

### III THE COMMON CAUSE

it is. The Judgments of the Lord are in the Earth, & I wish we may not only learn & practise righteousness in the present, but endeavour for its future continuance.

The People called Quakers have lately agreed, in their society capacity, to exclude any one of their Members who shall import, buy, or sell a Negro; & to set aside from religious services amongst themselves, all such who shall *detain* in bondage those they have, who, by the Quarter[ly] & Mo[nthly] Meetings to w[hic]h such Members belong, are thought *fit for Freedom*, & advise their being set at liberty. I mention not this boastingly, for indeed we have nothing to boast of.<sup>3</sup>

The eminent abilities thou art possess'd of are talents committed to thee for improvement & use; & is it not probable, that all the good in thy power to do with them, will be required at thy hands? The present circumstance of things, furnishes an ample field both for reflection and action, & it is my earnest wish, that Wisdom may preside in your counsels & frame your conclusions; that "peace on earth & good will to Men" may be the happy issue of all our labours; & no measures mimical thereto can be justified, upon the principles of Christianity or the practice of our Saviour.

For a Stranger so long to detain thy attention, an apology may be thought necessary & I shall refer to the matter to make it: The manner thou wilt excuse, since the intention I hope appears to be good.

I am thy real friend  
SAML. ALLINSON

1. The Continental Congress; Henry was a delegate.
2. The Virginia Association of August 6 contained a pledge neither to import nor purchase imported slaves after November 1, 1774. The Continental Association, modeled on that of Virginia, contained a similar provision effective December 1.
3. Despite admonitions from the Yearly Meetings and pressures exerted in local Monthly Meetings, few Jersey Quakers freed their slaves before the 1780s.

## 9 The Essex County Grand Jury to Chief Justice Frederick Smyth

[*New-York Journal; or, the General Advertiser*, November 17, 1774.]

By the fall of 1774 the arguments and episodes of the past ten years had made the spectre of British tyranny a tangible reality to many Americans. Attempts by crown officials and sympathizers to convince the people that their fears were groundless and that the real threat to liberty came from extralegal

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protest activities generally fell on deaf ears. That, at least, is what happened when Chief Justice Frederick Smyth of New Jersey lectured the Essex County Grand Jury on the politics of the day. Smyth (1731 or 1732-1815) served as chief justice and member of the provincial council from 1764 until the outbreak of the Revolution. Throughout the turmoil of the prerevolutionary decade, the Anglican Smyth, admired for his personal honor and integrity, was able staunchly to defend his native Britain without incurring the wrath of the popular leaders. In 1776 Smyth removed to New York and then, later, to Philadelphia where he spent the rest of his life.

[November 1, 1774]

The Address of the Grand Jury, for the Body of the County of Essex, at a Court of Oyer and Terminer and General Gaol Delivery, held at Newark, in the said County, the first Tuesday of November, 1774.

May it please your Honour,

As your Honour's charge<sup>1</sup> from the bench was not so properly directory to us, with respect to our duty, as the grand inquest of the county, as matter of instruction for the regulation of our own personal conduct amidst the present commotions of the continent; we think ourselves obliged, from the *singularity* of the charge, and its *paternal tenderness* for our welfare, to express our gratitude for your honour's friendly admonitions, (which doubtless derived great solemnity from the place in which they were delivered) and at the same time to inform you, how far we have the misfortune to differ from you in sentiment, both as to the *origin* and *tendency* of the present uneasiness, so generally diffused through all the colonies. If we rightly understood a particular part of your Honour's charge, you were pleased to tell us, that while we were employed in guarding against "imaginary tyranny, three thousand miles distant;" we ought not to expose ourselves to a "real tyranny at our own doors." As we neither know, Sir, nor are under the least apprehension of *any tyranny* at our own doors, unless it should make its way hither from the distance you mention, and then we hope, that all those whom the constitution has entrusted with the guardianship of our liberties, will rather strive to obstruct than accelerate its progress; we are utterly at a loss for the idea thereby intended to be communicated. But respecting the *tyranny at the distance of three thousand miles*, which your Honour is pleased to represent as *imaginary*, we have the unhappiness widely to differ from you in opinion. The effect, Sir, of that tyranny is too severely felt to have it thought altogether *visionary*. We cannot think, Sir, that taxes imposed upon us by our fellow subjects, in a legislature in which we are not represented, is an imaginary, but that it is a *real* and *actual* tyranny; and of which no nation whatsoever can furnish a single instance. We cannot think, Sir, that depriving us of the inestimable right of trial by jury—seizing our persons, and carrying us for trial to Great-Britain, is a tyranny merely *imaginary*. Nor can we think with your Honour, that destroying charters, and changing our forms of government, is a tyranny altogether *ideal*;<sup>2</sup> That an act passed to protect, indemnify and screen from punishment such as may be guilty even of murder is a *bare idea*;<sup>3</sup> That the establishment of French laws and popish religion in Canada, the better to facilitate the arbitrary schemes of the British ministry, by making the Canadians instruments in the hands of power, to reduce us to slavery, has no other than a *mental* existence.<sup>4</sup>

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In a word, Sir, we cannot persuade ourselves that the fleet now blocking up the Port of Boston, consisting of ships, built of real English Oak and solid iron, and armed with cannon of ponderous metal, with actual powder and ball; nor the army lodged in the town of Boston, and the fortifications thrown about it (substantial and formidable realities) are all *Creatures of the Imagination*. These, Sir, are but a few of the numerous grievances, under which America now groans. These are some of the effects of that deliberate plan of tyranny, concerted at “three thousand miles distance,” and which, to your Honour, appears only like the *baseless fabrick of a vision*. To procure redress of those grievances, which to others assume the form of odious and horrid realities; the continent, as we learn, has very naturally been thrown into great commotions, and as far as this county in particular has taken part in the alarm—we have the happiness to represent to your Honour, that in the prosecution of measures for preserving American Liberties, and obtaining the removal of oppressions, the people have acted in all their popular assemblies, (which it is the right of Englishmen to convene whenever they please) with the spirit, temper, and prudence becoming freemen and loyal subjects.

To trespass no longer on your Honour’s patience, we conclude with our hearty wishes, that while the great cause of Liberty is warmly, and at the same time so peaceably vindicated, by all honest Americans, as essentially necessary to public happiness, no bias of self interest, no fawning servility towards those in power, no hopes of future preferment, will induce any man to damp their laudable and patriotic ardour; nor lend his helping hand to the unnatural and diabolical work, of rivetting those chains which are forging for us, by the same *actual tyranny*, at the distance of three thousand miles.

1. Smyth’s statement has apparently been lost.
2. The Massachusetts Government Act of May 20, 1774.
3. The Impartial Administration of Justice Act of May 20, 1774.
4. The Quebec Act of May 20, 1774.

## 10 “Z” on the Continental Congress

[*Rivington’s New-York Gazetteer; or, the Connecticut, New-Jersey, Hudson’s-River, and Quebec Weekly Advertiser, December 1, 1774. Hereafter Rivington’s New-York Gazetteer.*]

The action of the Continental Congress affirmed the apprehensions and aroused the anger of those who either supported the royal regime or feared the