

1 Address to the People of Great Britain

2 Friday, October 21, 1774.

3 The Address to the People of Great Britain being brought in, and the amendments directed being
4 made, the same was approved, and is as follows:

5 To the People of Great Britain, from the Delegates appointed by the several English Colonies
6 of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations,
7 Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, the Lower Counties on Delaware,
8 Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, to consider of their Grievances
9 in General Congress, at Philadelphia, September 5, 1774.

10 Friends And Fellow-Subjects: When a Nation, lead to greatness by the hand of Liberty, and
11 possessed of all the Glory that heroism, munificence, and humanity can bestow, descends to the
12 ungrateful task of forging chains for her friends and children, and instead of giving support to
13 Freedom, turns advocate for Slavery and Oppression¹, there is reason to suspect she has either
14 ceased to be virtuous, or been extremely negligent in the appointment of her Rulers.

15 In almost every age, in repeated conflicts, in long and bloody wars, as well civil as foreign,
16 against many and powerful Nations, against the open assaults of enemies, and the more
17 dangerous treachery of friends, have the inhabitants of your Island, your great and glorious
18 ancestors, maintained their independence, and transmitted the rights of Men, and the blessings
19 of Liberty, to you, their posterity.

20 Be not surprised therefore, that we, who are descended from the same common ancestors²;
21 that we, whose forefathers participated in all the rights, the liberties, and the Constitution you
22 so justly boast of, and who have carefully conveyed the same fair inheritance to us, guarantied
23 by the plighted faith of Government, and the most solemn compacts with British Sovereigns,
24 should refuse to surrender them to men who found their claims on no principles of reason, and
25 who prosecute them with a design, that by having our lives and property in their power,³ they

1 may with the greater facility enslave you.¹

2 The cause of America is now the object of universal attention; it has at length become very
3 serious. This unhappy country has not only been oppressed,² but abused and misrepresented;³
4 and the duty we owe to ourselves and posterity, to your interest, and the general welfare⁴ of
5 the British Empire, leads us to address you on this very important subject.

6 Know then, That we consider ourselves, and do insist, that we are and ought to be as free as our
7 fellow-subjects in Britain, and that no power on earth has a right to take our property from us
8 without our consent.⁵

9 That we claim all the benefits secured to the subject by the English Constitution, and particularly
10 that inestimable one of Trial by Jury.⁶

11 That we hold it essential to English liberty, that no man be condemned unheard, or punished for
12 supposed offences, without having an opportunity of making his defence.⁷

13 That we think the Legislature of Great Britain is not authorized by the Constitution⁸ to
14 establish a Religion⁹ fraught with sanguinary and impious tenets, or to erect an arbitrary form
15 of Government in any quarter of the globe.¹⁰ These rights we, as well as you, deem sacred; and
16 yet, sacred as they are, they have, with many others, been repeatedly and flagrantly violated.

17 Are not the Proprietors of the soil of Great Britain lords of their own property? Can it be taken
18 from them without their consent? Will they yield it to the arbitrary disposal of any man, or
19 number of men whatever? You know they will not.¹¹

20 Why then are the Proprietors of the soil of America less lords of their property than you are of
21 yours? Or why should they submit it to the disposal of your Parliament, or any other
22 Parliament or Council in the world, not of their election?¹² Can the intervention of the sea that
23 divides us cause disparity in rights?¹³ Or can any reason be given; why English subjects, who
24 live three thousand miles from the Royal Palace, should enjoy less liberty than those who are
25 three hundred miles distant from it?¹⁴

1 Reason looks with indignation on such distinctions, and Freemen can never perceive their
2 propriety. And yet, however chimerical¹ and unjust such discriminations are, the Parliament
3 assert that they have a right to bind us in all cases, without exception, whether we consent or
4 not;² that they may take and use our property when and in what manner they please;³ that we
5 are pensioners on their bounty ³for all that we possess, and can hold it no longer than they
6 vouchsafe to permit. Such declarations we consider as heresies in English politicks, and which
7 can no more operate to deprive us of our property, than the interdicts of the Pope can divest
8 Kings of sceptres which the laws of the land and the voice of the people have placed in their
9 hands. At the conclusion of the late war⁴ - a war rendered glorious by the abilities and integrity
10 of a Minister, to whose efforts the British Empire owes its safety and its fame: at the conclusion
11 of this war, which was succeeded by an inglorious peace, formed under the auspices of a
12 Minister of principles and of a family unfriendly to the Protestant cause, and inimical to liberty;
13 we say, at this period, and under the influence of that man, a plan for enslaving⁵ your fellow-
14 subjects in America was concerted, and has ever since been pertinaciously carrying into
15 execution. Prior to this era you were content with drawing from us the wealth produced by our
16 commerce.⁶ You restrained our trade in every way that could conduce to your emolument.⁷ You
17 exercised unbounded sovereignty over the sea.⁸ You named the Ports and Nations to which
18 alone our merchandise should be carried, and with whom alone we should trade;⁹ and though
19 some of these restrictions were grievous, we nevertheless did not complain. We looked up to
20 you as to our parent state, to which we were bound by the strongest ties, and were happy in
21 being instrumental to your prosperity and your grandeur.

