

1 The Petition of the Grand American Continental Congress, to the King's Most Excellent Majesty

2 MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

3 WE your majesty's faithful subjects of the colonies of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts-Bay, Rhode-

4 Island and Providence plantations, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, the counties

5 of Newcastle, Kent and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina, and South-

6 Carolina, in behalf of ourselves and the inhabitants of those colonies, who have deputed us to

7 represent them in general congress, by this our humble petition, beg leave to lay our grievances

8 before the throne.

9 A standing army has been kept in these colonies, ever since the conclusion of the late war, without

10 the consent of our assemblies ; and this army, with a considerable naval armament, has been

11 employed to enforce the collection of taxes.

12 The authority of the commander in chief, and, under him, of the brigadiers general, has in time of

13 peace, been rendered supreme in all the civil governments in America.

14 The commander in chief of all your majesty's forces in North-America has, in time of peace, been

15 appointed governor of a colony.

16 The charges of usual officers have been greatly increased, and new, expensive, and oppressive

17 officers have been multiplied.

18 The judges of admiralty and vice-admiralty courts are impowered to receive their salaries and fees

19 from the effects condemned by themselves.

20 The officers of the customs are impowered to break open and enter houses, without the authority

21 of any civil magistrate founded on legal information.

22 The judges of courts of common law have been made intirely dependant on one part the legislature

23 for their salaries as well as for the duration of their commissions.

24 Councillors, holding their commissions during pleasure, exercise legislative authority.

25 Humble and reasonable petitions from the representatives of the people have been fruitless.

1 The agents of the people have been discountenanced, and governors have been instructed to prevent
2 the payment of their salaries.

3 Assemblies have been frequently and injuriously dissolved, and commerce burthened with many
4 useless and oppressive restrictions.

5 By several acts of parliament made in the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth years of your
6 majesty's reign, duties are imposed on us, for the purpose of raising a revenue, and the powers of
7 admiralty and vice-admiralty courts are extended beyond their ancient limits, whereby our
8 property is taken from us without our consent ;

9 the trial by jury, in many civil cases, is abolished ;

10 enormous forfeitures are incurred for slight offences ;

11 vexatious informers are exempted from paying damages to which they are justly liable, and
12 oppressive security is required from owners before they are allowed to defend their rights.

13 Both houses of parliament have resolved, that the colonists may be tried in England for offences
14 alleged to have been committed in America, by virtue of a statute passed in the thirty-fifth year of
15 Henry the eighth ; and in consequence thereof attempts have been made to enforce that statute.

16 A statute was passed in the twelfth year of your majesty's reign, directing that persons charged
17 with committing any offence therein described, in any place out of the realm, may be indicted and
18 tried for the same in any shire or county within the realm, whereby inhabitants of these colonies
19 may, in sundry cases by that statute made capital, be deprived of a trial by their peers of the
20 vicinage.

21 In the last session of parliament, an act was passed for blocking up the harbour of Boston ;

22 another empowering the governor of the Massachusetts-Bay to send persons indicted for murder in
23 that province, to another colony, or even to Great-Britain, for trial, whereby such offenders may
24 escape legal punishment ;

25 a third for altering the chartered constitution of government in that province;

1 and a fourth, for extending the limits of Quebec, abolishing the English, and restoring the
2 French laws, whereby great numbers of British freemen are subject to the latter, and establishing an
3 absolute government and the Roman Catholic religion throughout those vast regions that border on
4 the westerly and northerly boundaries of the free protestant English settlements ;
5 and a fifth for the better providing suitable quarters for officers and soldiers in his majesty's
6 service in North-America.

7 To a sovereign, who "glories in the name of Briton," the bare recital of these acts must, we presume,
8 justify the loyal subjects who fly to the foot of his throne and implore his clemency for protection
9 against them.

10 From this destructive system of colony administration, adopted since the conclusion of the late
11 war, have slowed those distresses, dangers, fears, and jealousies, that overwhelm your majesty's
12 dutiful colonists with affliction ;

13 and we defy our most subtle and inveterate enemies to trace the unhappy differences between
14 Great-Britain and these colonies, from an earlier period,

15 or from other causes than war have assigned;

16 had they proceeded on our part from a restless levity of temper, unjust impulses of ambition, or
17 a [. . .] ful suggestions of seditious persons, we should merit the opprobrious terms frequently
18 bestowed on us by those we revere.

19 But, so far from promoting innovations, we have opposed them, and can be charged with no
20 offence, unless it be one to receive injuries and be sensible of them.

21 Had our creator been pleased to give us existence in a land of slavery, the sense of our condition
22 might have been mitigated by ignorance and habit ; but, thanks be to his adorable goodness, we
23 were born the heirs of freedom, and ever enjoyed our rights under the auspices of your royal
24 ancestors, whose family was seated on the British throne to rescue and secure a pious and gallant
25 nation from the popery and despotism of a superstitious and inexorable tyrant.

1 Your majesty, we are confident, justly rejoices, that your title to the crown is thus founded on the
2 title of your people to liberty ;
3 and therefore we doubt not but your royal wisdom must approve the sensibility that teaches your
4 subjects anxiously to guard the blessing they received from divine providence, and thereby to prove
5 the performance of that compact which elevated the illustrious house of Brunswick to the imperial
6 dignity it now possesses.

7 The apprehension of being degraded into a state of servitude from the pre-eminent rank of English
8 freeman, while our minds retain the strongest love of liberty, and clearly foresee the miseries
9 preparing for us and our posterity, excites emotions in our hearts which, though we cannot
10 describe, we should not wish to conceal.

