

1 Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress

2 OCTOBER 14, 1774

3 Whereas, since the close of the last war, the British parliament, claiming a power, of right, to  
4 bind the people of America by statutes in all cases whatsoever, hath, in some acts, expressly  
5 imposed taxes on them, and in others, under various presences, but in fact for the purpose of  
6 raising a revenue, hath imposed rates and duties payable in these colonies, established a board  
7 of commissioners, with unconstitutional powers, and extended the jurisdiction of courts of  
8 admiralty, not only for collecting the said duties, but for the trial of causes merely arising within  
9 the body of a county:

10 And whereas, in consequence of other statutes, judges, who before held only estates at will in  
11 their offices, have been made dependant on the crown alone for their salaries, and standing  
12 armies kept in times of peace: And whereas it has lately been resolved in parliament, that by  
13 force of a statute, made in the thirty-fifth year of the reign of King Henry the Eighth, colonists  
14 may be transported to England, and tried there upon accusations for treasons and misprisions,  
15 or concealments of treasons committed in the colonies, and by a late statute, such trials have  
16 been directed in cases therein mentioned:

17 And whereas, in the last session of parliament, three statutes were made; one entitled, "An act  
18 to discontinue, in such manner and for such time as are therein mentioned, the landing and  
19 discharging, lading, or shipping of goods, wares and merchandise, at the town, and within the  
20 harbour of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts-Bay in New England;" another entitled, "An  
21 act for the better regulating the government of the province of Massachusetts-Bay in New  
22 England;" and another entitled, "An act for the impartial administration of justice, in the cases  
23 of persons questioned for any act done by them in the execution of the law, or for the  
24 suppression of riots and tumults, in the province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England;"  
25 and another statute was then made, "for making more effectual provision for the government

1 of the province of Quebec, etc." All which statutes are impolitic, unjust, and cruel, as well as  
2 unconstitutional, and most dangerous and destructive of American rights:  
3 And whereas, assemblies have been frequently dissolved, contrary to the rights of the people,  
4 when they attempted to deliberate on grievances; and their dutiful, humble, loyal, and  
5 reasonable petitions to the crown for redress, have been repeatedly treated with contempt, by  
6 his Majesty's ministers of state:  
7 The good people of the several colonies of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts-Bay, Rhode Island and  
8 Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Newcastle, Kent,  
9 and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North- Carolina and South-Carolina, justly alarmed  
10 at these arbitrary proceedings of parliament and administration, have severally elected,  
11 constituted, and appointed deputies to meet, and sit in general Congress, in the city of  
12 Philadelphia, in order to obtain such establishment, as that their religion, laws, and liberties,  
13 may not be subverted: Whereupon the deputies so appointed being now assembled, in a full and  
14 free representation of these colonies, taking into their most serious consideration, the best  
15 means of attaining the ends aforesaid, do, in the first place, as Englishmen, their ancestors in  
16 like cases have usually done, for asserting and vindicating their rights and liberties, DECLARE,  
17 That the inhabitants of the English colonies in North-America, by the immutable laws of  
18 nature, the principles of the English constitution, and the several charters or compacts, have  
19 the following RIGHTS:  
20 Resolved, N.C.D. 1. That they are entitled to life, liberty and property: and they have never  
21 ceded to any foreign power whatever, a right to dispose of either without their consent.  
22 Resolved, N.C.D. 2. That our ancestors, who first settled these colonies, were at the time of their  
23 emigration from the mother country, entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of free  
24 and natural-born subjects, within the realm of England.  
25 Resolved, N.C.D. 3. That by such emigration they by no means forfeited, surrendered, or lost

1 any of those rights, but that they were, and their descendants now are, entitled to the exercise  
2 and enjoyment of all such of them, as their local and other circumstances enable them to  
3 exercise and enjoy.

4 Resolved, 4. That the foundation of English liberty, and of all free government, is a right in the  
5 people to participate in their legislative council: and as the English colonists are not represented,  
6 and from their local and other circumstances, cannot properly be represented in the British  
7 parliament, they are entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their several  
8 provincial legislatures, where their right of representation can alone be preserved, in all cases of  
9 taxation and internal polity, subject only to the negative of their sovereign, in such manner as  
10 has been heretofore used and accustomed: But, from the necessity of the case, and a regard to  
11 the mutual interest of both countries, we cheerfully consent to the operation of such acts of the  
12 British parliament, as are bonfide, restrained to the regulation of our external commerce, for  
13 the purpose of securing the commercial advantages of the whole empire to the mother country,  
14 and the commercial benefits of its respective members; excluding every idea of taxation  
15 internal or external, for raising a revenue on the subjects, in America, without their consent.

