be to examine your Vindication and see whether it fully exculpates the measures of the Congress from the charges brought against them by the friends of order and good government [i.e., Loyalists]. This task I shall endeavor to perform with all that freedom of thought and expression which, as an Englishman, I have a right to, and which never shall be wrested from me either by *yourself* or the *Congress*. . . .

The Congress, Sir, was founded in sedition. Its decisions are supported by tyranny, and is it *presumption* to controvert [oppose] its *authority*? In your opinion, they are "*restless spirits*"—"enemies to the natural rights of mankind" who shall dare to speak against the Congress. . . .

. . . The manner in which they were chosen was subversive of all law, and of the very constitution of the province. After they had met they were only a popular assembly without check or control, and therefore unqualified to make laws or to pass ordinances. . . .

. . . Were the Delegates at liberty to do as they pleased? To pursue the most violent measures? To stop up every avenue of accommodation with Great Britain? And render our state ten times worse than they found it? Must all the province *religiously* observe their wicked decrees? And take all their *mad pranks* upon themselves, where they will or not? . . .

Now the dependence of the colonies on the mother country has ever been acknowledged. It is an impropriety of speech to talk of an independent colony. The words *independence* and *colony* convey contradictory ideas . . . To talk of a colony independent of the mother country is no better sense than to talk of a limb independent of the body to which it belongs. . . .

Consider, Sir, is it right to risk the valuable blessings of property, liberty and life to the single chance of war? Or the worst kind of war—a civil war? a civil war founded on rebellion? Without ever attempting the peaceable mode of accommodation? . . . But we are rushing into a war with our parent state without offering the least concession, without even deigning to propose an accommodation. You, Sir, have employed your pen and exerted your abilities in vindicating and recommending measures which you know must, if persisted in, have a direct tendency to produce and accelerate this dreadful event.

## ■ ALEXANDER HAMILTON

A Patriot, writing as "A Sincere Friend to America"

*The Farmer Refuted: or, A More Impartial and Comprehensive View of the Dispute between Great Britain and the Colonies . . .*, Jan. 1775

SIR,

I resume my pen in reply to the curious epistle you have been pleased to favor me with, and can assure you that, notwithstanding I am naturally of a grave and phlegmatic disposition, it has been the source of abundant merriment to me. The spirit that breathes throughout is so rancorous, illiberal, and imperious . . . that I will venture to pronounce it one of the most ludicrous performances which has been exhibited to public view during all the present controversy. . . .

Your envenomed pen has endeavored to sully the characters of our continental representatives with the presumptuous charges of ignorance, knavery, sedition, rebellion, treason, and tyranny—a tremendous catalogue indeed! . . .

As to the justice of proceeding in the manner we have done, it must depend upon the *necessity* of such a mode of conduct. If the British Parliament are claiming and exercising an unjust authority, we are right in opposing it by every necessary means. If Remonstrances and Petitions have been heretofore found ineffectual, and we have no reasonable grounds to expect the contrary at present, it is prudent and justifiable to try other methods, and these can only be restrictions on trade. . . .

Several of the colonies are now making preparation for the worst (and indeed the best way to avoid a civil war is to be prepared for it). They are disciplining [training] men as fast as possible and, in a few months, will be able to produce many thousands not so much inferior in the essentials of discipline as may perhaps be imagined. . . .

From these reflections, it is more than probable that America is able to support its freedom even by the force of arms, if she be not betrayed by her own sons. And in whatever light we view the matter, the consequences [of war] to Great Britain would be too destructive to permit her to proceed to extremes unless she has lost all just sense of her own interest. . . .

. . . Nor [is] it true that they have claimed an *absolute independence*. It is insulting common sense to say so when it is notorious [well known] that they have acknowledged the right of Parliament to regulate the trade of the colonies. . . They have professed allegiance to the British King and have bound themselves, on any emergency, to contribute their proportion of men and money to the defense and protection of the whole empire. Can this be called *absolute independence*? Is it better for Britain to hazard the total loss [of] these colonies than to hold them upon these conditions?

# CLERGYMEN DEBATE: IS REBELLION JUSTIFIED? 1774

## NEW ENGLAND CONGREGATIONALISTS

By 1774 most Congregational clergy of the northern and middle colonies supported colonial resistance to Britain, while cautioning their congregants on the ethical requirements of rebellion against God-ordained civil authority.

