

Continental Congress

4865 THE Twelve united colonies, by their delegates in congress
to the inhabitants of Great Britain. Not in Rich. 8vo.
Phila. 1775

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T H E

Twelve United Colonies,

B Y T H E I R

D E L E G A T E S

I N

C O N G R E S S,

T O T H E

I N H A B I T A N T S

O F

G R E A T - B R I T A I N.

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B Y T H E I R D E L E G A T E S I N
C O N G R E S S E S,
T o t h e I N H A B I T A N T S o f G R E A T - B R I T A I N .

Friends, Countrymen, and Brethren!

BY these, and every other Appellation, that may designate the Ties, which bind us to each other, we intreat your serious Attention to our second Attempt to prevent their Dissolution. Remembrance of former Friendships, pride in the glorious Atchievements of our common Ancestors, and Affection for the Heirs of their Virtues, have hitherto preserved our mutual Connection. But when that Friendship is violated by the grossest Injuries; when the Pride of Ancestry becomes our Reproach, and we are no otherwise allied than as Tyrants and Slaves, when reduced to the melancholy Alternative of reducing our Favour or our Freedom, can we hesitate about the Choice? Let the Spirit of Britons determine.

In a former Address, we asserted our Rights, and stated the Injuries we had then received. We
hoped

hoped that the Mention of our Wrongs, would have roused that honest Indignation, which has slept too long for your Honour, or the Welfare of the Empire. But we have not been permitted to entertain this pleasing Expectation; every Day brought an Accumulation of Injuries, and the Invention of the Ministry has been constantly exercised, in adding to the Calamities of your American Brethren.

After the most valuable Right of Legislation was infringed, when the the Powers, assumed by your Parliament, in which we are not represented, and from our local and other Circumstances, cannot properly be represented, rendered our Property precarious. After being denied that Mode of Trial to which we have been long indebted for the Safety of our Persons, and the Preservation of our Liberties; after being in many Instances divested of those Laws which were transmitted to US by our common Ancestors, and subjected to an arbitrary Code, compiled under the Auspices of Roman Tyrants, after annulling those Charters, which encouraged our Predecessors to brave Death and Danger, in every Shape, on unknown Seas, in Desarts unexplored, amidst barbarous and inhospitable Nations! When, without the Form of Trial, without a public Accusation, whole Colonies were condemned! their Trade destroyed, their Inhabitants impoverished. When Soldiers were encouraged to imbrue their Hands in the Blood of Americans, by Offers of Impunity; when new Modes of Trial were instituted for the Ruin of
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the accused, where the Charge carried with it the Horrors of Conviction; when a despotic Government was established in a neighbouring Province, and its Limits extended to every of our Frontiers; we little imagined that any Thing could be added to this black Catalogue of unprovoked Injuries; but we have unhappily been deceived; and the late Measures of the British Ministry fully convince us, their Object is the Reduction of these Colonies to Slavery and Ruin.

To confirm this Assertion, let us recall your Attention to the Affairs of America, since our last Address: Let us combat the Calumnies of our Enemies, and let us warn you of the Dangers that threaten you, in our Destruction. Many of your Fellow-Subjects, whose Situation deprived them of other Support, drew their Maintenance from the Sea; but the Deprivation of our Liberty being insufficient to satisfy the Resentment of our Enemies, the Horrors of Famine were super-added, and a British Parliament, who, in better Times, were the Protectors of Innocence, and the Patrons of Humanity, have, without Distinction of Age or Sex, robbed Thousands of the Food which they were accustomed to draw from that inexhaustible Source, placed in their Neighbourhood by the benevolent Creator.

Another Act of your Legislature shuts our Ports, and prohibits our Trade with any but those States, from whom the great Law of Self-preservation renders it absolutely necessary we should at present with-hold our Commerce. But
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this Act (whatever may have been its Design) we consider rather as injurious to your Opulence, than our Interest. All our Commerce terminates in you; and the Wealth we procure from other Nations, is soon exchanged for your Superfluities. Our Remittances must then cease with our Trade; and our Refinements with our Affluence. We trust, however, that Laws which deprive us of every Blessing but a Soil which teems with the Necessaries of Life, and that Liberty which renders the Enjoyment of them secure, will not relax our Vigour in their Defence.

