

Kinder Institute Summer Teachers Academy, 2019
Intro and readings for “The Lost Tradition of Economic Equality in America”
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Today the United States of America has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world. As a result of recent judicial decisions, the spending of corporate and individual money to influence elections and policy is afforded the same protection as speech, and corporations are granted extraordinary powers. While Americans cherish political and social equality, at least rhetorically, most oppose efforts to limit the concentration of corporate power and wealth and demonstrate hostility to progressive taxes that would redistribute wealth and services downward. They view the individual accumulation of great wealth as evidence of talent and hard work and one of the most cherished freedoms guaranteed by the Founding Fathers. But in fact, the United States was shaped in part by a radical tradition of economic equality, and the notion that the health and stability of a commonwealth depended on relative economic equality without extremes of terrible poverty or great wealth. The common corollary was that an elected republican government had the duty and power to maintain that happy condition. Our session will explore evolving tradition in America of economic equality, from the Revolution through Reconstruction.

For centuries, Europeans had assumed that all power (political, social, and economic) was connected, as reflected in feudalism and the emergence of absolute monarchs. But when the contest between king and Parliament exploded into the English Civil War in the 1640s, some radicals (inspired by radical Protestantism reflecting the Biblical Jubilee) called for all Englishmen to share land and wealth as well as political power. While these Diggers were soon suppressed, their ideals continued to have power through writings like James Harrington’s famous novel *Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656). Those radical ideas about equality and republican government approached reality in the America colonies, particularly New England, thanks largely to the land and other resources “provided” by indigenous peoples.

As the imperial conflict between Parliament and its American provinces developed in the late 1760s, “patriot” propagandists urged other Americans to preserve their “liberty” and “republican virtue” by (as “Brutus” wrote in 1769) avoiding “the temptations of ease and luxury”—i.e., to put the needs of their community ahead of their personal fortune. Benjamin Trumbull’s 1773 election day sermon in Connecticut (document A) reflects those concerns. When the War for Independence erupted, there were widespread efforts to control prices and greed at the local, state, regional, and national level, reflecting traditional concepts of the “just price” and more radical egalitarian republican ideals; see document B. But at about the same time, some Americans began to argue that the rules restraining free market pricing violated the Revolution’s natural principles of liberty and property; see document C.

- A. Benjamin Trumbull, *A Discourse, Delivered at the Anniversary Meeting of the Freemen of the Town of New-Haven, April 12, 1773* (New-Haven: Thomas and Samuel Green, 1773), pp. cover, 1st page of text (6?), 30-33.
- B. Plymouth County meeting of committees of safety and their resolve, *Boston Gazette*, June 16, 1777.
- C. Connecticut Courant column defending liberal ideal of property, “To Mr. Watson,” *Connecticut Courant*, May 12, 1777, p. 1

After winning independence, Americans generally embraced equality instead of regarding it as dreaded anarchy and saw their new country as the most egalitarian nation on earth. But at the same time, they began to view capital as a source of affluence, vehemently opposed the creation of corporations as a source of privileged power, were increasingly concerned that an aristocracy of

wealth could corrupt the republic and called for measures to ensure future economic equality. A few even advocated legal limits on individual property; at least one state legislator even called for the Biblical Jubilee.

D. "In the House of Representatives," Connecticut *Courant*, June 11, 1787, p. 1

There is no question that the new liberal ideas of individual property rights became dominant, especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that Americans became increasingly willing to accept social hierarchies and the inequalities of wealth that accompanied the explosive growth of cities and the rise of mass production and wage labor. That acceptance came easier as new state constitutions severed the traditional connections between property ownership and political participation. But the older tradition remained and during bad times grew stronger, as in the wake of the Panic of 1819, the first great depression in the country's history. Laborers and artisans in northeastern cities organized workingmen's parties to push for reforms, and some became part of the nascent socialist movement. In New York, a mass meeting in October 1829 adopted the following manifesto:

E. "The Report and Resolutions of the Committee of Fifty," in John R. Commons, ed., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, 10 vols. (1910-1911), 5: 149-151, <https://archive.org/details/documentaryhist05comm/page/149>.

This labor movement was by the Panic of 1837, but soon new egalitarian efforts with similar ideas took their place. This included the new interest in communitarian living, from the religious Shaker villages to the Fourier phalanxes that included the Transcendentalist Brook Farm near Boston. More significant was the National Reform Association, organized in 1844 by former "Workies" in New York City, which renewed and popularized Digger agrarian ideals in supporting radical land reform in their own state, and calling for a national law reserving free homesteads on federal land for actual settlers. a limitation (160 acres) on the amount of such land any person could hold, and a ten-hour work day for laborers.

F. NRA manifesto in *Young America*, August 1845.

G. *The Jubilee*, "Plan for Restoring the Land of New York to the People."

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A discourse, delivered at the anniversary meeting of the freemen of the town of New-Haven, April 12, 1773. By Benjamin Trumbull, A.M. Pastor of the church in North-Haven.

Trumbull, Benjamin, 1735-1820.

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DISCOURSE, DELIVERED AT THE ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE
FREEMEN OF THE TOWN OF NEW-HAVEN, APRIL 12, 1773.

By BENJAMIN TRUMBULL, A. M. PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN NORTH-
HAVEN.

NEW-HAVEN: PRINTED BY THOMAS AND SAMUEL GREEN.
M,DCC,LXXIII.

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IF to be governed by their own consent, by their native sons, chosen by their free suffrages, if to enjoy the most happy form of civil government, can make a people free; if these things have the greatest tendency to make them brave, prosperous and happy, and to perpetuate every dear enjoyment, then great indeed is the FREEDOM, great the PRIVILEGES and HAPPINESS of this COLONY. Such FREEDOM, such PRIVILEGES, such HAPPINESS, through the good providence of GOD, we amply enjoy. That great Blessing promised to Israel, That their NOBLES should be of themselves, and that their GOVERNOUR should proceed from the midst of them ^{||}, is vouchsafed unto us. Our Rulers are our country-men, our neighbours and friends. They love our country, as the place of their birth and education. It is the country of their friends and brethren; to which they are united by all the alliances of friendship and of blood; with which they have formed a thousand tender and powerful connections. Their interests are inseparably connected with our own. They are not only members of our civil, but of our religious communities: members of our churches, bound by baptism, by a personal profession of CHRISTIANITY, by sacramental vows, and the most sacred engagements to GOD and men, to seek their good, and the general good of their fellow men. They are bound by all the bands of nature, friendship, honour, interest and religion, to promote the public Weal. They are "able men," intimately acquainted with the laws, customs,

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manners, genius and great interests of the people. They love our country, our churches, and our religion. Their experience, superior wisdom and penetration have compiled for us a most excellent system of LAWS, founded on the great principles of liberty, justice, and religion. Their government is mild and righteous: and as they do not govern to get their bread and advance their fortunes, at the ruin of ours, and as they can lay no burdens on us, without bearing the same weight themselves, their government is as remarkable for the little expence of it, as it is for it's gentleness, impartiality and righteousness. All our expences, by way of salary ^{||} to civil officers, do not, I imagine, amount annually, by considerable, to the one half of the salary of a king's governour, in any of the neighbouring Provinces. Our lives and fortunes, all our privileges civil and religious are in a very happy manner secured.

WE have the greatest religious, as well as civil privileges. We enjoy liberty of conscience in the completest sense. No man is persecuted for his religion:

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we all enjoy our Bibles, may read and think for ourselves. Happy indeed would it be, did we read them more, understand them better, and build our faith and practice more entirely on the excellent doctrines and maxims which they prescribe.

THE Gospel is preached among us with light and power. We enjoy our Sabbaths and all gospel ordinances and privileges. Happy indeed shall we be if we "receive not" this "GRACE of GOD in vain."