22 We call upon you yourselves to witness our loyalty and attachment to the common interest of
23 the whole Empire. Did we not, in the last war, add all the strength of this vast Continent to the
24 force which repelled our common enemy?¹⁰ Did we not leave our native shores, and meet
25 disease and death, to promote the success of British arms in foreign climates?¹¹ Did you not

1 thank us for our zeal, and even reimburse us large sums of money, which you confessed we had
2 advanced beyond our proportion, and far beyond our abilities? You did.

3 To what causes, then, are we to attribute the sudden change of treatment, and that system of
4 slavery which was prepared for us at the restoration of peace?¹

5 Before we had recovered from the distresses which ever attend war, an attempt was made to
6 drain this country of all its money, by the oppressive Stamp Act, Paint, Glass, and other
7 commodities, which you would not permit us to purchase of other Nations, were taxed². Nay,
8 although no Wine is made in any country subject to the British state, you prohibited our
9 procuring it of foreigners, without paying a tax imposed by your Parliament, on all we imported.³

10 These and many other impositions were laid upon us most unjustly and unconstitutionally, for
11 the express purpose of raising a Revenue.⁴

12 In order to silence complaint, it was, indeed, provided that this revenue should be expended in
13 America, for its protection and defence.⁵ These exactions however can receive no justification
14 from a pretended necessity of protecting and defending us;⁶ they are lavishly squandered on
15 Court favourites⁷ and Ministerial dependants⁸, generally avowed enemies to America, and
16 employing themselves, by partial representations⁹, to traduce and embroil the Colonies. For the
17 necessary support of Government here we ever were and ever shall be ready to provide. And
18 whenever the exigencies of the state may require it, we shall, as we have heretofore done,
19 cheerfully contribute our full proportion of men and money. To enforce this unconstitutional
20 and unjust scheme of taxation, every fence that the wisdom of our British ancestors had
21 carefully erected against arbitrary power, has been violently thrown down in America; and the
22 inestimable right of Trial by Jury¹⁰ taken away in cases that touch both life and property. It
23 was ordained, that whenever offences should be committed in the Colonies against particular
24 Acts imposing various duties and restrictions upon trade, the prosecutor might bring his action
25 for the penalties in the Courts of Admiralty; by which means the subject lost the advantage of

1 being tried by an honest¹ uninfluenced² jury of the vicinage, and was subjected to the sad
2 necessity of being judged by a single man - a creature of the Crown;³ and, according to the course
3 of a law, which exempts the prosecutor from the trouble of proving his accusation⁴, and obliges
4 the defendant either to evince his innocence, or to suffer.⁵ To give this new Judiciary the
5 greater importance, and as if with design to protect false accusers, it is further provided, that
6 the Judge's certificate of there having been probable causes of seizure and prosecution, shall
7 protect the prosecutor from actions at common law for recovery of damages.⁶

8 By the course of our law, offences committed in such of the British Dominions in which Courts
9 are established and justice duly and regularly administered, shall be there tried by a jury of the
10 vicinage.⁷ There the offenders and the witnesses are known, and the degree of credibility to be
11 given to their testimony, can be ascertained.⁸

12 In all these Colonies justice is regularly and impartially administered, and yet, by the
13 construction of some, and the direction of other Acts of Parliament, offenders are to be taken by
14 force⁹, together with all such persons as may be pointed out as witnesses, and carried to
15 England¹⁰, there to be tried in a distant land by a jury of strangers¹¹, and subject to all the
16 disadvantages that result from want of friends, want of witnesses, and want of money.¹²

17 When the design of raising a Revenue from the Duties imposed on the importation of Tea
18 into America, had, in a great measure, been rendered abortive, by our ceasing to import that
19 commodity¹³, a scheme was concerted by the Ministry with the East India Company, and an Act
20 passed enabling and encouraging them to transport and vend it in the Colonies¹⁴. Aware of the
21 danger of giving success to this insidious manoeuvre, and of permitting a precedent of taxation
22 thus to be established among us, various methods were adopted to elude the stroke. The people
23 of Boston, then ruled by a Governour, whom, as well as his predecessor, Sir Francis Bernard,
24 all America considers as her enemy, were exceedingly embarrassed. The ships which had
25 arrived with the Tea, were, by his management, prevented from returning; the duties would

