1. The American Revolution, 1776-1789

Robert L. Bloom
Gettysburg College

Basil L. Crapster
Gettysburg College

Harold L. Dunkelberger
Gettysburg College

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/contemporary_sec11

Part of the Military History Commons, Political History Commons, Social History Commons, and the United States History Commons

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

1. The American Revolution, 1776-1789

Abstract
The long-range causes for the American Revolution may be found in the different social environment developing in England and America during previous decades. John Adams once wrote: “The Revolution was effected before the war commenced, in the minds and hearts of the people.” For over a century and a half English colonists in North America had been transforming their Old World culture into something greatly different. The wilderness conditions of the new land generally promoted wider economic opportunity. England’s colonial administration allowed extensive experience in self-government in her American possessions. Together these two developments introduced a high degree of social mobility, and without realizing it, perhaps, the “free-born American” aspired to a future different from that of his Majesty’s subjects in the mother country. Each passing generation knew increasingly little of England, "having only heard of her," as one writer phrased it, "as a distant Kingdom, the rulers of which had, in the preceding century, persecuted and banished their ancestors to the woods of America." Nevertheless, the loyalty of the colonists was hardly in doubt until an unenlightened British ministry and an obstinate British monarch decided on an abrupt change of policy for their North American provinces. [excerpt]

Keywords

Disciplines
History | Military History | Political History | Social History | United States History

Comments
This is a part of Section XI: The Revolutionary Years, 1776-1815. The Contemporary Civilization page lists all additional sections of Ideas and Institutions of Western Man, as well as the Table of Contents for both volumes.

More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson’s request with the goal of “introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages.”

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems. A second edition, retitled Ideas and Institutions of Western Man, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker ’66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

Authors

This book chapter is available at The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/contemporary_sec11/2
return of law and order, for peace and prosperity, and for political and economic stability, prepares the way for a conservative resurgence which historians have labeled a Thermidorean reaction (named after the month of the French Revolution calendar in which the conservatives ended the Terror.) The people are now ready to welcome the downfall of the revolutionaries and are content to entrust power to some strong man or group who, it is hoped, will stabilize conditions without at the same time completely abolishing the gains won during the upheaval.

Not every revolution has followed each of these stages in exact order or with the same degree of intensity. The American Revolution and the French Revolution were not precisely alike, although there exist striking similarities between them. First of all, considering the long stretch of Western Civilization, they occurred at about the same time. Moreover, they moved against common foes -- monarchical obstinacy, a purblind aristocracy, and general intellectual obscurantism. They were more than mere "palace revolutions" because new social classes emerged to power, the political framework was drastically altered, and the prevailing economic system was extensively modified. It is a significant fact that both revolutions took place after decades of effort to clarify and define the "rights of mankind." To both of them could be applied George Washington's view of the American Revolution, that it "was not laid in the gloomy age of Ignorance and Superstition, but at an Epocha when the rights of mankind were better understood...than at any former period."

1. The American Revolution, 1776-1789

The long-range causes for the American Revolution may be found in the different social environment developing in England and America during previous decades. John Adams once wrote: "The Revolution was effected before the war commenced, in the minds and hearts of the people." For over a century and a half English colonists in North America had been transforming their Old World culture into something greatly different. The wilderness conditions of the new land generally promoted wider economic opportunity. England's colonial administration allowed extensive experience in self-government in her American possessions. Together these two developments introduced a high degree of social mobility, and without realizing it, perhaps, the "free-born American" aspired to a future different from that of his Majesty's subjects in the mother country. Each passing generation knew increasingly little of England, "having only heard of her," as one writer phrased it, "as a distant Kingdom, the rulers of which had, in the preceding century, persecuted and banished their ancestors to the woods of America." Nevertheless, the loyalty of the colonists was hardly in doubt until
an unenlightened British ministry and an obstinate British monarch decided on an abrupt change of policy for their North American provinces.

By 1763 Great Britain had expelled France from the North American continent. The very extent of this triumph over her most formidable imperial rival made for new and more difficult problems in colonial administration. With it came not only the envy and scarcely concealed hostility of the rest of Europe, but a crushing tax burden on the English people. In an effort to solve these heretofore unforeseen problems, the British government decided to tighten its control of colonial affairs and to seek additional sources of revenue in America. The implementation of this new imperial policy was obstructed by a number of colonial attitudes. Except for those limitations imposed by Britain's mercantilist policies, the Americans had enjoyed considerable economic independence. In addition, they now felt free of the French and Indian menace on the western frontier and therefore less dependent than ever before on Britain for naval and military protection.

The new policy, coming as it did after a long period of "salutary neglect," a term used to describe the mother country's lenient and liberal colonial administration, brought an unexpected uproar from America. Heretofore the loose enforcement of the navigation laws and the exercise of local self-government had made the colonists both prosperous and contented with British rule. Now, with new restrictions proclaimed on westward settlement, new taxes imposed, mercantilist trade regulations more stringently enforced, and new concessions to the French settlers of Quebec announced, the colonists sensed a threat to their economic and political well-being. Americans of all classes chafed at the prospect of permanent political inferiority and economic exploitation at the hands of British interests.

The intellectual temper of the times also influenced American attitudes. Educated Americans of the eighteenth century were familiar with the political philosophy of John Locke as well as with other Enlightenment thought. They never doubted that taxation without representation was tyranny, and their particular experience and unique circumstances in America led them to reject Britain's tentative offer of limited representation in Parliament. While still loyal to British tradition and the British crown, Americans protested against policies which, in their judgment, subverted both their rights as Englishmen and their rights as men.