BESIDES, we have a good land like Canaan of old, a land flowing with milk and honey; in which we may eat bread to the full,

whose stones are iron and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

It is also a land under good advantages for a sea-trade; so that we may

suck of the abundance of the seas and of treasures hid in the sand. The lines are fallen unto

us "in pleasant places: yea" we

have a goodly heritage.

WHILE therefore we consider how great are our privileges and enjoyments, and from whom they are all derived, can we but reflect, How great are our obligations to the most grateful sentiments, even on the bended knees of our hearts, to offer our devoutest acknowledgments of praise and thanksgiving to GOD, the great author and giver of them? And that these streams of his beneficence and mercy should lead us to him, and engage us constantly, and forever in his service?

YEA, can we but reflect again, That our sin and ingratitude will be great indeed, most inexcusable and abominable, if under all these privileges and advantages we continue in sin, and do not become, in very deed, an obedient and holy people?— That as we are exalted up to Heaven, in point of privileges, so we shall be cast down even to the lowest Hell, if we abuse and misimprove them?— That it will

be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of Judgment⁺, than for us.

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ANOTHER thought which the preceding sentiments suggest, is this, That all possible care, and every proper measure, should be taken to prevent foreigners, and all others, who are independent of a people, from having any part in government, and to keep civil rulers, as much as possible dependent on the people whom they govern, and intimately connected with them.

NOT only the representations made, and horrible deeds related in this discourse, but the history of all nations and ages will teach us, that nothing can be more fatal to the civil rights and happiness of a people than the government of strangers, and of rulers independent of the people whom they govern. When the government of a state is put into the hands of men unconnected with them, unsupported by them, whose intimate friends and special connections, are in a different country, and who receive ample support from another quarter, they may well expect oppression, injustice, the loss of liberty, and almost every civil mischief. As this becometh the case with America, or with her several provinces and governments, may not SHE, and THEY expect to bid farewell to that liberty, to those happy times and days, which we and our fathers have seen? As things are verging towards this, are not our liberties, by little and little, crumbling away, and is not our happiness drawing to a close?

EVERY free state therefore should maintain a most vigilant care and guard against foreign, or independent rulers, and against all such measures as are calculated to

introduce them, and impose them upon a people. The very first step this way, ought thoroughly to rouse, thoroughly to alarm them.

IT should also be the particular care of every civil community to keep their rulers as much as possible dependent on them, and intimately connected with them. For this purpose it will be highly politic, in every free state, to keep property as equally divided among the inhabitants as possible, and not to suffer a few persons

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to amass all the riches and wealth of a country: and also to have a special care how they adopt any laws, customs, or precedents, which have a tendency this way. For when men become possessors of the Wealth of a state, it will be in their power to purchase, or by undue influence, which, in such circumstances, they may have ways almost innumerable, to thrust themselves into all places of honour and trust. This will put it in their power, by fraud or force to keep themselves in those important posts, and to oppress and tyrannize over their fellow men. It will teach the people to look up to them, as to lords and masters, make them servile, and by little and little it will despoil them of all true liberty and freedom. But on the other hand, the keeping of property, as equally divided as possible among a people, will make elections more free, the rulers more dependent, and the liberty and privileges of the ruled vastly more secure.

FURTHERMORE, will not our subject direct us to this enquiry, Whether the erecting of Courts, and the making of civil rulers independent of the people, whom they respect and govern, are not inconsistent with the original great design of Government, inconsistent with the great and unchangeable RULES of RIGHTEOUSNESS, and incompatible with the important RIGHTS, which GOD and Nature have given, in common, to mankind?

Is it not the dictate of reason and of the will of GOD, That the original great design of civil Government is the good of the community? The maintaining and securing the rights, liberties, privileges and immunities of mankind? The impartial and faithful administration of justice? Must not whatsoever therefore, tendeth to deprive mankind of these important rights, and to prevent the impartial administration of justice, be contrary to the great design of government, and subversive of it's noble institution? But is not this the case, when rulers are made wholly independent of the people, when strangers unconnected with them, and independent

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of them, are appointed to rule over them? Is not this calculated to deprive a people of liberty and justice; —to render life, property, and every dear enjoyment very precarious; and to reduce them to a state of slavery and misery, instead of making them free and happy? Is it not an infraction of the great and unchangeable LAWS of Nature, Reason, and Religion?— Incompatible with the essential rights of mankind? How inconsistent is this with the constitution of the SUPREME LAWGIVER for the good of his chosen people? Did he not command, That all their rulers should be

dependent upon their brethren and most intimately connected with them? HE said also,

Thou shalt take no gift; for the gift blindeth the wise, and pervertleth the Words of the righteous* .

But if any gift tendeth to pervert judgment, if so small a gift as one neighbour may ordinarily bestow on another, is a precious stone in the eyes, will not hundreds or thousands sterling much more have this tendency? Will not such showers of gold and silver overwhelm reason, confound the judgment, and prove not only a stone in the eyes, but even render them totally dark and blind? Have not Courts and civil rulers constituted, in a manner, wholly independent of the people, ever been the public fountains of oppression and injustice? Have they not, instead of defending the lives and liberties of mankind, wantonly deprived them of both? And can this be more consistent with the British constitution and the rights of Englishmen, than (◊) the laws of justice, and with the unalienable rights of mankind in general? Have not Britons and Americans too, gloried in this, as a privilege, which they might all claim, To be judged by their countrymen and neighbours, who were intimately connected with them, and dependent on them? Have not thousands bravely bled to procure and maintain it? Have not the whole nation thought it well secured to them, for several hundred

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years, by MAGNA CHARTA? Have they all been mistaken? Or is the constitution of courts and rulers independent of the people, and the granting them large pensions or salaries from abroad, a flagrant violation of the essential right of British subjects?

OUR subject will further instruct us what men we ought, this day, to elect into places of civil trust; "Able men," men of truly great and noble minds, possessed of resolution, courage, constancy, and firmness; excellent preservatives against partiality and corruption, to which men of little minds, narrow and contracted souls, are easily swayed, by threats, fears, hopes or gifts. They should be men of genius, of great wisdom and abilities, who can discern both time and judgment; well acquainted with the laws, customs, manners, genius, and great interests of the government:—Men of prudence, of real piety and religion, of invincible integrity, veracity and faithfulness;

such as fear GOD, men of truth, hating covetousness

*. Rulers should, by no means, be men of deceit and intrigue, or of a covetous narrow spirit, meanly coiling themselves up in their own dirty shell, and making self the grand end of all their pursuits. They should be men of a public spirit; men, who most sensibly feel the sacred ties of religion, and the awful bonds and solemnities of an oath: Men who love their country—love the churches of our LORD JESUS CHRIST—and for their brethren and companions sakes will seek the peace and prosperity of JERUSALEM, and

because of the HOUSE of the LORD our GOD, will seek

HER "GOOD"[†]. They ought to be men most keenly penetrated with a sense of the vast worth and high importance of our privileges, and of the force and energy of those endearing motives, by which they are bound to promote the COMMON-WEAL.

FURTHER, what hath been said may not unnaturally introduce an address to the civil authority of this

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town, and to the gentlemen who shall be chosen to represent us, in the General Assembly.