11 Feeling as men, and thinking as subjects, in the manner we do, silence would be disloyalty.

12 By giving this faithful information we do all in our power to promote the great objects of your royal
13 cares, the tranquillity of your government and the welfare of your people.

14 Duty to your majesty, and regard for the preservation of ourselves and our posterity, the primary
15 obligations of nature and of society, command us to entreat your royal attention, and as your
16 majesty enjoys the signal distinction of reigning over freemen, we apprehend the language of
17 freemen cannot be displeasing.

18 Your royal indignation we hope will rather fall on those designing and dangerous men, who
19 daringly interposing themselves between your royal person and your faithful subjects, and for
20 several years past incessantly employed to dissolve the bonds of society, by abusing your majesty's
21 authority, misrepresenting your American subjects, and prosecuting the most desperate and
22 irritating projects of oppression, have at length compelled us, by the force of accumulated injuries,
23 too severe to be any longer tolerable, to disturb your majesty's repose by our complaints.

24 These sentiments are extorted from hearts that much more willingly would bleed in your majesty's
25 service.

1 Yet so greatly have we been misrepresented that a necessity has been alleged of taking our
2 property from us without our consent, "to defray the charge of the administration of justice, the
3 support of civil government, and the defence, protection and security of the colonies."
4 But we beg leave to assure your majesty, that such provision has been, and will be made for
5 defraying the two first articles as has been and shall be judged, by the legislatures of the several
6 colonies, just and suitable to their respective circumstances; and for the defence, protection, and
7 security of the colonies, their militias, if properly regulated, as they earnestly desire may
8 immediately be done, would be fully sufficient, at least in time of peace; and in case of war your
9 faithful colonists will be ready and willing, as they ever have been when constitutionally required, to
10 demonstrate their loyalty to your Majesty, by exerting their most strenuous efforts in granting
11 supplies and raising forces.
12 Yielding to no British subjects, in affectionate attachment to your majesty's person, family, and
13 government, we too dearly prize that privilege of expressing that attachment, by those proofs
14 which are honourable to the prince who receives them, and to the people who give them, ever to
15 resign it to any body of men upon earth.
16 Had we been permitted to enjoy in quiet, the inheritance left us by our forefathers, we should at
17 this time have been peaceably, chearfully and usefully employed in recommending ourselves by
18 every testimony of devotion to your Majesty, and of veneration to the state from which we derive
19 our origin.
20 But though now exposed to unexpected and unnatural scenes of distress by a contention with that
21 nation, on whose parental guidance on all important affairs, we have hitherto with filial reverence
22 constantly trusted, and therefore can derive no instruction in our present unhappy and perplexing
23 circumstances from any former experience ; yet we doubt not the purity of our intention and the
24 integrity of our conduct will justify us at that grand tribunal before which all mankind must
25 submit to judgment.

1 We ask but for peace, liberty and safety.

2 We wish not a diminution of the prerogative, nor do we solicit the grant of any new right in our

3 favour.

4 Your royal authority over us and our connection with Great-Britain, we shall always carefully and

5 zealously endeavour to support and maintain.

6 Filled with sentiments of duty to your majesty and affection to the parent state, deeply impressed by

7 our education and strongly confirmed by our reason ;

8 and anxious to evince the sincerity of these dispositions, we present this petition only to

9 obtain redress of grievances and relief from fears and jealousies, occasioned by the system of

10 statutes and regulations adopted since the close of the late war, for raising a revenue in America,

11 extending the power of courts of Admiralty, and Vice-Admiralty, trying persons in Great-Britain

12 for offences alledged to be committed in America, affecting the province of Massachusetts-bay, and

13 altering the government, and extending the limits of Quebec, by the abolition of which system, the

14 harmony between Great-Britain and these colonies, so necessary to the happiness of both, and so

15 ardently desired by the latter, and usual intercourses, will be immediately restored.

16 In the magnanimity and justice of your majesty and parliament, we confide for a redress of our

17 other grievances, trusting, that when the causes of our apprehensions are removed, our future

18 conduct will prove us not unworthy of the regard we have been accustomed in our happier days to

19 enjoy.

20 For appealing to that Being who thoroughly searches the hearts of his creatures, we solemnly

21 profess, that our councils have been influenced by no other motive than a dread of impending

22 destruction.

23 Permit us then, most gracious sovereign, in the name of all your faithful people in America, with

24 the utmost humility to implore you, for the honour of Almighty God, whose pure religion our

25 enemies are undermining ;

1 for your glory, which can be advanced only by rendering your subjects happy, and keeping them
2 united ;
3 for the interest of your family depending on an adherence to the principles that enthroned it ;
4 for the safety and welfare of your kingdoms and dominions threatened with almost unavoidable
5 dangers and distresses :
6 That your Majesty, as the loving father of your whole people, connected by the same bands of law,
7 loyalty, faith and blood, though dwelling in various countries, will not suffer the transcendent
8 relation formed by these ties, to be farther violated, in uncertain expectation of effects, that if
9 attained, never can compensate for the calamities through which they must be gained.
10 We therefore most earnestly beseech your majesty, that your royal authority and interposition
11 may be used for our relief, and that a gracious answer may be given to this petition.
12 That your majesty may enjoy every felicity, through a long and glorious reign, over loyal and
13 happy subjects, and that your descendants may inherit your prosperity and dominions, till time
14 shall be no more, is, and always will be, our sincere and fervent prayer.
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