

think every man has a right to examine as freely into the origin, spring and foundation of every power and measure in a commonwealth, as into a piece of curious machinery, or a remarkable phenomenon in nature; and that it ought to give no more offence to say, the parliament have erred, or are mistaken, in a matter of fact or of right, than to say it of a private man, if it is true of both. If the assertion can be proved with regard to either, it is a kindness done them to shew them the truth. With regard to the public, it is the duty of every good citizen to point out what he thinks erroneous in the commonwealth.

I have waited years in hopes to see some one friend of the colonies pleading in public for them. I have waited in vain. One privilege is taken away after another, and where we shall be landed, God knows, and I trust will protect and provide for us, even should we be driven and persecuted into a more western wilderness, on the score of liberty, civil and religious, as many of our ancestors were, to these once inhospitable shores of America. I had formed great expectations from a gentleman, who published his first volume in quarto, on the rights of the colonies two years since; but, as he foresaw, the state of his health and affairs have prevented his further progress. The misfortune is, gentlemen in America, the best qualified in every respect to state the rights of the colonists, have reasons that prevent them from engaging: Some of them have good ones. There are many infinitely better able to serve this cause than I pretend to be; but from indolence, from timidity, or by necessary engagements, they are prevented. There has been a most profound, and I think shameful silence, till it seems almost too late to assert our indisputable rights as men and as citizens. What must posterity think of us. The trade of the whole continent taxed by parliament, stamps and other internal duties and taxes as they are called, talked of, and not one petition to the King and parliament for relief.

I cannot but observe here, that if the parliament have an equitable right to tax our trade, 'tis indisputable that they have as good an one to tax the lands and every thing else. The taxing trade furnishes one reason why the other should be taxed, or else the burdens of the province will be unequally born, upon a supposition that a tax on trade is not a tax on the whole. But take it either way, there is

no foundation for the distinction some make in England, between an internal and an external tax on the colonies. By the first is meant a tax on trade, by the latter a tax on land, and the things on it. A tax on trade is either a tax of every man in the province, or 'tis not. If 'tis not a tax on the whole, 'tis unequal and unjust, that a heavy burden should be laid on the trade of the colonies, to maintain an army of soldiers, custom-house officers, and fleets of guard ships; all which, the incomes of both trade and land would not furnish means to support so lately as the last war, when all was at stake, and the colonies were reimbursed in part by parliament. How can it be supposed that all of a sudden the trade of the colonies alone can bear all this terrible burden. The late acquisitions in America, as glorious as they have been, and as beneficial as they are to Great Britain, are only a security to these colonies against the ravages of the French and Indians. Our trade upon the whole is not, I believe, benefited by them one groat. All the time the French Islands were in our hands, the fine sugars, &c. were all shipped home. None as I have been informed were allowed to be bro't to the colonies. They were too delicious a morsel for a North American palate. If it be said that a tax on the trade of the colonies is an equal and just tax on the whole of the inhabitants; What then becomes of the notable distinction between external and internal taxes? Why may not the parliament lay stamps, land taxes, establish tythes to the church of England, and so indefinitely. I know of no bounds. I do not mention the tythes out of any disrespect to the church of England, which I esteem by far the best *national* church, and to have had as ornaments of it many of the greatest and best men in the world. But to those colonies who in general dissent from a principle of conscience, it would seem a little hard to pay towards the support of a worship, whose modes they cannot conform to.

If an army must be kept up in America; at the expence of the colonies, it would not seem quite so hard if after the parliament had determined the sum to be raised, and apportioned it, to have allowed each colony to assess its quota, and raise it as easily to themselves as might be. But to have the whole levied and collected without our consent is extraordinary. 'Tis allowed, even to *tributaries*, and those
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