Respected and worthy FATHERS and GENTLEMEN,

IT is with a very sensible pleasure and satisfaction, that we behold GENTLEMEN exalted to rule over us, to protect our lives and fortunes, all our privileges and dear enjoyments, and to promote our common happiness, who are our countrymen, our neighbours, our friends, our brethren, and fathers: Men to whom their country is endeared by all the ties of Nature, who are united with our churches, by all the solemn and sacred bonds of our Holy religion; and connected with the community, in general, both by friendship and interest: Who, by our free consent, and by the influence of our esteem and friendship enjoy their places of honour and trust. Great, worthy and dear GENTLEMEN, is the trust we and the public repose in you. More valuable far than gold, yea, more precious than our blood, are the privileges, which, under GOD, we commit to you. We persuade ourselves you are sensible of their value, feel the importance of your trust, and are not strangers to the influence of those efficacious motives which bind you to seek and promote our interest and happiness. Under the influence of these, we trust, you have lately unanimously entered upon measures to suppress vice, and to incourage and prolomote order, virtue, and religion, in the town . For

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these you have already received the thanks of the inhabitants; and, on the same account, in the name of my reverend fathers and brethren, in the ministry, I return you publick thanks: and assure you, that we shall cheerfully contribute what in us lieth, to encourage, support and assist you, in carrying into execution whatsoever may be necessary for the peace, order and happiness of this town, and of the several parts of it. These public testimonials of a general approbation of your conduct, we persuade ourselves, will encourage you with unwearied diligence, unremitting zeal and ardour, to persevere in every salutary measure you have taken for the publick good, and that they will afford an argument, of no little weight, with you, to go into a prudent and vigorous exertion of all your authority, abilities and influence, to suppress all kind of vice, immorality and disorder, and to promote order, virtue, and religion. You cannot be insensible, that this will have a charming aspect upon society, that the happy effects and consequences of it may, through the blessing of GOD, not only be felt by the present generation, but extend themselves to ages unborn, yea, to all eternity. Good government and religion have a favourable aspect not only upon the present, but future Times. No more can you be insensible, That it is the duty, and an important branch of the character of civil rulers, That they bear not the civil

As a consequence of the Committee of Correspondence, from the towns in the county of Plymouth, held by adjournment at Plymouth, on Wednesday the 17th, 1777, the following draft was unanimously adopted.

The Committee do admit the impetuous distresses and embarrasments, necessarily attending a new country engaged in a bloody contest with a power which though vain in arrogating to itself omnipotence is formidable, in conjunction with its allies, and by its superior naval superiority, that after contending two years, and circumstances considered, with an unparalleled success, and watering with their richest blood, the same altar on which their ancestors had before so copiously shed their own—that such a people, after exhibiting such illustrious examples of patience, contempt of life and danger, when near the crisis of their fate, and in sight of the promised land, should suffer an exorbitant lust for gain, than which no passion is more incompatible with the true dignity of man, to divert their attention from the true objects, and thereby endanger their entrance into the region of peace, liberty and happiness, will astonish all future generations, and give a vicious cast to their noblest attainments.

This Convention, alarmed at the rapid progress of avarice and extortion, which, like a scorching torrent, has overpread the land, and threatens the utter extinction of every virtuous and patriotic sentiment, earnestly entreat their countrymen, especially those with whom they are more immediately connected, to pause a moment from the pursuit of wealth, and redress on the tremendous consequences, to which, so general a distraction from public spirit and virtue, naturally leads. As not our savings and our resources to dragoon the inhabitants of these States into an unconditional submission to British power and despotic rule? Will it not require the vigorous and active efforts of every Whig upon the Continent, to repel the hostile invasions, which will probably be made upon several of the United States, in the course of the ensuing campaign? Was he not perfectly acquainted with human nature who observed, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon"? Is it not the height of folly to suppose that man, whose minds are wholly bent on the acquisition of wealth, will pursue the public welfare with an assiduity, commensurate to its importance? And will not the least remission of our exertions in this critical conjuncture, hazard a total defeat? And what then, in the scale of Heaven, will their riches avail them?

The unattainable price, which are still demanded for commodities of all kinds; notwithstanding the intervention of the legislative authority, to check their extravagance, is a triple-headed mischief, as it tends to deplete the springs of government, to ruin the currency, and to discourage the soldier. The variety of ways in which each of these may be affected by a continuance of these avaricious, extortionate and oppressive practices have been so often repeated and so indeed so obvious as renders it unnecessary to enumerate them. And we would ask all men who sincerely wish the freedom and prosperity of their country, whether military operations can be carried on with the requisite vigour without government money or soldiers?

It is easy to trace, in all our distresses and embarrasments, the serpentine circuitings and political cunning and artifices of a set of men, will enough distinguished by the name of Tories, who with unremitting zeal, labour to create division and animosities among ourselves, that they may more effectually gratify their infernal spleen by overthrowing the glorious fabric of liberty reared in these American wilds, and with the demolition of that to exile freedom from the world. But it is inconceivably strange that any honest man can be so insensitive and unguarded as to be duped by such unnatural miscreants.

The members of this convention, determined religiously to discharge the sacred duties they owe to their country, themselves and posterity, that whatever shall be the issue of this severe contest, they may be happy, adopt the following resolves.

First, That an equitable exchange of the fruits of the earth, or a communication of one man's labour, in due proportion to that of another, is the basis on which the felicity, freedom and happiness of a community greatly depend.

Secondly, That the highest degree of political and civil liberty consists in the living under the protection of an equal government, or the administration of laws framed by the people themselves (who are to be governed by them) or their representatives, freely and adequately elected.—And that it is the indispensable duty of every good subject to pay all due obedience to the acts of such a government.

Thirdly, That we will use our utmost influence to enforce the act of this State, entitled "An Act to prevent monopoly and oppression," and the act in addition, to said act, and will do all in our power to bring to condign punishment the raven and notorious violators of said acts, as enemies to the present government, and the independence of America.

Fourthly, Whereas difficulties have arisen from a supposed disposition to the prices of many articles, this Convention have been at the pains of fixing the prices of these articles as near as could be, in a just equality.—It is therefore recommended to the good people of this county, to adhere strictly to the prices as they are now stipulated, so they tender the union and peace of this county, and the salvation of their country.

Fifthly, That it is a duty incumbent upon all persons who have a superabundance of the necessities of life to supply such as are destitute, at the stated prices; with so much of them as they may see reasonably want for their own consumption.

Sixthly, Our internal enemies having become more open and daring in their diabolical machinations of subverting the great cause of America and mankind, and are monopolizing the wine, liquors, cloathing, provisions, &c. so well for the purpose of enhancing the price of these commodities, and so depreciating the

currency, as for reducing the people to distress and want. It is seriously recommended to all the friends of this Continent in general, and to those of this county in particular, to watch with vigilance and circumspection the movements of all suspicious characters, and to take immediately such decisive measures as shall effectually preclude them from executing their impious devices.

Seventhly, That it be and hereby is recommended to the selectmen of the several Towns in this county, to watch their respective towns so men without delay, and proceed agreeable to an act of the State, for securing the United States, against the internal enemies thereof.

Eighthly, As we have undoubted intelligence that the British King will exhaust all the strength of his Kingdoms this campaign, in pursuit of his favourite idea of subjugating this State; and as this State may probably be visited by the unwhilful feet of his band of mercenaries, it is further recommended to every good man in this county, capable of bearing arms, to equip himself completely, and with all possible speed, that the enemy may not obtain an advantage over us, from our being unprepared to oppose them.

Ninthly, As the best regulations are but of little significance, without a constant correspondent thereto, this Convention are unanimously determined, with the most scrupulous punctuality, to carry into execution the Resolves of the Grand American Congress, and the good and wholesome acts of this State; as every thing dear and sacred to us depends upon an inviolable adherence to the same; and to prosecute to the utmost rigour of the law, such persons, as from a principle of amity to the righteous cause of their country, shall be found counteracting them; and to treat such sinners as traitors and particides.

Published by Order of the Convention.

THOMAS COTTON, Chairman.

