

Sheriff! to your Arms, my boys! Presently after a volley of Stones followed, and the two Gentlemen narrowly escaped thro' favour of the Night, not without some bruises. I should have mentioned before, that I sent a written order to the Colonel of the Regiment of Militia, to beat an Alarm; he answered, that it would signify nothing, for as soon as the drum was heard, the drummer would be knocked down, and the drum broke; he added, that probably all the drummers of the Regiment were in the Mob. Nothing more being to be done, The Mob were left to disperse at their own Time, which they did about 12 o'clock.

The Declarations of the Stamp Act Congress, 1765

The members of this congress, sincerely devoted, with the warmest sentiments of affection and duty to his Majesty's person and government; inviolably attached to the present happy establishment of the Protestant succession, and with minds deeply impressed by a sense of the present and impending misfortunes of the British colonies on this continent; . . . make the following declarations, of our humble opinion, respecting the most essential rights and liberties of the colonists, and of the grievances under which they labour, by reason of several late acts of Parliament.

I. That his Majesty's subjects in these colonies, owe the same allegiance to the Crown of Great Britain, that is owing from his subjects born within the realm, and all due subordination to that august body, the Parliament of Great Britain.

II. That his Majesty's liege subjects in these colonies are entitled to all the inherent rights and liberties of his natural born subjects within the kingdom of Great Britain.

III. That it is inseparably essential to the freedom of a people, and the undoubted right of Englishmen, that no taxes should be imposed on them, but with their own consent, given personally, or by their representatives.

IV. That the people of these colonies are not, and from their local circumstances, cannot be represented in the House of Commons in Great Britain.

V. That the only representatives of the people of these colonies, are persons chosen therein, by themselves; and that no taxes ever have been, or can be constitutionally imposed on them, but by their respective legislature.

VI. That all supplies to the Crown, being free gifts of the people, it is unreasonable and inconsistent with the principles and spirit of the British constitution, for the people of Great Britain to grant to his Majesty the property of the colonists.

VII. That trial by jury is the inherent and invaluable right of every British subject in these colonies.

VIII. That the late Act of Parliament, entitled, An Act for granting and applying certain Stamp Duties, . . . by imposing taxes on the inhabitants of . . . and the said Act, and several other Acts, by extending the

jurisdiction of the courts of admiralty beyond its ancient limits, have a manifest tendency to subvert the rights and liberties of the colonists.

IX. That the duties imposed by several late Acts of Parliament, from the peculiar circumstances of these colonies, will be extremely burdensome and grievous, and from the scarcity of specie, the payment of them absolutely impracticable.

X. That as the profits of the trade of these colonies ultimately centre in Great Britain, to pay for the manufactures which they are obliged to take from thence, they eventually contribute very largely to all supplies granted there to the Crown.

XI. That the restrictions imposed by several late Acts of Parliament, on the trade of these colonies, will render them unable to purchase the manufactures of Great Britain.

XII. That the increase, prosperity and happiness of these colonies, depend on the full and free enjoyment of their rights and liberties, and an intercourse with Great Britain, mutually affectionate and advantageous.

XIII. That it is the right of the British subjects in these colonies, to petition the king or either house of Parliament.

Lastly, that it is the indispensable duty of these colonies to the best of sovereigns, to the mother country, and to themselves, to endeavour by a loyal and dutiful address to his Majesty, and humble applications to both houses of Parliament, to procure the repeal of the Act for granting and applying certain stamp duties, of all clauses of any other Acts of Parliament, whereby the jurisdiction of the admiralty is extended as aforesaid, and of the other late Acts for the restriction of American commerce.

"William Pym" Asserts Parliamentary Supremacy, 1765

The people in our American colonies lay a very great stress upon the importance of their charters, and imagine that the privileges granted to their ancestors, at the time of their original establishment, must infallibly exempt them from participating in the least inconvenience of the Mother country, though the Mother country must share in every inconvenience of theirs. This mode of reasoning is however no less new than it is extraordinary: and one would almost be tempted to imagine that the persons, who argue in this manner, were alike unacquainted with the nature of the colonies and the constitution of this kingdom.

I shall very readily grant, that the colonies at the time of their first settling might receive particular indulgences from the Crown, to encourage adventurers to go over; and I will also grant, that these charters should be as inviolably adhered to as the nature of public contingencies will admit. But at the same time let me inform my fellow subjects of America, that a resolution of the British parliament can at any time set aside all the charters that have ever been granted by our monarchs; and that consequently nothing can be more idle than this pompous exclamation about their charter exemptions, whenever such a resolution has actually passed.

