

“He has made a great number of converts”

Praise for Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, 1776
as reported in American newspapers

- Extract of a letter from Maryland, February 6, 1776. “If you know the author of COMMON SENSE, tell him he has done wonders and worked miracles, made TORIES WHIGS, and washed Blackamores white. He has made a great number of converts here. His style is plain and nervous; his facts are true; his reasoning just and conclusive. I hear of three only in my county who disapprove of the piece, and two are the echo of one. I inquired their reasons, “Because (said one of them) as how D—D—y said it might be easily answered.” I beg you would procure and send me two dozen of the second edition. Since the King’s speech and the addresses of both Houses of Parliament, I look upon the separation as taken place. Sometime past the idea would have struck me with horror. I now see no alternative; it is SERVIRE AUT DISJUNGE. Can any virtuous and brave American hesitate one moment in the choice?”

—*The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 13 Feb. 1776

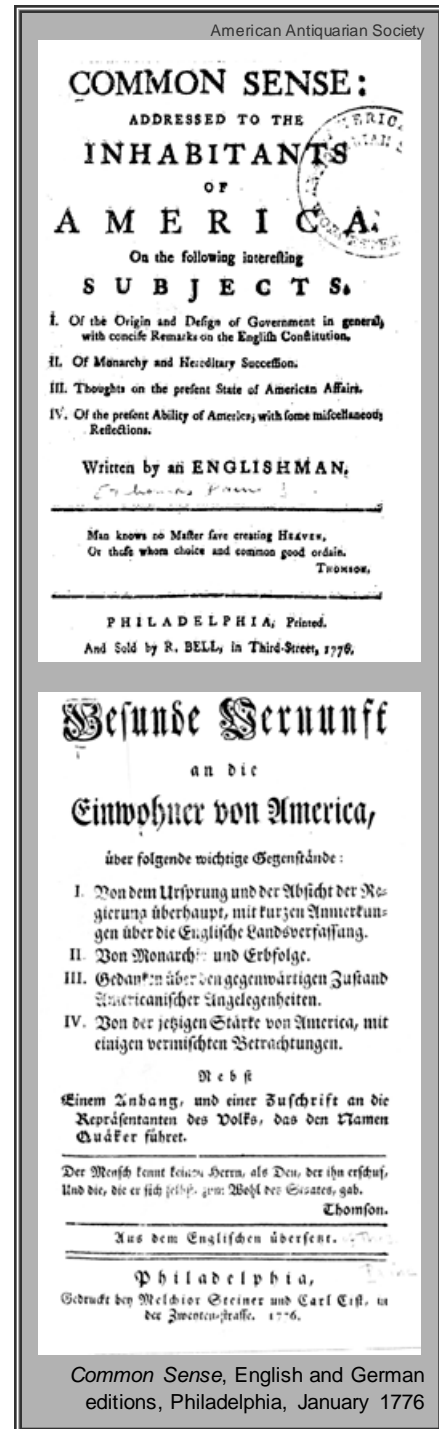
- In your famous pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, by which I am convinced of the necessity of Independence, to which I was before averse, you have given liberty to every individual to contribute materials for that great building, the grand charter of American Liberty. I shall therefore venture to lay before you and the public a few hints, as they may occur to my mind . . . [The writer offers suggestions for the boundaries and delegate allocation of the new states.]

—“ESSEX,” *The New-York Journal; or, The General Advertiser*, 17 March 1776

- To the Author of the Pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*.

Sir, In declaring your own, you have declared the sentiments of Millions. Your production may justly be compared to a land-flood that sweeps all before it. We were blind, but on reading these enlightening works the scales have fallen from our eyes. Even deep-rooted prejudices take to themselves wings and flee away, tho’ not as an eagle towards heaven. The doctrine of Independence hath been in times past greatly disgustful; we abhorred the principle. It is now become our delightful theme and commands our purest affections. We revere the author and highly prize and admire his works. — Indeed, sir, you stand high in the esteem of Americans, and unborn Millions will rise up and call you blessed. America through your means will rise to Glory and Independence, and become the envy as well as the admiration of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Your pamphlet, sir, speaks good things concerning America, and comes freighted with blessings to a distressed and insulted country. Your works, above all other political writings, have this peculiar