PROVIDENCE, June 7.
We learn that three Frigates sailed a few days ago from Newport, and were joined off Block Island by a 30 gun ship and two frigates from New-York. They are said to be bound on a cruise.

Since our last four soldiers (three of them foreigners) one missing and three taken, have deserted from the army at Rhode Island, and arrived here. By a person who escaped from Rhode-Island on Wednesday last, we learn, that the enemy are obliged to furnish almost entirely on salted provisions; and that a number of distressed persons, who lately fled to Newport from the southern part of this State for protection, were compelled to bear arms, and have been sent to New York to join the ministerial army.

A gentleman from Middlesex informs, that an officer had arrived there from New-Jersey and brought advice that a sharp skirmish happened on the 16th of last month, in which the enemy had 77 men killed, and 40 taken prisoners. Of the Continental troops 30 were killed and wounded.

BOSTON, June 10.
Wednesday the Hon. *Archibald Miller*, Esq. was elected to a Seat at the Hon. Council of this State, in the room of the Hon. *James Bowdoin*, Esq. who has resigned.

Wednesday last returned into Port, the Schooner *America*, Capt. *Daniel Smith*, having sprung the mainmast. Before the ship from *Tobago*, (convinced in our last) he likewise took a Brig from *—* which is barely expected.

Capt. *Oak* who has taken a valuable Prize, which is safe arrived at an Eastern Port.

Capt. *Stimms* has taken two Brigs laden with Flour, which are safe arrived at an Eastern Port.

Saturday last arrived safe in Port, two Brigs from Bilbao, laden with Flour, and other valuable Articles. Their Cargo belongs to the Continent.

A Letter from Bilbao of the 17th of April makes no mention of any Political affairs.

Some day arrived in Port the Brig formerly mentioned to be taken by Capt. *Clavton*, bound from England to Guinea.

After the same Day arrived a Prize Brig, taken by Commodore *Mahly*; she was bound from London for New-York, laden with Duck, Corrage, &c. which has come to a very good Market. Commodore *Mahly* and Capt. *Mediel*, as the Prize Master informs, when he left them, had full list with three transports. In the last of which was a 64 Gun Ship bound for New-York; and as the two Continental Prizes had sailed round the Ship several times "he got so hot, they will bring or lead in one or more of the transports."

Captain *Johnson* (formerly of the *Yankee Hero*) in a Continental Brig from Virginia, has taken two Prizes laden with Wine, and sent them into Nantz. He was left in Chains of another.

Thursday last at a special Session, *William Clark*, late Minister of *Delham* and *David White*, of the same Place were brought in guilty of being inimical to the United States of America; and were immediately conducted on board the *Guard-Ship*.

Friday last the noted Colonel *Stephen Holland* set out from the Goal in this Place, for that in *Exeter* New-Hampshire, under a proper Guard.

Danbury, May 31, 1777.
In Obedience to a Resolve of the Honorable Congress of the 1st of April last, this is to Inform all concerned, That Military Hospitals are established for the Eastern Department, at Danbury, in the State of Connecticut; and at *Pitt Kill*, in the State of New-York. All Officers, Regimental Surgeons or others; are therefore requested to take Notice, that such of the Continental Troops under their Care, who may happen to fall sick at or near those Places, will be received into the Hospital and properly attended to; they are particularly desired to send Certificates from the Resolves referred to, and to report such as may have been left in the Care of private Physicians and Surgeons to the Director's Office in this Place.

1662 ROSTER, D. B. D.

Last Week the General Assembly sitting here appointed the Hon. *ROBERT TARRANT*, Esq. Attorney General for the State.

IN CONGRESS, May 27, 1777.
RESOLVED, That for the future there be only one Chaplain allowed to each Brigade in the Army; and that such Chaplain be appointed by Congress.
That each Brigade Chaplain be allowed the same Pay, Rations and Forage, that is allowed to a Colonel in the same Corps.
That each Brigadier General be requested to nominate and recommend to Congress, a proper Person for Chaplain to his Brigade; and that they recommend none but such as are Clergymen of experience and established public Character for Piety, Virtue and Learning.
By Order of Congress,
JOHN HANCOCK, President.

STATE of MASSACHUSETTS: BAY.
Councils-CHAMBER, Boston, June 14, 1777.
NOTICE is hereby given, That there is to be built in the Town of *Rutland*, in the County of *Worcester*, a Wooden Barrack of 140 Feet long, and 40 Feet wide, and two story high, each story to be 20 Feet in the Clear, to be framed, Railed, Boarded, Shingled and Glazed, and to have three Entries—single ways through the House, a Stair-Case in each Entry to be divided by Flank Partitions into Rooms of 30 Feet square, with two Windows in each Room three square wide and four high, 10 by 8 Glass—The Floor to be laid with Double Pine Boards, all the Workmanship to be done in the plainest Manner, and all the Materials to be found and provided on the Spot ready in the Workman's Hand.—Such Carpenters as are inclined to build the House aforesaid, and to board and clad themselves during the Time they are going the Work, are desired to send their Proposals sealed up, and directed to the Secretary of this State at *Boston*, on or before the 7th of July next, at which Time the several Proposals will be opened and examined; and such Carpenter whose Proposals are most reasonable and best approved, will be immediately employed by the Council of this State to do the Work, which must be done as soon as possible.—One Half of the Money will be advanced the Workmen, on their giving Bond to complete the Carpenters and Joiners Work, and the Remainder when the Building is finished.

NOTICE is hereby given to the Brethren of the ancient and honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons, That the Festival of St. John the Baptist, will be celebrated on Thursday the 24th Instant, at Free Mason's Hall.—Tickets to be had of the Grand Stewards at said Hall, or of the Grand Secretary.—Dinner to be on the Table at Two o'Clock, &c. By Order of the Right Worshipful *JOSEPH WEBB*, Esq. Grand Master of Ancient St. John for this State.
NATH. PRINCE, G. Secy.
Boston, 13th June, 1777.

WANTS Employ, in the mercantile Way, a young Man, that writes a good Hand, and can be well recommended. Inquire of the Printer.

All Persons indebted to the Estate of *Joseph Swan*, late of *Waltham* deceased, are desired to bring in their Accounts to *Zachariah Weston*, of said *Waltham*, Administrator on said Estate, in Order for a speedy Settlement.

Where the subscribers being appointed Commissioners by the Hon. *John Wetherup*, Esq. Judge of Probate of Wills, &c. for the County of *Middlesex*, to receive and examine the claims of the several creditors to the estate of *J. Swan*, late of *Waltham* deceased, represented insolvent; and six months being allowed upon the said creditors for proving their debts.—Do give notice, that ye shall attend that business at the house of *Capt. Isaac Heath*, in *Waltham*, on the last Monday of this and the first following months, from Two to Six of the clock afternoon.
April 15, **ABRAHAM PERCIVAL**, } Commissioners
1777. **JOHN CLARKE**, }

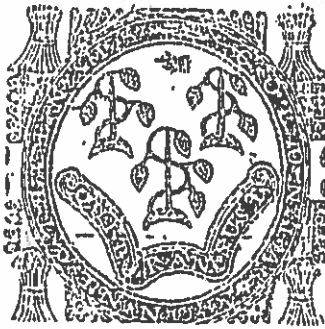
TAKEN up by *Abram Peice* of *Waltham*, in the Great Road in said Town, two Jackets, and a Pocket-Book with some small Money, in it, which the Owner may have again by paying Charges.
June 10, 1777.

All persons that have any Demands on the estate of *Mrs. Elizabeth Webb*, deceased; and those who are indebted to the said estate, are desired to settle the same with *William Blair*, of *Townsend*, Esq. sole executor of her last Will and Testament.
Boston, June 14, 1777.