We might here observe on the Cruelty and Inconsistency of those, who, while they publicly brand us with reproachful and unworthy Epithets, endeavour to deprive us of the Means of Defence, by their Interposition with foreign Powers, and to deliver us to the lawless Ravages of a merciless Soldiery. But happily we are not without Resources; and though the timid and humiliating Applications of a British Ministry should prevail with foreign Nations, yet Industry, prompted by Necessity, will not leave us without Supplies.

We could wish to go no further,—and, not to wound the Ear of Humanity, leave untold those rigorous Acts of Oppression, which are daily exercised in the Town of Boston, did we not hope, that by disclaiming their Deeds, and punishing the Perpetrators, you would shortly vindicate the Honour of the English Name, and re-establish the violated Laws of Justice.

That once populous, flourishing and commercial

cial Town, is now garrisoned, by an Army sent, not to protect, but to enslave its Inhabitants. The civil Government is overturned, and a military Despotism erected on its Ruins. Without Law, without Right, Powers are assumed unknown to the Constitution. Private Property is unjustly invaded. The Inhabitants daily subjected to the Licentiousness of the Soldiery, are forbid to remove in Defiance of their natural Rights, in Violation of the most solemn Compacts. Or, if after long and wearisome Solicitation, a Pass is procured, their Effects are detained, and even those who are most favoured, have no alternative but Poverty or Slavery. The Distress of many Thousand People, wantonly deprived of the Necessaries of Life, is a Subject on which we would not wish to enlarge.

Yet we cannot but observe, that a British Fleet (unjustified even by the Acts of your Legislature) are daily employed in ruining our Commerce, seizing our Ships, and depriving whole Communities of their daily Bread. Nor will a Regard for your Honour, permit us to be silent, while British Troops sully your Glory, by Actions which the most inveterate Enmity will not palliate among civilized Nations; the wanton and unnecessary Destruction of Charlestown, a large, ancient, and once populous Town, just before deserted by its Inhabitants, who had fled to avoid the Fury of your Soldiery.

If you still retain those Sentiments of Compassion by which Britons have ever been distinguished; if the Humanity which tempered the Valour of our common Ancestors, has not degenerated

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into Cruelty, you will lament the Miseries of their Descendants.

To what are we to attribute this Treatment? If to any secret Principle of the Constitution, let it be mentioned; let us learn that the Government we have long revered, is not without its Defects, and that while it gives Freedom to a Part, it necessarily enslaves the Remainder of the Empire. If such a Principle exists, why for Ages has it ceased to operate? Why at this Time is it called into Action? Can no Reason be assigned for this Conduct? Or must it be resolved into the wanton Exercise of arbitrary Power? And shall the Descendants of Britons tamely submit to this?——No, Sirs! while we revere the Memory of our gallant and virtuous Ancestors, we never will surrender those glorious Privileges, for which they fought, bled, and conquered, Admit that your Fleets would destroy our Towns, and ravage our Sea-coasts; these are inconsiderable Objects, Things of no Moment, to Men whose Bosoms glow with the Ardour of Liberty. We can retire beyond the Reach of your Navy, and without any sensible Diminution of the *Necessaries* of Life, enjoy a *Luxury*, which from that Period you will want: **THE LUXURY OF BEING FREE.**

We know the Force of your Arms, and was it called forth in the Cause of Justice and your Country, we might dread the Exertion. But will Britons fight under the Banners of Tyranny? Will they counteract the Labours, and disgrace the Victories of their Ancestors? Will they forge

Chains

Chains for their Posterity? If they descend to this unworthy Task, will their Swords retain their Edge, their Arms their accustomed Vigour? Britons can never become the Instruments of Oppression, till they lose the Spirit of Freedom, by which alone they are invincible.

Our Enemies charge us with Seditious: In what does it consist? In our Refusal to submit to unwarrantable Acts of Injustice and Cruelty? If so, shew us a Period in your History, in which you have not been equally seditious?

We are accused of aiming at Independence: But how is this Accusation supported? By the Allegations of your Ministers, not by our Actions.—Abused, insulted, and contemned, what Steps have we pursued to obtain Redress? We have carried our dutiful Petitions to the Throne;—we have applied to your Justice for Relief, we have retrenched our Luxury, and with-held our Trade.

The Advantages of our Commerce were designed as a Compensation for your Protection: When you ceased to protect, for what were we to compensate?