1 have been paid; the cargoes landed and exposed to sale; a Governour's influence would have
2 procured and protected many purchasers. While the Town was suspended by deliberations on
3 this important subject, the Tea was destroyed. Even supposing a trespass was thereby com-
4 mitted, and the proprietors of the Tea entitled to damages, the Courts of Law were open, and
5 Judges appointed by the Crown presided in them. The East India Company, however, did not
6 think proper to commence any suits; nor did they even demand satisfaction, either from
7 individuals or from the community in general. The Ministry, it seems, officiously made the case
8 their own, and the great Council of the Nation descended to intermeddle with a dispute about
9 private property. Divers papers, letters, and other unauthenticated ex parte evidence were laid
10 before them; neither the persons who destroyed the Tea, nor the people of Boston, were called
11 upon to answer the complaint. The Ministry, incensed by being disappointed in a favourite
12 scheme, were determined to recur from the little arts of finesse, to open force and unmanly
13 violence. The Port of Boston was blocked up by a Fleet, and an Army placed in the Town. Their
14 trade was to be suspended, and thousands reduced to the necessity of gaining subsistence from
15 charity, till they should submit to pass under the yoke consent to become slaves, by confessing
16 the omnipotence of Parliament, and acquiescing in whatever disposition they might think
17 proper to make of their lives and property. Let justice and humanity cease to be the boast of
18 your Nation! Consult your history; examine your records of former transactions, nay, turn to
19 the annals of the many arbitrary States and Kingdoms that surround you, and show us a single
20 instance of men being condemned to suffer for imputed crimes, unheard, unquestioned, and
21 without even the specious formality of a trial; and that, too, by laws made expressly for the
22 purpose, and which had no existence at the time of the fact committed. If it be difficult to
23 reconcile these proceedings to the genius and temper of your Laws and Constitution, the task
24 will become more arduous., when we call upon our Ministerial enemies to justify, not only
25 condemning men untried, and by hearsay, but involving the innocent in one common

1 punishment with the guilty; and for the act of thirty or forty, to bring poverty, distress, and
2 calamity, on thirty thousand souls, and those not your enemies, but your friends, brethren, and
3 fellow-subjects. It would be some consolation to us if the catalogue of American oppressions
4 ended here. It gives us pain to be reduced to the necessity of reminding you that, under the
5 confidence reposed in the faith of Government, pledged in a Royal Charter from a British
6 Sovereign, the forefathers of the present inhabitants of the Massachusetts Bay left their former
7 habitations and established that great, nourishing and loyal Colony. Without incurring or being
8 charged with a forfeiture of their rights; without being heard; without being tried; without law,
9 and without justice, by an Act of Parliament their Charter is destroyed; their liberties violated;
10 their Constitution and form of Government changed; and all this upon no better pretence than
11 because in one of their Towns a trespass was committed on some merchandise said to belong to
12 one of the Companies, and because the Ministry were of opinion that such high political
13 regulations were necessary to compel due subordination and obedience to their mandates.
14 Nor are these the only capital grievances under which we labour. We might tell of dissolute,
15 weak, and wicked Governours having been set over us; of Legislatures being suspended for
16 asserting the rights of British subjects; of needy and ignorant dependents on great men
17 advanced to the seats of Justice, and to other places of trust and importance; of hard
18 restrictions on Commerce, and a great variety of lesser evils, the recollection of which is almost
19 lost under the weight and pressure of greater and more poignant calamities.
20 Now mark the progression of the Ministerial plan for enslaving us.
21 Well aware that such hardy attempts to take our property from us; to deprive us of that
22 valuable right of Trial by Jury; to seize our persons and carry us for trial to Great Britain; to
23 blockade our Ports; to destroy our Charters and change our forms of Government, would
24 occasion, and had already occasioned great discontent in the Colonies, which might produce
25 opposition to these measures, an Act was passed to protect, indemnify, and screen from

1 punishment such as might be guilty even of murder, in endeavouring to carry their oppressive
2 edicts into execution; and by another Act the dominion of Canada is to be so extended, modelled,
3 and governed, as that by being disunited from us, detached from our interests, by civil as well as
4 religious prejudices, that by their numbers daily swelling with Catholick emigrants from Europe,
5 and by their devotion to Administration, so friendly to their religion, they might become
6 formidable to us, and, on occasion, be fit instruments in the hands of power, to reduce the
7 ancient, free, Protestant Colonies to the same state of slavery with themselves.