DESERTED from me the subscriber, in Captain *Benjamin Warren's* company, Colonel *Richard Alden's* regiment, one *James Hadden*, 25 years old, 5 feet 8 inches high; light complexion, brown hair, grey eyes, born in Ireland, something peckish, well favoured, a rest lent of *Wantage*.—A loose head Barnabaz, an Indian, 34 years of age, a native and dweller at *Martha's Vineyard*, with a down look; 5 feet 4 inches high. Had on when he went away, an old red great coat and other mean apparel.—Whoever will apprehend both or either of said Deserters, and deliver them to their regiment at Fort No. 2, Cambridge, or confine them in any Jail, and send word so that they may be had, shall have EIGHT DOLLARS reward for each of them, and all necessary charges paid by me.
WILLIAM CURTIS, Lieut.
Cambridge, June 11, 1777.

WANTED IMMEDIATELY,
TWO Negro Boys and two Negro Girls, from eight to thirteen years of age.
Inquire of the Printer.

CONNECTICUT



COURANT,

HARTFORD

INTELLIGENCER.

AND WEEKLY

Containing the Freshest ADVICES,

Both FOREIGN and DOMESTIC.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY EBENEZER WATSON, NEAR THE GREAT BRIDGE.

Printing Office, Hartford, April 28, 1777.

It is reasonable to suppose that the necessities of this time have rendered the Printer into an unhappy dilemma. He has to keep up his business and to save his family, and to pay the wages of his workmen, and the price of his Paper, and other work. He has hitherto adhered to his former price, by which means he has greatly suffered in his interest, especially for the last month past, while with indignation and resentment he has beheld the power of avarice, and the insatiable thirst of the times. But what can be done? He has exhausted the talent of opposition till his mind is exhausted, and must either die in his debt, or be reduced to beggary. And is it right to use the means of safety, and work as it were for nothing, when every necessary of life is purchased at the exorbitant price? No; the horrors of poverty, which on him like an armed force forbid it; the pressing wants of his family, the irresistible necessity and the great law of self-preservation, as the people will not break the fatal injunction, by reducing the price of things, he is compelled to raise the price of his work. *Twelve Shillings* therefore, for the News paper, and other work of equal value, is as low as he can possibly afford it, as it is now at present, (after which the paper will be dearer than any one of it's size on the continent.) If the price is consistent with the regulating act, to which he always has, so he means still to adhere, should, or more universally violated, he thinks himself excusable in the step he has taken, and that persons will have just cause of complaint. Those persons who are unwilling to comply with the above price, are desired to send their names to the Printer at three weeks from this date, (at which time the said alteration will take place) that their papers may be stopped, otherwise they will be continued to them in the humble terms, E. WATSON.

Those persons who send their names to the Printer, before their papers may be discontinued in consequence of the above advertisement, are requested to send to find the money for these they have already paid.

Money in general were called in their print about 30 days by the Regulating Act.

For the benefit of the P U B L I C,

It is requested that such citizens as carry the Connecticut Covenant, and others, on public business within town for the future call at the Post Office, that notice may remain for persons adjacent may be speedy conveyance. *Thos. Hillaker.*

W I N E S.

LAGA, LISBON, TENERIFFE & RED-PORT,
To be sold
EBENEZER BERNARD, jun.
in **HARTFORD.**

REQUIREMENT OF INDIGO, of the best kind, to be sold by **MATHER and SMITH,** in Christ Church street, near John Pomeroy's, Suffield.

REQUIREMENT from Capt John Howard's company, Col. Wylie's regiment from time to time, Michael Brown, 27 years of age, 4 feet 4 inches high, dark brown hair, dark complexion, Jacob Evans, 27 years of age, 5 feet 8 inches high, light hair, gray complexion, Thomas Gardner, 5 feet 10 inches high, 27 years of age, has had the small pox, and is now sick or fear of his right eye. Whoever will take up him or either of them, and return them to the Regiment, shall have five dollars reward for each, and necessary charges paid, by
THOMAS WOODBRIDGE, Lieut.

HARTFORD, April 28, 1777.

LOST by the subscriber, a brown HORSE, about 4 years old, an west price, near hind foot a little white spot on his nose, no brand. Said horse found in the subscribers pasture. The owner is desired to pay charges and take him and keep away.
REWARD, May 3, 1777.

LOST from the subscriber on the 27th ult. a large red and white COW, about 8 years old. Whoever will take said COW and return her to the subscriber shall be handsomely rewarded.
JOSEPH COIT.

Connecticut Insurance-Office:

THE public are hereby informed, that there is kept by the subscriber at his house in Westfield, next door to the meeting-house, an **INSURANCE OFFICE**—The underwriters are **Mrs SAMUEL BROWN, JOHN BROWN, JEREMIAH PLATT and JOSEPH WARD.** Any gentlemen that want to have insurances made, may apply to any of the above gentlemen, or to
DARRELL DAVIS.
April 28, 1777.

Just published, and to be sold by the Printer hereof, **PRICE ONE SHILLING.**

The Reasons and Design of public Punishments;
A SERMON,
Delivered before the People who were called to the **EXECUTION**
of
MOSES DUNBAR,
Who was condemned for **HIGH TREASON** against the State of Connecticut, and executed March 19th, A. D. 1777.
By **NATHAN STRONG,**
Pastor of the first Church in **HARTFORD.**

Bleedy and dreadful Men shall not live out half their Day.

ALL persons indebted to the subscriber are desired to make immediate payment, as he designs soon to go abroad, and is uncertain when he shall return, and stands in need of his money to subsist upon.
JESSE ROOT.

HARTFORD, May 3, 1777.

STRAYED or stolen from the subscriber at New-Lebanon, in Albany county, on the 18th of April last, a **MARE** and two **COLTS,** the mare of a dun colour, ten years old, peace and crook, the colts 2 years old this spring, one a dark coloured bay, the other a more light bay, a white streak in his forehead; both of them horse, colts, peace and crook. Whoever will take up and send them to me at New-Lebanon, or secure them and send me word, or advertise them in the Hartford paper so that I may find them, shall have 5 dollars reward and all necessary charges paid, by
NEW LEBANON, May 3, 1777.

RUN-AWAY from the subscriber, living in Coventry, about the first of April last, an apprentice **BOY** named Samuel Lewis, jun. he is about 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, something slender built, large blue eyes, a very wide mouth, broad fore teeth, talks much but little sense, had on and took with him a buttoned coloured coat and waistcoat; leather breeches, check'd flannel shirt, mix'd coloured stockings, black hankerchiefs, a white hunting shirt. Whoever takes up said boy and returns him to me the subscriber, shall have two coppers lawful money reward, no charges paid, by
STEPHEN RICHARDSON.

ALL persons are forbid harboring said boy.

RUN-AWAY from the subscriber in one night of the 16th of April, a **Negro** boy named **LIVER-FOOL;** had on a brown jacket, a blue cap, blue stockings and red vest; is a short thick fellow, about 18 years of age. Whoever will take up and secure said Negro to his master may have him, shall have **FIVE DOLLARS** reward, and all reasonable charges paid by me his master, living near Ballsbury Farm on the Oblong in Dutchess County.
JOSHUA DAKINS.

April 26, 1777.

ALL persons that have any accounts with the estate of **ELIAZER NASH,** late of Granby, deceased, are requested to bring the same to **Wid. Phoebe Nash,** now of Granby, Administratrix to said estate; all indebted to said estate are desired to make immediate payment to said Phoebe.
MAY 3, 1777.

