

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

4 The Resolves of the New Brunswick Convention

[*Minutes of the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety of the State of New Jersey* (Trenton, 1879), pp. 25-27. Hereafter *PCCS Minutes*.]

The gathering of county committeemen in New Brunswick marked the first colony-wide extralegal conference in New Jersey. While their authority and responsibility were essentially local, the delegates brought unprecedented unity to the protest movement and paved the way for the truly united action that would be provided a year later by the Provincial Congress (see Sec. V, Doc. 1). The New Brunswick gathering also marked a turning point in the structural organization of the popular front. By going beyond a declaration of rights and grievances to the appointment of delegates to the First Continental Congress and the institution of a campaign to provide relief for the people of Boston, the conclave assumed temporary direction of the resistance movement; eventually the extralegal organization would replace the legislature as coordinator of protest activities in New Jersey.

[July 23, 1774]¹

At a general meeting of the Committees of the several Counties of the Province of New Jersey, at New Brunswick, on Thursday, the 21st July, and continued to the Saturday following. Present, seventy-two Members.

Stephen Crane,² Esquire, in The Chair.

The Committees taking into their serious consideration the dangerous and destructive nature of sundry Acts of the British Parliament, with respect to the fundamental liberties of the American Colonies, conceive it their indispensable duty to bear their open testimony against them, and to concur with the other Colonies in prosecuting all legal and necessary measures, for obtaining their speedy repeal. Therefore, we unanimously agree in the following sentiments and Resolutions:

1st, We think it necessary to declare that the inhabitants of this Province, (and we are confident the people of America in general) are, and ever have been, firm and unshaken in their loyalty to his Majesty King George the Third; fast friends to the Revolution settlement;³ and that they detest all thoughts of an independence on the Crown of Great Britain; Accordingly we do, in a most sincere and solemn manner, recognize and acknowledge his Majesty King George the Third to be our lawful and rightful Sovereign, to whom under his royal protection in our fundamental rights and privileges, we owe, and will render all due faith and allegiance.

2d. We think ourselves warranted from the principles of our excellent Constitution, to affirm that the claim of the British Parliament, (in which we neither are, nor can be represented) to make laws, which shall be binding on the King's American subjects, "in all cases whatsoever,"⁴ and particularly for imposing taxes for the purpose of raising a revenue in America is unconstitutional and oppressive, and which we think ourselves bound in duty to ourselves and our posterity, by all constitutional means in our power, to oppose.

III THE COMMON CAUSE

3d. We think the several late Acts of Parliament for shutting up the port of Boston, invading the Charter rights of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, and subjecting supposed offenders to be sent for trial to other Colonies, or to Great Britain; the sending over an armed force to carry the same into effect, and thereby reducing many thousands of innocent and loyal inhabitants to poverty and distress; are not only subversive of the undoubted rights of his Majesty's American subjects, but also repugnant to the common principles of humanity and justice. These proceedings, so violent in themselves, and so truly alarming to the other Colonies, (many of which are equally exposed to Ministerial vengeance,) render it the indispensable duty of all, heartily to unite in the most proper measures, to procure redress for their oppressed countrymen, now suffering in the common cause; and for the re-establishment of the constitutional rights of America on a solid and permanent foundation.

4th. To effect this important purpose, we conceive the most eligible method is, to appoint a General Congress of Commissioners of the respective Colonies; who shall be empowered mutually to pledge, each to the rest, the publick honour and faith of their constituent Colonies, firmly and inviolably to adhere to the determinations of the said Congress.

5th. *Resolved*, That we do earnestly recommend a general non-importation and a non-consumption agreement to be entered into at such time, and regulated in such manner, as to the Congress shall appear most adviseable.

6th. *Resolved*, That it appears to us, to be a duty incumbent on the good people of this Province, to afford some immediate relief to the many suffering inhabitants of the town of Boston.

Therefore, the several County Committees do now engage to set on foot, and promote collections, without delay, either by subscriptions or otherwise, throughout their respective counties; and that they will remit the money arising from such subscriptions, or any other benefactions, that may be voluntarily made by the inhabitants, either to Boston, or into the hands of James Neilson, John Dennis, William Ouke, Abraham Hunt, Samuel Tucker, Dr. Isaac Smith, Grant Gibbon, Thomas Sinnicks, and John Carey, whom we do hereby appoint a Committee for forwarding the same to Boston, in such a way and manner as they may be advised will best answer the benevolent purpose designed.

7th. *Resolved*, That the grateful acknowledgments of this body are due to the noble and worthy patrons of constitutional liberty, in the British Senate,⁵ for their laudable efforts to avert the storm they behold impending over a much injured Colony, and in support of the just rights of the King's subjects in America.

8th. *Resolved*, That James Kinsey,⁶ William Livingston,⁷ John DeHart,⁸ Stephen Crane,⁹ and Richard Smith,¹⁰ Esquires, or such of them as shall attend, be the Delegates to represent this Province in the General Continental Congress, to be held at the City of Philadelphia, on or about the first day of September next, to meet, consult, and advise with the Deputies from the other Colonies, and to determine upon all such prudent and lawful measures as may be judged most expedient for the Colonies immediately and unitedly to adopt, in order to obtain relief for an oppressed people, and the redress of our general grievances.

Signed by Order,
JONATHAN D. SERGEANT, Clerk.¹¹

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1. The undated resolutions were probably adopted on the final day of the meeting.

2. Crane had earlier chaired the Essex County mass meeting. See Doc. 2.

3. The Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689, which brought William and Mary to the throne, provided for a Protestant succession, and produced the English Bill of Rights.

4. As asserted by Parliament in the Declaratory Act of 1766 which accompanied the repeal of the Stamp Act.

5. That is, the House of Lords.

6. Kinsey, Burlington lawyer and assemblyman, had favored the calling of the General Assembly instead of convening a popular convention to choose delegates. See Doc. 3.

7. A transplanted New Yorker, Livingston became active in Jersey politics in 1774. See Doc. 3, notes 7 and 8.

8. De Hart (1729-1795), a distinguished Elizabethtown lawyer, represented New Jersey in both the First and Second Continental Congress. He was subsequently named as a congressional delegate again in February 1776, but resigned shortly thereafter in June 1776. One of the few Anglicans at the forefront of rebel ranks, he was a member of St. John's Church in Elizabethtown, whose pastor was an archloyalist, the Reverend Thomas Bradbury Chandler.

9. A representative from Essex County since 1766, Crane was one of the most influential members of the lower house.

10. Smith, a prominent Quaker lawyer from Burlington, was active in the protest movement although the Society of Friends instructed its members to maintain a position of neutrality during the imperial crises.

11. Sergeant (1746-1793), studied law with Richard Stockton after graduating from both the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) and the College of Philadelphia (now University of Pennsylvania) and established practice in Princeton. A strong Whig, he was a member of numerous local radical committees in addition to serving in the Provincial Congress from 1775 to 1776 (he held the posts of secretary and treasurer) and the Continental Congress from February to June 1776. He probably resigned the latter post in order to serve on the committee that drafted the state constitution of 1776.

5 "B.N." on the Continental Congress

[*New-York Journal*; or, *the General Advertiser*, August 4, 1774.]

The calling of the Continental Congress was unprecedented in the annals of American history, the nature and scope of the conclave far surpassing that of the earlier Stamp Act Congress. Surely the unidentified writer who penned the essay that follows bespoke the questions troubling many of his fellow