Seeking at first to employ legal and moderate channels of protest, the colonists forwarded restrained and dignified petitions to London. The inability or unwillingness of British politicians to give ear to their complaints turned Americans to more defiant measures. In general such measures were an intensification of customary practices. The Navigation Acts were openly flouted, royal officials who attempted to enforce them
were threatened with reprisals, associations were formed to boycott British merchants, and in many instances property rights were disregarded. The celebrated Boston Tea Party (1773) not only destroyed valuable property but it constituted the most direct challenge yet to British rule. The home government responded early in 1774 with the "Intolerable Acts," which placed the colony of Massachusetts under virtual martial law. In September of that year the First Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia, and after warmly debating the relative wisdom of conciliation or resistance, decided to organize a united protest. Richard Henry Lee spoke not only for the delegates to the Congress but for a growing sentiment in the thirteen colonies when he declared: "I am not a Virginian, but an American!" The Continental Congress then endorsed revolutionary declarations advocating forcible resistance to the Intolerable Acts, adopted a non-intercourse agreement concerning trade with Great Britain, drew up a "Declaration of Rights and Grievances," and dispatched petitions to London in the hope of mollifying George III and the English people.

Meanwhile, steps were taken in each colony to prepare for armed hostilities. Committees of "patriots" carried on correspondence with each other, collected arms, organized and drilled militias, and set up an elaborate system of espionage. British officials in turn moved to suppress such subversive activities and in Massachusetts instituted measures to discipline the rebellious colonists. At Boston General Thomas Gage determined on a military demonstration by seizing the rebels' arms and rounding up their ringleaders. The result was the early morning clashes at Lexington and Concord (1775). As news of "the shot heard 'round the world" spread rapidly throughout the colonies the people rallied to the aid of Massachusetts' embattled farmers. For the next seven years war raged in America as Americans fought Englishmen.

At stake in this conflict was a basic issue as the colonial patriots viewed it: the natural right of mankind to liberty, self-government, and equality of opportunity. At first they had hoped to secure these rights within the framework of the British Empire. They had reiterated their loyalty to the crown and reasserted their belief that the British constitutional system was the best that the world had ever seen. Despite the fact that British intransigence alienated more and more Americans, the efforts of the small group of conspirators bent on achieving political independence from Great Britain were at first largely unavailing. It remained for extremists like Samuel Adams and his followers to discover some persuasive argument which could be circulated effectively to convince the majority of colonists that their interests lay in severing political ties with England.

This need was filled with the publication of Thomas Paine's justly famous pamphlet, Common Sense, written and circulated during the winter of 1775-1776. It is difficult to overstate the influence of this propaganda leaflet, more than 120,000 copies of which were issued. Paine (1737-1809) has long been
an extremely controversial figure in American history and only in recent years has his true contribution been appreciated. Born and bred as a lower-class Englishman, Paine acquired with an education a deep sense of the injustices present in eighteenth century English society. Representing a workers' group, he came to London to perform some business with Parliament, and while there met Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was interested in him and provided a letter of recommendation to take with him to America. In 1774 Paine arrived in Philadelphia to start life anew.

It required no strong urging to enlist the expatriate Britisher in the resistance movement. A Quaker turned deist, devoted to the abstract principle of human liberty, detesting monarchy in general and George III in particular, Paine dared to advance a more radical argument than anyone had heretofore openly circulated. In part the tremendous appeal of Common Sense lay in its lucid style and vigorous language, and in its frank stress on the American material interests to be served by political independence. Its author voiced successfully those thoughts which many colonists cherished but were either unable or too timid to express.

Paine returned to Europe in 1787 hopeful of spreading the principles of the American Revolution in the Old World. "My country is the world," he once proudly asserted, "to do good, my religion." His influence was such that after the Revolution in France got under way he was invited to take a seat in the French National Assembly. Yet Paine was never a Jacobin, and his willingness to see France retain a monarchical government brought down upon him the denunciations of these French extremists. Paine returned to America in 1802 and died in New York seven years later. The following is an excerpt from Common Sense (1776):

Some writers have so confounded society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections, the latter negatively by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last is a punisher.

Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries by a government, which we might expect in a country without government, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built upon the ruins of the bowers of paradise. For were the impulses of conscience clear, uniform and irresistibly obeyed, man would need no other lawgiver; but that not
being the case, he finds it necessary to surrender up a part of his property to furnish means for the protection of the rest; and this he is induced to do by the same prudence which in every other case advises him out of two evils to choose the least. Wherefore, security being the true design and end of government, it unanswerably follows that whatever form thereof appears most likely to ensure it to us, with the least expense and greatest benefit, is preferable to all others.

In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense; and have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves; that he will put on, rather that he will not put off the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day.

Volumes have been written on the subject of the struggle between England and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with various designs; but all have been ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed. Arms, as the last resource, must decide the contest; the appeal was the choice of the king, and the continent hath accepted the challenge.

It has been reported of the late Mr. Pelham (who, though an able minister was not without his faults) that on his being attacked in the house of commons, on the score, that his measures were only of a temporary kind, replied, "they will last my time." Should a thought so fatal or unmanly possess the colonies in the present contest, the name of ancestors will be remembered by future generations with detestation.

The sun never shone on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom, but of a continent -- of at least one-eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time, by the proceedings now. Now is the seed-time of continental union, faith and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound will enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

By referring the matter from argument to arms, a new area for politics is struck; a new method of thinking hath arisen. All plans, proposals, etc. prior to the nineteenth of April, i.e. to the commencement of hostilities, are like the almanacks of last year; which, though proper then, are superseded and useless now. Whatever was advanced by the advocates on either side of the question then, terminated in one and the same point, viz. a union with Great Britain; the only difference between the parties was the method of effecting it; the one proposing
force, the other friendship; but it hath so far happened
that the first has failed, and the second has withdrawn
her influence.

