

DOCUMENT A: SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, EXCERPTS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE YEARLY MEETING, SEPTEMBER 23-28, 1776

Note: The Religious Society of Friends or Quakers came to North America in the early days to spread their beliefs and to escape persecution. The Quakers were spread throughout all thirteen colonies and their religious beliefs came into conflict with the threat of war during the American Revolutionary era. Quakers are pacifists who choose not to participate in wars, nor believe in the death penalty for crimes.

...In this time of singular difficulty and trial...we are unanimous in sentiment that...friends

[Quakers] should be particularly vigilant in and watchful Christian care over themselves & each other....

We are United in judgment that such who make religious profession with us and do either openly or by connivance [secretly] pay any fine, penalty or tax in lieu of their personal services for carrying on the war under the prevailing commotions, or who do consent to, and allow their children, apprentices, or servants to act therein, do thereby violate our Christian testimony and by so doing, manifest that they are not in religious fellowship with us....[any Quaker who pays taxes/fines to make up for not serving in the war is going against their religious values—they must refuse to participate and accept the jail sentence/punishment].

We affectionately desire, that Friends may be careful to avoid engaging in any trade or business tending to promote war, and particularly from sharing or partaking of the spoils of war, by buying, or vending [selling] prize goods of any kind....

Source:

Quakers address the problem of Slavery (1776). [excerpt] Digital history.com.
https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=147

DOCUMENT B: COMMON SENSE [EXCERPT], THOMAS PAINE, 1776

Note: An active participant in the American and French Revolutions, and an early proponent of the antislavery, women's rights, animal protection, and free public education, Thomas Paine was also the person who proposed that his adopted country become free of Great Britain. Born in 1737, the son of a poor Quaker corset maker, Paine was apprenticed to his father at the age of 12. Later he ran away to become a ship's hand and pirate, taught school, served as a tax collector, and became involved with groups secretly opposed to Britain's king. At the age of 37, he left England, carrying letters of introduction from Benjamin Franklin. Eighteen months later, in January 1776, he published Common Sense, which sold 150,000 copies.

In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense....

I have heard it asserted by some, that as America has flourished under her former connection with Great-Britain, the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more fallacious [false] than this kind of argument. We may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon milk, that is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. But even this is admitting more than is true; for I answer...that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power taken any notice of her.....

But she has protected us, say some.... We have boasted the protection of Great Britain, without considering, that her motive was interest not attachment....

As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it. It is the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions [fights], which she never can do, while, by her dependence on Britain, she is made the make-weight in the scale of British politics.

Europe is too thickly planted with Kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, because of her connection with Britain....

There is something absurd, in supposing a Continent to be perpetually governed by an island.... A government of our own is our natural right.... Ye that oppose independence now, ye know not what ye do: ye are opening the door to eternal tyranny....

Source:

Paine, T. (1776). Common sense. Excerpts from 'The thoughts on the present state of American affairs'. US history.org. <https://www.ushistory.org/paine/commonsense/sense4.htm>

DOCUMENT C: CHARLES INGLIS, THE TRUE INTEREST OF AMERICA IMPARTIALLY STATED [EXCERPT], 1776

Note: Horrified by Thomas Paine's pro-revolution Common Sense pamphlet which was widely read and reprinted after its initial appearance in January 1776, several Loyalists published immediate rebuttals. The most disturbing to the Patriots, perhaps, was that penned a month later by Rev. Charles Inglis, a British-born Anglican clergyman whose congregation at Trinity Church in New York City was largely Loyalist.

...Suppose we were to revolt from Great Britain, declare ourselves Independent, and set up a Republic of our own—what would be the consequence? My blood runs chill when I think of the calamities, the complicated evils that must follow. . .

Devastation and ruin must mark the progress of this war along the sea coast of America. So far, Britain has not exerted her power. Her number of troops and ships of war here at present, is very little more than she judged necessary in time of peace. . .

But as soon as we declare independence, ruthless war, with all its aggravated horrors, will ravage our once happy land. Our seacoasts and ports will be ruined, and our ships taken. Torrents of blood will be spilled, and thousands reduced to beggary and wretchedness.

By declaring independence, we would instantly lose all assistance from our friends in England. They will stop saying anything in our favor, for they would be seen as rebels, and treated accordingly.

The only European power, from which we can possibly receive assistance, is France. But France is now at peace with Great Britain; and is it possible that France would interrupt that peace, and risk another war with England, from a disinterested motive of aiding and protecting these Colonies?...

Source:

Inglis, C. (1776). Deceiver unmasked: Or loyalty and interest, united, in answer to a pamphlet entitled common sense. The true interest of America impartially stated [excerpt from section III]. Americaninclass.org.
<http://americaninclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/rebellion/text7/inglisdeceiverunmasked.pdf>