

Camp
Constitution
Presents

*The Family
Heritage
Series*



The Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution

Camp Constitution is pleased to be able to reprint excerpts of the Family Heritage Series which was originally published in the early 1970's in a weekly newsletter format.

The newsletters were meant to be read at the family dinner table. The six issues reprinted here concern the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

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The Family Heritage Series



A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom.

Written by Mildred Tenney Handy

Edited by Wallis W. Wood

Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency,
a project of The John Birch Society.

June-July, 1973

Volume I, Lesson Fourteen

The Birth Of Independence

LESSON IDEA

To make American history in the 1700's more vivid, to show how the Revolutionary War began and why the Declaration of Independence was written.

PREPARATION

Prepare cards for each member of the family containing the Patrick Henry quote. (See page three.) For grade schoolers, shorten the quote to begin with: "Is life so dear . . ." Smaller youngsters could be given the four line ditty describing the Boston Tea Party.

* * * * *

TONIGHT WE ARE TAKING a time trip — back more than 200 years to the time of the English giant and the American dwarf. On the far side of the Atlantic Ocean sat prosperous, powerful England and on this side, the struggling American colonists who had managed to hack a thin strip of civilization out of a huge expanse of wilderness and stretch it as far north as New Hampshire and as far south as Georgia.

The Americans had close ties to the English in 1765 and were loyal subjects of the British king, George III. They had brought fame and wealth to the English giant by building towns and businesses under the British flag and fighting England's enemies on the American continent. In return, they enjoyed more freedom than any other people in the civilized world — most especially the privilege of electing their own assemblies, which levied taxes to support the colonial governments.

But the independence with which they ran their businesses, trading such things as tobacco, salt, molasses, cotton, shoes, and furniture with each

other and with countries like Spain or Africa or the West Indies, irritated the English parent. Americans were supposed to work for the profit of England — not for themselves. To assure this, Parliament had passed the Navigation Acts (which were a series of laws extending over a period of 150 years) and, in 1733, the Molasses Act.

BUT THE AMERICANS continued to resist being treated as dependent children confined to the English nursery, and the mother country continued to be indignant at the spirited growth and independence of her colonies. Tempers flared when England passed the Stamp Act in 1765 — a new tax law which ignored the long-standing colonial system of representative taxation and thrust the parental hand directly into the colonial pocket.

Suppose that were to happen to us. Suppose that after years of freedom, the head of the United Nations suddenly decreed a Stamp Act as Britain did in 1765; and every time we bought a newspaper or magazine we were forced to pay the additional price of a UN stamp for the paper? [*Encourage everyone to give his reaction.*] Suppose when one of you graduated from college we had to buy a \$10 UN stamp for your diploma before it was officially yours? [*Again, ask for reactions. Point out how dictatorial it would be.*]

The Stamp Act was not only a dictatorial practice but also a financial hardship for many. Some newspapers and publishers were forced out of business. In the last edition of the *Pennsylvania*

Journal, publisher William Bradford printed a skull and crossbones in the spot reserved for the British stamp. On the front page, he explained his situation to his subscribers:

"I am sorry," he wrote, "to be obliged to acquaint my readers that as the Stamp Act is feared to be obligatory upon us after the first of November ensuing (the fatal tomorrow), the publisher of this paper, unable to bear the burden, has thought it expedient to stop awhile, in order to deliberate, whether any methods can be found to elude the chains forged for us and escape the insupportable slavery, which it is hoped, from the last representation now made against the act, may be effected."

Mr. Bradford urged his subscribers to pay what they owed so that he could not only survive during the interval but be better prepared to proceed again with his paper whenever possible — which he hoped would be soon.

And it was soon — a short four-and-one-half months — for the news of the colonists' anger had traveled the ocean and caused Parliament to change its mind about stamps. But not about taxes. Stubbornly, the English Lords declared their right to tax colonial subjects directly even though no American was allowed to vote on how much or what kind. Americans violently disagreed. It wasn't that they were unwilling to pay taxes. Colonial assemblies and town meetings had been levying taxes for years. But it was colonial money voted by colonial representatives; and in most colonies, it paid the governor's salary. Which meant that if the King's executive in America opposed the will of the colonists, it was a simple matter to "forget" to vote the governor's pay and, thus, to bring his actions into line.

FOR ENGLAND suddenly to transfer taxing power from American hands into its own was an outrage — and Britain's idea of representation was an insult. The royal argument was that the colonists were as well represented in Parliament as the people of England because there were farmers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, and tradesmen among its members. Which meant, by British reasoning, that all farmers, all doctors, all lawyers, all merchants, and all tradesmen were repre-

sented whether they lived in England or the colonies.

Applying that thinking today would mean the UN General Assembly in New York — to which our country belongs — would have the right to tax Americans directly simply because members of the United Nations have the same types of jobs or professions that people in our country have. How would you like to have half of your allowance taken in UN taxes and told you were "represented" because some of the people in the General Assembly were students? Regardless of how much or how little was taken, would you think it fair? [*Name the specific amount of each family member's allowance and ask each what he would think if the UN took half of it or more. Make it clear that there would be no chance to say "yes" or "no" to the UN tax collector nor to the amount that he could take.*] So it was not so much the amount of money that England demanded of her colonists which upset them, but the fact that it was taken without their consent.

A new English taxing scheme — called the Townshend Acts — started in 1767. Now an extra premium was required for the purchase of glass, paper, paints, and tea. In protest, more and more colonists refused to buy *anything* that was British-made. Patriots wore homespun clothes and scorned those who dressed in linens and woolsens imported from England.

PROTEST OR NOT, the taxes stayed as feelings grew more explosive each year. Town meetings were called; patriotic groups organized; and news was carried by riders from colony to colony over country roads and woodland trails.

In December, 1773, three British ships moored in Boston harbor loaded with three hundred and forty-two chests of tea — tea that could not be unloaded until the royal tax was paid, and tea that merchants dared not accept with the tax, regardless of its low price; for to do so would be to risk public outrage. The dilemma was solved on December 16 under cover of night by about fifty young men dressed as "wild Indians" — John Hancock was one of them — who boarded the ships and dumped the untaxed tea into the water. This was the famous Boston Tea Party; and Samuel

Adams, the originator of the patriotic Committees of Correspondence, sent messengers dashing in all directions with news of it. A popular ditty celebrating the event ended with these lines:

*We made a plaguey mess of tea
In one of the biggest dishes
I mean we steeped it in the sea
And treated all the fishes!*

Five months later, in May, 1774, England retaliated with the Port Bill. The harbor of Boston was to be closed to all shipping on the first day of June if the citizens did not pay for the tea destroyed by the “wild Indians.” To do so would be to admit that Parliament had the right to tax the colonists, and this admission the Massachusetts Committees of Correspondence would never make. Samuel Adams wrote a circular letter notifying the other colonies of the “we-do-not-intend-to-pay” decision. All rallied to the needs of Boston, realizing that if Massachusetts lost its freedom, others would suffer the same fate. Colonies as far away as Georgia sent rice, money, and supplies; church bells tolled; flags flew at half-mast. [*Ask family members to picture what would happen in your town if the UN were to close the harbors or highways because a tax on coffee had not been paid. How would it affect the daily routine? Explain that tea was as popular with the colonists as coffee is with us today.*]

The closing of the Boston harbor was the fuse that ignited the powder keg of protest and led to the calling of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia in September, 1774. Every colony except Georgia (which was sparsely populated and

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

Edmund Burke was one of several English statesmen who were sympathetic to the American cause in 1775. However, in 1789, Burke opposed the French Revolution as fervently as he supported the American fight for independence. Why? The reasons for his opposition are detailed in his essay, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, available at most public libraries. Encourage older students to read it. Claims by today's left-wing revolutionists that they are modern George Washingtons can be countered by many of Burke's observations.

more dependent on England than the others) sent delegates to the Congress — men like Samuel Adams, George Washington, Patrick Henry, and John Adams.

AFTER DAYS of debate, these patriotic leaders issued a statement of their rights as British subjects and a demand to be taxed by their own elected assemblies. No mention was made of separation from the mother country, but the last few lines of the petition to the King carried a veiled threat, a resolve not to buy or use goods made in England until the unjust laws were repealed.

The American petitions, declarations, and resolutions for justice were flicked aside by the British King and Parliament like so much waste paper. By February, the English government had declared Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion and, at Salem, had made an unsuccessful attempt to seize colonial military supplies.