As much hath been said of the advantages of reconcili-
ation, which, like an agreeable dream, hath passed away
and left us as we were, it is but right that we should
examine the contrary side of the argument, and inquire
into some of the many material injuries which these col-
onies sustain, and always will sustain, by being con-
ected with and dependant on Great Britain. To examine
that connection and dependance, on the principles of
nature and common sense, to see what we have to trust to,
if separated, and what we are to expect, if dependant.

I have heard it asserted by some that as America has
flourished under her former connexion with Great Britain,
the same connexion is necessary towards her future hap-
piness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing
can be more fallacious than this kind of argument. We
may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon
milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first
twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for
the next twenty. But even this is admitting more than is
true, for I answer roundly, that America would have flour-
ished as much, and probably much more, had no European
power had anything to do with her. The articles of com-
merce, by which she has enriched herself, are the neces-
saries of life, and will always have a market while eat-
ing is the custom of Europe.

But she has protected us, say some. That she hath
engrossed us is true, and defended the continent at our
expense as well as her own, is admitted, and she would
have defended Turkey from the same motives, viz. for the
sake of trade and dominion.

Alas! we have been long led away by ancient prejudices,
and made large sacrifices to superstition. We have boasted
the protection of Great Britain, without considering, that
her motive was interest, not attachment; and that she did
not protect us from our enemies on our account, but from
her enemies on her own account, from those who had no
quarrel with us on any other account, and who will always
be our enemies on the same account. Let Britain waive her
pretentions to the continent, or the continent throw off
the dependance, and we should be at peace with France and
Spain, were they at war with Britain. The miseries of
Hanover last war ought to warn us against connexions.

It hath lately been asserted in parliament, that the
colonies have no relation to each other but through the
parent country, i.e. that Pennsylvania and the Jerseys,
are so on for the rest, are sister colonies by way of Eng-
land; that is certainly a very round-about way of proving
relationship, but it is the nearest and only true way of
proving enemyship, if I may so call it. France and Spain
never were, nor perhaps ever will be, our enemies as Am-
ericans, but as our being the subjects of Great Britain.
But Britain is the parent country say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore, the assertion, if true, turns to her reproach; but it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase parent or mother country hath been jesuitically adopted by the king and his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster) and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home, pursues their descendants still.

In this extensive quarter of the globe, we forget the narrow limits of three hundred and sixty miles (the extent of England) and carry our friendship on a larger scale; we claim brotherhood with every European Christian, and triumph in the generosity of the sentiment.

It is pleasant to observe with what regular gradations we surmount local prejudices, as we enlarge our acquaintance with the world. A man born in any town in England divided into parishes, will naturally associate with most of his fellow parishioners (because their interest in many cases will be common) and distinguish him by the name of neighbor; if he meet him but a few miles from home, he drops the narrow idea of a street, and salutes him by the name of townsman; if he travel out of the county, and meets him in any other, he forgets the minor divisions of street and town, and calls him countryman, i.e. countyman; but if in their foreign excursions they should associate in France or any other part of Europe, their local remembrance would be enlarged into that of Englishman. And by a just parity of reasoning, all Europeans meeting in America, or any other quarter of the globe, are countrymen; for England, Holland, Germany, or Sweden, when compared with the whole, stand in the same places on the larger scale, which the divisions of street, town, and county do on the smaller one; distinctions too limited for continental minds. Not one third of the inhabitants, even of this province, are of English descent. Wherefore, I reprobate the phrase of parent or mother country applied to England only, as being false, selfish, narrow and ungenerous.

But, admitting that we were all of English descent, what does it amount to? Nothing. Britain being now an open enemy, extinguishes every other name and title; and to say that reconciliation is our duty, is truly farcical. The first king of England, of the present line (William the Conqueror) was Frenchman, and half the peers of England are descendants from the same country; wherefore, by the same method of reasoning, England ought to be governed by France.
Much hath been said of the united strength of Britain and the colonies, that in conjunction they might bid defiance to the world. But this is mere presumption; the fate of war is uncertain, neither do the expressions mean anything; for this continent would never suffer itself to be drained of inhabitants, to support the British arms in either Asia, Africa, or Europe.

Besides, what have we to do with setting the world at defiance? Our plan is commerce, and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe; because it is the interest of all Europe to have America a free port. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold and silver secure her from invaders.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation, to show a single advantage that this continent can reap, by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge; not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for, buy them where we will.

But the injuries and disadvantages which we sustain by that connexion, are without number; and our duty to mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instructs us to renounce the alliance; because, any submission to or [dependence] on Great Britain, tends directly to involve this continent in European wars and quarrels; and sets us at variance with nations, who would otherwise seek our friendship, and against whom, we have neither anger nor complaint. As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connexion with any part of it. It is the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions, which she never can do, while, by her dependence on Britain, she is made the make-weight in the scale of British politics.

Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, because of her connexion with Britain. The next war may not turn out like the last, and should it not, the advocates for reconciliation now will be wishing for separation then, because, neutrality in that case, would be a safer convoy than a man of war. Everything that is right or natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'tis time to part. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America, is a strong and natural proof, that the authority of the one over the other, was never the design of heaven. The time likewise at which the continent was discovered, adds weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled, increases the force of it. The reformation was preceded by the discovery of America, as if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety.

