

(By HON. C. I. LANDIS)

"With singular regret and concern we are compelled to address you. The good order of the Borough and the very being of its government must depend on the wise and prudent deliberations of the Congress upon an incident of the most alarming nature which lately happened here. We beg leave to offer you a candid and faithful narrative of the facts on which your sentiments will be absolutely necessary.

On the 29th ulto. the late committee of this Borough met on a complaint made to them that a Company formed in Rapho and Manheim Townships had been insulted by a few persons. They thought proper on this application to express their abhorrence of such conduct, and wrote to the members of the Committee of those two Townships to appear at the next mustering of the Company, express their and our disapprobation of such improper proceedings and behavior, and conciliate harmony and friendship. We send you hereby a copy of our letter.

Just before the Committee broke up, they received a second application from two of the chief persons of the Mennonists, complaining that violence and threats had been used by some people to members of that society, because they did not form themselves into military associations, and that some of that religious persuasion had desisted from their usual work by reason thereof; that their members would cheerfully co-operate in the Common Cause except in such Acts as were repugnant to their consciences, and praying the protection of the Committee from any further outrage. We observed to those Appliers probably such conduct had partly arose from abusive or opprobrious language bestowed by some of their denomination against Bodies of people under arms and warmly pressed them to discontinue any such expressions; that while they looked to us for security, we should expect they would take an active part in prevention of future bickerings and animosities. They pledged themselves to the Committee for the performance of those duties, disclaimed such wanton and rude terms, and further went so far as to declare that they objected not to any of their society taking up arms, whose consciences were free in this particular. Upon mature deliberation, it was unanimously resolved by the committee that a number of Hand bills both in English and German (one of which we now inclose to you) should be struck off and dispersed through the county.

We flatter ourselves, Gentlemen, we need use no arguments in vindication of the measure adopted. Our most excellent Charter of Privileges in the very first paragraph was a plain directory for the conduct of the committee. "No one shall be molested or prejudiced because of his conscientious persuasion or practice, nor be compelled to do or suffer anything contrary to his religious persuasion." The act of 2 and 13 Gul. 3 confirmed a doctrine so highly agreeable to the spirit of Christianity. When one of the chief grounds of our opposition to the late arbitrary Statutes was the impious destruction of the Charter of Massachusetts Bay, could we sit tamely spectators of equal violence to our own countrymen? Or in the glorious struggle for Freedom, could we deny to others their liberty of conscience?

\* (Letter sent by the Committee of Safety in Lancaster to Continental Congress, June 1775.)

But whilst we thought it just and reasonable to discourage licentiousness, we judge it equally right and proper to guard and protect those reputable inhabitants, who nobly appeared in arms in defense of America from scoffs and insult. The bringing such imprudent persons to a proper sense of their misconduct evidently pointed to the Directions of the last Congress with respect to the violators of the Association.

We cheerfully submit the step we have taken to the Hon'ble Congress for their re-examination and opinion. Conscious of having discharged the duties of our fidelity and care, so far as our judgments or understandings directed us, we shall rest satisfied and contented with their determination.

On the afternoon of the 5th Instant when the five companies in this town were assembling, the printer called on a member of the committee with the hand bills. He said an officer had threatened to take them from out of his house with a body of men by force. In a few minutes after another officer came in, who informed the same member that the Companies were greatly dissatisfied with the committee's proceedings and would not muster if any people whatever were excused from bearing arms and associating. He was sincerely sorry for what had happened, and desired to know what could be done to remove the public discontent. The member proposed to him that these persons who excepted against the hand bill should meet together peaceably and appoint a dozen of their body to confer with the committee. If on such conference the committee were convinced of their error, or that the publication of the hand bill would injure the common cause, they would deem it honorable to recede, and perhaps on a free communication of sentiments all matters might be set right. The officer took his leave, having behaved throughout the whole interview with the greatest politeness and good manners.