On March 22, 1775, from the British side of the ocean, Edmund Burke, longtime friend of America in Parliament, made his famous appeal to the King for reconciliation. The following day in America, Patrick Henry strode to the pulpit of St. John's Church in Richmond, Virginia, to deliver his spirited “We Must Fight” speech to the second revolutionary convention of Virginia.

Beginning with a recap of wrongs suffered by the colonists, the fiery Virginian ended his speech by demolishing the arguments for peace with these now famous words:

Gentlemen may cry peace, peace — but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the North will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? — I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

BBRITISH TROOPS were quartered in the city of Boston, the trouble center, and British warships were anchored in the bay. Samuel Adams and John

Hancock, sought by England as traitors, were in Lexington ready to leave for the May 10 meeting of the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. On April 14, the British commander, General Gage, was ordered to break up the colonial rebellion. Four nights later British troops were on the march to capture guns and powder which the colonists had stored at Concord — a move which the Boston patriots were expecting. The only question was which route would be taken — land or water.

From the tower of Boston's North Church a watchman eyed the British movement and flashed the lantern signal which sent William Dawes and Paul Revere riding to Lexington and Concord to awaken the people, warn Adams and Hancock, and call out the militia. As April 19 drew to a close, most of the colonists' guns and powder were secure; Adams and Hancock were safely on their way to Philadelphia; shots had been exchanged; and the War for Independence had begun.

In Philadelphia, Congress formed the Continental Army and appointed George Washington its commander-in-chief. Three months later, on July 3, 1775, Washington rode into Cambridge Common in Boston to take command of an army of untrained men from every colony and all walks of life. At the same time, Congress was sending the Olive Branch Petition to King George — a final appeal for peace and justice.

In August, England smashed the American hopes for peace by decreeing that the colonies were in open rebellion. British troops still controlled Boston; Washington's volunteer army was camped on the outskirts; and Benedict Arnold was preparing an expedition to Canada to capture the British fort at Quebec. In October, Congress authorized a navy and in November, began a search for allies among England's enemies in Europe. King George ignored the Olive Branch Petition and issued a royal proclamation in late 1775 closing the colonies to all trade effective March 1, 1776.

Still the talk of independence — a total break with England — was slow to come. It was a difficult decision for the colonists to make. To do so meant to become traitors and, hence, criminals in the courts of England.

Concluding Thought

There is nothing in the story of the American

revolution to indicate that the colonists acted hastily or hotheadedly. Ten years elapsed from the time of the Stamp Act in 1765 to the first battle of the Revolutionary War in 1775. During those ten years, every lawful means was tried to correct English injustices, all without success. Even as the colonial army trained for battle, Congress petitioned for reforms and another year lapsed before the final break came.

Looking Ahead

Next week we'll take a closer look at the dramatic events in July of 1776 that marked our independence and birth as a nation.

* * * * *

DURING THE WEEK

After the lesson tonight, ask each member of the family to memorize all or part of Patrick Henry's quote or the Boston Tea Party ditty. Cards for this purpose should be prepared prior to the lesson and the quotes adjusted in length or kind to suit the age and capabilities of the family. Use the dinner or breakfast hours to test the memorization progress and to review the events described in this lesson.

The Family Heritage Series

For parents who wish to teach their children the true meaning of liberty, responsibility, and our Americanist heritage.

The **Family Heritage Series** is an outstanding series of weekly lessons for the home, written to stimulate interest and spark discussion about the legacy we have received.

The **Family Heritage Series** is for all parents with school-age children. It is sure to be valued by all Americans who participate in its Heritage Hour discussions, and would be especially welcomed as a gift.

The **Family Heritage Series** is published by the Movement To Restore Decency, a project of The John Birch Society. The annual subscription rate is twelve dollars for fifty-two lessons, mailed monthly. Individual lessons may be purchased in any quantity at four copies for one dollar. Address all orders and subscriptions to The John Birch Society, 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, Massachusetts 02178. ©1973 by The John Birch Society

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June-July, 1973

Volume I, Lesson Fifteen

The Declaration Of Independence

LESSON IDEA

To show that the Declaration of Independence is based on God-given, not government-given, rights.

PREPARATION

Make copies of the first two paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence (see last page), so that each member of the family can study the words as they are read in the lesson.

* * * * *

LET'S GO BACK to the time trip we started last week and find out what happened after England went to war against the colonial army of musket-toting farmers, woodsmen and merchants. In 1775 and the early months of 1776, it was still a British family fight, with the soldiers and ships of the English giant lodged in Boston and Washington's army of volunteers rimming the west edge of the city — each waiting for the other to back down. Neither did.

As the Second Continental Congress, still in session in Philadelphia, struggled to find food, uniforms, and ammunition for Washington's troops, the talk grew of cutting all ties with England. In January, Massachusetts passed a resolution for independence. In April, North Carolina took the bold step. Then, Rhode Island; and one month later, Virginia declared her own independence from England. New York and Pennsylvania opposed the break; but in other colonies, the idea began to gain momentum.

Finally, on June 7, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia asked the Congress to vote on the resolu-

tion, "That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connections between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

THE TIME FOR decision had come, but it had to be unanimous. If some colonies voted "yes" while others voted "no," England would take advantage of the division, and defeat would be certain. Rather than press for a immediate decision, the colonists delayed voting until July 2.

But to save time in the event the resolution passed unanimously, Congress appointed a committee of five — John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman and Robert Livingston — to prepare a declaration detailing the reasons for the break with England. Even an unanimous "yes" to Lee's resolution was not enough. The delegates wanted a formal statement that all men and governments could read, making clear that their quarrel with England was much bigger than a tax dispute or a fight over who had what rights. They meant to question the right of a king to be a king — the idea of a man being a god of government who could give and take liberties as he saw fit. For many thousands of years kings, pharaohs, and emperors had been venerated and even worshiped as the source of rights. Few persons had dared look such deified beings straight in the eye and say: "Behind your ermine, velvet robes, and diamond crowns, you are man — no more or less kingly than any one of us. Any rights

you have come from the same place ours do, the Supreme Being who created you. And because of this, we have rights by birth — not by your decrees.”

The idea of God-given, not king-given or government-given, liberties had sparked the drive for independence and nationhood. It was the only reason important enough to cause colonial leaders to pull away from the protection of the English empire and to risk defeat and death by challenging the British army and navy.

THE FIVE-MAN COMMITTEE appointed to prepare the Declaration of Independence asked Thomas Jefferson of Virginia to do the writing. The tall, freckled, sandy-haired Jefferson was known for his mastery of the language. A speaker he was not — in fact, he hadn't attempted a single speech during his year in Congress — but with pen and paper, he had few equals.

For three weeks the Virginian worked diligently on the Declaration, using a portable writing desk he had invented. His lodgings were simple, a second-floor parlor and bedroom in the house of a Philadelphia bricklayer.

While Jefferson searched for the exact words to set the idea of God-given rights before the world, the speech-makers and debaters — persuasive men like John Adams and his cousin Samuel — hammered home the logic of independence to undecided and unwilling delegates — particularly from Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and New York.

Since each colony had a single vote, determined by the majority of its delegates, the task was not to convince every delegate but a majority of each colonial delegation. By July 1, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and even New York, where British sentiment was strongest, looked favorable. The only delegation still in doubt was Delaware which had

three representatives — Thomas McKean and Caesar Rodney who were for independence and George Read who felt the move was premature and would vote “no.” But Rodney was not in Philadelphia. He had been called home to squelch a pro-British uprising. To make the eighty-mile ride to Pennsylvania in time for the July 2 vote was a great deal to expect of anyone, particularly a man in Rodney's condition. The forty-eight-year-old bachelor suffered almost constant pain from a cancer that had spread over half his face. Physicians had advised him to seek treatment in Europe, but he refused to leave the colonies in their crisis.

On the evening of July 1, Rodney was riding toward Philadelphia through a blinding thunderstorm, stopping only long enough to change horses at the homes of friends. On the morning of July 2, only a few minutes before John Hancock, President of the Congress, called the session to order, Rodney arrived at the meeting room, weary and mud-splattered, still shod in boots and spurs.

THE ROLL CALL vote began. Two Pennsylvanians who couldn't bring themselves to vote “yes” had stayed away from the State House, enabling their delegation to vote for independence. New York declined to vote either way; South Carolina gave in for the sake of unanimity. When Delaware was called, Caesar Rodney pulled himself to his feet to say, “As I believe the voice of my constituents and of all sensible and honest men is in favor of Independence, and my judgment concurs, I vote for Independence!” The issue was decided. Twelve colonies had voted unanimously for nationhood and separation from England; New York, the colony the British had counted on to vote against independence, had remained silent.