The authority of Great Britain over this continent, is a form of government, which sooner or later must have an
end: and a serious mind can draw no true pleasure by looking forward under the painful and positive conviction, that what he calls "the present constitution," is merely temporary. As parents, we can have no joy, knowing that this government is not sufficiently lasting to ensure any thing which we may bequeath to posterity; and by a plain method of argument, as we are running the next generation into debt, we ought to do the work of it, otherwise we use them meanly and pitifully. In order to discover the line of our duty rightly, we should take our children in our hand, and fix our station a few years farther into life; that eminence will present a prospect, which a few present fears and prejudices conceal from our sight.

Though I would carefully avoid giving unnecessary offence, yet I am inclined to believe, that all those who espouse the doctrine of reconciliation, may be included within the following descriptions.

Interested men, who are not to be trusted; weak men, who cannot see; prejudiced men, who will not see; and a certain set of moderate men, who think better of the European world than it deserves: and this last class, by an ill-judged deliberation, will be the cause of more calamities to this continent than all the other three.

It is the good fortune of many to live distant from the scene of sorrow; the evil is not sufficiently brought to their doors to make them feel the precariousness with which all American property is possessed. But let our imaginations transport us a few moments to Boston; that seat of wretchedness will teach us wisdom, and instruct us forever to renounce a power in whom we can have no trust. The inhabitants of that unfortunate city, who but a few months ago were in ease and affluence, have now no other alternative than to stay and starve, or turn out to beg. Endangered by the fire of their friends if they continue within the city, and plundered by the soldiers if they leave it. In their present situation they are prisoners without the hope of redemption, and in a general attack for their relief, they would be exposed to the fury of both armies.

Men of passive tempers look somewhat lightly over the offences of Britain, and, still hoping for the best, are apt to call out, "come, come, we shall be friends again, for all this." But examine the passions and feelings of mankind, bring the doctrine of reconciliation to the touchstone of nature, and then tell me, whether you can hereafter love, honor, and faithfully serve the power that hath carried fire and sword into your land? If you cannot do all these, then are you only deceiving yourselves, and by your delay bringing ruin upon your posterity. Your future connexion with Britain, whom you can neither love nor honor, will be forced and unnatural, and being formed only on the plan of present convenience, will in a little time fall into a relapse more wretched than the first. But if you say, you can still pass the violations over, then I ask, hath your house been burnt?
Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or a child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have? But if you have, and can still shake hands with murderers, then are you unworthy the name of husband, father, friend, or lover, and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant.

This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which nature justifies, and without which, we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. It is not in the power of Britain or of Europe to conquer America, if she does not conquer herself by delay and timidity. The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed, but if lost or neglected, the whole continent will partake of the misfortune; and there is no punishment which that man will not deserve, be he who, or what, or where he will, that may be the means of sacrificing a season so precious and useful.

It is repugnant to reason, and the universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose that this continent can longer remain subject to any external power. The most sanguine in Britain, do not think so. The utmost stretch of human wisdom cannot, at this time, compass a plan short of separation, which can promise the continent even a year's security. Reconciliation is now a fallacious dream. Nature hath deserted the connexion, and art cannot supply her place. For, as Milton wisely expresses, "never can true reconcilement grow, where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep."

Every quiet method for peace hath been ineffectual. Our prayers have been rejected with disdain; and only tended to convince us that nothing flatters vanity, or confirms obstinacy in kings more than repeated petitioning -- nothing hath contributed more than this very measure to make the kings of Europe absolute: witness Denmark and Sweden. Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats, under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child.

To say they will never attempt it again, is idle and visionary; we thought so at the repeal of the stamp act, yet a year or two undeceived us: as well may we suppose that nations, which have been once defeated, will never renew the quarrel.

As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice: the business of it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience, by a power so distant.
from us, and so very ignorant of us; for if they cannot conquer us, they cannot govern us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which, when obtained, requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness -- there was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.

Small islands, not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for kingdoms to take under their care; but there is something absurd, in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverses the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems: England to Europe -- America to itself.

I am not induced by motives of pride, party, or resentment, to espouse the doctrine of separation and independence; I am clearly, positively, and conscientiously persuaded that it is the true interest of this continent to be so; that every thing short of that is mere patchwork; that it can afford no lasting felicity, -- that it is leaving the sword to our children, and shrinking back at a time, when going a little further would have rendered this continent the glory of the earth.

As Britain hath not manifested the least inclination towards a compromise, we may be assured that no terms can be obtained worthy the acceptance of the continent, or any ways equal to the expense of blood and treasure we have already put to.

The object contended for, ought always to bear some just proportion to the expense. The removal of North, or the whole detestable junto, is a matter unworthy the millions we have expended. A temporary stoppage of trade, was an inconvenience which would have sufficiently balanced the repeal of all the acts complained of, had such repeals been obtained; but if the whole continent must take up arms, if every man must be a soldier, it is scarcely worth our while to fight against a contemptible ministry only. Dearly, dearly do we pay for the repeal of the acts, if that is all we fight for; for, in a just estimation, it is as great a folly to pay a Bunker-hill price for law as for land. I have always considered the independency of this continent, as an event which sooner or later must take place, and, from the late rapid progress of the continent to maturity, the event cannot be far off. Wherefore, on the breaking out of hostilities, it was not worth the while to have disputed a matter which time would have finally redressed, unless we meant to be in earnest; otherwise, it is like wasting an estate on a suit at law, to regulate the trespasses of a tenant, whose lease is just expiring. No man was a warmer wisher for a reconciliation than myself, before the fatal nineteenth of April, 1775, but the moment the event of that
day was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen-
tempered Pharaoh of England for ever; and disdain the 
wretch, that with the pretended title of Father of his 
people, can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and 
composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul.