Mr. WATSON,
If you please to insert the following observations in your useful paper, perhaps they will be of some service to the public, and oblige many of your readers. **A. B.**
It is with pain I have heard a great deal of talk about the depreciation of our paper currency. The arguments commonly made use of, are, the high

prices of goods and labour, and the preference which too many people give to a payment in silver, goods, or necessaries, to one in paper money. These objections proceed from hence and well-meaning persons, tho' ignorant and ill-informed, and sometimes from our secret and lurking enemies, who, knowing the importance of our paper currency at this important crisis, say and do every thing in their power to depreciate it. If I can instruct and enlighten the first, and silence the last, by a few arguments drawn from the nature of things, and founded on experience, I shall think I have done the public some service.

There are two causes for the depreciation of bills or a paper currency. First, a want of credit or means of redemption in the emitters. Second, a flood or great number of bills emitted. The first admits of no remedy, and must necessarily not only depreciate, but annihilate a current, in ill supported. The last is no more incident to a paper than to a gold or silver currency. Every man versed in history, knows, that since the discovery of South-America, and her mines, the value of gold and silver has fallen in Europe above a thousand per cent, and the price of labour and goods, &c. rose in the same proportion. It is agreeable to the course of nature, that every thing should be valued in proportion to its scarcity or plenty. This holds as well with respect to gold, or silver, and precious stones, as every thing else.

The first cause of depreciation, is not, nor can hardly ever be the case with America, while we conquer, and are subjected to a foreign power, must be evident to every man of sense.

When we consider the immense resources of this extensive continent, viz. the soil and quantities of an almost infinite quantity of new lands, are daily arising from our extensive and free trade with every part of the world, and the well moderate rates or issues from a numerous and almost infinitely increasing people. What amazing sums of paper currency, may not this State redeem, not only without opposition, but even with ease to the subject.

I have heard it said by some, whom I have always disliked for the assertion, that in their opinion, it was pretty much the same, whether we were taxed by Britain or our own assemblies, for the payment of our debts; but if these gentlemen are not led to reason and common sense, they must acknowledge a very great difference between the taxation of a foreign power, whose interest it is to tax and oppress us for the payment of a debt, in the contracting of which we have had no voice; and a taxation exacted for the payment of our own debts, by an assembly of representatives, whose interests are naturally blended with that of their constituents, and who can't but be proportionable share in their burdens.

I know that the notion of a depreciation has taken its rise from the high prices of goods, occasioned by their scarcity and the increased charge of importing them; but whenever the taxes are removed, and goods become plenty, they will of course sink in their value; especially when we consider that the abundance of money in every body's hands, occasioned by those copious emissions necessary to carry on and support the war, being launched out in trade, money will then become more rare, and sink in estimation in proportion to its scarcity.

As to the scheme of supporting the money and regulating the prices of things by penal statutes, it always has and ever will be impracticable in a free country, because so law can be framed to limit a man in the purchase or disposal of property, but what most interests these principles of liberty, for which we are gloriously fighting. I am very sensible of the hardship of these whose wages are fixed by law, so as to hinder their parting with others, which is the case of the army; but let us not remedy that inconvenience by a greater, the infringement of fundamental principles. Certainly it is in the power of the respective legislatures, at the expense of the community, to support the families of the soldiery, during the war, at a price proportioned to their wages, and at the end of the war, they will have an equal chance with their fellow soldiers. This will remedy the chief inconvenience arising from a scarcity of goods and a plenty of money, without encroaching upon those natural and inalienable principles of liberty and property, which ought always to be secured and inviolable in a free country.

Connecticut Courant,

AND

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCER.

HARTFORD: PRINTED BY HUDSON AND GOODWIN, NEAR THE BRIDGE.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT,
In the House of Representatives,
FRIDAY, May 25.

MR. Hopkins, at an early day of the session, moved for leave to bring in a bill for exempting the land of inhabitants of this State from being sold for the payment of taxes. Leave being given, when the bill came before the house, many objections were raised against the form and provisions of the bill. Upon this, Mr. Hopkins moved for leave to take back the bill, and that a committee might be appointed to draft a bill more agreeable to the sense of the house. The motion was granted—a committee appointed—and a new bill brought in. The subject was debated at several times; the principal objections against it were, that it would greatly impede, and in many cases defeat, the collection of taxes; and that it would afford no substantial relief, because the hardship of being imprisoned for taxes, is quite as great as that of having one's land sold. When the bill was put to vote, scarce a hand was lifted up in its favour.

WEDNESDAY May 30.

Mr. Peter Bulkley of Colchester, moved for leave to bring in a bill for a tendery act—leave was given and the bill laid in. Upon its being proposed to have this bill considered at the same time, with one which Mr. Gillet of Stratton, was to bring in for an emission of paper-money;

Col. Hissman wished to have this bill read now; for, to have both read at once would give so great a shock, that the house would not be able to hear it.

Maj. C. Phelps seconded the motion of having it read, and moved that it might be assigned for consideration in the afternoon.

Mr. Davenport mentioned that the bill had been long in agitation, and had been landed round to the members of the house, so that they were in general acquainted with it; he therefore moved the house to take it into consideration immediately.

Mr. Taylor thought that, as the two bills were twins, the attempt should be made to bring them both into the world at once; but he perceived they would be still born.

Col. Wedsworth hoped they might be so marked, that the house would know them a part.

Mr. Davenport's motion being seconded by several gentlemen and the motion for assigning being withdrawn, the house proceeded to the consideration of the bill.

Mr. Peter Bulkley said that the bill ought to be treated seriously and not laughed out of the house; that the States round us had made such laws to secure their inhabitants; that the people of these States could still collect their debts of us; that when a man offers up all to his creditors, it is wrong to imprison him; that the bill ought to be fairly treated; that, if there were mistakes in the bill, they ought to be altered; that people abroad did expect, they should do something of this nature; and that he wished the year and days might be taken.

Mr. Webb was in favour of the bill; because it put it out of the power of creditors to torment poor debtors.

Mr. Welton. Mr. Speaker, I rise with dilidence on the present subject. I am sensible I shall have to meet all the learning and eloquence of this house. There will be against me; yet I propose to launch out into an unmeasured read. I trust the importance of the subject will lead the house to hear me with patience. I shall consider this subject in the first place as it respects our constitution and laws; and secondly, as it relates to the reasoners of the people. The great legislator of the universe gave his ancient people not only a system of moral law, but also of civil and political law. That plan of government was popular or democratical. Although the government was the institution of God himself; yet the continuance of it was to be by the people. For this purpose an equal distribution of property was necessary. We may as well think to repeal the great laws of attraction and gravitation; as to think of continuing a popular government without a good degree of equality among the people as to their property. By these laws established by infinite wisdom, slavery was prohibited, and lands were to revert to their former owners at the end of every fifty years. When the people broke over these regulations, and added field to field; the prophets preached repentance; they exhorted the people to undo the heavy burdens—to loose the bands of the prisoners—to brake every yoke—and to let the oppressed go free. Now let us take up our collecting laws, and see whether they agree with these precepts. I need not dictate to the members of this house what these laws are; they are well known. The creditor wants to get judgment; judgment is given for him; and no notice is taken of the manner in which the debt arose; whether

from an honest bargain, from inevitable providence, or from idleness and bad husbandry. When execution comes out, the debtor is obliged to turn out his personal estate to be sold on execution. Men are feeling avoid the sale; it is to them a painful sight. The goods are sold low; part of the debt is collected; and the cost is paid. The debtor is willing to turn out his other estate at its just value. But the creditor will not take it. The debtor must be torn from his family and dearest friends, and carried to goal, there to be kept till he has paid the uttermost farthing. He must sell his land. Avaricious men stand round. They know the horrors of a prison; and, that rather than hear them, a man will do any thing. The land must be sold for very little; and then the debtor may sweat out of goal. If we would only divest ourselves of our prejudices, we should see the unreasonableness of these things.

