



THE
Pennsylvania
Magazine
OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

A British Spy in Philadelphia
1775-1777

AMONG the papers of Sir Henry Barkly, which are in the possession of Mrs. Mona MacMillan of Long Whittenham, Berkshire, England, are copies of a series of letters sent by his relative, Gilbert Barkly, from America to the government in London during the Revolution. These copies were contained in a memorial submitted by Barkly to the Treasury, claiming recompense for his wartime services and for expenditures incurred in performing them.

Little is known of Gilbert Barkly. He was born in Cromarty, Scotland, the son of Alexander Barkly, a "tacksman" (substantial farmer of good social status), and he is described in 1751 as a "merchant in Cromarty." Later, he emigrated to Philadelphia, and by 1763 had become a merchant of some substance—a letter of July 8 in that year refers to his "country house about five miles from the City."

Barkly's stay in Philadelphia was not an uninterrupted one. In 1773, he was in London, where the East India Company showed him favor by appointing him one of the consignees of its shipment of tea to Philadelphia. Barkly returned to America on the tea ship, which arrived at Chester on Christmas Day. Coming to Philadelphia, he

was confronted by a stern committee appointed by the citizens at a mass meeting held at the State House on October 18 to protest the "pernicious program of the East India Company" of exercising its monopoly right to send tea to America where it was subject to a duty.

To his consternation, Barkly learned how aroused the city was over the "detested tea," how dangerous the tea tax was to American liberties, and that all the other Philadelphia tea commissioners had given up their commissions. Poor Barkly had no recourse but to do the same, "expressing the particular hardship of his situation . . . in a manner which affected every one present."

Meanwhile, at another public meeting on December 27, it was resolved that the tea should not be unloaded but sent directly back to England. Evidently, the purpose of Barkly's return to Philadelphia was primarily to handle the sale of the tea, and when that purpose was frustrated, there was no reason to remain. Accordingly, on December 28, "Capt. Ayres of the tea ship *Polly*, with Mr. Barclay, late one of the consignees, left Arch-street wharf, on board a pilot boat (having been 46 hours in town) to follow the ship to Reedy Island, and from thence transport the East India Company's adventure to its Old Rotting Place, in Leaden-Hall street, London. They were attended to the wharf by a concourse of people, who wished them a good voyage."¹ At least Philadelphia had been spared the violence of the Boston Tea Party.

It seems that Barkly stayed in England for a time, watching the relations between the colonies and the mother country deteriorate. In January, 1775, he drew up a plan to conciliate the colonies. As he later informed John Dickinson, this plan "was the reason the first minister of the British Empire sent for me: when he asked my Oppinion, I gave it with freedom, and free of disguise, and after some conversation on the subject agreeable to the memdn. given by me to Mr. Willing,² he added that what ever engagements I came under after my arrival in America, he would take care to have them fulfilled."³

Unfortunately for Barkly, when he again set foot in Philadelphia in May, 1775, the battles of Lexington and Concord had been fought

¹ *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet*, Jan. 3, 1774.

² Thomas Willing (1731-1821).

³ Barkly to Dickinson, Oct. 12, 1775, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

and conciliation had become much more difficult to promote. Still, Barkly did his best, but as his efforts became less and less availing, his letters, all of which were written from Philadelphia and which were addressed to Grey Cooper at the Treasury,⁴ began to include more and more military intelligence. In short, from being a peace-maker, Barkly became a spy. Whether Lord North intended him to go that far cannot be known. In a memorial to General William Howe of November 10, 1776, Barkly indicated his mission to be an official one in that he "was ordered out to Philadelphia by Lord North in March 1775 with Orders to exert myself to bring about an accomodation, and to give intelgence of the Proceedings of the Congress etc."⁵ His reports as a whole are remarkable for their accuracy, particularly those parts which deal with American naval activity.

Barkly remained in Philadelphia until October 29, 1776, when he went to New York to give an intelligence report to General William Howe, who probably paid no attention to it. Back in Philadelphia after Howe had occupied the city late in 1777, Barkly called frequently at headquarters, but was not received. Finally, he wrote Howe that if the General had no need of his services he intended to return to England. Howe did not acknowledge this letter either, and Barkly sailed for London on the *Britannia* on December 12, 1777. From Antigua, where the *Britannia* put in for repairs, Barkly wrote a final letter in his series of reports, morosely commenting that "if general Howe is continued Commander in Chieff an end to the rebellion need not be expected."⁶

Whatever his services to the British government may have amounted to, Barkly seems to have been unsuccessful in obtaining what he considered his just reward. His original memorial of July 16, 1778, achieved nothing, and though in February, 1789, the Secretary to the Treasury, George Rose, recognized his services to the govern-

⁴ Grey Cooper was joint secretary to the Treasury under Rockingham, Chatham, Grafton, and North (1765-1782). He was highly esteemed as an administrator and as a financial expert; though appointed to office by Rockingham, he retained his position during successive administrations, and became Lord of the Treasury in the Fox-North Ministry of 1783. Barkly's letters were addressed to Cooper at Parliament Street, London.