But where, say some, is the king of America? I'll 
tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make 
havoc of mankind like the royal brute of Britain. Yet 
that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly 
honors, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming 
the charter; let it be brought forth placed on the divine 
law, the word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by 
which the world may know, that so far as we approve of 
monarchy, that in America the law is king. For as in 
absolute governments the king is law, so in free coun-
tries the law ought to be king; and there ought to be no 
other. But lest any ill use should afterwards arise, let 
the crown at the conclusion of the ceremony be demolished, 
and scattered among the people whose right it is.

A government of our own is our natural right: and 
when a man seriously reflects on the precariousness of human 
affairs, he will become convinced, that it is infinitely 
wiser and safer, to form a constitution of our own in a 
cool deliberate manner, while we have it in our power, 
than to trust such an interesting event to time and 
chance. If we omit it now, some Massanello may hereafter 
arise, who, laying hold of popular disquietudes, may col-
lect together the desperate and the discontented, and by 
assuming to themselves the powers of government, finally 
sweep away the liberties of the continent like a deluge. 
Should the government of America return again into the 
hands of Britain, the tottering situation of things will 
be a temptation for some desperate adventurer to try his 
fortune; and in such a case, what relief can Britain give? 
Ere she could hear the news, the fatal business might be 
done; and ourselves suffering like the wretched Britons 
under the oppression of the Conqueror. Ye that oppose in-
dependence now, ye know not what ye do; ye are opening a 
door to eternal tyranny, by keeping vacant the seat of 
government. There are thousands and tens of thousands, 
who would think it glorious to expel from the continent, 
that barbarous and hellish power, which hath stirred up 
the Indians and negroes to destroy us -- the cruelty hath 
a double guilt, it is dealing brutally by us, and treach-
erously by them.

To talk of friendship with those in whom our reason 
forbids us to have faith, and our affections, wounded 
through a thousand pores, instruct us to detest, is mad-
ness and folly. Every day wears out the little remains 
of kindred between us and them; and can there be any 
reason to hope, that as the relationship expires, the 
affection will increase, or that we shall agree better 
when we have ten times more and greater concerns to quar-
rel over than ever?

Ye that tell us of harmony and reconciliation, can ye
restore to us the time that is past? Can ye give to prostitution its former innocence? Neither can ye reconcile Britain and America. The last cord now is broken, the people of England are presenting addresses against us. There are injuries which nature cannot forgive; she would cease to be nature if she did. As well can the lover forgive the ravisher of his mistress, as the continent forgive the murders of Britain. The Almighty hath implanted within us these unextinguishable feelings, for good and wise purposes. They are the guardians of his image in our hearts, and distinguish us from the herd of common animals. The social compact would dissolve, and justice be extinguished from the earth, or have only a casual existence were we callous to the touches of affection. The robber, and the murderer, would often escape unpunished, did not the injuries which our tempers sustain, provoke us into justice.

O! ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.*

Britain's errors in policy during 1775 also help explain the appeal of Common Sense to Americans. A royal proclamation in August had declared the colonies to be in a state of rebellion, implying severe punishment for the leaders of the resistance. British naval units committed depredations along the New England coast, and in October news had arrived that the king was hiring Hessian troops to aid in suppressing the colonial protest. Nevertheless, a strong minority of Americans were not yet prepared to accept separation. Many, who had as yet suffered relatively little personal inconvenience or loss at the hands of Great Britain, were repelled by the elements of class antagonism which they detected in the movement. Conservatives and propertied groups, fearing that they would lose much and gain little should the protection of royal authority be withdrawn, recoiled before the prospect of "mobocracy." Timorous souls were unwilling to hazard violence, and many of the merchants and planters of the eastern towns and coastal regions distrusted the revolutionary fervor of the rural and back-country inhabitants.

It should be remembered, therefore, that the American Revolution proceeded in two directions -- as a measure of resistance to Britain's imperial policies which led eventually to the fight for independence, and as an opportunity to overthrow these social and political institutions in the colonies which had produced a degree of social stratification. Not without

grounds has the great struggle of 1775-1783 been called "America's first civil war." With some notable exceptions the conservative, propertied, and "respectable" citizenry displayed varying degrees of hostility toward the American cause. Its most fervent supporters came mainly from the ranks of the liberal minded, the non-propertied, the small landholders, and the urban craftsmen.

Those Americans who remained loyal to the king were denounced as "Tories" by the revolutionaries, although they referred to themselves as "Loyalists." On the other side those who resisted what they deemed royal and ministerial tyranny called themselves "Whigs" or "Patriots." As is true in most revolutionary movements, however, the American dissidents could not agree as to the extent of the desired changes they wished to effect, and the Whigs divided into moderates and radicals.

Among the former were such prominent men as Joseph Galloway and John Dickinson, both of whom deplored British policy but were repelled at the proposition that the Americans' only recourse was to seek political independence. They disputed this contention at the Second Continental Congress meeting at Philadelphia in May 1775, but the radical Whigs, led by Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, carried the day. As a consequence the Congress recommended to the colonies that each should form its own government independent of British authority. On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee arose to submit three resolutions to the body. Lee proposed that the Congress declare that "these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States." A second resolution welcomed foreign alliances, and a third called for "a plan of confederation."