As soon as Lee's resolution was adopted, Congress took up debate on the Declaration of Independence which Jefferson had finished and Adams, Franklin, Sherman, and Livingston approved. Now the arguments began over the specific words and phrases that Jefferson had penned. From July 2 to the evening of July 4, the debate went on until the document met the approval of all.

Let's look at the final product — the freedom declaration that brought shouts of approval and

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

What were the specific charges the colonists made against the King? How do they compare to the abuses of the executive branch of government today? Make your own list and compare them with the charges listed in the Declaration. (See page 119 of *Quest Of A Hemisphere*.)

What action did the colonial leaders take to remedy the injustices? What can we do today?

the ringing of the Liberty Bell in July, 1776. There are three main parts – first, the reason for the Declaration being written; second, the heart of the argument, which was the idea of God-given rights instead of King-granted or government-given liberties; and finally, a list of specific charges against King George. Here’s the opening paragraph. [*Distribute copies of the first two paragraphs to each member of the family. Seeing the words as they are read leaves a more lasting impact than merely hearing them.*]

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

Can you put that idea in your own words? What is the reason for writing the Declaration? [*The answer is that such serious action as breaking away from an established government requires that an explanation be given.*]

Now the second paragraph, which is the most important part of the Declaration, gives the reason for independence.

We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .

Which means that what is to follow are truths that should be obvious to everyone.

. . . that all men are created equal . . .

Stop and think that through. What is the difference between all men being *created* equal and all men being equal? [*Encourage discussion about this important point.*] If all men are equal, each would have the same talents, tastes, and ambitions. Therefore, each should receive the same amount of money regardless of the job he has. Being *created* equal is something very different. It has to do with our having equal importance in the sight of God, our Creator. The life of each person is just as sacred as the life of any other; each has exactly the same natural God-given rights.

The next phrase reads: “That they are en-

dowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights . . .”

Again, this goes back to the idea that rights come from God and not from kings or governments or presidents of the United States. These rights are permanent and cannot be taken away, which is what “unalienable” means.

What are these God-given rights that are permanent? The next phrase tells us: “. . . Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness . . .” What things are not mentioned? [*The right to a ten thousand dollar income, which we have to work to get. The right to a job, which we have to seek. The right to take something that belongs to someone else – even if the government does the taking, calling it “taxes,” and gives it to us, calling it “welfare.”*]

But we do have the right to life – and to have it protected. A king or a president should not be able to order us shot or hanged because we criticize his actions. However, if we deliberately disobey a law for which we know the penalty is death, then our life is no longer protected.

We also have the right to liberty – that is, to lead the kind of life that we feel will please our Creator – and to pursue happiness. The Declaration doesn’t guarantee or promise us happiness. No one can do that for anyone else. Our God-given right is to be able to work for happiness in the way that we see fit.

The next sentence explains how these God-given rights are protected. It says: “. . . That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

The entire purpose of having a government of any kind is to protect – not to give or change – our God-given rights.

SUPPOSE WE MOVED to a newly-discovered island in the middle of the Atlantic with other families and began to have differences of opinion as to who owned what land or how to make a land claim or where to build a road and what side of it to drive on. We would need some rules and someone to enforce them that was not on either side of the dispute. We would need a referee. If there were many families living there and many disputes arising, we might consider hiring a full-

time referee which we might call "government." Since we would be paying this referee or government to do the job we wanted done, it would be our servant. The only power it would have is the power we agreed to give it.

What would we do if the referee we hired, the government, began to do things it was not paid to do? For example: forbid us to drive on the roads or to own land or to freely move about. Suppose it threatened to take our lives if we disagreed with its decrees? [*Encourage ideas from all members. The simple solution would be either to get government back on the right track or hire a new one that would do the job in the right way.*] This is the way the Declaration puts it:

That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Government long established should not be changed for light and transient causes . . .

It was because the English government was destroying the God-given liberties of the colonists – in fact, it did not even recognize that there were such rights – and that there was no hope for changing either the King or Parliament (most every means had been tried for more than ten years) that made independence and a new government necessary.

The Declaration then lists the number of ways in which the King had taken away the liberties of the colonists and concludes with these very solemn words: "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

Would each of you be willing to give your life, all that you have, to support the ideas we have discussed? You might lose a great deal. Many of the men who signed the Declaration did. Next week we'll talk about what happened to some of them.

Concluding Thought

The most important point to remember is that our rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are God-given, not government-given, and that we should never look to government as the giver of rights but as an agency we hire to protect them.

DURING THE WEEK

As a family project, we recommend purchasing a copy of the Declaration of Independence to frame. Surrounding your family with visual reminders of our American heritage reinforces learning. Parchment reproductions of the Declaration are available for less than fifty cents.

Also recommended for purchase is the book, *They Signed For Us* – an outstanding Americanist study by Merle Sinclair and Annabel McArthur which tells more details of the signing of the Declaration and the fate of the signers. It is available at most American Opinion Bookstores for \$2.95 or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts.

OPENING PARAGRAPHS OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

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June-July, 1973

Volume I, Lesson Sixteen

They Signed For Us

LESSON IDEA

The courage, character, and sacrifices of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence.

PREPARATION

Prepare cards for each member of the family containing the first two paragraphs of John Adams' "Sink-or-swim" speech. (See last page.)

* * * * *

WHEN JOHN ADAMS, stern New Englander, stood before the Second Continental Congress to argue for independence from England, he put into words the thoughts that must have been in the minds of many of the supporters of the Declaration.

"Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish," thundered Adams, "I give my hand and my heart to this vote. . . . You and I, indeed, may rue it. We may not live to the time when this Declaration shall be made good. We may die; die colonists; die slaves; die, it may be, ignominiously and on the scaffold.

"Be it so, be it so.

"If it be the pleasure of Heaven that my country shall require the poor offering of my life, the victim shall be ready. . . . But while I do live, let me have a country, or at least the hope of a country, and that a free country. . .

"Sir, before God, I believe the hour is come. My judgment approves this measure, and my whole heart is in it. All that I have, and all that I am, and all that I hope, in this life, I am now ready here to stake upon it; and I leave off as I began, that live or die, survive or perish, I am for the Declaration. It is

my living sentiment, and by the blessing of God it shall be my dying sentiment, Independence now, and Independence forever."

Determination and boldness were not Adams' alone. John Hancock, President of the Congress, was a handsome young bachelor with a sizeable fortune and a price of five hundred pounds on his head. Do you know what a British pound was? [*It is a basic money unit, like a dollar. In colonial times a British pound equaled three and one-third dollars. So the reward offered for Hancock's capture was approximately \$1,665 — a large amount for that time.*] If captured, Hancock would be tried in England for treason, and probably hanged. No pardon was possible, as it was for other rebels.

YET, HANCOCK SIGNED the Declaration on July 4, 1776 — the day it was approved by Congress — without hesitation. In fact, Hancock's name, as President of the Congress, and Charles Thomson's, as Secretary, were the only signatures to appear on the original document. When the Declaration was engrossed on parchment and signed by all fifty-six of the Congressional delegates on August 2, Hancock joked about the large, shaded letters of his signature. "John Bull (meaning King George)," he said, "can read my name without spectacles, and may now double his reward of £500 for my head. *That* is my defiance!"

All members of Congress who signed for independence were marked by the British for special vengeance. So were their families, their properties, and their businesses. The danger was greatest in

New York where English troops were gathering for battle with Washington's fledgling army.

The four New York delegates — Francis Lewis, William Floyd, Philip Livingston, and Lewis Morris — had millions of dollars at stake. They were all wealthy businessmen with luxurious town houses and country estates. Putting their names to the Declaration would mean, for all practical purposes, signing away their property and endangering their families. This they knew and, yet, they signed.

Suppose our family would be in a situation like that today because of our opposition to Communism. Would all of you be willing to leave this house? Or would you expect us to play it safe and not do anything to show our opposition to Communism? *[Add enough specific details to make the situation realistic for your family. Ask each what he would choose to do.]*

WITHIN A MONTH British troops were at the door of Francis Lewis' country estate, intent on hanging the signer who dared to defy England. Booted and spurred, they forced their way into the mansion, seized Mrs. Lewis, and began a sweep of destruction. Everything of value — silver, clocks, clothing, china, food and drink — disappeared into British saddlebags. The furnishings that could not be carried away were mercilessly destroyed. All of Lewis' books and papers were piled in a heap and set afire. Mrs. Lewis, forced to watch the destruction of her property, was handled with brutality and contempt. Imprisoned in a dingy, unheated room, she was not permitted to have a bed and for many weeks had no change of clothes. Even though General Washington arranged for her release in a prisoner exchange, her health had been broken and she died soon after. When Lewis returned to his estate after the war, nothing remained but rubble.

