

## NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

that no Heats, Disorders or Animosities, may in the least obstruct the united Endeavours that are now strongly engaged for the Repealing the Act above-mentioned, and other Acts affecting the Trade of the Colonies.

1. The "Concessions and Agreements" of 1665. See Doc. 2, note 2.
2. Without opposition, unanimously.
3. Supplies are taxes; the concept here is that the people, through their elected representatives, can only give money (revenue) to the crown — it cannot be extracted or forced from them.
4. Strange as it may seem for a colony without a newspaper or flourishing printing profession, New Jersey was the only province to register official opposition to the Stamp Act as an infringement upon the freedom of the press.

### 12 "A Lover of Liberty" to the Woodbridge Sons of Liberty

[New Jersey Manuscripts, 151, New Jersey Historical Society.]

While nearly all Jerseymen opposed the Stamp Act, there were many who feared that the excesses of the protest activities would hinder rather than help secure a redress of grievances. To such people, law and order took precedence over the specific points of contention. The document that follows is a rough draft of one of "Two papers sent to the sons of Liberty at Woodbridge Feby. 1766." I have incorporated interlinear revisions and corrections into the present text. The identity of the writer is unknown. However, his sentiments are most consonant with the law-and-order, nonviolent attitude current among the Quakers of Woodbridge, a conspicuous minority in a zealous Whig community.

[February 1766]

When the people Enter into Associations & Unite in Opposition to any Particular Measure of Government, It must be presumed that they are justly Alarmed, that something is Attempted Ag[ains]t their Liberty or property, not War-ranted by the Constitution Under Which they Live. I will not Argue w[h]ether This is the Case or no at this time. I will rather suppose that the Late Laws especially that Called the Stamp Act, are destructive of Commerce in gen[era]l & American Liberty in particular. But altho I suppose this, and am satisfied of the truth of it, I am to

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Consider that Others are to be Convinced of the Same truth, and that I ought to use reason & Argum[en]t with my Country men that differ in Opinion from me, to bring them over to My Sentiments. Every reasonable man knows that this must be his Conduct in All Cases whenever there Arises Differences of Opinion, and whenever the Leading Men or Ministers of a Kingdom are to be Addressed for this purpose, it is to be done with the greatest Decency as well as firmness. There is a Wide Difference to be used in the Mode of Argum[en]t When I address my Neighbour on a Levell with myself, or My Superior in Station & fortune. We all know, that the Same sentiments must be Delivered in different Language Otherwise Our Attempts will be in Vain; and we Shall Appear ridiculous, however just our reasons for Complaint may be. This will hold good in All private disputes but when Government is to be addressed, and Relief from it to be Asked Still greater Care is to be used. We ought not only to weigh our words, but Also put a Guard up on our Actions, that they may not give the Lye to our Expressions. While we firmly & With Respect demand the repeal of a Law Lett us not Appear to trespass upon our Constitution, & Unhinge the Government; while we make Professions of Loyalty to our Prince, lett him not see that We are Guilty of treason A[gains]t him, and ready to overthrow our Constitution. We should in short, take Care that that Spirit of Liberty which is now so Effectually Roused Should not from the Views of bad men degenerate into Licentiousness. History will furnish us with too many Instances in which Zealots have ruined the Cause of Liberty & religion too; We Cannot be too Watchfull over those nor be too Carefull of our selves Lest we run into Error. The Assertors of Liberty in this Country however they may be Distinguished, Should be very Carefull of this. While they Associate in Opposition to one Law, they Should not sett themselves Above, or act in defiance of All the rest; to be Governed by Law is the height of Liberty. Other Governm[en]t is tyranny, Other Liberty Licentiousness. Those who proscribe rules for their & neighbours Conduct & Use threats upon non Compliance are Enemys to publick freedom as well as those who, Set fines upon their fellow Subjects for their Differences of Opinion. I shudder on the [illegible] of the powers of Governm[en]t & traitors to their Country. The Late Advertisem[en]t<sup>1</sup> in this province Ag[ains]t the Retailers of Tea, Shows a Licentious Spirit Among some at the same time that the Spirited Conduct of the sons of Liberty has Shown, that Liberty was their point in View by the publick Manner in which they disown'd the fact and the publick Testimony they have given of their Abhorrance of Such Licentious proceedings. They have hitherto been in due [bounds?] & no Violence by words or Acts hath as yet Sully'd their proceedings.<sup>2</sup> I wish they so may Continue to Act & never Catch a Spark of that fiery Zeal that has possession of the Eastern Gov[ernmen]ts. It is with Real Concern I see them Stepping from one Violent Measure to Another. Impatient they Cannot Rest satisfied with having prevented the Execution of the Act, and wait the Determination of his Majesty & his Parliam[e]nt on this joint Address of All his Colonys,<sup>3</sup> but with the Greatest Imprudence they endeavor to Perswade the Govern[men]t at home that they are ripe for Rebellion, have shutt their Ears to All Remonstrance and Determined to bully the Govern[men]t in to their Sentiments & Even take the field in Support of their Opinion.<sup>4</sup> How Ridiculous, are Such publications, how presuming in the Inhabitants of one County in a Colony, to bid Defiance to the power of Brittain. It surely is not, I know it is not the Intentions of my Countrymen to throw off their Dependance on their Mother Country. I am