On July 2 the resolution of independence was adopted, and a select committee turned to the task of drawing up a declaration of independence. The actual writing was entrusted to Jefferson, whose facile pen was universally respected. Jefferson's draft, with minor alterations and rephrasing, was eventually submitted to the Congress, adopted, and proclaimed on July 4, 1776. Of what significance was the Declaration of Independence? In the first place it was a restatement of beliefs and attitudes which had been developing within the colonial mind for decades. Secondly, it furnished a moral pronouncement behind which colonists of all classes and sections might unite. Furthermore, it proclaimed to the world (and particularly to France) that the colonists were committed at last to complete separation from the British Empire. Finally, it is not only a classic in political polemics couched in superb literary style, but an unrivaled exposition of the philosophy of the Enlightenment.

The Declaration listed some twenty-seven specific grievances against George III. It is not necessary here to examine this indictment as to its historical accuracy. Jefferson and his colleagues were not writing history -- they were making it. The ideas expressed in this manifesto were not new, but common to the century. "Where Jefferson got his ideas," Carl Becker has observed, "is hardly so much a question as where he could have got away from them."
When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and, when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them, and formidably to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly, for opposing, with manly firmness, his invasions on the rights of the people.
He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their exercise; the state remaining, in the mean time, exposed to all the dangers of invasions from without and convulsions within.

He has endeavored to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

He has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

He has made judges dependent on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the military independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws, giving his assent to their acts or pretended legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;

For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states;

For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;

For imposing taxes on us without our consent;

For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury;

For transporting us beyond seas, to be tried for pretended offenses;

For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighboring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these colonies;

For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments;

For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever;

He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burned our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.
He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow-citizens, taken captive on the high seas, to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections among us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have we been wanting in our attention to our British brethren. We have warned them, from time to time, of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity; and we have conjured them, by the ties of our common kindred, to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They, too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends.

We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved; and that, as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

American independence was not achieved by the mere signing of an intent to sever political ties with England. Ahead were years of arduous, heart-breaking, and grueling military effort.
in which the final outcome was always in doubt. From Lexington to Yorktown the colonial army struggled against almost insuperable odds, sustained less by George Washington's military genius than by his dedicated character. Probably the decisive factor in the successful outcome of the American military effort was the financial and military aid from France and the growing war-weariness in England. When Lord Cornwallis surrendered his army of 7,000 at Yorktown in October, 1781, the military operations of the American Revolution came to an end. Two years later Great Britain formally recognized American independence in the Treaty of Paris.

With independence, however, came no surcease from problems. The war had disrupted the American economy, overthrown established political institutions, and changed many traditional social mores. It had seen many of the erstwhile political and business leaders stripped of their property, prestige, and positions of influence because of their loyalty to the motherland. As a result, with its society in a state of flux, America was cast adrift on the perilous seas of eighteenth century diplomacy. America now had to reorganize its domestic institutions with a citizenry no longer united by a common cause against the British. The times cried for a strong hand at the helm, and some conservatives turned to Washington as the potential dictator who could bring order out of chaos.

The impulse toward an American Thermodorean reaction was not to result in a dictatorship such, as we will see, befell the French under Napoleon Bonaparte. When someone proposed to Washington that he ascend an American throne as the new nation's first monarch, he replied with some warmth: "If you have any regard for your country, concern for yourself or posterity, or respect for me...banish these thoughts from your mind." The conservative resurgence did not reach a peak in America for several years, and when it did come its processes were legal, orderly, and evolutionary in character.

In the midst of the war effort against England the Continental Congress in 1777 had drafted Articles of Confederation under which the Congress hoped to achieve a stronger and lasting union among the thirteen colonies in war and the thirteen states in peace. This framework of government naturally reflected the revolutionary political philosophy of the times -- a distrust of centralized government, a suspicion of concentrated executive power, and opposition to any governmental machinery which would permit arbitrary coercion of individuals. Among the practical purposes of the Articles was the difficult task of establishing national unity while at the same time maintaining a tender regard for local interests. The compromises arrived at under the Articles, weighted in favor of political decentralism, failed to stand the test of the postwar bickering born out of the colonies' mutual suspicion and envy. To many of the best minds in America the experience of the so-called critical period from 1783 to 1789 revealed the need for a stronger government if the infant republic was to endure.
An important question now posed itself. Would the American Thermidor transpire peacefully or be characterized by violent counter-revolution? Following a series of preliminary conferences in 1785 and 1786, twelve states sent delegates to meet in convention at Philadelphia in May 1787, "for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation. These delegates were for the most part propertied men, agreed in their distrust of democracy as they saw it in practice, concerned over the political disunity inherent in the weak Articles, and embarrassed at the low estate of the United States in international affairs. The convention soon agreed wholeheartedly that the Articles should be scrapped, although some differences of opinion arose as to the method by which the new government should be strengthened. The delegates had to find a formula for a federal system which would strengthen the central government without at the same time destroying the states. Such had never been done before except for brief periods. Minor differences were resolved by compromises. In September the convention completed its work and offered the new constitution to the states for ratification. In requiring that the states pass on their work before it went into effect, the convention set a precedent not always followed elsewhere and in many ways new to America.

As strange as it may seem to us today, many voices were soon raised in opposition to the new organic law. The strongest animadversions came from those elements which had most strongly favored the liberal philosophy of the Declaration of Independence. They regarded the work of the Philadelphia convention as a repudiation of the ideals which had carried America through the dark days of the Revolution. Patrick Henry was among the most vocal in opposition and both Samuel Adams and Thomas Jefferson expressed reservations. Equally influential leaders, however, including Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison, rallied to the support of the new governmental framework. Hamilton and Madison joined with John Jay in co-authoring a series of eighty-five newspaper articles explaining and defending the proposed political arrangement. Compiled subsequently into a book entitled The Federalist, these essays constitute one of the great treatises on the American constitutional system. There is some significance in the fact that they appeared in book form in a French translation in 1792 at a time when the French nation was fervently debating its political future.