⁵ The memorial was enclosed in a letter from Barkly to Grey Cooper, Nov. 30, 1776. See below, pages 34-37.

⁶ Barkly to Grey Cooper [?], Feb. 14, 1778. This final letter in the series has not been printed because its contents are largely a résumé of well-known events of the Revolution.

ment and promised future assistance, he regretted, for political reasons that are obscure, that nothing could be done at that time. As late as 1800, Barkly was still pressing his claim—by then he was suggesting that a pension of as little as £100 a year would satisfy him. There is no evidence that he ever obtained anything.⁷

University of St. Andrews

GEOFFREY SEED

LETTERS TO GREY COOPER

25th May 1775

Sir

I arrived in this City the 18th Curr, when to my surprize I found the inhabitants under Arms being inflamed at the attack made on the Provincials by the Kings troops nigh Boston;⁸ this is told with very agravating circumstances which meets with Credit; but as you must long ago have the true state of that affair, I decline saying any more on the Subject.

The day after my arrival I waited of my Friends (who are among the most respectable in the City). The conversation began with the critical Cituation of the times; I told them that the dignity of great Britain (in which Ammerica was concerned) was an Object of the first consequence, that the resolutions of Parliament of the 20th. of February⁹ was thrown out on purpose as a Basis for a general compact, in order to have a line drawn betwixt the mother Country and the Colonies respecting taxation etc. That the most speedy and prudent method for getting this much desired and consequential affair effectuated was by sending a respectable deputation home, by

⁷ In the following transcript of Barkly's letters, superscript letters have been brought to the line, the designation "Philadelphia" has been deleted from the heading, and the complimentary close and signature have been omitted.

⁸ Battles of Lexington and Concord, Apr. 19, 1775.

⁹ The Conciliatory Resolution which Lord North persuaded Parliament to adopt appeared to represent a real effort to find a basis for agreement. It provided for exemption from parliamentary taxation for revenue of any colony which made an adequate contribution, through its assembly, to imperial defense and to the support of civil and judicial officials in the colony; revenue raised within the colony from measures designed to regulate trade would be credited to it. The purpose of Lord North, however, became suspect among his opponents in Britain and in America. It was thought that he was trying to split the parliamentary opposition to the Ministry, and to create among the colonies divisions which would facilitate their subjugation.

appointment of the different assemblies, that those and none else could be heard: That the King and his Councils had not the most distant desire to enslave, nor distress the Ammericans, but that a Spirit of Licentiousness had run so high in some of the Northeren Provinces (who dared to do what no power in Europe durst attempt) that the Nation was inflamed at their Arrogance, which allone brought on it's resentment. That to my knowledge the minister had nothing more at heart than an honourable and speedy settlement of the Unhappy differences in which (I assured them) his aid might be depended on, when Constitutinally required, consistent with the honour and dignity of the Nation, and the trust reposed in him: that there was not the most distant prospect of a Change in Administration, and that if any of the members of the Congress rested the success of their cause on that event, they would find it distant and fruitless. I gave my Friends the Copy of a Plan by which the different Provinces might regulate the sums each of them Ought to pay, what effect it may have I know not.

Since writting the above I am told (with what truth I cannot say) that an offer is to be made of £150,000 to be payed yearly by the Provinces who have sent members to the Congress, but that, that sum is expected to be appropriated towards the payment of the National debt, I am likewise told that a respectable deputation, by Appointment of the different Assemblies will be sent home.

I find from the spirit of the people in general that they are not avers to be taxed by their own assemblies for a sum to be payed to great Britain; on the whole I have reason to assure you, that the deligates from the Northeren provinces to the Congress, has not such influence this year as they had last, by which it is expected the spirit of Licentiousness begins to Subside. Be assured Sir every effort my Judgment and prudence can suggest shall be made use of to bring about such offers from this Country as may be received with honour, and prove Consistant with the dignity of Britain to receive. . . .