The other New York signers also fared badly. Although the families of William Floyd and Lewis Morris escaped before the British arrived, their estates were looted, the houses stripped of everything, farm tools and livestock stolen and timberlands razed. All of Morris' servants and tenants were driven from their homes; and the Floyd estate, used as British headquarters, was left in shambles.

Morris, deprived of his property and income, left Congress and joined Washington's army, serving as a militia brigadier. Three of his sons also served as officers, all with distinction. After the war, Morris used what remained of his property and fortune to pay his private debts to British citizens, an act he felt morally obligated to do despite the war.

Philip Livingston had already given up much of his fortune before signing the Declaration. His business was imports — the buying and selling of British goods. When the colonists began to boycott British-made clothing, tea and furnishings, Livingston gave his full support and lost much of his income.

A similar situation today would be owning a fruit and vegetable market and knowing the lettuce and grapes we were selling would put money into the pockets of Caesar Chavez' Communist-controlled labor union. Many patriotic customers would refuse to buy these products, and we would lose their business. We could continue selling lettuce and grapes to people who didn't know or care where they came from, or we could refuse to sell them and take a loss in income. What do you think we should do? *[Ask family members what they would choose to do. Remind them that Philip Livingston chose not to sell the enemy's goods even though it meant losing large sums of money.]*

In the fall of 1776, when the defeated American army was driven from New York, all of Livingston's business properties were confiscated. His mansion on Duke Street was turned into a British

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

The fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence were a young and hardy lot. Only seven were over sixty; eighteen were still in their thirties; and three in their twenties. Not one wore a beard or mustache.

Two of the signers died on July 4, 1826, fifty years after the historic event; one lived to spade the first earth for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at the age of 91; another was poisoned by a grandnephew impatient for his inheritance. The details of their lives would make an excellent subject for history reports or English themes.

We recommend reading *They Signed For Us* by Sinclair and McArthur. It is available from most American Opinion Bookstores for \$2.95, or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts.

barracks; his estate on Brooklyn Heights was made into a Royal Navy hospital. In the months that followed, he sold the properties he owned in other parts of the State to help maintain the credit of the United States. Two years later, in 1778, he died, deplete of income and separated from his family.

THOMAS NELSON, JR. of Virginia was another of the wealthy merchants who did not hesitate to give whatever was required in the fight for independence. In 1775 when the British Navy was threat-

ening to bombard Yorktown, Nelson had property and family in the target area and vast sums of money in English banks, but his reaction to the threat was bold and decisive.

"Let my trade perish," he thundered to the delegates of the House of Burgesses. "I call God to witness that if any British troops are landed in the County of York, of which I am Lieutenant, I will wait no orders, but will summon the militia and drive the invaders into the sea!"

Nelson meant what he said. In October of 1781, when the tide of the war turned in America's favor,



Photograph Courtesy of John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company

the British were cornered in Yorktown under bombardment from seventy colonial cannons. Nelson, knowing that the English were headquartered in his home, watched from the American lines as the firing began in his own neighborhood.

"Why do you spare my house?" he demanded of a gunner.

"Out of respect to you, sir," the soldier replied.

"Give me the cannon!" Nelson ordered. He directed the fire upon his own stately dwelling.

Before the war, Nelson had been one of the richest men in Virginia. When it was over, his income was one of the most modest. In 1778 he raised a company of Virginia cavalry to fight in Pennsylvania. He was its commander and banker, most of the funds for its food, uniforms, and ammunition coming out of his own pocket. In addition, he paid the bills for two other regiments, one in York and one in Williamsburg. He stripped his plantation of fine hunting and carriage horses to give to the army, fed hungry soldiers from his own granary, and neglected his tobacco crops to send slaves and tenants to harvest the crops of small farmers who were serving in the militia and had no hired help.

When money was desperately short, Nelson raised two million dollars almost overnight by offering his own properties as a guarantee for the loans. These he forfeited when the loans came due. His government never reimbursed him. At war's end, his health broken and fortune gone, Nelson retired to a small house in Hanover County, Virginia, with his wife and children. He died eight years later.

Concluding Thought

Virtually all of the signers would have been better off financially and personally if they never had been in Congress. Of the fifty-six who pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor for independence, nine died of wounds or hardships during the war. Five were captured and imprisoned, sometimes brutally treated. The wives, sons, and daughters of others were killed, jailed, mistreated, and left penniless. The houses of twelve signers were burned to the ground. Seventeen lost everything they owned. One was driven from his wife's deathbed.

Every signer was proclaimed a traitor, and each was hunted by the British. Most were, at one time or another, barred from their families or homes. Most were offered bribes, pardons, rewards, or the release of loved ones if they would break their pledged word or take the King's protection. But no signer defected or changed his stand through the darkest hour. What did their acts of sacrifice and courage gain? In the end, honor remained and a new nation was born. That was all they asked.

Looking Ahead

Today we see another group of revolutionaries of our country. They claim to be modern George Washingtons and Thomas Nelsons, making a stand against America just as the signers of the Declaration of Independence did against England in 1776. Next week we'll talk about these modern revolutionaries and see if their claims are true or false.

* * * * *

DURING THE WEEK

After the lesson tonight, ask each member of the family to memorize all or part of John Adams' "Sink-or-swim" speech. Cards for this purpose should be prepared prior to the lesson and the quote adjusted in length to suit the age and capabilities of the family. Use the dinner or breakfast hour to test the memorization progress.

JOHN ADAMS' QUOTE

"Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I give my hand and heart to this vote You and I, indeed may rue it. We may not live to the time when this Declaration shall be made good. We may die; die colonists; die slaves; die, it may be, ignominiously and on the scaffold.

"Be it so, be it so.

"If it be the pleasure of Heaven that my country shall require the poor offering of my life, the victim shall be ready But while I do live, let me have a country, or at least the hope of a country, and that a free country"

The Family Heritage Series

For parents who wish to teach their children the true meaning of liberty, responsibility, and our Americanist heritage.

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The Family Heritage Series



A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom.

Written by Mildred Tenney Handy
Edited by Wallis W. Wood

Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency,
a project of The John Birch Society.

June-July, 1973

Volume I, Lesson Seventeen

Revolutionaries

LESSON IDEA

To show the difference between American revolutionaries and present-day revolutionists, and to expose the fraud that modern rebels can be compared favorably with our Founding Fathers.

PREPARATION

Review the discussion parts of the lesson and adapt them to the understanding of your family. For younger children, clip pictures of present-day revolutionaries from newspapers and magazines. Compare with pictures of Washington, Adams, and other signers of the Declaration.

* * * * *

SINCE THE TIME of the American Revolution, the men who led it have been honored as heroes throughout the world. Why do you think so many persons in so many different countries share our admiration for George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Hancock, and other Founding Fathers? [*Encourage each child to answer.*]

Present-day revolutionaries often claim to be like these American heroes. In country after country, rebel leaders are called "George Washingtons" by themselves and their admirers. Why would these revolutionaries want to be considered "like George Washington?" Do you think this would help them attract more followers and gain more support? [*Again, ask each family member to express an opinion.*]

Fidel Castro, for example, was introduced as the "George Washington of Cuba" to millions of Americans who watched him on television during the Cuban revolution. Do you consider the com-

parison fact or nonsense? Why? [*Encourage everyone to answer. Many teenagers will have heard this comparison in classroom discussions or conversations with other students. Although they know it is false, they may not be prepared to disprove it. Others may be wondering about its validity.*]

LET'S LOOK at Washington, first of all, as the prime example of an American leader of 1776. We know, of course, he lived a comfortable life as a plantation owner in colonial America. His customs, manners, dress, and speech were patterned after those of an English gentleman. He had no hatred of things English nor of the principles of honesty, honor, and fairness that were part of the civilization of his day. If he had, he would have rebelled in the style of Castro or of today's hippie — dressing in shabby clothing, living in squalor, stealing from the King's officials, and lying about his intentions whenever it suited his purpose.

Castro, as a rebel against all of society, did all of these things. Washington did none. The code of honor, integrity, truthfulness, and justice — not only of English society but also of Western Civilization — were values he wanted to preserve, not destroy.