Probably the best known of these analytical commentaries from the standpoint of later constitutional developments was the Federalist No. 10, from the pen of James Madison (1751-1836). The author attempted to reconcile republican government with the Lockean emphasis on property as one of mankind's natural rights. In it little is said of democracy other than the implied notion that among the advantages of the new constitution was its power to protect property from the assaults of a leveling democracy. It should be remembered that in 1787 democracy was regarded in most respectable circles as a
perverted creed much as Aristotle had described it, and it was against what they deemed the excesses of democracy that the framers of the Constitution had labored. Madison's emphasis in this essay, however, is that in the Constitution of 1787 divergent economic and sectional interests can be reconciled within the framework of this republican government.

To the People of the State of New York:

Among the numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction. The friend of popular governments never finds himself so much alarmed for their character and fate as when he contemplates their propensity to this dangerous vice. He will not fail, therefore, to set a due value on any plan which, without violating the principles to which he is attached, provides a proper cure for it. The instability, injustice, and confusion introduced into the public councils, have, in truth, been the mortal diseases under which popular governments have everywhere perished; as they continue to be the favorite and fruitful topics from which the adversaries to liberty derive their most specious declamations. The valuable improvements made by the American constitutions on the popular models, both ancient and modern, cannot certainly be too much admired; but it would be an unwarrantable partiality to contend that they have as effectually obviated the danger on this side as was wished and expected. Complaints are everywhere heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens, equally the friends of public and private faith, and of public and personal liberty, that our governments are too unstable, that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties, and that measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority. However anxiously we may wish that these complaints had no foundation, the evidence of known facts will not permit us to deny that they are in some degree true. It will be found, indeed, on a candid review of our situation, that some of the distresses under which we labor have been erroneously charged on the operation of our governments; but it will be found, at the same time, that other causes will not alone account for many of our heaviest misfortunes; and, particularly, for that prevailing and increasing distrust of public engagements, and alarm for private rights, which are echoed from one end of the continent to the other. These must be chiefly, if not wholly, effects of the unsteadiness and injustice with which a factional spirit has tainted our public administrations.

By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of
the community.

There are two methods of curing the mischiefs of faction: the one, by removing its causes; the other, by controlling its effects.

There are again two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one, by destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.

It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it was worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.

The second expedient is as impracticable as the first would be unwise. As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the former will be objects to which the latter will attach themselves. The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results; and from the influence of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors, ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties.

The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man; and we see them everywhere brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society. A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have, in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good. So strong is this propensity of mankind to fall into mutual animosities that, where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions and excite their most violent conflicts. But the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those
who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society. Those who are creditors, and those who are debtors, fall under a like discrimination. A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations, and divide them into different classes actuated by different sentiments and views. The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of the government.

No man is allowed to be a judge in his own cause, because his interest would certainly bias his judgment and, not improbably, corrupt his integrity. With equal, nay with greater reason, a body of men are unfit to be both judges and parties at the same time; yet what are many of the most important acts of legislation but so many judicial determinations, not indeed concerning the rights of single persons, but concerning the rights of large bodies of citizens? And what are the different classes of legislators but advocates and parties to the causes which they determine? Is a law proposed concerning private debts? It is a question to which the creditors are parties on one side and the debtors on the other. Justice ought to hold the balance between them. Yet the parties are, and must be, themselves the judges; and the most numerous party, or, in other words, the most powerful faction, must be expected to prevail. Shall domestic manufactures be encouraged, and in what degree, by restrictions on foreign manufactures? Are questions which would be differently decided by the landed and the manufacturing classes, and probably by neither with a sole regard to justice and the public good. The apportionment of taxes on the various descriptions of property is an act which seems to require the most exact impartiality; yet there is, perhaps, no legislative act in which greater opportunity and temptation are given to a predominant party to trample on the rules of justice. Every shilling with which they overburden the inferior number is a shilling saved to their own pockets.

It is in vain to say that enlightened statesmen will be able to adjust these clashing interests, and render them all subservient to the public good. Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm. Nor in many cases can such an adjustment be made at all without taking into view indirect and remote considerations, which will rarely prevail over the immediate interest which one party may find in disregarding the rights of another or the good of the whole.

The inference to which we are brought is that the causes of faction cannot be removed, and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its effects. If a faction consists of less than a majority, relief is supplied by the republican principle, which enables
the majority to defeat its sinister views by regular vote. It may clog the administration, it may convulse the society; but it will be unable to execute and mask its violence under the forms of the Constitution. When a majority is included in a faction, the form of popular government, on the other hand, enables it to sacrifice to its ruling passion or interest both the public good and the rights of other citizens. To secure the public good and private rights against the danger of such a faction, and at the same time to preserve the spirit and the form of popular government, is then the great object to which our inquiries are directed. Let me add that it is the great desideratum by which this form of government can be rescued from the opprobrium under which it has so long labored, and be recommended to the esteem and adoption of mankind.

By what means is this object attainable? Evidently by one of two only: Either the existence of the same passion or interest in a majority at the same time must be prevented, or the majority, having such coexistent passion or interest, must be rendered, by their number and local situation, unable to concert and carry into effect schemes of oppression. If the impulse and the opportunity be suffered to coincide, we well know that neither moral nor religious motives can be relied on as an adequate control. They are not found to be such on the injustice and violence of individuals, and lose their efficacy in proportion to the number combined together, that is, in proportion as their efficacy becomes needful.