30th May 1775

Sir

The above is a copy of my last. I have since dined with some members of the Congress wth whom I intend to Cultivate an intimacy; I find by them and the generality of the People that they

wou'd not adobt Lord Chatham's conciliatory plan,¹⁰ though it had been approved of by Parliament. The ship I came passenger with, landed me at Annapolus in Maryland (140 miles to the southward of this place). The people were universally allarmed, and with the greatest assiduity learning the military exercise and forming themselves into Companys, fixed and determined not to bear to be taxed by the Parliament of great Britain, but willing to Contribute by their own assemblies.

By every intelligence I can get Dr. Franklin keeps much on the reserve, and has not hitherto oppined in the maner that was expected; if he is not blinded by faction, he can be of more use to great Britain, and Ammerica, than any man in this Country.

I find by the spirit of the people in general that the non importation and Exportation resolutions will be strictly Observed: every effort in my power will be used to encourage the sending home a deputation to be chosen by the different assemblies. . . .

By the Packet Via New York
Sir

6th June 1775

Since my last 30th Ultimo, I have been in company with a member of the Congress whose fidelity I can depend on, and who heartely wishes to have the differences amicably settled: I urged the prudence of sending home a respectable deputation to be chosen by the different governors and assemblies, as the most acceptable method of treating with government for acomadating the unhappy differences: That it became them as the Children of the Parent Country to represent their grievances in the most constitutional and respectful

¹⁰ Chatham's plan was introduced into Parliament on Feb. 1, 1775, after a careful study of American attitudes and opinions. It was hoped that it would be acceptable in the colonies, but it was never properly put to the test since it was rejected by the House of Lords. The proposals stressed the rights of Parliament in imperial matters, and refuted a recent assertion that a standing army could not legally be maintained in time of peace in any colony without the consent of its legislature; but at the same time they attempted to meet some basic American demands. For example, no revenue tax was to be imposed on "British freemen in America" without the consent of the colonial assemblies. Moreover, the Continental Congress was to be recognized as a legal body, authorized to consider making a free grant of a perpetual revenue for the alleviation of the British national debt. Several acts of Parliament which were widely disliked in the colonies were to be repealed, including that which imposed the duty on tea, the Intolerable Acts, and the Quebec Act.

maner, and that I doubted not but the Acts complained of would be suspended, provided they were properly Represented as hurtful to trade and grievous to the People.

The reply made was, that the Colenests had not the most distant desire of being independent of Britain; that the severity of some Acts were such that the People were Universially alarmed and would not trust themselves home, for fear of being declared in rebellion, that the jealousy of the people was such, that they would not trust their liberty to the negotiation of any delegation, for fear of their being corrupted, at the same time, they earnestly wish that Commissioners was Appointed by the Crown and sent out to this Country, and that the different governors was ordered to call their Assemblies in order to Chuse members to treat with the Kings Commissioners: that this wou'd be the most speedy and effectual method for fixing a general Compact betwixt the mother Country and them; which might prove lasting and happy to both Sides: that the Provinces who have sent members to the Congress, and who are now Cemented together, expects not to be treated with seperately, as an attempt of the Kind would be productive of the worst Consequences, when at the same time a generous Oppeness must tend toward the lasting happyness of the whole; which above all things they ardently wish for.

Thus Sir I give you undisguisedly the sentiments of a gentleman of probity, and as far as I can discover what wou'd tend towards quieting the minds of the People, who are at present much agitated: nothing but military preparations going on among them, the Quackers not excepted. . . .

7th June 1775

Sir

On the other side you have a Copy of what I did myself the honour to write you by the Packet Via New York; but as some letters sent me by the April Packet from London has been intercepted, it is possible the one of which that is a Copy, may have met with the same fate, I therefore send this under cover to a Mercht. in the City, by an other Opportunity; who I have desired should deliver it himself. Nothing of Consequence has happened Since But that Major Skeen arrived passenger in a Ship from London last

night, and that himself and baggage are under arrest owing (it is said) to his being appointed governor of Crown point.¹¹

I verily beleive nothing will bring those unhappy differences to a happy period, but the Appointment of Commissioners from home, agreeable to what is mentioned in my last letter; and much good Sense temper and prudence will be found Necessary, particularly as much pains is taken by many on your side of the watter to keep the peoples mind's agitated: Carnage and destruction on this side, wou'd give them pleasure, in hopes of gaining their diabolical ends, of which I pray to god they may be disapointed.

There was a general review of the militia of this City this day when above 3000 were under arms,¹² with a train of Artilery etc, most of them people of property, among them there was some Companys of Quackers:¹³ this example (of the quackers) will have a great effect over all the Country people: it is my humble Oppinion Sir that the sooner balm is thrown into the wound, the sooner every thing agreeable will be brought to its happy Original state. If the wound is continued Oppen, the peoples mind's will get Corroded and prove ruinous to this Country and hurtful to the Parent State. The North-eren Provinces has now involved the Southeren Ones in the same predicament with themselves, which makes the affair extremely serious, and so determined are the people (this they declare) that were their towns to be battred down about their Ear's, they wou'd retire to the Country and support their liberty with their swords in their hand's.