Five minutes had not elapsed when one of the companies marched towards the Court House. When they had arrived thither, the commanding officer ordered them to halt, but the soldier cried out, "March on! March on!" The officer then left them and with their firelocks in their hands they called at the house of another of the committee, grossly insulted him and demanded that the hand bills should be delivered up to them. The member answered he had them not in his possession. He received for reply that the company would have them at all events. The first mentioned member then came up and avowed his having the papers. The Soldiers, who by this time were joined by many more, insisted repeatedly that they would have the hand bills. They were answered that they should not be delivered up to a body of armed men, who demanded them in that manner that if one of their officers required a copy, it would be delivered to him with pleasure. One of the officers came into the house, and having received a hand bill upon his request went out and delivered it to his men, who immediately affixed it to the whipping post, and then several—of the soldiers fired guns at and consumed it. By this time the town was in great ferment, and this commotion was increased by some persons who either wickedly or ignorantly took pains to mislead the people. No hand bills had been distributed by our committee and very few persons had seen any of them. The tumult after a time subsided somewhat, and the companies proceeded to their exercises, though they mustered but thinly. Some other violence happened on their return after being dismissed by their officers, but these things we hope to be spared the mortifying task of repeating. It gives us exceeding pain to be under the necessity of being thus far particular. Many threats were thrown out against the committee, that burning and some acts of outrage were apprehended. A second smaller party met before the same house where the soldiers had assembled about 10 o'clock at night and insulted the owner, and the door of his house was found tarred and feathered next morning. Yesterday we fondly hoped the popular clamour would have abated and Reason resumed her seat in the minds of many. We most ardently wished for this event, but we found on the most minute inquiry that it was in vain to bear up any longer against the torrent.

As we had unfortunately lost the public confidence and would no longer be useful as a committee, we judged it most eligible and prudent to resign the Trust delegated to us, and to request a new election. We accordingly met and after serious consideration signed a paper, which was affixed to the court house door, the copy of which follows:

"The members of the committee having taken into consideration their situation with respect to many of the inhabitants of the Borough of Lancaster and that their well-meant endeavors to serve the public interests have not proved satisfactory to divers people resident in the said borough, and that should they continue to act any longer as a committee their proceedings may be productive of dis-union and destroy that Peace and good order which they ardently wish to cultivate and maintain, do unanimously resign the trust formerly reposed in them by the worthy inhabitants of the Borough and decline serving as a committee for the future. And it is recommended to the inhabitants of the Borough that they proceed to the election of a new committee in their stead and room."

(Signed)

Edw. Shippen, Adam Simon Kuhn, J. Yeates, Will Atlee, William Bowman, Sebastian Graff, Chas Hall, Christian Voght, Cas. Shaffner, Adam Reigart, Eberhart Michael.

In consequence of the above advertisement we have the pleasure of informing you that a new committee of the Borough has been elected this afternoon. We flatter ourselves the minds of those inhabitants who have been so strongly irritated will now be made easy. Our chiefest views, gentlemen, in now addressing you are, by your salutary counsels, to prevent any future disturbance of the Peace of this opulent town, to strengthen and support the hands of the new committee, and to avoid misconstruction of our conduct. We profess ourselves warmly attached to the true interests of our country, but we deprecate the fatal consequences of public anarchy and confusion. We wish never to see the day when the patriotic spirit of our countrymen shall be the source of our greatest misfortune, when the vigor of government shall be relaxed, and the arms put into the hands of people shall be perverted to instruments of ruin. Your aid and weight in the Continental Congress we are confident will not be wanting in securing to each individual his liberty of conscience and in promoting peace, harmony and good order, so essentially necessary to the well being of the community.

We are, Gentlemen, with the greatest respect, your most obed't and very humble serv'ts.

EDW. SHIPPEN  
ADAM SIMON KUHN  
J. YEATES  
WILL ATLEE  
CHAS. HALL  
SEBASTIAN GRAFF  
CHRISTIAN VOGHT  
CAS. SHAFFNER  
ADAM REIGART  
EBERHART MICHAEL

Late members of the committee for the Borough of Lancaster.

The controversy which caused all the trouble was, under the management of the new committee, evidently satisfactorily solved. One of the old members, insulted by the mob, as above stated, may have been Mr. Yeates. It will be observed that, in the communication, care was taken not to mention the names of any of the parties involved. The high state of feeling arising out of the battle of Lexington gave rise no doubt to this dispute.