16 Resolved, N.C.D. 5. That the respective colonies are entitled to the common law of England,  
17 and more especially to the great and inestimable privilege of being tried by their peers of the  
18 vicinage, according to the course of that law.

19 Resolved, N.C.D. 6. That they are entitled to the benefit of such of the English statutes, as  
20 existed at the time of their colonization; and which they have, by experience, respectively  
21 found to be applicable to their several local and other circumstances.

22 Resolved, N.C.D. 7. That these, his Majesty's colonies, are likewise entitled to all the immunities  
23 and privileges granted and confirmed to them by royal charters, or secured by their several  
24 codes of provincial laws.

25 Resolved, N.C.D. 8. That they have a right peaceably to assemble, consider of their grievances,

1 and petition the king; and that all prosecutions, prohibitory proclamations, and commitments  
2 for the same, are illegal.

3 Resolved, N.C.D. 9. That the keeping a standing army in these colonies, in times of peace,  
4 without the consent of the legislature of that colony, in which such army is kept, is against law.

5 Resolved, N.C.D. 10. It is indispensably necessary to good government, and rendered essential  
6 by the English constitution, that the constituent branches of the legislature be independent of  
7 each other; that, therefore, the exercise of legislative power in several colonies, by a council  
8 appointed, during pleasure, by the crown, is unconstitutional, dangerous and destructive to the  
9 freedom of American legislation.

10 All and each of which the aforesaid deputies, in behalf of themselves, and their constituents, do  
11 claim, demand, and insist on, as their indubitable rights and liberties, which cannot be legally  
12 taken from them, altered or abridged by any power whatever, without their own consent, by  
13 their representatives in their several provincial legislature.

14 In the course of our inquiry, we find many infringements and violations of the foregoing rights,  
15 which, from an ardent desire, that harmony and mutual intercourse of affection and interest  
16 may be restored, we pass over for the present, and proceed to state such acts and measures as  
17 have been adopted since the last war, which demonstrate a system formed to enslave America.

18 Resolved, N.C.D. That the following acts of parliament are infringements and violations of the  
19 rights of the colonists; and that the repeal of them is essentially necessary, in order to restore  
20 harmony between Great Britain and the American colonies, viz.

21 The several acts of Geo. III. ch. 15, and ch. 34.-5 Geo. III. ch.25.-6 Geo. ch. 52.-7 Geo.III. ch. 41  
22 and ch. 46.-8 Geo. III. ch. 22. which impose duties for the purpose of raising a revenue in  
23 America, extend the power of the admiralty courts beyond their ancient limits, deprive the  
24 American subject of trial by jury, authorize the judges certificate to indemnify the prosecutor  
25 from damages, that he might otherwise be liable to, requiring oppressive security from a

1 claimant of ships and goods seized, before he shall be allowed to defend his property, and are  
2 subversive of American rights.

3 Also 12 Geo. III. ch. 24, intituled, "An act for the better securing his majesty's dockyards,  
4 magazines, ships, ammunition, and stores," which declares a new offence in America, and  
5 deprives the American subject of a constitutional trial by jury of the vicinage, by authorizing the  
6 trial of any person, charged with the committing any offence described in the said act, out of the  
7 realm, to be indicted and tried for the same in any shire or county within the realm.

8 Also the three acts passed in the last session of parliament, for stopping the port and blocking  
9 up the harbour of Boston, for altering the charter and government of Massachusetts-Bay, and  
10 that which is entitled, "An act for the better administration of justice, etc."

11 Also the act passed in the same session for establishing the Roman Catholic religion, in the  
12 province of Quebec, abolishing the equitable system of English laws, and erecting a tyranny  
13 there, to the great danger (from so total a dissimilarity of religion, law and government) of the  
14 neighboring British colonies, by the assistance of whose blood and treasure the said country  
15 was conquered from France.

16 Also the act passed in the same session, for the better providing suitable quarters for officers  
17 and soldiers in his majesty's service, in North-America.

18 Also, that the keeping a standing army in several of these colonies, in time of peace, without  
19 the consent of the legislature of that colony, in which such army is kept, is against law.

20 To these grievous acts and measures, Americans cannot submit, but in hopes their fellow  
21 subjects in Great Britain will, on a revision of them, restore us to that state, in which both  
22 countries found happiness and prosperity, we have for the present, only resolved to pursue the  
23 following peaceable measures:

24 1. To enter into a non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreement or  
25 association.

1 2. To prepare an address to the people of Great-Britain, and a memorial to the inhabitants of

2 British America: and

3 3. To prepare a loyal address to his majesty, agreeable to resolutions already entered into.

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