I know that arguments will be used on the other side. They will say that contracts are sacred, and must not be violated; that credit is important, and must be maintained. On the other hand, I see, justice and righteousness without goodness of heart are unlimited; we all stand in need of these. I have gone over some of the arguments on this subject; I will proceed further; and consider the bill in a retrospective view. Its operating upon past contracts is the greatest objection against it. But I would ask, what can a man do more than resign up all that he has? The law of justice and kindness requires no more. As to the operation of such a law upon future contracts, I think it would be beneficial. It would put a check upon trading and living extravagantly. It would establish private credit; because a man must either pay down, or establish a character of performing his contracts honourably. It would establish public credit; because public and private credit depend upon each other.

Mr. Cleveland. One of the gentlemen who spoke first on the bill, without being received seriously, I join with him in this wish; but, upon serious principles, I am against the bill. Contractual things; and moral honesty requires a specific performance of them. Let us consider the case of two individuals, who enter into a contract. They know what their agreement is; they know that the law enforces it; and each of them voluntarily subject himself to the consequences of his inability to perform. It is true, there are disadvantages in our present system of laws. Nor can we ever expect they will be perfect, so long as human nature continues the same. As to the idea of an equal division of property, it never can be reduced to practice. We, however, come as near to it as can be expected. There is a free circulation of property; when the owner of an estate dies, it is divided among his children; when the profuse and extravagant spend their estates, the industrious acquire them. In this way and by such means, there is a sufficient equality among the people of this State. But this bill would not answer any such purpose. The State has no right to interfere with past contracts; and take away one man's money, and give it to another, because the funds in need of it. This bill would be attended with the disadvantage of raising the prices of articles. Suppose a man has stock which he would sell; he does not know what property would be put off to him in payment; he must demand a higher price. When that property is appraised off to him in payment, if the appraisers mean to keep strictly to the agreement, or if they undertake to arbitrate, it will produce nothing but confusion. As to the lessening of law suits, this bill would be so far from it, that it would increase them. Those persons who would feel the inconveniences of this law, would contrive some way to elude it. They would keep out of the way so that a tender could not be made; or perhaps the tender would be made in the wrong place. This would occasion a dispute. The cause must be tried in the county court, and then, if large enough, in the superior court. There would be the cost of attorney's witnesses, and fees. Further, this bill would destroy private credit. Those who lend money are generally either farmers or traders; they are not in a capacity to take in the various articles which might be tendered to them. They see what disadvantages the law subjects them to; and lock up their money in their chests, a free circulation of cash is exceedingly beneficial. Only one dollar constantly circulated, would in a short time pay off debts to the amount of a hundred pounds. But this bill would prevent the benefits of a free circulation; it would put a stop to all industry; it would be ruinous to the State. There is no such stimulus to industry as what we commonly call a medium, which is hard money.

Mr. Peter Bulkley spoke, and repeated much of

what he had said before; which gave rise to a discussion relative to the rules of the house.

Col. Seymour. In considering this subject; Mr. Speaker, it is of importance; that the bill be clearly understood. I will attempt to disseminate the contents of it, so as to make it intelligible. The first clause of the bill makes all real and personal estates receivable in payment of executions. If the debtor offers it in payment, it is to be appraised off to the creditors, and all collecting officers; meaning sheriffs and constables, are to proceed accordingly. By the second clause, a tender of real or personal estate shall stop the interest on all contracts. After the debtor has made an inventory of all his estate, and tendered it to his creditors, he is not liable to imprisonment. All rates or taxes, whether due to the State, or town, society, &c. are excepted; and the person who owes, is liable as heretofore. I am seriously and concisely opposed to this bill.

I conceive it, Mr. Speaker, to be fraught with ruin. I highly respect that gentleman [Mr. Welton] for his ingenuity and solemnity, with which he treated this subject. But I do not despair of convincing him, that his sentiments are not right, and converting him to this side of the question. If he should not be convinced, I wish him to rise, and state his objections. This bill I would consider in a moral point of view; it relates to past contracts. Can the members of this house lay their hands upon their breasts, and say, that they will step in, and nullify past contracts. I cannot believe they will do it. If they should, it would be, to use the words of a great writer, a *sin spem*. It would be impious. I will not follow the gentleman through the Jewish history. But when was the law, which he mentions, promulgated? Was it not, while they were travelling through the wilderness? It was a law before they had bought or sold, or even acquired their lands. It was a law at first; there was notice, that there would be a jubilee once in fifty years; and they contracted accordingly. Is not Mr. Welton mistaken in this? He must be convinced that the instance from the Jewish law does not justify us in interfering with contracts after they are made. This bill, Mr. Speaker, would dry up every spring of industry and common honesty. It would destroy our commerce. Is not our commerce now decaying? I would ask the farmers, what shall we do with the produce, when all nature is blooming around us; and we have our cattle (as I said the other day) upon a thousand hills, what shall we do with the produce of our farms, if the merchant is unable to receive it. Some are for discouraging commerce. Cut it all up, say they. Is not the merchant the agent, the factor, the servant of the farmer? Let us see the operation of this bill. Suppose that I owe Maj. Phelps a large sum of money; and that he has no farm, but a store of goods. In the fall of the year, when he cannot take them, I go, and tender him a number of cattle and horses. It is more just to cut off at one stroke one half or three fourths of his debt. The neighbouring States, who have tried such acts; are now under the clouds of ruin. New Hampshire has made the trial. The inhabitants of that State cannot now gain or dit for the smallest articles with us. They are despoiled. Honesty is stopped. Ruin follows the bill. I would rather cut my head upon the waters, than make such a law as this. I dare not do it. It would destroy like the devouring insect.

Maj. C. Phelps. It is an important maxim, that the legislature should not make laws, unless there be a necessity for them. It is proper for us to enquire, what would be the operation of this bill; whether it would do good or hurt? One of the gentlemen says, it would prevent law-suits. But I observe, Mr. Speaker, that there is a blank left in this bill, for a certain number of years to be inserted; it is to exist only for a limited time. It might prevent people from demanding their dues for a time. But it would be like damming up a stream; which would cause it to rise, and swell, and sweep all before it. This bill is unnecessary. The people in this State are not so much crowded with suits and executions now as they were in the year 1774. Hence I infer, they are not so much in debt. Is it not then, from the inconstancy of republican governments, that some are for such an alteration. This bill would take away all confidence in dealing between man and man. We never can depend upon any thing, if private contracts are liable to be altered by the legislature. It would encourage idleness and prodigality. My debtor may be careless and prodigal. This law would prevent my calling upon him until he had spent the greater part of his estate. It would take the whole to pay me, and he would be ruined. Whereas a more reasonable hint, from his creditors would have awaked him from his idle dreams, and given him the necessity

Ec. H.
C739d

A Documentary History of American Industrial Society

Edited by John R. Commons
Ulrich B. Phillips, Eugene A. Gilmore
Helen L. Sumner, and John B. Andrews

Prepared under the auspices of the American Bureau of
Industrial Research, with the co-operation of the
Carnegie Institution of Washington

With preface by Richard T. Ely
and introduction by John B. Clark

Volume V
Labor Movement



Cleveland, Ohio
The Arthur H. Clark Company
1910

104200
13/17/10

2. THE AGRARIAN PARTY

(a) THE REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE OF FIFTY

Working Man's Advocate (New York), Oct. 31, 1829, p. 1, col. 2. This report was presented at a meeting on October 19, 1829. Though handed in by J. C. Stanley, chairman of the committee, it was written by Thomas Skidmore. Its adoption, according to Robert Dale Owen, one of the secretaries of the meeting, was without due consideration.