Why, then, if Washington was not at war with the values to which the English subscribed, did he lead an army in a war of independence against Britain? Why be independent of a nation that taught its citizens to strive for integrity, truthfulness, and justice? What were Washington and the other revolutionary leaders against? [*Encourage discussion. Some points that should be made: The*

American leaders were against king-centered government, not the values of English society. Even though justice was the goal of English civil law, it was not practiced by the King or Parliament.]

WHY WAS WASHINGTON against England's king-centered government, yet not its code of values? A deep religious conviction was the determining factor. He was against the English King as a giver of liberties because he recognized that God was the only giver of rights. He was for the honor, honesty, and justice of English society because such values were based on Scriptural teachings — and true for all societies and nations.

Castro, as a Communist, denied the existence of God and declared war on all the religious values as well as the government of Cuba. Lying, stealing, and assassination became tools to further the goals of his revolution. Castro believed — and taught his followers — “the end justifies the means.” What does this phrase mean? [*Explain the phrase. Help family members to understand it demolishes all standards of right and wrong. Every act is judged in terms of whether or not it works — not whether it is right or wrong.*] To Castro, it meant lying, stealing, and murdering — in fact, all kinds of evil acts — were right and proper if they benefited his revolution. Do you think Washington and the other

FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

If the discussions in this lesson are beyond the understanding of the children in your family, we recommend skipping them and concentrating on the story of the mythical kingdom of Thud. Some questions you might want to ask after reading the story:

If you had lived in the country of Thud, would you have joined the rebels of the nation of Opportunity who were fighting for freedom? Why?

Were the Tyrants who overthrew the king honest? Did they fight fairly? Who helped them? Could they have taken over the country without the help of some of the King's own ministers?

What lies do you suppose the Tyrants told the people to get them fighting each other?

If you have been living in the kingdom, would you have been more frightened if the Tyrants killed only their enemies or if they had come down our street killing every fourth person they met? Why did they do this?

American revolutionaries believed “the end justifies the means?”

Deceit was a particular Castro speciality. When asking this country for money and weapons, Castro assured Americans he was not, and never had been, a Communist. After the revolution, he told the Cuban people and the world he was, and always had been, a Communist.

Did Washington or other American leaders try to conceal their motives from European nations during the Revolution? What did they do to make their intentions known? [*Point out the American motives for revolution were simply and openly stated in the Declaration of Independence. Eventually, France and other European nations aided the Americans.*] What would have happened if Castro had been as honest in stating his motives for revolution? Would he have received American support? Why not? What did he have to hide? [*Make clear that the methods and tactics of Communists were well known because of the takeovers in other countries. Castro would not have succeeded if he honestly had stated his case.*]

When Castro took over the Cuba government, firing squads began lining up victims. Thousands were murdered as “enemies of the revolution” — not because they had opposed it but because they were property owners or leaders who might do so in the future. The graves of wealthy Cubans were opened, and everything of value stolen. Churches were closed; ministers, priests, and missionaries tortured; Bibles destroyed; families separated; food rationed. Why were these things done? [*After some answers are given, ask if these acts of terror would encourage or discourage opposition to the new government? Would Castro's power be increased or decreased? Help family members to understand when life and liberty are attacked, or people terrorized, the government has become a dictatorship — no matter what it chooses to call itself.*]

WHAT HAPPENED in America when the War for Independence was won? There were “enemies of the revolution,” to be sure. Almost a third of the colonists had remained loyal to England, and some had given information to the British that cost American patriots their lives. Were they lined up before firing squads? Some patriots thought it

would be only fair; but Washington, as well as other leaders, turned a deaf ear to talk of revenge. No punishment was legal. There was no confiscation of property following victory. Some of the pro-British colonists — called Tories — were badly treated by neighbors or former friends; some lost property through the ravages of war and wanton acts of hotheaded militia, but none faced an American firing squad or hangman's noose. In fact, the Continental Congress refused to cancel debts owed to British merchants; and revolutionary leaders like Thomas Nelson, Jr., Jefferson, and Lewis Morris — men who had emptied their own pockets to pay the expenses of American troops and ambassadors — sold what little remained of their property or possessions to pay their personal debts to the British.

At war's end, the American revolutionaries formed a new government — one with less power than any other in history. Gone was the throne that has been reserved for kings and dictators. In its place was a legislature, a court system, and an executive branch — three separate centers, each designed to checkmate the growth of the others.

The rights of the people to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were guaranteed in a written contract called the Constitution. Power-seekers were hamstrung by the restrictions that were written into that historic document.

It could have been otherwise. Washington, if he had wished, could have taken advantage of his power as the commander of a victorious army to set up a strong, central government. Such was his popularity that many urged him to become king. But he was not seeking personal glory or power. Government was, in his words, “a dangerous servant and a fearful master” — an instrument that should be regarded with distrust and held in check.

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

Because France supplied money and men for the American Revolution and only eight years later dethroned her own king, many people think the American and French Revolutions were similar. Yet, they were — like the Cuban Revolution — almost exact opposites. To understand the leaders, tactics, and goals of the French revolutionists, we recommend reading *Seventeen Eighty-Nine*, available for one dollar from most American Opinion Bookstores or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts.

Had he been “another Castro,” he would have grabbed the opportunity and abandoned his convictions.

Do you think Fidel Castro or any of the present-day revolutionaries can be compared favorably with George Washington? Why not? [*Ask family members to compare the two in terms of moral conduct, beliefs about God, property, and government.*]

What about the leaders of riots in Watts, Detroit, and Chicago — revolutionaries like Bobby Seale, Huey Newton, and Angela Davis? Are these rebels behaving like Castros or Washingtons? [*Again, ask for comparisons. Castro's methods — “the end justifies the means” — should be contrasted with Washington's honesty and fairness. For younger students, end the lesson with the following story comparing two types of revolutions.*]

THIS STORY of the mythical kingdom of Thud might give us a better idea of the difference between the two types of revolutions. King Nasty was the ruler of Thud. His subjects thought him a tyrant and pleaded with his ministers for fair and just treatment.

But King Nasty only laughed. “Let them complain,” he said. “I am the king, and they are my servants. What I wish shall be law.”

But in the far corner of the Thud kingdom, trouble was brewing for the haughty king. After years of journeying to the palace to beg King Nasty to let them choose their own ministers as his father had done, these distant subjects began to question the King's authority.

“Is he not made of flesh,” they said, “just as we are? Were we not created at birth with the same rights as he? What makes him think he is king and we are servants?”

King Nasty sent his army to put an end to the rebellion. But the subjects banded together to defend their homes and families. “We want to be free to pursue the life, liberty, and happiness that are our rights from our Creator,” they told him. “And we are willing to fight your army and die, if necessary, for our freedom.”

Fight they did for eight long years — and finally, they won. The rebel leaders formed a new nation, called Opportunity. Citizens were chosen to make

the laws, and Opportunity began to grow and prosper. Other people left their homes in Thud to come to the new nation and live as free men.

Meanwhile, in the palace of King Nasty, another group of rebels, some of them ministers of the King, began to meet, plotting to take over the kingdom. Nothing in Thud pleased them. Everything, they decided, must be changed. Only then, they said, would peace reign and everyone be happy.

With money and protection from the King's ministers, the rebels moved from city to city telling the people such lies that soon all were quarreling. No one noticed that King Nasty was thrown in the dungeon; and the rebels, now known as Tyrants, took over his palace.

On their first day in power, the Tyrants rode through the countryside collecting guns. They said they wanted to keep the servants of the kingdom from fighting each other. This would bring peace, they said.

With all the people's guns stored in the palace, the Tyrants demanded the people give up their land, houses, shops, and factories. Some refused, so every fourth person in the kingdom was killed. The frightened people quickly gave up their property and possessions. Now everything belonged to the Tyrants. Soon the people of Thud were forced to journey to the palace to beg for a place to live, food to eat, and clothing to wear.

"You are now our slaves," the Tyrants told the hungry people, "and we will give you food only if you work for us, making things we can sell to make us rich."

Everyone was sent to work in the fields and factories. Each was given a grey suit to wear and one potato each morning to eat. Many people tried to leave the country, but the Tyrants built an iron wall around it and shot those who came near. King Nasty was hanged, and the Tyrants ruled the people of Thud as slaves.

Where would you choose to live, in the nation of Opportunity or in the country of Thud? Why? *[Ask each member of the family why he would choose as he did. Depending on the age of the children, explain in more detail how the rebellion that produced the nation of Opportunity was like the revolution that created America. Also, compare the subversive techniques of the Tyrants in Thud*

to Castro in Cuba and to the Bobby Seales and Huey Newtons in our country today.]