- **REV. GAD HITCHCOCK**, Election day sermon preached before Gen. Thomas Gage and the Massachusetts assembly, Boston, 25 May 1774, shortly after Gage arrived as military governor to enforce the Coercive Acts.

Proverbs 29:2. *When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.*

Much lies at stake, honored Fathers — much depends and will probably turn on the choice you make of Councillors, not to this province only but to the rest of the colonies. In the present scenes of calamity and perplexity, when the contest in regard to the rights of the colonists rises high, every colony is deeply interested in the public conduct of every other. . . .

The people in this province and in the other colonies love and revere civil government — they love peace and order — but they are not willing to part with any of those rights and privileges for which they have, in many respects, paid very dear.

- **REV. NATHANIEL NILES**, Sermon, North Church, Newburyport, Massachusetts, 5 June 1774.

I Corinthians 7:21. *Aren't thou called being a servant? Care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.*

It becomes us, with united hearts, to make a firm stand against every attempt to wrest the jewel [of liberty] from us, either by force or fraud — The present state of things is very alarming. In the view of the most simple common sense, we are now called on — men, women and children are called on to struggle for the preservation of those rights of mankind which are inexpressibly dear. Let us then rouse and exert ourselves to the utmost on the present occasion. But you ask me. What shall we do? Shall we renounce the authority of our gracious sovereign? Shall we take up arms against troops? What shall we do?

I answer, By no means. Do not suffer [allow] the thought of renouncing our king's authority so much as to turn in your mind. Rather, be ready to shed your blood in defense of your rightful sovereign and his high office. Never let us think of entering on a civil war unless the Pretender or some other usurper should attempt to dethrone the British parent of his people. But should this be the case, then let the world see that their king is dearer to the Americans than their blood.

- **REV. TIMOTHY HILLIARD**, *The Duty of a People under the Oppression of Man to Seek Deliverance from God*, Sermon, East Church, Barnstable, Massachusetts, 14 July 1774.

Psalms 119: 134. *Deliver me from the oppression of MAN, so will I keep thy precepts.*

It is too evident to be denied that we are a people under the oppression of man. The heavy hand of power is lifted up against us, and we are in a very afflicted persecuted condition. The government in the mother country seems greatly incensed against the people of this province in a particular manner, and if we were to judge by some late [recent] decrees of the British senate, it seems as if they were determined to exterminate the very idea of freedom from among this people. It must be owned [admitted] that many things have been said and done among us very insolent and abusive, and which, it were sincerely to be wished, had been left undone. We have not behaved ourselves so wisely and prudently as we might and ought to have done, but too many have improved their liberty as a cloak for licentiousness.

But what was it that raised such a disorderly and ungovernable spirit among this people, but acts and

**MUCH lies at stake, honored Fathers—**

decrees which were judged inconsistent with “that liberty wherewith we were made free.” There was not a more peaceable people upon the face of the earth than the inhabitants of these American colonies before laws were made on the other side [of] the water to impose unconstitutional taxes and violently extort our property from us. Before this, a most happy harmony subsisted between the mother country and the colonies; they delighted in mutual good offices and “fought the things that made for peace.” We rejoiced in the friendship and protection of the parent state and gloried in the welfare of the land of our forefathers’ sepulchres.

But alas! these halcyon days are past, and it is questionable whether we shall live to see them return. A foundation seems to be laid for a long and violent struggle which threatens the ruin of both countries.

■ **REV. ISAAC STORY**, *The Love of Our Country Recommended and Enforced*, Sermon, Second Church, Marblehead, Massachusetts, 15 December 1774.

Psalm 122:7. *Peace be within thy Walls and Prosperity within thy Palaces.*

We ought this day to render public thanks to God for our gracious interpositions of his Providence in our behalf — That he has raised up such a set of men (we have been describing) to stand foremost in the defense of our Liberties, our Religion, and everything else that is near and dear — That, instead of leaving us, as he might have done in righteous judgment, in a state of supineness and submission to those chains, which have been forging for us, he has graciously roused the spirit of the people, almost universally, to spurn at the chains, to be tenacious of their rights and privileges, as Englishmen, and as Freemen.

And when we consider the bond of union that has taken place from colony to colony through the continent, we cannot help crying out, The finger of God is here! Wonderful are thy works, O Lord, altogether! . . .

War with *Britain* is not to be named: It is to be dreaded *next to the loss of Liberty*.