¹¹ Maj. Philip Skene arrived in Philadelphia on the ship *Sally* from London on June 7. William Duane, ed., *Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall, 1774-1781* (Albany, N. Y., 1877), 29. He was at once arrested on the grounds that he had been appointed governor of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, that he was authorized to raise a regiment in America, that he was "a dangerous partizan of Administration and that his papers may contain intelligence of Ministerial designs against America, very important to be known." *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington, D. C., 1904-1937), II, 82. A few days later, Skene was released on parole and later sent under guard to Middletown, Conn., where he was to be confined on parole.

¹² Barkly overestimated the number of men under arms. Both the *Pennsylvanias Gazette*, June 14, 1775, and Christopher Marshall in his diary (p. 29) gave the number as "above" 2,000 men.

¹³ Participating in the review was the Quaker Light Infantry, or Quaker Blues, commanded by Capt. Joseph Cowperthwaite. This company was composed of Quakers or descendants of Quakers. J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *A History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884* (Philadelphia, 1884), I, 296; *Autobiography of Charles Biddle* (Philadelphia, 1883), 82.

This Sir I recone a duty incumbent on me to inform you of, and humbly to Suggest to you again, that Commissioners sent out, with a Proclamation, declaring the Kings pleasure, would be Productive of the best effects.

Since I began this letter, I'm told that on his passage from England Major Skeen told the Capt. of the ship and other's passengers, that he had a Commission to go to Cannada and to raise 5000 Cannadians to be brought against the Colonists: this is the reason given for making him Prisoner, all the letters, and papers, he had with him, are seized and broke Oppen, and among them (it is said) were some papers, declaring that he had Orders to go the length of £50,000 to bribe the members of the Congress: This you may be assured Sir meets with Universal Credit among the great body of the People, and will be improved upon, by those who are fond of fishing in troubled watters: as to myself I do not beleive any part of the story, tho' I beleive the Major has been imprudent. . . .

19th June 1775

Sir

Since my last 7th Currt. I had a visit from Mr. Dickinson¹⁴ (the Pennsylvania farmer) with whom I had been long acquainted. I told him my sentiments with freedom, respecting the steps that ought to be taken, in order to bring about a happy reconciliation, betwixt Britain and Ammerica, and particularly mentioned to him, the imprudence and absurdity of not offering payment for the Tea destroyed at Boston, that assuredly if that had been don, and proper Concessions made for that, and such other unprecedented steps as had been taken, the Port of Boston, wou'd have been Oppened long since; as the King had nothing so much at heart as the Prosperity and happyness of all his Subjects. He freely ouned to me, that his outmost Efforts in Conjunction with some others, had been used in the last Congress to bring that about as also the offer of a sum to be yearly payed to Britain for her protection, but that he and others who was of his Oppinion was overruled, and had nigh lost their Popelarity for going such lengths: That he and his friends's outmost

¹⁴ John Dickinson (1732-1808), whose *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvanias to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies* (1768) underlined colonial opposition to parliamentary taxation.

Efforts would still be used to bring about such offers, as might be recived by Britain with honour, and preserve that dignity to the Empire, it has hitherto preserved, in which they reconed themselves (as the Children of the mother Country) interested: That nothing could be more distant from their wishes than being disunited from Britain, that by being Connected with her, their greatest glory and happiness Consisted, but that they would be like Britain: free.

I mentioned to him the pervers spirit of the Northeren Provinces, and gave him it as my Oppinion, that were they able, and had an Oppertunity, they would give law's to the Other Provinces: He does not seem impresed with the best Oppinion of them, and assured me, that they meant to keep a watchful eye over them, though in their immediat situation they must support them.

By all I can learn Mr. Franklin is among those who are for moderation, and bringing about reconcilitary measur's, but as he is a deep designing man, it is not easy coming at his real intentions, but hitherto (my freinds tells me) he appears on the side of moderation: the Ammericans has a high Oppinion of his principals and penetration, by which means he will have great influence on their deliberations.

