



22. Common Sense – January, 1776

Published in 1776, *Common Sense* challenged the authority of the British government and the royal monarchy. The plain language that Thomas Paine used spoke to the common people of America and was the first work to openly ask for independence from Great Britain.

“But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young nor savages make war upon their families...”

The British government is not treating the colonists like citizens.

“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...”

America's trade with other countries is hurt when England goes to war with those countries.

“Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, ‘tis time to part...Even the distance at which the Almighty has placed England and America is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other was never the design of nature.”

The distance between England and the colonies proves that one should not govern the other.

“...there is something very absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance has nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverse the common order of nature, it is evident they belong to different systems – England to Europe, America to itself.”

“O! ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the Old World is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe, Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her as a stranger and England hath given her warning to depart. Receive the fugitive and prepare in time any asylum for mankind.”

“But where, says some, is the king of America? I’ll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and does not make havoc of mankind like the royal brute of Britain...let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know that, so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America the law is king. For as in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law ought to be king; and there ought to be no other. But lest any ill use should afterward arise, let the crown at the conclusion of the ceremony be demolished and scattered among the people, whose right it is.”

America should be ruled by law not a monarch.

“We have it in our power to begin the world over again.”

Common Sense was important because it was the first time public opinion swung toward revolution and independence.

23. Second Continental Congress – July, 1776

On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress unanimously adopted the Declaration of Independence.



The Declaration of Independence was written by Thomas Jefferson representative to the Continental Congress from Virginia.

John Adams, representative to the Continental Congress from Massachusetts, was on the committee to help write the document.