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Satisfied of their Affection & Attach[men]t to Britton, and that they oppose the Stamp Act & have petitioned a repeal of it as ruinous to their property & an Injury on their Constitution & Opening the Door to a taxation of their Estates by the House of Commons in Which they are not Represented. For a repeal of this Law they have Petitioned King Lords & Commons & in the Meantime Resolved not to permitt An Execution of it. This surely was going Length[s] eno'. We show'd our Resolution Sufficiently thus to oppose an Act of the Legislature of Great Brittain. But while this Matter is Deliberated in that Great Assembly, What right have We? how Indecent is it in us? to Make Continual publications of Assemblys in this & that place & of the Arbitrary Resolutions that were then taken To Make puffs of our power, & what we will Do if Matters are not Managed as we Choose or Direct? Would not now Modesty become us? Even if such things Come to the Extremity of taking the field (Which God forbid) Have we so approved ourselves on any Day that will justify this Vaunt? or Can we have such Assurances of our resolution, that we shall not think on the trial? A brave man is Ever modest, he never brags, but shows what he will Do, is Always patient, & good Natured, & Shows his Resolution when it is Necessary to exert it. On the Other hand, the Coward hides his fears under a Multitude of Words. Conscious of his want of spirit he ever bullies—he Swaggers, & he talks big & as it is his wish, so he hopes his Words & Looks will frighten his Adversary & prevent a trial of his Resolution. Is not the Conduct of the people of Wallingford Like this? Who are they or what are they, that talk thus & putt fines on their fellow Subjects. The Colonys of New England first raised the hand of Violence & their Townships Seem to Veigh with one another which Shall go furthest in Licentiousness. The example they have Sett, has Already hurt; and may in its Consequences ruin the Cause of Liberty. But Little better Could be Expected from Colonies ever head strong & unruly, who seem Desirous to remove them selves as far from the Civil as their fathers Did from the Religious Constitution of their Country.<sup>5</sup> The Same Spirit endeavours to raise its head here. Directors of Colleges Seized with the Same frenzy & aided by a few needy Attornies throw out poison among the people. They endeavour to raise imaginary fears, hoping that the people when once raised, will follow their Guide and that from the Confusions that must follow in ye Gov[ernmen]t they May gain some Advantage to themselves. But Let Us Calmly judge for ourselves and we shall not be Caught in their trap. We shall see that Opposition will be better made by Supporting the more generous of the Laws and avoid tumultuous Assembly. The Spirit of Liberty will be kept Awake by Calm Reason; and no Licentious proceedings will Stain our Charecters. We have Shown our Aversion to the Stamp Act & that we Cannot, we will not submit to it. Our Lawyers have nobly Declared Ag[ains]t it & Sacrificed their Interest for the peace of their Country. Lett us follow their Example and do nothing that will distress peace & good order. Lett us View the Riotts & Violence to fellow subjects in the Other Gov[ernmen]ts Calmly & with out heat & we shall never give into the like proceed[ing]s. The Indiscretion of this Man, or Absurd sentim[en]t of Another should move our Compassion, but never raise our Indignation so as to induce us to a breach of the publick peace & a Violation of the Law—That Law without which freedom cannot subsist, That Law on which we rely to protect our property & to which we appeal on every assertion we make for our Liberty.

A LOVER OF LIBERTY

## I REFORM AND RESISTANCE

1. I know of no such advertisement.
2. I have inserted this sentence, a marginal notation in the original, into the text since that apparently was the author's intent.
3. The petition of the Stamp Act Congress.
4. The writer is referring to a series of bold declarations issued by the New England Sons of Liberty during the winter of 1765-1766, perhaps the most audacious being the assertion of the Wallingford, Connecticut, Liberty Boys on January 31: "That we will oppose the same [the Stamp Act] to the last extremity, even to take the field." *Connecticut Courant*, February 3, 1766.
5. A reference to the migration of Separatists (the "Pilgrims") and Puritans to New England in the 1620s and the 1630s because of opposition to the Church of England (Anglican).

### 13 The Resolutions of the Woodbridge Sons of Liberty

[*New-York Gazette; or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, March 6, 1766.]

Chapters of the Sons of Liberty appeared in New Jersey in February and March 1766, largely because of prompting by the New York City Liberty Boys. Most popular and effective in the Middlesex County communities of New Brunswick and Woodbridge, the Jersey Sons were important in further galvanizing opposition to the Stamp Act and providing greater unity to the resistance movement. Eschewing the radicalism that marked the activities of Sons in other colonies, the Jersey organizations accurately reflected the resolute yet moderate temperament of the province in the imperial crisis. Nonetheless, they embodied both the potential for more extreme forms of protest should the stamp tax be retained and the actuality of an agency capable of enforcing the measures of the popular front at the local level.

Woodbridge, February 26, 1766

Sir,<sup>1</sup>

Please to insert the following Resolves in your next Paper.

AT a Meeting of the SONS of LIBERTY, of Woodbridge, in New-Jersey, they have come into the following RESOLVES.

I. RESOLV'D, That we yield hearty and unfeigned Obedience to His Majesty King GEORGE the Third.

II. RESOLV'D, That we maintain and abide by all and singular the Constitutional Laws of our Mother Country; but no other Laws or Impositions whatsoever.