. . . Your committee, therefore, feel that all human society, our own as well as every other, is constructed radically wrong; that in the first foundation of government in this state the division of the soil should have been equal, at least, among families; and that provision should have been made (if property must descend in a family line) that it should descend in an equal manner, instead of having been placed at the disposal of the caprice of testators. They even go farther, and say, as their opinion, that inasmuch as the people resident on the soil, at the first formation of our government, had equal right thereto, as individuals, not as members of families, so also had their immediate successors the same right. But this has never been accorded to them; nay, even the families themselves of the first settlers, as we have seen, had nothing of equality existing between them; and, as a certain and natural result, we see thousands of our people of the present day in deep distress and poverty, dependent for their daily subsistence upon a few among us whom the unnatural operation of our own free and republican institutions, as we are pleased to call them, has thus arbitrarily and barbarously made enormously rich.

But though, as your committee believe, it is to this unnatural and unequal organization of society that we

are to look for the prime source of all our oppressions; of that which places over us task masters, with power to require unreasonable toil; with power to withhold an adequate recompense; with power to deny employment altogether; and thus inflict upon us untold suffering; still your committee are sensible that this fountain of your distresses is not to be dried up but by a revolution; a civil revolution, it is true, since three hundred thousand freemen in this state have the power, through their votes at the ballot boxes, to bring it about, without resorting, as most other countries must do, to the use of the bayonet.

But although your committee are sensible that, until a revolution take place, such as shall leave behind it no trace of that government which has denied to every human being an equal amount of property on arriving at the age of maturity, and previous thereto, equal food, clothing, and instruction at the public expense, nothing can save the great mass of the community from the evils under which they now suffer; still they are also sensible, approaching as we are the eve of one of our annual elections, that there is an opportunity offered us of abating, of assuaging, of preventing the aggravation of our calamities, by resorting to the polls, and there electing, if we can, men who, from their own sufferings, know how to feel for ours, and who, from consanguinity of feeling, will be disposed to do all they can to afford a remedy. . . .

[*Omitted*: a lengthy argument against banking institutions "as being next to the original unequal appropriation and transmission to posterity of the soil of the State, the greatest cause of your present unhappy Condition;" an argument against the auction system; and brief arguments against the Brooklyn Ferry Companies, the New York Gas Light Company, imprisonment for

debt, and the general ticket system of electing presidential electors; also a short argument in favor of a single municipal legislative chamber, and in favor of direct election of officials for short terms of service.]

With this observation your committee beg leave to offer the following resolutions.

RESOLVED, that it has become the duty of the people to enquire into the causes of their distresses, and to express their opinions in relation thereto.

RESOLVED, in the opinion of this meeting, that the first and unequal appropriation of the soil of the state to private and exclusive possession, was eminently and barbarously unjust.

RESOLVED, that it was substantially feudal in its character, inasmuch as those who received enormous, because they were unequal, possessions, were lords, and those who received little or nothing, were vassals.

RESOLVED, that hereditary transmission of wealth on the one hand, and poverty on the other, has brought down to the present generation all the evils of the feudal system, and that this, in our opinion, is the prime source of all our calamities.

RESOLVED, that these calamities have been greatly aggravated and increased by a legislation which has employed all its energy to create and sustain exclusive privileges; and that among the objects of such privileges, banking institutions stand most conspicuous.

RESOLVED, that these institutions, as it regards our own state, stand constantly indebted to the public, according to the best of our information, in the sum of thirty or thirty-five millions of dollars.

RESOLVED, if they are to be suffered to remain among us, that they ought no less to pay interest on the debt they owe to the community, than that the community itself should pay interest on any debt it may owe them.

MONOPOLY AND THE NATIONAL REFORM ASSOCIATION

MONOPOLY



ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL REFORM ASSOCIATION.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, AUGUST 2, 1913.

Vol. 11, No. 11

Land Monopoly causes national crimes and evils, creating inordinate desire for territorial acquisition, leading to wars and violence, wealthy speculators corrupting the government, the landless poor being ready instruments for a war, and traders and military aspirants urging it on. It leads to aggressions on the rights of the Indian tribes, who use the land in common, and tends to prevent their progress to a better state of society. It perverts enterprize to the accumulation of acres instead of the improvement of the soil. The uncertainty and constant warlike it engenders, prevent association for mutual advantages not to be enjoyed in isolation. It causes office-seekers, and elevates unsuitable men to the important trusts. It causes litigation, mobs, riots, retaliatory violence, bloodshed, and insurrections. It weakens Republics, and gives strength to Monarchies. By the uncertainty of shelter and subsistence which it occasions, it stimulates avarice to the highest pitch, and greatly weakens the social virtues. It causes those curses upon industry, rents and mortgages, or interest upon land. It leads to interest upon money, by which wealth is obtained from the producer without equivalent. It generates Paper Money and various other contrivances and monopolies which transfer the products of labor without compensation to those who are privileged to deal in them. It produces the monstrous anomaly of poverty among the producing classes in proportion to the increase of national wealth.

We, therefore, Representatives of Men of Progress and of Equal Rights, in Convention assembled, appealing to the highest power for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by the authority and declare, that the time has arrived when a system of measures ought to be commenced, that will speedily restore the soil to the people, and place every human being in this country in possession of every inalienable right. For which purpose we will proceed, by every means in our power, to organize in one body all who are in favor of this reform, and to concentrate their energies by an **INDUSTRIAL CONGRESS**. And for the support of such a Congress in all its necessities, so far as they are directed to carry out these principles, to the extent of our ability, we mutually pledge ourselves to each other.

["YOUNG AMERICA," EXTRA. Read and Circulate.]



"I set out on this ground, which I suppose to be self evident, that the earth belongs in usufruct to the laborer." — *Myerson.*

"There should be **SAME LAW** to the right of any human being to monopolize the soil which God has made for the sustenance of the race." — *N. Y. Tribune.*

"The most unwise tenure in the history of man, that still is used in the land. This ruin could not be final, perhaps could extend but a few years; in the first extremely he could not be turned as one whom burthright was extinguished." — *Crabtree on the Feudal.*

"Land shall not be sold forever."



THE JUBILEE

A PLAN FOR RESTORING THE LAND OF NEW-YORK OR (INCIDENTALLY) OF ANY OTHER STATE TO THE PEOPLE.

(Taken from *The American*, a weekly paper devoted to Human Rights and Social Improvement. Organ of the National Reform Association, & to advocate the Franchise of the People.)

PLAN FOR RESTORING THE LAND OF NEW YORK TO THE PEOPLE.

To secure to every farmer a farm.

1. No one hereafter shall, under any circumstances, become possessed of more than 160 acres of land in this State. (1)
- To secure to every mechanic or professional man a lot.
3. No one hereafter shall, under any circumstances, become possessed of more than one lot in a city or village, (the size of which may be regulated by the city or town authorities.) (2)

To abolish at once the Feudal Tenures.

3. There shall be a special Court or Commission, composed of Land-holders and (poor) Landless proportioned to the numbers of their respective classes in the State, who shall, in all cases where land is held by a twenty years' or more, a life, or a perpetual lease, determine, on principles of equity, (without regard to legal wrongs,) what (or whether any) compensation shall be paid to the claimant in full extinguishment of his claim. (3)

To abolish Mortgages.

- 4 The Homestead Lot or Farm shall be inalienable, except at the will of the occupant, and then only transferable to a landless person.
- To abolish monopolies by never dying bodies without souls.
5. Every Corporation of whatever name or nature, now holding land, shall be allowed five years to dispose of the same to landless persons, under the above restrictions, excepting the lots and buildings occupied for their business.

To provide for Associations or Communities.

6. Associations of persons may hold their Freeholds in common, or in joint occupancy.