

INSTRUCTIONS OF THE TOWN OF BOSTON TO ITS REPRESENTATIVES IN  
THE GENERAL COURT, THURSDAY, MAY 23, 1776.

"GENTLEMEN: At a time when, in all probability, the whole United Colonies of *America* are upon the verge of a glorious Revolution, and when, consequently, the most important questions that were ever agitated before the Representative body of this Colony, touching its internal police, will demand your attention, your constituents think it necessary to instruct you in several matters what part to act, that the path of your duty may be plain before you.

"We have seen the humble petitions of these Colonies to the King of *Great Britain* repeatedly rejected with disdain. For the prayer of peace, he has tendered the sword; for liberty, chains; and for safety, death. He has licensed the instruments of his hostile oppressions to rob us of our property, to burn our houses, and to spill our blood. He has invited every barbarous nation whom he could hope to influence, to assist him in prosecuting these inhuman purposes. The Prince, therefore, in support of whose Crown and dignity, not many years since, we would most cheerfully have expended life and fortune, we are now constrained to consider as the worst of tyrants. Loyalty to him is now treason to our country. We have seen his venal Parliament so basely prostituted to his designs, that they have never hesitated to enforce his arbitrary requisitions with the most sanguinary laws. We have seen the people of *Great Britain* so lost to every sense of virtue and honour, as to pass over the most pathetick and earnest appeals to their justice with an unfeeling indifference. The hopes we placed on their exertions have long since failed. In short, we are convinced that it is the fixed and settled determination of the King, Ministry, and Parliament of that Island, to conquer and subjugate the Colonies, and that the people there have no disposition to oppose them.

"A reconciliation with them appears to us to be as dangerous as it is absurd. A spirit of resentment once raised, it is not easy to appease. The recollection of past injuries will perpetually keep alive the flame of jealousy, which will stimulate to new impositions on the one side, and consequent resistance on the other; and the whole body-politick will be constantly subject to civil commotions. We therefore think it absolutely impracticable for these Colonies to be every again subject to or dependant upon *Great Britain*, without endangering the very existence of the state. Placing, however, unbounded confidence in the supreme councils of the Congress, we are determined to wait, most patiently to wait, till their wisdom shall dictate the necessity of making a Declaration of Independence. Nor should we have ventured to express our sentiments upon this subject, but from the presumption that the Congress would choose to feel themselves supported by the people of each Colony, before they adopt a resolution so interesting to the whole. The inhabitants of this town, therefore, unanimously instruct and direct you that, at the approaching session of the General Assembly, you use your endeavours that the Delegates of this Colony at the Congress be advised that, in case the Congress should think it necessary for the safety of the United Colonies to declare them independent of *Great Britain*, the inhabitants of this Colony, with their lives and the remnant of their fortunes, will cheerfully support them in the measure.

"Touching the internal policy of this Colony, it is essentially necessary, in order to preserve harmony among ourselves, that the constituent body be satisfied that they are fairly and fully represented. The right to legislate is originally in every member of the

community, which right is always exercised in the infancy of a state. But when the inhabitants are become numerous, it is not only inconvenient, but impracticable for all to meet in one assembly; and hence arose the necessity and practice of legislating by a few, freely chosen by the many. When this choice is free, and the representation equal, it is the people's fault if they are not happy. We therefore instruct you to devise some means to obtain an equal representation of the people of this Colony in the Legislature. But care should be taken that the Assembly be not unwieldy; for this would be an approach to the evil meant to be cured by representation. The largest bodies of men do not always despatch business with the greatest expedition, nor conduct it in the wisest manner.

"It is essential to liberty that the legislative, judicial, and executive powers of Government be, as nearly as possible, independent of, and separate from each other; for where they are united in the same person or number of persons, there would be wanting that mutual check which is the principal security against the making of arbitrary laws, and a wanton exercise of power in the execution of them. It is also of the highest importance that every person in a judiciary department employ the greatest part of his time and attention in the duties of his office. We therefore further instruct you to procure the enacting such law or laws as shall make it incompatible for the same person to hold a seat in the legislative and executive departments of Government at one and the same time; that shall render the Judges, in every judicatory through the Colony, dependant, not on the uncertain tenure of caprice or pleasure, but on an unimpeachable department in the important duties of their station, for their continuance in office; and to prevent the multiplicity of offices in the same person; that such salaries be settled upon them as will place them above the necessity of stooping to any indirect or collateral means for subsistence. We wish to avoid a profusion of the publick moneys on the one hand, and the danger of sacrificing our liberties to a spirit of parsimony on the other. Not doubting of your zeal and abilities in the common cause of our country, we leave your discretion to promote such exertions, in promoting any military operations, as the exigencies of our publick affairs may require. And in the same confidence of your fervour and attachment to the publick weal, we readily submit all other matters of publick moment, that may require your consideration, to your own wisdom and discretion."

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