

Option 1: Restore the Ties of Loyalty

Damn those rabble-rousing radicals in Boston and Philadelphia! The actions of these mad, power-hungry fools are threatening to sever the ties that bind us to our beloved mother country and our gracious king. We are at risk of losing the protection of the British constitution—the most noble effort yet produced by the minds of men to govern human affairs. To take up arms against Britain is both treasonous and suicidal.

How short are the memories of these rebels! They have forgotten that we are here thanks to the crown and the Parliament. The Britain they now despise founded our colonies, nurtured our development, and protected us from our enemies. Just a few years ago, they were praising King George and Prime Minister Pitt for Britain's glorious victories over the French and their cruel Indian allies—a triumph that opened up the entire continent to our use. At great costs, the British military has guarded our shipping and defended our frontier settlements. The meager taxes that we have been asked to pay are a small price for the benefits we receive.

The radicals have distorted history to make their case. The claim that Parliament has no legitimate authority over us ignores the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Since the final defeat of the Stuart kings, Parliament has been given greater responsibility for guaranteeing the rights of Englishmen everywhere. To argue that we can be loyal to the king and at the same time deny the authority of Parliament is to spurn the victory of 1688.

Consider how we have prospered within the British empire. Our population is now two million and doubling every twenty-five years. Our merchant ships carry cargoes to the West Indies, Europe, and Africa. Our fishermen cast their nets in Canadian waters and sell their catch locally and abroad. For more than a century and a half, our legislatures have enjoyed the right of self-government. Compared to our brothers in Britain, we pay much less in taxes. Indeed, they and the rest of the world envy our happiness and well-being.

Of course, all that we have gained would be ruined by war. Our towns would be occupied, our merchants driven into bankruptcy, and our ships sunk. With markets abroad closed, the bounty produced by our farmers and fishermen would be left to rot. Brother would be turned against brother, and neighbor against neighbor. Fire and sword would reach the smallest village. Are we willing to bring all this upon our heads rather than sit down with British officials and settle our differences?

Reflect for a moment on what awaits us if, God forbid, the radicals are successful in severing our ties of blood and tradition with Britain. In such circumstances, the thirteen colonies would immediately begin to squabble among themselves, much like selfish children deprived of parental guidance. How would the disputes over the western land claims be settled? Who would sort out disagreements over trade, or the usage of harbors and rivers? Even worse, the rabble and lower classes that have become the tools of the Boston radicals would soon turn on their betters. Do you want Sam Adams and his mob to govern you? Instead of the imagined tyranny of the king, we would suffer the real tyranny of the democratic mob. Whose property will be safe then?

Above all, let us recognize that loyalty and obedience to the king and Parliament are our sacred duties. King George is the head of our church, and he rules by

Option 2: Create a More Perfect Union

Cooler heads must prevail! If this rebellion does not cease, our relationship with Britain, our mother country, will be forever broken. Certainly, there are legitimate grievances on both sides. But there is nothing that cannot be resolved if we are willing to sit down with one another and settle our differences in a spirit of brotherly compromise.

First, we must recognize that the colonies belong to Britain. Ninety percent of the free men here trace their origins to the British Isles. Relations with our mother country have been strained lately, but that does not mean that we should disavow our English blood and heritage. Parliament contains many members who have shared our concerns in the past. We should be building bridges to our allies in London, not tearing them down through acts of rebellion.

Second, we must shoulder our share of the blame for the current crisis. Colonial legislatures have occasionally behaved irresponsibly. During the French and Indian War, several legislatures contributed nothing to the war effort. When Parliament gave the colonies an opportunity to propose an alternative to the Stamp Tax, many of our legislative leaders refused to suggest another means to raise revenue. On the contrary, they responded with the outrageous claim that Parliament has no right to tax the colonies, and even argued that the colonies owe allegiance only to the king.

But enough pointing fingers. Let us instead find common ground on which to build a peaceful future. The foundation of the British constitution rests on the principle that no man may be taxed or deprived of his property without representation. In this matter, we in the colonies have been in the right. Gone is the day when the interests of the colonies could be determined in London or ignored altogether. We are now a thriving community of two million Englishmen, nearly one-third the population of Britain herself.

To restore harmony between the colonies and the mother country, a British-American council should be formed with representatives from each of the thirteen colonies. Under such an arrangement, each colony would retain existing powers to regulate its internal affairs, while the council would have the authority to pass laws and impose taxes for the colonies as a whole. To take effect, the decisions of the council would need the approval of Parliament. Finally, the king should appoint a president in the colonies who would be responsible for enforcing the rule of law.

The establishment of a colonial council would address the complaint that we in the colonies are being taxed by a body in which we are not represented. Moreover, it would renew our union with the mother country and allow us to again pledge our allegiance to the king with enthusiasm and pride.

If we reject compromise, consider where the road of rebellion will lead. Our ports would be blockaded and our trade with the British empire would come to a halt. Without the mother country to act as a mediator, the disputes among the colonies would break out into open hostilities, and we would be plunged into civil war.