Concluding Thought

Washington and the leaders of the American Revolution were rebelling against the form of government that gave a king unlimited power to rule as if he were God while present-day revolutionists are attempting to destroy our entire society and all of its religious values. Unlike Fidel Castro who believed "the end justifies the means," these Americans were men of honor and integrity who created a new government and limited its powers to prevent the rise of a dictatorship.

Next week we want to take a closer look at the life of one of the generals of the American Revolution.

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Edited by Wallis W. Wood

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Volume I, Lesson Twenty-Four

The Constitutional Convention

LESSON IDEA

To show how delegates from thirteen separate and suspicious states finally agreed upon a unique form of government which would protect the rights of the minorities while being fair to majorities.

PREPARATION

Read the two sections of *Your Rugged Constitution* described in "During The Week" and decide which would be most appropriate for your family to study following this lesson.

* * * * *

THE ATMOSPHERE WAS TENSE and tempers were touchy when delegates began to arrive in Philadelphia in May of 1787, to decide how to revise the Articles of Confederation. Some felt strongly that the Articles should be forgotten, not revised. Others were determined to accept nothing more than minor revisions of the Articles. Each suspected the others of wanting to favor their own states or business interests at the expense of the rest of the country. Men from the Southern States, for example, thought the New Englanders would be interested only in protecting their manufacturing interests. While the Massachusetts men had the same uneasy feelings about the Virginians and their plantation culture. Delegates from small states mistrusted those from the large states, fearing that their independence would be threatened by the size and influence of the bigger delegations.

Those of like mind gathered in small groups. At some dinner tables, the discussion centered on the

philosophy of Locke, the history of Greece, and the laws of Rome. At others, debates raged on how many reforms people would accept and what compromise measures could be adopted.

THE CONVENTION, which began on May 25, 1787, could have become a fruitless effort in factional debate. Instead, it became one of the major events of history. One of the reasons was the unanimous choice of George Washington as presiding officer. Washington's fairness, his patience in hearing all sides of an issue, and his skill in preventing serious disagreements from turning into fatal battles guided the delegates through four months of meetings to a final consensus in September.

At the very start of the Convention, Washington made a brief but powerful speech. With a few well-chosen words, he stopped all talk of weak compromises and avoiding major issues because of fear of public reaction.

It was entirely possible, said the former Commander-in-Chief, "that no plan [of government] we propose will be adopted. Perhaps another dreadful conflict is to be sustained. If, to please the people we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterward defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the honest can repair; the event is in the hands of God."

Washington's words reminded the delegates of the seriousness of their task. Suggestions of compromise measures and advice to avoid major issues were forgotten.

The first few days of meetings were devoted to establishing rules for the Convention.

One was to debate in secret until the delegates reached a final decision. Today, nearly 200 years later, many liberals who ridicule the Constitution and suggest replacing it with some type of socialistic people's republic, pretend to believe the Philadelphia delegates were all rich and selfish men who meant to establish a government which would help them get richer, at the expense of the citizens they represented. The secrecy rule, say the liberals, proved the delegates were trying to hide their true intentions. This line of reasoning has several serious flaws. Does anyone know what they are?

[Discuss secrecy in government as it is practiced today – such as the secrecy of President Nixon in keeping White House conversations about Watergate from the public, or the secrecy by government officials in trading with Communist nations which supplied our enemies in Vietnam. The secrecy of these decisions was to be permanent; however, the secrecy rule of the Constitutional Convention was to last only until the meeting ended. Its purpose was to allow delegates to discuss all types of government from monarchy to democracy without fear of being quoted publicly in the wrong way and at the wrong time. Daily news headlines like "Convention Argues Merits of Monarchy," would have totally misled the waiting public and created unnecessary fear. It is one thing for elected officials to keep government decisions forever secret from the public – and quite another to keep debates secret only until a finished plan can be submitted to the people for approval or disapproval.]

When the delegates to the Philadelphia Convention began to debate the type of government best suited to their infant nation, they had three plans to consider – the Virginia plan, the Hamilton plan, and a third proposal for minor changes in the existing Articles of Confederation.

THE VIRGINIA PLAN, which was presented by Edmund Randolph, proposed much more centralization of power in a federal government than the delegates finally accepted. There were other defects, and after thorough consideration, it was rejected. The same fate was in store for Hamilton's plan, which provided for more centralization of power than the Virginia Plan and even the estab-

lishment of a new monarchy. Hamilton had proposed that presidents be elected for life. The third plan, making revisions in the Articles of Confederation, was also debated at length and rejected.

As the debates and discussions continued, the delegates from small and large states, from North and South, learned to respect each other's opinions. Washington's special type of leadership – his readiness to listen, his willingness to allow every delegate to express himself at length, and his patience in permitting a delegate to reopen the same subject as many times as he wished – these qualities also had a noticeably good effect on the Convention. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney from South Carolina was one of those who noted the change in attitude. "I will confess," he wrote, "that I had prejudices against the Eastern States before I came here, but I have found them as liberal and candid as any man whatever." *[A "liberal" of the 1700's was a man who valued individual freedom – especially freedom from government dictates – while today's liberal favors more government controls, which he calls "progressive thinking," at the expense of individual freedoms.]*

The delegates had generally accepted the part of the Virginia Plan which divided government power into three parts. Who can name each of these three parts? Yes, one was the legislative branch, which would make the laws. The second was the executive, to enforce the laws. And the third was the judicial, to interpret the laws according to the Constitution. The major disagreement was on the question of representation in the national legisla-

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

An interesting study in the history of governments from ancient to modern times can be found in *The Mainspring Of Human Progress* by Henry Grady Weaver. Weaver asks these questions: What has made some nations stagnate for long periods of time, without making any progress whatsoever, while Americans transformed a wilderness into the most prosperous and productive nation in the world in less than 100 years? How do you explain the difference? What, indeed, is the mainspring (or prime mover) of human progress?

The Mainspring Of Human Progress is available in an attractive paperbound edition for ninety-five cents from most American Opinion Bookstores or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts, 02178.

ture. The Virginia delegation was adamant that representation should be based on population. But the smaller states feared they would be totally dominated in such a situation and refused to agree. It seemed like a hopeless deadlock.

Let's discuss the delegates' dilemma by using a specific example – voting on an increase in taxes. If our state had only six votes to New York's thirty-nine or California's forty-three, would it be fair for us to be outvoted by New York and California simply because they had more people and more representatives? Why not? What are the dangers of such majority rule? Is the majority always right? *[Explain the dangers to minorities of majority rule. The Amish, for example, constitute a very small percent of our population. With a culture different from the majority, they would always be outvoted and conceivably might not be permitted to live in their chosen way. Suppose, as a farfetched example, that the majority decided to eliminate or imprison all redheaded people or Lutherans or Baptists. How could these minorities be protected against the majority?]*

WASHINGTON DREW ATTENTION to the inherent weakness of arbitrary majority rule. Any system which would permit a majority to impose its will on a minority, he warned, would violate the very rights proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence. Two years before the Convention, he had opposed such "majority rule" in Virginia, when the House of Burgesses was considering a tax on all persons, regardless of their faith, to support the Episcopal Church. Although the Episcopal Church was the largest church in Virginia and was, in fact, the church to which Washington belonged, he strongly opposed the measure, arguing that such a tax would be unfair to the members of other faiths. Likewise, at the Constitutional Convention he would not support his fellow Virginians in their demands that both branches of the Legislature – House and Senate – be organized on the basis of population.

It was a thorny problem – so serious that all attempts to form a new government would collapse if it were not solved. But how could it be resolved to every delegate's satisfaction? If the small states would not tolerate the strict majority rule pro-



ROGER SHERMAN, author of the proposal which solved the question of fair representation in Congress, is the only man who had the privilege of signing all four of the great documents of America's early history. These were the Articles of Association of the first Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution.

posed by the larger states, neither would the more densely settled states agree to proposals by their smaller brethren that each state be given the same number of votes. On a tax issue, for example, the larger states would be paying more because they would have more taxable citizens, yet their vote would be equal to the smallest state – whose citizens would pay only a fraction of the sum needed to finance government. This is the situation in which we find ourselves in the United Nations. Even though we are assessed twenty-five percent of the UN budget every year, our vote is equal to the vote of scores of mini-nations which pay little or nothing.