What has been the Success of our Endeavours? The Clemency of our Sovereign is unhappily diverted; our Petitions are treated with Indignity; our Prayers answered by Insults. Our Application to you remains unnoticed, and leaves us the melancholy Apprehension of your wanting either the Will, or the Powers to assist us.

Even under these Circumstances, what Measures have we taken that betray a Desire of Independence? Have we called in the Aid of those

foreign Powers, who are the Rivals of your Grandeur? When your Troops were few and defenceless, did we take Advantage of their Distress and expel them our Towns? Or have we permitted them to fortify, to receive new Aid and to acquire additional Strength?

Let not your Enemies and ours persuade you, that in this we were influenced by Fear, or any other unworthy Motive. The Lives of Britons are still dear to us.—They are the Children of our Parents, an uninterrupted Intercourse of mutual Benefits had knit the Bonds of Friendship.—When Hostilities were commenced, when on a late Occasion we were wantonly attacked by your Troops, though we repelled their Assaults, and returned their Blows, yet we lamented the Wounds they obliged us to give; nor have we yet learned to rejoice at a Victory over Englishmen.

As we wish not to colour our Actions, or disguise our Thoughts; we shall in the simple Language of Truth, avow the Measures we have pursued, and our future Designs.

When our late Petition to the Throne produced no other Effect than fresh Injuries, and Votes of your Legislature, calculated to justify every Severity; when your Fleets and your Armies, were prepared to wrest from us our Property, to rob us of our Liberties or our Lives, when the hostile Attempts of General Gage evinced his Designs, we levied Armies, for our Security and Defence; when the Powers vested in the Governor of Canada, gave us Reason to apprehend

apprehend Danger from that Quarter; and we had frequent Intimations, that a cruel and savage Enemy was to be let lose upon the defenceless Inhabitants of our Frontiers, we took such Measures as Prudence dictated, as Necessity will justify. We possessed ourselves of Crown-Point and Tionderoga. Yet give us Leave, most solemnly to assure you, that we have not yet lost Sight of the Object we have ever had in View; a Reconciliation with you on constitutional Principles, and a Restoration of that friendly Intercourse, which, to the Advantage of both, we till lately maintained.

The Inhabitants of this Country apply themselves chiefly to Agriculture and Commerce.—As their Fashions and Manners are similar to yours, your Markets must afford them the Conveniencies and Luxuries for which they exchange the Produce of their Labours. The Wealth of this extensive Continent centers with you; and our Trade is so regulated as to be subservient, only to your Interest. You are too reasonable to expect that by Taxes (in Addition to this) we should contribute to your Expence, to believe, after diverting the Fountain that the Streams can flow with unabated Force.

It has been said, that we refuse to submit to the Restrictions on our Commerce. From whence is this Inference drawn? Not from our Words, we having repeatedly declared the Contrary, and we again profess our Submission to the several Acts of Trade and Navigation, passed before the Year 1763, trusting nevertheless in the

Equity and Justice of Parliament, that such of them as upon cool and impartial Consideration shall appear to have imposed unnecessary or grievous Restrictions, will, at some happier Period, be repealed or altered. And we cheerfully consent to the Operation of such Acts of the British Parliament as shall be restrained to the Regulation of our external Commerce for the Purpose of securing the commercial Advantages of the whole Empire to the Mother Country, and the commercial Benefits of its respective Members, excluding every Idea of Taxation internal or external, for raising a Revenue on the Subjects in America, without their Consent.

It is alledged that we contribute nothing to the common Defence; to this we answer that the Advantages which Great-Britain receives from the Monopoly of our Trade, far exceeds our Proportion of the Expence necessary for that Purpose. But should these Advantages be inadequate thereto, let the Restrictions on our Trade be removed, and we will cheerfully contribute such Proportion when constitutionally required.

It is a fundamental Principle of the British Constitution, that every Man should have at least a representative Share in the Formation of those Laws by which he is bound. Were it otherwise, the Regulation of our internal Police by a British Parliament, who are, and ever will be, unacquainted with our local Circumstances, must be always inconvenient, and frequently oppressive, working our Wrong, without yielding any possible Advantage to you.

A Plan of Accommodation (as it has been absurdly called) has been proposed by your Ministers to our respective Assemblies. Were this Proposal free from every other Objection, but that which arises from the Time of the Offer, it would not be unexceptionable. Can Men deliberate with the bayonet at their Breast? Can they treat with Freedom while their Towns are sacked; when daily Instances of Injustice, and Oppression, disturb the slower Operations of Reason?