Option 3: Defend Our Rights as Englishmen

As Englishmen, we will give our lives to defend the rights that make us free men. We hold sacred the principles of the British constitution and consider ourselves loyal subjects of King George. We are not among the handful of radicals who wish to separate the colonies from our mother country and from our fellow Englishmen. Thus, it is with great reluctance that we have taken up arms to protect our homes and villages. As the minutemen of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill have shown, we will not put down our weapons until our rights have been restored.

Ever since our colonies were founded, we have enjoyed the same rights and privileges as our fellow Englishmen in the mother country. Our colonial charters were granted by the crown, and it is to the crown that we remain morally and legally bound. For the past century, the crown has recognized the wisdom of allowing the colonies a large measure of self-government. The responsible citizens in each colony have elected legislatures that have passed the laws and taxes necessary for the well-being of their fellow colonists. Even the royal governors have realized that imposing on us laws and taxes passed by Parliament has brought undue hardship to the colonies.

King George has been misled by his ministers. In following their misguided advice, he has approved measures that deprive us of liberty and prosperity. We do believe, however, that in time his majesty will realize the errors of his government. He should know that we are not rebelling against his legal authority. On the contrary, we are defending ourselves against flagrant violations of the British constitution.

The principles for which we stand are the cornerstone of the constitution. We hold that Parliament does not have the right to legislate over us without our consent. Until the conclusion of the French and Indian War, we were willing to accept the right of Parliament to regulate the trade of the British empire. In recent years, however, Parliament has lost our trust. Ruinous taxes, unreasonable trade restrictions, unconstitutional searches and trials, and the decision to take away the right of self-government from the Massachusetts colony reveal a pattern of tyranny. We will not allow ourselves to be reduced to the status of slaves.

By taking up arms to resist tyranny, we are acting in the best English tradition. No less than John Locke asserted that citizens have the right to rise up when the government ceases to protect and promote their God-given rights of life, liberty, and property. Our Whig friends in Parliament sympathize with our grievances. They admire our devotion to the cause of liberty. We must avoid antagonizing them by actions that go beyond asserting our rights and protecting our homes.

Those who demand complete separation from the mother country have not considered the consequences of their actions. While we have shown our bravery on the battlefield, do they imagine that we can defeat the British army and navy in a long war? Do they expect the most powerful country on earth to turn over meekly the colonies it founded? No other nation would dare help us in such a struggle. We would be alone in uncharted waters.

We must not deviate from principle or lose our faith in the rightness of our cause. We will continue to resist efforts to deny our rights by brute force, and we will remain steadfast in

Option 4: Fight for Independence

Damn the king and damn Parliament! They have murdered our fathers and brothers, burned our homes, and stolen our property. Is this how a loving parent treats her children? The ties that once bound us to the mother country have been broken by British force. Now we must stand up for ourselves.

We in the colonies have grown up. The brave souls who came here to find the religious freedom and economic opportunity they were denied in England have built a new society. By right, we are entitled to independence. Even the English philosopher James Harrington recognized that the colonies would eventually wean themselves from the mother country. It is natural that the cord be cut now.

Feelings of gratitude and obligation toward Britain are misplaced. Britain has not protected our interests, but its own. Trade regulations were not intended to benefit the colonies, but to enrich Britain. Moreover, this conflict was started by British officials, not by us. The British took it upon themselves to close our ports, ban our assemblies, take away our property, and fire upon our citizens.

There is no longer good reason to remain tied to Britain. Our population is growing rapidly and in fifty years will surpass that of Britain. Our land is fertile and without limits, and our God-given resources dwarf those of the British Isles.

As an independent country, our trade would expand. Without the restrictions imposed by London, new markets in Europe would be open to American goods. Our merchants would be free to import products from France, Spain, Holland, or any other nation. Even the British would soon be eager for our trade. After all, will they go naked rather than purchase our flax, furs, cotton, and indigo? Independence will be a boon to our economy.

Independence will also permit us to develop along the path we have set for ourselves. From all over Europe, freedom-loving men who wish to be judged by their abilities and not by their birth would be attracted to our shores. Our foreign relations would be of our choosing. No longer would we be drawn into London's distant wars.

Of course, there are doubters among us who question our ability to succeed by force of arms. Rest assured that after the battles at Concord and Bunker Hill the British have no doubt about the determination and valor of our citizens. The British cannot wage war in the colonies for long. London's supply lines stretch to the other side of the Atlantic. Moreover, the French and the Spanish will see an opportunity to weaken their rival by supporting our cause. Even now, there are reports that French aid is on the way.

God gave each of us the sacred natural rights of life, liberty, and security in our property. No power on earth can take these away without our consent. As John Locke asserted, we have an obligation to overthrow a government that violates its duty to protect our fundamental rights. Rather than endure tyranny, we have the moral authority to establish a government that will promote our well-being. Past divisions among the colonies will fade away once a continental government of our own replaces British rule.