The final solution to the problem of fair representation for all states had been proposed to the delegates at the start of the convention – and promptly forgotten. At one of the first meetings, Roger Sherman of Connecticut had suggested basing the membership in the House of Representa-

tives on population, and organizing the Senate with equal votes for every state. The delegates had rejected the idea. Two months later, however, attitudes had changed, preconceived ideas had been modified by debate, new thoughts and new ways of viewing government had begun to take root, and the fifty-five delegates were willing to reconsider Sherman's unique proposal. It must have seemed to some to be a last resort — the only way out of a hopeless deadlock. Actually, it was a daring solution to the age-old problem of protecting minorities while being fair to majorities. In the Senate each state would have the same number of votes, no matter how large or small; in the House of Representatives, representation would follow population, one voting member for every thirty thousand citizens. Each branch of the legislature would have special powers, and each was designed to check and balance the other.

The vote on Sherman's proposal was not unanimous, but his idea was finally accepted by all. The deadlock was broken, and the work of the delegates moved to a discussion of salaries, duties, terms of office, trade, slavery, and court systems. No decision was ever quick or simple. Sixty votes, for example, were taken before the Convention could decide on a method of selecting the President. But the attitude of the delegates had changed from suspicion and hostility to consideration and conciliation.

The final product of four months of concerted effort by some of the keenest minds on the American Continent was ready for its public unveiling on September 17, 1787. Citizens from northern Maine to southern Georgia were to scrutinize the proposed Constitution line by line from Preamble to final paragraph. They were encouraged to examine it sentence by sentence and phrase by phrase. Ministers and diplomats from all over Europe studied it carefully. As years passed, the Constitution stood the test of time better than any other similar document in the history of the world. William E. Gladstone, Prime Minister of England in the 1800's, echoed the verdict of many when he called it, "the greatest work of its kind ever turned out by the mind and purpose of man."

Concluding Thought

When the fifty-five delegates met in Philadelphia in May of 1787, they were as divided in thought

and as suspicious of each other as any group of men could be; but after four months of debate and discussion under the leadership of George Washington, they emerged as a group united in a common purpose. Together they had hammered out the written contract for a daring new system of government which guaranteed freedom, fairness, and opportunity to the people they represented. The delegates succeeded in keeping government power within proper and well-defined boundaries.

Looking Ahead

Next week we'll see how this written contract called the Constitution limited the power of government by dividing it, incorporating carefully planned checks into it, and confining its authority to specific areas. Most governments function on the theory that they may do anything they wish in any area of public life, unless specifically prohibited by some legislative act. The American government, on the other hand, was designed to keep its elected officials from doing anything in any area unless specifically instructed to do so by the Constitution. And what a crucial difference it was!

DURING THE WEEK

Continue the study of the Constitution suggested last week. The requirements for becoming a Senator or a member of the House of Representatives are described on pages 14 through 33 of *Your Rugged Constitution* while the powers granted to the legislators are explained on pages 64 through 93. Pick whichever section is most interesting to your family and ask individual members to read a part of the section each day and explain it to others during the dinner hour.

The Family Heritage Series

For parents who wish to teach their children the true meaning of liberty, responsibility, and our Americanist heritage.

The Family Heritage Series is an outstanding series of weekly lessons for the home, written to stimulate interest and spark discussion about the legacy we have received.

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The Family Heritage Series



A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom.

Written by Mildred Tenney Handy
Edited by Wallis W. Wood

Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency,
a project of The John Birch Society.

September, 1973

Volume I, Lesson Twenty-Five

Checks And Balances

LESSON IDEA

To show how the Constitution, through a complex latticework of checks and balances, was specifically designed to prevent the misuse of government power.

PREPARATION

Make enough copies of the Washington quote on page four to distribute to each member of the family after this lesson. Study the section of *Your Rugged Constitution* suggested in "During The Week" and decide how to use it for home study.

* * * * *

THE CONSTITUTION of the United States which was adopted by the thirteen former British colonies created a unique system of government. It shocked the rulers of Europe from the top of their crowns to the tips of their jeweled fingers. Never, they said, had government been so badly treated. The Americans, they stormed, had cut up its power, divided it into parts, and checked and counter-checked each part against the other. They had hampered it and hamstrung it until it looked like a giant helplessly pinned to the ground by millions of small ropes. How did they expect it to function?

Why was the Constitution such a shock to the rulers of Europe? Why didn't they adopt a similar document for their countries? [*Encourage everyone to give an opinion.*]

Government, in the minds of kings and court ministers, was meant to be unlimited in power and able to amble about the country doing as it pleased with its subjects. It was, in the thinking of kings, a divine powerhouse which they have been appoint-

ed to head as earthly ambassadors for God Himself. Should their menial subjects fail to appreciate their kings' exalted position as sources of all wisdom, physical force — like parental discipline — was in order. Often this meant firing squads, guillotines, hangmen's nooses, prison terms, and beatings. It may never have occurred to some rulers that such reasoning was nonsense — an excuse to cover their own lusts for power. Certainly the people who had been beaten and imprisoned had no such delusions.

NEITHER DID George Washington. He well understood the tendency for government to worship itself and brutally misuse its powers. "Government," he said emphatically, "is not reason; it is not eloquence; it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master."

Do you think Washington's description was accurate? Why did he compare government to fire? Why is fire a dangerous servant? When is it a fearful master? [*Encourage discussion. Make sure everyone understands that all-powerful governments such as Nazism in Germany or Communism in the Soviet Union is as fearful a master to its subjects as a raging forest fire. Also, make the point that even when a government is held in check as the American government was under the Constitution for many years, it is like a bonfire. While it serves as a necessary source of heat and light, it can quickly become a forest fire if left unattended and unchecked.*]

Like Washington, many of the Constitutional Convention delegates wanted no part of creating another "fearful master" to be added to the

governments of the world. They believed government should be a servant of the citizenry – a legal apparatus which could act as a referee between individuals and groups, keeping the rules fair and the game clean for each citizen to enjoy freedom in his own way. And while it was not designed to protect an individual from the folly of his own mistakes, it was intended to protect the nation against threats from foreign powers.

Yet, creating a federal government with even the minimum of power was a dangerous adventure, as Washington had indicated. Power, in any quantity, does strange things to the men who hold it. As Lord Acton had so succinctly phrased it: "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Our Founding Fathers believed it was entirely possible for the champions of freedom in 1776 to become the dictators of the 1800's if given unlimited power – not to mention what could happen 100, 200, or 300 years later. Knowing this, the delegates to the Philadelphia Convention established a unique constitutional system which denied power to everyone – including themselves.

THE SECRET to limiting the power of government was to design it so that no part of it was concentrated in one place for the use of one man or a small group of men. This is why the Constitution divided federal power into three major parts – legislative, to make the laws; executive, to enforce the laws; and judicial, to interpret laws according to a written Constitution.

FOR THE SERIOUS STUDENT

Find out more about the men who attended the Constitutional Convention. Brief descriptions and pictures of ten of the most prominent delegates are included in *Quest Of A Hemisphere*, pages 150 through 186. Some questions that might be of interest include: Which delegate had the distinction of being the only man who signed all four of the great documents of America's early history? How many of the delegates had fought in the Revolutionary War? How many were lawyers? What was the average age of the delegates? Who was the oldest? The youngest?

Quest Of A Hemisphere by Donzella Cross Boyle is available at most American Opinion Bookstores or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts, 02178. \$9.00 Hardbound; \$5.00 Paperbound.

Each branch, they hoped, would jealously guard its own powers and keep the other two at bay. Congress would check the President, the President would check Congress, and the federal courts would check both and be checked in return.

EXACTLY HOW DOES this work? Suppose the President wanted to build a thousand-room mansion with gold-plated walls and diamond door-knobs. As a king or emperor or despot, he could make his desire known to his court in the morning and in the afternoon dispatch his tax collectors, or his army, to take the money for his pleasurable palace by force from the citizens. But, as the head of the executive branch of the American government, he could do nothing more than send his request to the legislative arm of government and ask it to please pass a bill to raise the sums needed for his pleasure palace.

His problem would be made even more difficult because all bills involving money have to pass the House of Representatives first. It is in this particular assembly that the legislators are most sympathetic to taxpayers – or the people who would pay the bills for any proposed legislation. The reason is simply that taxpayers are voters, and voters decide elections, and every two years members of the House of Representatives have to please the voters or be replaced by someone who can. Moreover, even though the public's memory is short, it can generally remember for two years how its elected representatives voted on money issues. Senators, on the other hand, have a six-year term, and the taxpayers' wrath usually cools and fades in that length of time. Thus, the Framers of the Constitution decided all money bills must originate in the House of Representatives.