■ **REV. SAMUEL WEBSTER**, *The Misery and Duty of an Oppress’d and Enslav’d People*, Sermon “on a Day set apart for FASTING and PRAYER On Account of approaching public Calamities,” Salisbury, Massachusetts, 14 July 1774.

Nehemiah 9: 36-38. *Behold, we are Servants this day! And for the Land that thou gavest unto our Fathers, to eat the Fruit thereof, and the Good thereof, behold we are Servants in it! And it yieldeth much Increase unto the Kings which thou hast set over us, because of our Sins: Also they have Dominion over our Bodies and over our Cattle, at their Pleasure: And we are in great Distress! And because of all this, we make a sure Covenant, and write it; and our Princes, Levites and Priests seal unto it.*

We have done nothing against *men*, our *king* or our *brethren*, to bring all this evil<sup>5</sup> upon us, but what was judged absolutely *necessary* to preserve our *liberty*.

And if there was anything done amiss, sure it [doesn’t] deserve all this! From man therefore I take it to be clearly *unjust*, *oppressive* and *cruel* to the last degree, and find this acknowledged by many of the *British Parliament* themselves. And who can judge otherwise? For a *whole city*, nay, a whole *province* is destined to destruction for the suppos’d fault of a few, without ever having been charg’d with that fault; nay, while our *great enemy* has publicly declar’d that even *the town*, as such, had no hand in it. And we are condemn’d UNTRIED, UNHEARD, contrary to the *first principles of justice* in all nations. . . .

O my brethren — come and let us return to the God of mercy, who delighteth to be gracious! Let us do it without delay! And who knows but the day in which our enemies hope to triumph in the overthrow of our liberties, God may (as he did to his people of old in the days of *Ham*) make the day of our *deliver-ance* and of the overthrow of our implacable enemies, and settle our *rights* on a firmer foundation than ever.

condemn’d UNTRIED, UNHEARD,

<sup>5</sup> I.e., hardships due to the British closure of the Boston port.

# CLERGYMEN DEBATE: IS REBELLION JUSTIFIED? 1774

## ANGLICANS

Most Anglican clergy in the colonies opposed colonial rebellion on theological as well as political grounds. Many left America for Britain after the beginning of armed rebellion.

- **REV. THOMAS BRADBURY CHANDLER**, *A Friendly Address to All Reasonable Americans on the Subject of Our Political Confusions: In Which the Necessary Consequences of Violently Opposing the King's Troops, and of a General Non-Importation, Are Fairly Stated*, essay, New York, 1774.

Galatians 4:16. *Am I therefore become your Enemy, because I tell you the Truth?* St. Paul.

*Friends, Countrymen, and Fellow Subjects!* . . .

. . . The darkness of a rising tempest is beginning to overspread our land. The thunder roars at a distance and appears to be swiftly approaching. It is high time therefore to awaken the thoughtless to a sense of their danger and to think of providing for our common safety. There is, there can be, but one way to prevent the ruin that threatens us. Our own misconduct has brought it forward, and our immediate reformation must stop its progress. He must be blind that is not convinced of this, and he must be infatuated [who] will pursue the road which evidently terminates in darkness and destruction.

Whether the British Parliament has been right or wrong in its late proceedings towards the Colonies, our behavior has been such as every government must and will think intolerable. If the supreme power of any kingdom or state, through want [lack] of due information or attention, should adopt measures that are wrong or oppressive, the subjects may complain and remonstrate against them in a respectful manner, but they are bound by the laws of Heaven and Earth not to behave undutifully, much more not to behave insolently and rebelliously. The bands of society would be dissolved, the harmony of the world confounded, and the order of nature subverted if reverence, respect, and obedience might be refused to those whom the constitution has vested with the highest authority.

The ill consequences of open disrespect to government are so great that no misconduct of the administration can justify or excuse it. The guilt of it is so aggravated that Christians are required under the heaviest penalty to avoid it and to be *subject to the higher powers* of whatever character, *for conscience's sake*. . . .

Were the Americans actually in a state of oppression, it would show their wisdom and prudence to submit with patience to their present condition rather than to provoke the power that oppresses them, without some fair prospect of obtaining relief. . . . But it appears to me that, of all people under heaven, the King's subjects in America have hitherto had the least ground for complaint, and that the present confusion of the Colonies has been occasioned by misinformation and false alarms. . . .