The great business of the British Legislative power is, to consult upon

what new laws may be necessary for the general good of the British dominions, and to remove any casual inconveniences which may arise from the existence of their former acts. In the prosecution of this important end, they cannot expect but what the most salutary laws will prove oppressive to some part of the people. However no injury, which may be sustained by individuals, is to prevent them from promoting the welfare of the community; for if they debated till they framed an ordinance agreeable to the wishes of every body, 'twould be utterly impossible for them ever to frame any ordinance at all.

If then the Legislative power of this country have a right to alter or annul those public acts which were solemnly passed by former princes and former parliaments; it must be a necessary consequence that they have an equal right to annul the private charters of former princes also; and that these charters, which are by no means to be set in the same degree of importance with our laws, are at least every whit as subject to their jurisdiction and authority. This is a circumstance which the assembly of Virginia in particular should have attended to before their late unaccountable resolutions; and 'tis what I hope the assemblies of our other settlements will judiciously attend to, if they find the least propensity to follow the extraordinary example of their Sister-colony.

The people of Ireland, though they have a parliament of their own (and a parliament, I will take the liberty of saying, composed of people to the full as eminent for their fortune and abilities, as any of our American assemblies) are nevertheless under the immediate subjection of the British Legislature. The vote of an English Senate can in an instant abrogate all the laws of that kingdom; and surely none of the plantations can possibly plead a greater share either of merit or privileges than our Irish fellow subjects; who nevertheless behave with an uncommon degree of respect to our decisions; and never presume to blame the hand which increases their burdens, however they may groan beneath the heaviness of the load.

I am very well aware that the present impatience, which the whole kingdom feels at the least increase of taxes, will naturally create a number of friends for the colonies: but at the same time let us consider that the propriety of the tax, which has excited such a ferment among our American fellow-subjects, is not now the foundation of dispute. The question now is, Whether those American subjects are, or are not, bound by the resolutions of a British parliament? If they are *not*, they are entirely a separate people from us, and the mere reception of officers appointed in this kingdom, is nothing but an idle farce of government, which it is by no means our interest to keep up, if it is to produce us no benefit but the honour of protecting them whenever they are attacked by their enemies. On the other hand, if the people of America *are* bound by the proceedings of the English legislature, what excuse can the Virginians possibly make for the late indecent vote (to give it no harsher appellation) of their assembly. The present crisis, Sir, is really an alarming one; and after all the blood and treasure which we have expended in defence of the colonies, it is now questioned, whether we have any interest in those colonies at all.

If the people of Virginia were offended either with the tax itself, or with the mode of taxation, the proper method of proceeding would have been to petition the parliament, to point out the grievances arising from it, and to solicit the necessary redress. This is the invariable manner in which all the rest of their fellow-subjects (at least the European part of their fellow subjects) have acted in cases of a like nature. But to think of bullying their King, and the august Council of the Mother country, into an acquiescence with their sentiments, by a rash and hot headed vote; not only must expose them to the ridicule, but to the resentment of every considerate man who wishes well either to their interest or to the prosperity of this kingdom.

The people of the colonies know very well that the taxes of the Mother country are every day increasing; and can they expect that no addition whatsoever will be made to theirs? They know very well that a great part of our national debt was contracted in establishing them on a firm foundation, and protecting them from the arbitrary attempts of their implacable enemies.—Can anything then be so unreasonable, as a refusal of their assistance to wipe a little of it off? For my own part I am as much astonished at their want of justice, as I am surprized at their want of gratitude; and cannot help declaring it as my opinion, that we ought to shew but a very small share of sensibility for the circumstances of those people who are so utterly regardless of ours. To be sure, Sir, in assisting the colonies we had an eye to our own interest. It would be ridiculous otherwise to squander away our blood and our treasure in their defence. But certainly the benefit was mutual; and consequently the disadvantage should be mutual too. If we reap emoluments from the existence of the colonies, the colonies owe every thing to our encouragement and protection. As therefore we share in the same prosperity, we ought to participate of the same distress; and nothing can be more inequitable, than the least disinclination to bear a regular portion of those disbursements, which were applied to support the general interest both of the mother-country and themselves.

Examination of Benjamin Franklin Before the House of Commons, 1766

Q. What is your name, and place of abode?

A. Franklin, of Philadelphia.

Q. Do the Americans pay any considerable taxes among themselves?

A. Certainly many, and very heavy taxes.

Q. What are the present taxes in Pennsylvania, laid by the laws of the colony?

A. There are taxes on all estates real and personal, a poll tax, a tax on all offices, professions, trades and businesses, according to their profits; an excise on all wine, rum, and other spirits; and a duty of Ten Pounds per head on all Negroes imported, with some other duties.