From this view of the subject it may be concluded that a pure democracy, by which I mean a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person, can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of faction. A common passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by a majority of the whole; a communication and concert result from the form of government itself; and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party or an obnoxious individual. Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of government, have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would, at the same time, be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions.

A republic, by which I mean a government in which the scheme of representation takes place, opens a different prospect, and promises the cure for which we are seeking. Let us examine the points in which it varies from pure democracy, and we shall comprehend both the nature of the cure and the efficacy which it must derive from the Union.
The two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic are: first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens, and greater sphere of country, over which the latter may be extended.

The effect of the first difference is, on the one hand, to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations. Under such a regulation, it may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the purpose. On the other hand, the effect may be inverted. Men of factious tempers, of local prejudices, or of sinister designs, may, by intrigue, by corruption, or by other means, first obtain the suffrages, and then betray the interest, of the people. The question resulting is, whether small or extensive republics are more favorable to the election of proper guardians of the public weal; and it is clearly decided in favor of the latter by two obvious considerations:

In the first place, it is to be remarked that, however small the republic may be, the representatives must be raised to a certain number, in order to guard against the cabals of a few; and that, however large it may be, they must be limited to a certain number, in order to guard against confusion of a multitude. Hence, the number of representatives in the two cases not being in proportion to that of the two constituents, and being proportionally greater in the small republic, it follows that, if the proportion of fit characters be not less in the large than in the small republic, the former will present a greater option, and consequently a greater probability of a fit choice.

In the next place, as each representative will be chosen by a greater number of citizens in a large than in the small republic, it will be more difficult for unworthy candidates to practice with success the vicious arts by which elections are too often carried; and the suffrages of the people, being more free, will be more likely to center in men who possess the most attractive merit and the most diffusive and established characters.

It must be confessed that in this, as in most other cases, there is a mean, on both sides of which inconveniences will be found to lie. By enlarging too much the number of electors, you render the representative too little acquainted with all their local circumstances and lesser interests; as by reducing it too much, you render him unduly attached to these, and too little fit to comprehend and pursue great and national objects. The federal Constitution forms a happy combination in this
respect; the great and aggregate interests being referred to the national, the local and particular to the State legislatures.

The other point of difference is, the greater number of citizens and extent of territory which may be brought within the compass of republican than of democratic government; and it is this circumstance principally which renders factious combinations less to be dreaded in the former than in the latter. The smaller the society, the fewer probably will be the distinct parties and interests composing it; the fewer the distinct parties and interests, the more frequently will a majority be found of the same party; and the smaller the number of individuals composing a majority, and the smaller the compass within which they are placed, the more easily will they concert and execute their plans of oppression. Extend the sphere, and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or, if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength and to act in unison with each other. Besides other impediments, it may be remarked that where there is a consciousness of unjust or dishonorable purposes, communication is always checked by distrust in proportion to the number whose concurrence is necessary.

Hence it clearly appears that the same advantage which a republic has over a democracy, in controlling the effects of faction, is enjoyed by a large over a small republic, is enjoyed by the Union over the States composing it. Does the advantage consist in the substitution of representatives whose enlightened views and virtuous sentiments render them superior to local prejudices and to schemes of injustice? It will not be denied that the representation of the Union will be most likely to possess these requisite endowments. Does it consist in the greater security afforded by a greater variety of parties against the event of any one party being able to outnumber and oppress the rest? In an equal degree does the increased variety of parties comprised within the Union increase this security? Does it, in fine, consist in the greater obstacles opposed to the concert and accomplishment of the secret wishes of an unjust and interested majority? Here, again, the extent of the Union gives it the most palpable advantage.

The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular States, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other States. A religious sect may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the Confederacy; but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it must secure the national councils against any danger from that source. A rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper or
wicked project, will be less apt to pervade the whole body of the Union than a particular member of it; in the same proportion as such a malady is more likely to taint a particular county or district than an entire State.

In the extent and proper structure of the Union, therefore, we behold a republican remedy for the diseases most incident to republican government. And according to the degree of pleasure and pride we feel in being republicans ought to be our zeal in cherishing the spirit and supporting the character of Federalists.

Publius. *

Despite the reassurances advanced by the proponents of the new basic law there remained considerable opposition to it. Its limitations on direct popular control of the machinery of government inspired the distrust of many Americans. The omission of a bill of rights appeared to ignore the Jeffersonian principle that "governments are instituted among men to secure certain inalienable rights." The provisos that the President and members of the Senate were to be chosen by indirect election and the elaborate system of checks and balances between the three major branches of government alarmed many who felt that control of the new government was removed from the hands of the people. Only when advocates of the new political blueprint pledged themselves to append a bill of rights could enough votes be obtained to ratify the Constitution. These guarantees against arbitrary government interference with individual liberties were eventually incorporated in the first ten amendments proposed by the First Congress and ratified by the states in 1791.

**Article I**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

**Article II**

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

**Article III**

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

**Article IV**

The right of the people to be secure in their persons,

houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Article V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Article VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

Article VII

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Article VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Article IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Article X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

On April 30, 1789, George Washington (1732-1799) took the oath of office as the first President of the United States of
America under the new constitution. The political maturity of the American people had been tested and not found wanting. The nation had survived a period of revolutionary turbulence without the purges, assassinations, and internecine wars that have blackened the history of so many counter-revolutionary movements. In after years Jefferson expressed his gratification that the Thermidorean phase of the American Revolution had been accomplished by the labor of men's minds rather than by the force of their arms.