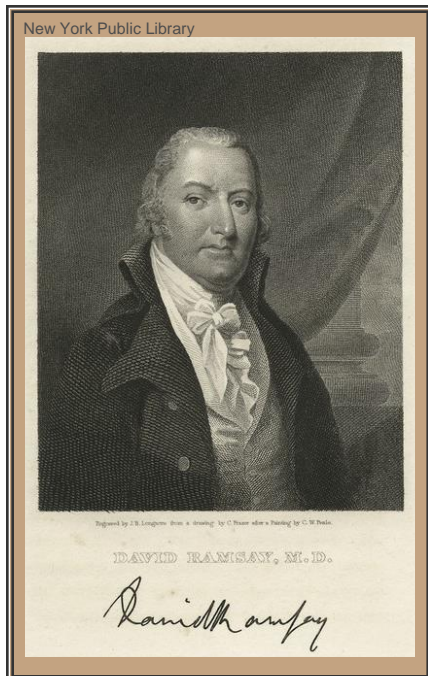
O my infatuated Countrymen! My deluded Fellow Subjects and Fellow Christians! Open your eyes, I entreat you. Awake from your dream and regard your own safety!

- **REV. ISAAC WILKINS**, *Short Advice to the Counties of New York*, essay, New York, 1774.

Survey the different nations of the world; compare their situation with your own, and you will soon become sensible of the inestimable advantages you enjoy over them. Do not therefore inadvertently sacrifice them to the visionary schemes of mistaken or designing men. . . . Believe not therefore such men as tell you that Great Britain would enslave you. Great Britain wishes to see us free and happy; she is the land of liberty and would gladly dispense that blessing to her children and to all the world. But her ministers [government officials] are men and as such may err; they may ignorantly or inadvertently adopt measures that are injurious to the community and subversive of its liberties. But the people can surely never be justified in proceeding to open rebellion, at least, till all peaceful, legal and constitutional means of redress have proved ineffectual.

**O my infatuated Countrymen! My deluded Fellow-Subjects,**





## AN AMERICAN PREDICTS “FLAMES OF WAR” AFTER 1774

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

A South Carolina physician, Ramsey 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.

In the contest between Great Britain and her Colonies, there had been a fatal progression from small to greater grounds of dissension. The trifling tax of 3d. per pound on tea roused the jealous [resentful/suspicious] inhabitants of Boston to throw 340 chests of it into the ocean. This provoked the British Parliament to shut up their port and to new model their charter. Statutes so unconstitutional and alarming excited a combination in twelve of the Colonies to stop all trade with Great Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies. Their combination gave birth to the restraining acts of Parliament by which nine of the colonies were interdicted all other

trade but that from which they had voluntarily excluded themselves, and four of these nine were farther devoted to famine by being forbidden to fish on their coasts. Each new resolution on the one side, and new act on the other, reciprocally gave birth to something from the opposite party that was more irritating or oppressive than what had preceded.

The beginning of strife between the Parent State and her Colonies was like the letting out of waters. From inconsiderable causes, love was changed into suspicion that gradually ripened into ill will, and soon ended in hostility. Prudence, policy, and reciprocal interest urged the expediency of concession; but pride, false honor, and misconceived dignity drew in an opposite direction. Undecided claims and doubtful rights, which under the influence of wisdom and humility might have been easily compromised, imperceptibly widened into an irreconcilable breach. Hatred at length took the place of kind affections, and the calamities of war were substituted in lieu of the benefits of commerce.

From the year 1768, in which a military force had been stationed in Boston, there was a constant succession of insulting words, looks, and gestures. The inhabitants were exasperated against the soldiers, and they against the inhabitants. The former looked on the latter as the instruments of tyranny, and the latter on the former as seditious rioters or fraudulent smugglers. In this irritable state, every incident, however trifling, made a sensible impression. The citizens apprehended constant danger from an armed force, in whose power they were. The soldiers, on the other hand, considered themselves as in the midst of enemies, and exposed to attacks from within and from without. In proportion as the breach between Great Britain and her Colonies widened, the distrust and animosity between the people and the army increased.

From the latter end of 1774, hostile appearances daily threatened that the flames of war would be kindled from the collision of such inflammable materials. Whatsoever was done by either party by way of precaution, for the purposes of self-defense, was construed by the other as preparatory to an intended attack. Each disclaimed all intentions of commencing hostilities, but reciprocally manifested suspicion of the other's sincerity. As far as was practicable without an open rupture, the plans of the one were respectively thwarted by the other. From every appearance it became daily more evident that arms must ultimately decide the contest.