

VII FROM COLONY TO STATE

penalties thereof, in like manner as by the ancient laws of this State, he or they should have suffered in cases of high treason.

And be it further resolved and ordained, That all and every person or persons, who, from and after the date hereof, shall be found guilty of reviling the government of this State, as by this Convention established, or of other seditious speeches or practices, shall be punished in like manner as by the former laws of this State such person or persons might or ought to have been punished for such seditious speeches and practices against the government then in being.¹

And be it further resolved and ordained, That all and every person or persons, who, from and after the date hereof, shall be found guilty of counterfeiting or altering the Continental bills of credit, the bills of credit issued by the late Provincial Congress of this State, or the Assemblies, Conventions, or Congresses of any of the United States of North America, or uttering² the same knowing them to be counterfeit or altered, shall be adjudged felons, and be punished with death, in like manner as persons found guilty of counterfeiting or knowingly altering the former bills of credit of this State might or should have been.

Provided always, That no person or persons shall suffer death, or other pains or penalties for any of the offences aforesaid, until he or they shall have been first found guilty of the same offence or offences whereof he or they shall be charged and accused in due course of law, and by the verdict of a jury.

Provided also, That nothing in this ordinance contained shall be construed to divest any Committee of the power they now possess of examining and committing any offenders, so that they do not proceed to the infliction of punishments for any of the offences in this ordinance contained, but leave the same to be determined in due course of law in manner aforesaid.

1. That is, the rebels invoked the treason laws of the crown to suppress opponents of the revolutionary regime.

2. Utter: to emit or put into circulation.

11 Abraham Clark to Elias Dayton

[Gratz Collection, Declaration of Independence, Box 19, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.]

As August 13—the date Jersey men would go to the polls to elect the members of the new state government—drew near, Abraham Clark, who had recently signed the Declaration of Independence, grew ever more pessimistic about the future of America. The Loyalists were now active politically and militarily, the British army was poised to take New York City, the Provincial

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Congress faced myriad problems of governance, and the people of New Jersey were beginning to experience the realities of a full-blown revolution. Men cannot always predict with certitude the consequences of their action; as the following letter reveals, Clark, at base a philosophical fatalist, was most uncertain about what he had done on the second and fourth days of July.

Phila. Augst. 6th. 1776

My Dear Friend,

... Our Election for Council & Assembly Sheriffs &c. come on next Tuesday in all the Counties of New Jersey. I now feel the want of you in Eliza[beth]Town. I sat down to consider to whom I might Venture to Write on Politicks, and have none that I dare speak plainly to; had you or my much Esteemed Friend Mr. Caldwell¹ been there I should have been at no loss. I have none like-minded. I have friends it is true but none there now that I dare Speak with freedom to. I have Wrote to several, and desire they will not keep my Letters Secret, so that I hope I shall not be Charged with secret Practices.

As to my Title, I know not yet whether it will be honourable or dishonourable, the issue of the War must Settle it. Perhaps our Congress will be Exalted on a high Gallows. We were truly brought to the Case of the three Leapers.² If we continued in the State we were in, it was evident we must Perish; if we declared Independence, we might be saved, we could but perish. I assure you Sir I see, I feel the danger we are in, I am far from exulting in our immaginary happiness. Nothing short of the Almighty Power of God can save us. It is not in our Numbers, our Union, or our Valour that I dare trust. I think an Interposing providence hath been evident in all the events that Necessarily led us to what we are—I mean *Independant States*—but for what purpose, whether to make us a great Empire, or to make our Ruin more compleat, the issue only can determine

I am my Dear friend,
Your Sincere Friend & Hum. Servt.
ABRAHAM CLARK

1. The Reverend James Caldwell.
2. The dilemma faced by the four lepers who could either remain at the gates of the city and die from leprosy or enter the famine-struck city and die of starvation. 2 Kings 7:3-11.