If this Proposal is really such as you should offer, and we accept, why was it delayed till the Nation was put to useless Expence, and we were reduced to our present melancholy Situation? If it holds forth nothing, why was it proposed, unless indeed to deceive you into Belief that we were unwilling to listen to any Terms of Accommodation? But what is submitted to our Consideration? We contend for the Disposal of our Property; we are told that our Demand is unreasonable, that our Assemblies may indeed collect our Money, but that they must at the same time offer, not what your Exigencies or ours, may require, but so much as shall be deemed sufficient to satisfy the Desires of a Minister, and enable him to provide for Favourites and Dependants. (A Recurrence to your own Treasury will convince you how little of the Money already extorted from us has been applied to the Relief of your Burthens.) To suppose that we would thus grasp the Shadow, and give up the Substance, is adding Insult to Injuries.

We have nevertheless again presented an humble

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ble and dutiful Petition to our Sovereign; and to remove every Imputation of Obstinacy, have requested his Majesty to direct some Mode, by which the united Applications of his faithful Colonists may be improved into a happy and permanent Reconciliation. We are willing to treat on such Terms as can alone render an Accommodation lasting, and we flatter ourselves, that our pacific Endeavours will be attended with a Removal of the Troops, a Repeal of those Laws, of the Operation of which we complain on the one Part, and a Dissolution of our Army and commercial Associations, on the other.

Yet conclude not from this, that we propose to surrender our Property into the Hands of your Ministry, or vest your Parliament with a Power which may terminate in our Destruction. The great Bulwarks of our Constitution we have desired to maintain by every temperate, by every peaceable Means; but your Ministers (equal Foes to British and American Freedom) have added to their former Oppressions an Attempt to reduce us by the Sword to a base and abject Submission. On the Sword therefore are we compelled to rely for Protection.—Should Victory declare in your Favour, yet Men trained to Arms from their Infancy, and animated by the Love of Liberty, will afford neither a cheap or easy Conquest. Of this at least we are assured, that our Struggle will be glorious, our Success certain, since even in Death we shall find that Freedom which in Life you forbid us to enjoy.

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Let us now ask what Advantages are to attend our Reduction? the Trade of a ruined and desolate Country is always inconsiderable, its Revenue trifling; the Expence of subjecting and retaining it in Subjection certain and inevitable. What then remains but the Grati-
fications of an ill judged Pride, or the Hope of rendering us subservient to Designs on your Liberty.

Soldiers who have sheathed their Swords in the Bowels of their American Brethren, will not draw them with more Reluctance against you. When too late you may lament the Loss of that Freedom, which we exhort you, while still in your Power, to preserve.

On the other Hand, should you prove unsuccessful; should that Connection, which we most ardently wish to maintain be dissolved; should your Ministers exhaust your Treasures; waste the Blood of your Countrymen in vain Attempts on our Liberty; do they not deliver you, weak and defenceless, to your natural Enemies?

Since then your Liberty, must be the Price of your Victories; your ruin of your defeat: What blind Fatality can urge you to a Pursuit destructive of all that Britons hold dear?

If you have no Regard to the Connection that has for Ages subsisted between us; if you have forgot the Wounds we received fighting by your Side, for the Extension of the Empire; if our Commerce is an object below your Consideration; if Justice and Humanity have lost their Influence on your Hearts, still Motives are not wanting to excite your Indignation at the Measures now pursued: Your Wealth, your Honour, your Liberty are at Stake.

Notwithstanding the Distress to which we are reduced, we sometimes forget our own Afflictions, to anticipate and sympathize in yours. We grieve that rash and inconsiderate Councils should precipitate the Destruction of an Empire, which has been the Envy and Admiration of Ages. And call God to Witness!

that

that we would part with our Property, endanger our Lives, and sacrifice every Thing but Liberty to redeem your ruin.

A Cloud hangs over your Heads and ours ; e'er this reaches you, it may probably burst upon us ; let us then (before the Remembrance of former Kindness is obliterated) once more repeat those Appellations which are ever grateful in our Ears. Let us entreat Heaven to avert our ruin, and the Destruction that threatens our Friends, Brethren, and Countrymen, on the other Side of the Atlantic.

By Order of the Congress,

JOHN HANCOCK, President.

Attested by

CHARLES THOMPSON, Secretary.

Philadelphia, July 8, 1775.