8 This was evidently the object of the Act; and in this view being extremely dangerous to our
9 liberty and quiet, we cannot forbear complaining of it as hostile to British America. Superadded
10 to these considerations, we cannot help deploring the unhappy condition to which it has
11 reduced the many English settlers, who, encouraged by the Royal Proclamation, promising the
12 enjoyment of all their rights, have purchased estates in that country. They are now the subjects
13 of an arbitrary Government, deprived of trial by jury, and when imprisoned, cannot claim the
14 benefit of the Habeas Corpus Act, that great bulwark and palladium of English Liberty. Nor can
15 we suppress our astonishment, that a British Parliament should ever consent to establish in
16 that country a Religion that has deluged your Island in blood, and dispersed impiety, bigotry,
17 persecution, murder, and rebellion, through every part of the world.

18 This being a true state of facts, let us beseech you to consider to what end they lead. Admit
19 that the Ministry, by the powers of Britain, and the aid of our Roman Catholick neighbours,
20 should be able to carry the point of taxation, and reduce us to a state of perfect humiliation and
21 slavery; such an enterprise would doubtless make some addition to your National Debt, which
22 already presses down your liberties, and fills you with pensioners and placemen. We presume,
23 also, that your commerce will somewhat be diminished. However, suppose you should prove
24 victorious, in what condition will you then be?

25 What advantages or what laurels will you reap from such a conquest?

1 May not a Ministry with the same Armies enslave you? It may be said you will cease to pay
2 them; but remember the taxes from America, the wealth, and we may add the men, and
3 particularly the Roman Catholicks of this vast Continent, will then be in the power of your
4 enemies; nor will you have any reason to expect, that after making slaves of us, many among us
5 should refuse to assist in reducing you to the same abject state.

6 Do not treat this as chimerical. Know that in less than half a century, the quit-rents reserved to
7 the Crown, from the numberless grants of this vast Continent, will pour large streams of wealth
8 into the Royal coffers; and if to this be added the power of taxing America at pleasure, the Crown
9 will be rendered independent of you for supplies, and will possess more treasure than may be
10 necessary to purchase the remains of liberty in your Island. In a word, take care that you do
11 not fall into the pit that is preparing for us.

12 We believe there is yet much virtue, much justice, and much publick spirit in the English
13 Nation. To that justice we now appeal. You have been told that we are seditious, impatient of
14 Government, and desirous of Independency. Be assured that these are not facts, but calumnies.
15 Permit us to be as free as yourselves, and we shall ever esteem a union with you to be our
16 greatest glory and our greatest happiness; we shall ever be ready to contribute all in our power
17 to the welfare of the Empire; we shall consider your enemies as our enemies, and your interest
18 as our own. But, if you are determined that your Ministers shall wantonly sport with the rights
19 of mankind; if neither the voice of justice, the dictates of the law, the principles of the
20 Constitution, or the suggestions of humanity, can restrain your hands from shedding human
21 blood in such an impious cause, we must then tell you that we will never submit to be hewers of
22 wood or drawers of water for any Ministry or Nation in the world.

23 Place us in the same situation that we were at the close of the last war, and our former
24 harmony will be restored.

25 But, lest the same supineness, and the same inattention to our common interest, which you

1 have for several years shown, should continue, we think it prudent to anticipate the
2 consequences. By the destruction of the trade of Boston the Ministry have endeavoured to
3 their measures. The like fate may befall us all. We will endeavour therefore to live without trade,
4 and induce submission to recur for subsistence to the fertility and bounty of our native soil,
5 which will afford us all the necessaries, and some of the conveniences of life. We have suspended
6 our importation from Great Britain and Ireland; and, in less than a year' s time, unless our
7 grievances should be redressed, shall discontinue our exports to those Kingdoms and the West
8 Indies. It is with the utmost regret, however, that we find ourselves compelled, by the over-ruling
9 principles of self-preservation, to adopt measures detrimental in their consequences to numbers
10 of our fellow- subjects in Great Britain and Ireland. But we hope, that the magnanimity and
11 justice of the British Nation will furnish a Parliament of such wisdom, independence, and
12 publick spirit, as may save the violated rights of the whole Empire from the devices of wicked
13 Ministers and evil Counsellors, whether in or out of office; and thereby restore that harmony,
14 friendship, and fraternal affection between all the inhabitants of his Majesty' s Kingdoms and
15 Territories so ardently wished for by every true and honest American.

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25