But, suppose, for some strange reason, the House of Representatives did decide to pass the President's request for a thousand-room mansion with gold-plated walls and diamond doorknobs. It would then have to win the approval of the Senate where two men from every State have a vote. Is it likely, do you think, that more than half of the 435 men in the House of Representatives and more than half of the one hundred Senators – a minimum of 269 elected legislators – would agree to such an outlandish

request? Why not? Is there any way the President could force Congress to grant his wish?

[Make it clear the President has no power under the Constitution to pressure Congressmen into voting his way. But, if he is a man of few or no principles, he can use such tactics as blackmail or bribery. For example, he may hire investigators to dig up scandalous gossip about individual legislators and threaten to make such information public. Then, again, he can offer money or favors – a federal grant to the Congressman’s home town, for example. He can promise representatives appointments as ambassadors or diplomats in foreign countries, or high-paying jobs in one of the many government bureaus. Any of these promises would certainly be tempting to a Congressman – perhaps so much so that he would decide to vote as the President wished, knowing that if he were defeated in the next election a glamorous new job would be waiting for him in the executive branch of government.]

How could such blackmail and bribery be stopped? *[The answer is to elect honest men who are not subject to blackmail and who would publicly denounce attempts at bribery. Then keep them alert to their duties by close scrutiny. Eternal vigilance – by each taxpayer – is the price of freedom.]*

THE CHECKS AND BALANCES of the U.S. Constitution also keep Congress from developing delusions of grandeur. Suppose, for example, Congress passed a law reducing a newly-elected President’s salary to one dollar per year and denying him the right to have more than two cabinet officers to assist him in executing the laws of the land. This would be a deliberate attempt to steal power from the executive branch of government and increase that of the legislative. Could it be done? Why not? *[Explain that the President has the Constitutional right to veto any bill by refusing to sign it. Without the chief executive’s signature, no bill can become law – unless it goes back through Congress and is passed again by two-thirds of the representatives and two-thirds of the Senators. This checks the power of Congress and prevents hasty and unwise actions by either the legislators or by the President.]*

Suppose, on the other hand, both Congress and the President want to create titles of nobility for themselves. The President might submit a bill requiring everyone to call him “His Majesty” and the Congress might agree to this – provided the President would sign a bill giving each Congressman the title of “Earl.” The two branches of government would be conspiring against the citizens to create a monarchy in America. Could this happen? Why not? *[Explain that the Constitution specifically forbids the granting of any title of nobility. Thus, the proposed law, even though passed by both Houses of Congress and signed by the President, would be declared illegal by the judiciary branch – the Federal courts whose job it is to interpret laws according to the Constitution.]*

THERE ARE MANY other checks built into the Constitution. For example, the President has the power to make treaties with foreign nations – but each treaty must have the approval of two-thirds of the Senators present in Congress to become effective. The President can appoint anyone he chooses to certain high positions in the executive branch of government – but the appointments are not valid if the Senate disapproves. The Congress can pass any law it likes – but any citizen who feels such a law is illegal can appeal to the judiciary branch (the courts) and have the constitutionality of the law tested. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the nation’s army and navy – but only Congress can declare war. The executive branch of the government spends money – but only if Congress says so. Members of the judicial branch are appointed for indefinite periods of time – but any one of the judges can be removed from office at any time by the Congress if he is found guilty of treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors. This same is true for the appointed members of the executive branch.

Considering all these checks and balances between the three branches of government, we would have to say the Framers of the Constitution created the most cumbersome and inefficient government mechanism ever put into operation. And they meant to do so! The men who worked so diligently in Philadelphia during the summer of 1787 were thinking of our life, liberty, and pursuit

of happiness. Their chief concern was not with the efficiency of government but with the freedom of each and every citizen.

If they had wanted the most "efficient" government on earth, what would they have created? [*Ask for opinions.*] Yes, it would have been a dictatorship, because laws under such an unrestricted government can be made each morning after breakfast and executed before lunch. No one checks or balances a despot; no one dares. But under such "efficient" systems, the rights and liberties of the individual rapidly wither and disappear. Which would you prefer? [*Encourage everyone to answer.*] Would the opposite extreme — anarchy, or no government — be better?

Concluding Thought

To sum up our lesson, the Constitutional delegates steered a balanced course between the anarchy which threatened the thirteen independent states under the Articles of Confederation, and the efficient, fast-moving, brutal operation of a monarch or despot. What they created was a servant — a government loaded with limitations and restrictions calculated to prevent it from using its power to destroy what it was created to preserve. The Framers of our Constitution made sure the rights of each citizen would be protected not only against other men, but also against the power of government itself.

Looking Ahead

When the Constitutional Convention adjourned, one of the citizens who was waiting outside the Philadelphia State House, anxiously asked Benjamin Franklin, "What kind of government have you given us, a republic or a monarchy?"

"We have given you," the weary and aged delegate replied, "a republic — if you can keep it."

What do you think Franklin meant when he said, "if you can keep it"? What is a republic and why should it be so hard to keep? These are the questions that we'll try to answer next week when we talk about the difference between a republic and a democracy.

DURING THE WEEK

Have family members memorize Washington's famous quote about the dangers of government. Use the dinner hour to test the memorization progress of each. To reinforce the idea, you may also want to print the quote in large letters on a 5" by 8" card or a sheet of white paper and post on the family bulletin board or near the telephone.

Continue the section by section study of *Your Rugged Constitution*, starting with Article II, on duties, powers, and requirements for the executive branch. (See pages 112 through 141 of *Your Rugged Constitution* by Bruce and Esther Findlay, \$2.45 paperbound, available at most American Opinion Bookstores or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts, 02178.)

WASHINGTON'S QUOTE

"Government is not reason;
it is not eloquence;
it is force! Like fire,
it is a dangerous servant
and a fearful master."

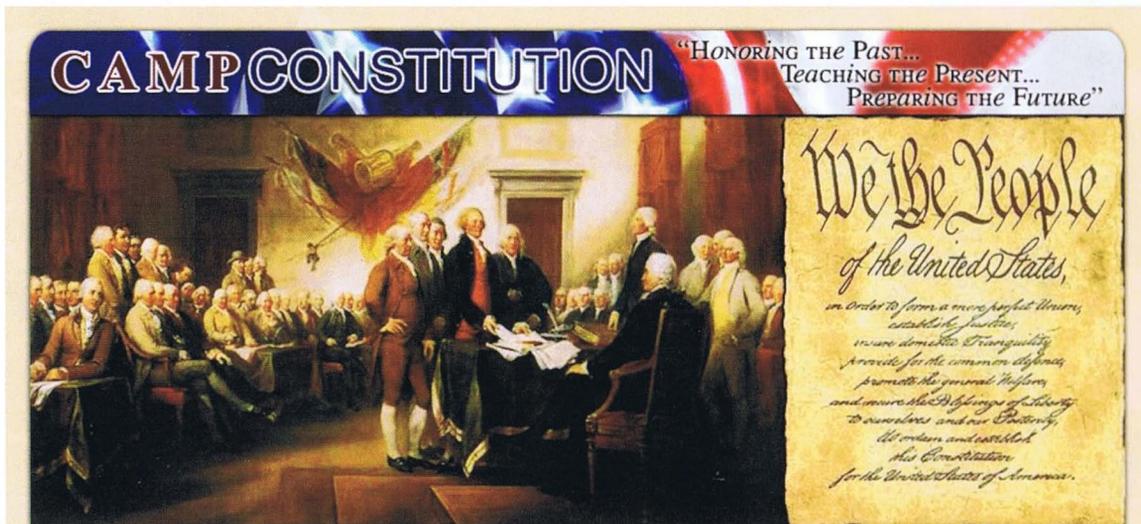
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Camp Constitution is an unincorporated association of Constitutionlists serving as volunteers to see that knowledge and blessings of liberty are passed on from generation to generation. Camp Constitution runs a week-long family summer camp program that is true to its motto "Honoring the Past... Teaching the Present... Preparing the Future..." The camp program includes classes on the U.S. Constitution, current events, and how to be a freedom activist.

Our instructors include authors, elected officials and experts in their fields. Camp attendees participate in field trips to historic sites like Lexington Battle Green and Concord Bridge and recreation activities which include swimming, hiking, volleyball, basketball, and rock climbing.

In addition to the summer camp program, Camp Constitution will be reprinting pamphlets and essays like "Republics and Democracies. The camp has channels on YouTube, Vimeo, Daily Motion and Metacafe that contain videos of classes, interviews, and other videos of importance. Please visit our web site campconstitution.net

Camp Constitution recommends visiting the camp book store AmericanistBookStore.com for many of the books we use at camp or written by our instructors.