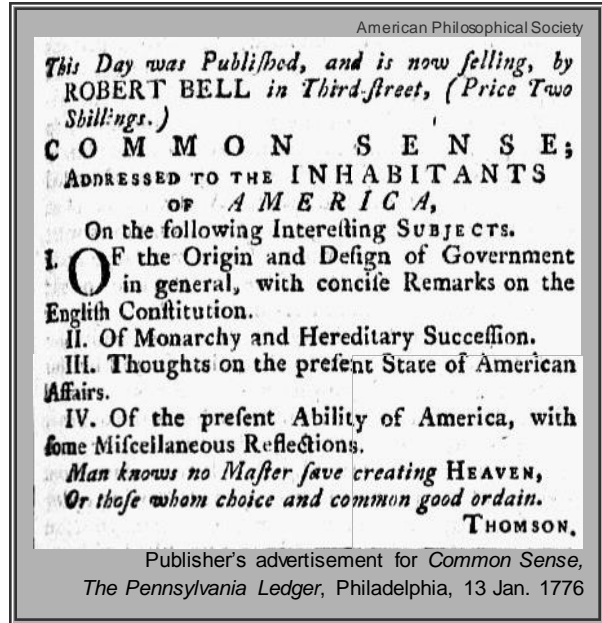
Common Sense, English and German editions, Philadelphia, January 1776

virtue —they convert Tories and, like Noah’s ark, prove a covert for different species of animals. The clean and the unclean, those that divide the hoof and those that do not — like the radii of a circle, may meet in this common center and become one in the great cause of liberty. Should the Honorable the Continental Congress in their great wisdom think as we do, the business would be done — the free and independent states of America fixed on an immovable foundation, and the Congress be held in the highest veneration by MILLIONS.

—The New-London [Connecticut] Gazette, 22 March 1776

- A favorite toast in the best companies [in Connecticut] in “May the INDEPENDENT principles of COMMON SENSE be confirmed throughout the United Colonies.”

—Connecticut Courant, 8 April 1776



- To the Printer. Sir, Your inserting the following resolve may convince the public that *Common Sense* is not altogether destitute of proselytes in Pennsylvania.

At a meeting of Captain James McCandless’s company and a number of other inhabitants of the township of Faun in York County: Resolved unanimously, That the independent principles of *Common Sense* are what we wish to see established as soon as the wisdom of the *Hon. the Continental Congress* shall think proper, as we look upon it to be the only alternative now left us to secure our liberties and screen us from the disgraceful epithet of rebels in the eyes of all the world.

—The Pennsylvania Evening Post, 4 May 1776

- Extract of a letter from Petersburg, Virginia, dated April 12. “In my way through Virginia, I found the inhabitants warm for independence. I spent last evening with Mr. _____, from South Carolina. He tells me that the people there have no expectation of ever being reconciled with Britain again, but only as a foreign state. They have formed a government for themselves. John Rutledge Esq. is appointed President, with all the powers that are vested in the Governor. From several letters I have received from North Carolina, since that Convention have met, I find they are for independence, as they either have or intend to repeal the instructions that were given to their delegates [to the Continental Congress] and to leave them at liberty to vote upon every occasion as they think best. Mr. _____ was some little time at Halifax [site of North Carolina convention]. He says they are quite spirited and unanimous. Indeed I hear nothing praised but COMMON SENSE and INDEPENDENCE. The people of North Carolina are making great preparations and say that are determined to die hard. I assure you, my good Sir, the vehemence of the southern colonies will require all the coolness of the northern ones to moderate their zeal. I suspected, when I was with you, that whenever they were urged [for independence], they would go great lengths.”

—Essex Journal, Newburyport, Massachusetts, 10 May 1776

- We hear the town of Canterbury [Connecticut] in a full meeting have unanimously adopted the principles of independence contained in *Common Sense*, and also voted that the delegates for the Continental Congress ought to be elected by the freemen of the colony, and not their representatives.

—Connecticut Courant, 27 May 1776