You may be assured Sir the minority on your side of the watter, has their Emisarys on this side, exerting themselves to keep the peoples minds inflamed, in order to prolong any accomodation, and to gain time, by which means and the stop put to trade, they expect the manufactorers and mercantle body, will get inflamed, and that this will force a Change in the Kings Councils and Administration, and am sorry to be Obliged to assure you Sir that they have already but too Much Success, the Contagion being spread, and the minds of the people greatly agitated, and from those expectations and persuasions, they expect to carry every thing before them. So Sanguine are they with regard to taking goods from Britain, that a Ship belonging to this Place arrived lately from Bristol, with Coals: the Committee obliged the Owner to order them to be thrown into the river, which was accordingly don, and woud not allow them to be sold tho' the Owner offered, that the produce of them should be appropriated for the use of the poor.

In order to dispel the Contagion and Oppen the eyes of the People, may I again take the Liberty to suggest, that a Royal Proclamation

from the King in Council declaring his Pleasure and Accompanied by Commissioners with powers to settle the differences, would in my Oppinion (and it is also the Oppinion of my friends) have the best effects, and disapoint those incendrys who has not the prosperity nor happyness of the King and his subjects at heart, and I beg it may not be taken as presumption in me to add, that among the Commissioners there should be members of whos integrity the Ammericans have a good Oppinion, which would help to Convince them of the Kings intention, and royal goodness.

I understand that the Congress has resolved that 1000 rifle men should be raised immediatly and the Command given to Colonel Washington, they also speak of stricking two millions of dollars in paper money: A Petition is preparing to be presented to His Majesty: Colonel Washington marches the end of this week for New England, and it is said is to be escorted from Provence, to Provence, by the troop of light horse (belonging to each provence): Colonel Lee¹⁵ is at this place and acted the general, the day the City militia was reviewed, but I do not find that he is much in the good graces of the People: Major Skeen is Out on his parole not to go above five miles from the City: I'm this moment told that some transports with troops are arrived at sandy hook (the entery to New York) and that orders were waiting them to proceed for Boston, which they did immediatly. . . .

1st July 1775

Under cover to Wm. Strachan Esqr.¹⁶ Via Liverpool:

Sir

Since my last 19th June I understand the assemblie of this Provence has resolved to Raise, and put into imediate pay 4500 men, and this Example I doubt not will be folowed by the other provences; notwithstanding of this, I have it from the best authority, that the Superior number of the Congress are for Concieliatory measurs, you will be able to frame some Judgement of the fermint the people ar kept in, by the news papers here with Sent. . . .

¹⁵ Charles Lee, formerly of the British army, afterward promoted to major general in the Continental Army; subsequently court-martialed and dismissed from the service.

¹⁶ William Strahan (1715-1785), eminent printer and friend of Benjamin Franklin's.

17th July 1775

Sir

I was in the Country when the ship by which Mr. Penn went passenger to England sailed which is the reason for not doing myself the honour of writting you, and inclosing the Pamphlets here with sent, they confirm the inteligence, I did myself the honour of giving you since my arrival in this Country: The Clergy of all denominations has catched the flame which you will see by the inclosed sermon, which in my Oppinnion is worth your reading as it will in some degree explain the plan the people adopts. I find the Congress has sent by Mr. Penn a Petition¹⁷ to be presented to his Majesty, wherein I understand they Humbly Pray his Majesty to direct a mode by which the United Application of his faithful Colonists, may be improved into a happy and permanent reconciliation, being willing to treat on such terms as can alone render an accomodation lasting.

I took the liberty in my letters 25th and 30th of May to mention that I understood from the spirit of the generality of the people that they would not be averse to be taxed by their own assemblies for a sum to be payed yearly to the Crown for their protection etc. I am still of the same Oppinnion, provided that a Cessation of hostiliteys should immedeatly take place, and that Commissioners was sent over with full powers to settle the differences, and as it is (in my humble Oppinnion) absolutely necessary for the quiet, and happyness of the great whole, that a permanent line betwixt Britain, and Ammerica should be proposed by them, I take the liberty again to mention the land tax¹⁸ of England as the most rational Basis for such a line: the Colonists by that rule will only pay their proportion agreeable to the Exigencie of the times, and it will bring them in (as it ought to do) sharers of your glory and prosperity, and by it be prompted towards

¹⁷ This petition, the "Olive Branch Petition," was drafted largely by Dickinson and was moderate and conciliatory in tone. It was given to Richard Penn to take to Britain. Penn sailed from Philadelphia on July 12, and delivered the petition to the Secretary of State, Lord Dartmouth, on Aug. 26.

¹⁸ The English Land Tax was a complex arrangement by which taxation was imposed both on real and on personal property, but in practice almost wholly on real property. The tax collected from each locality was based on an annual assessment (quota), and this was at least as important as the actual rate (normally 4s. in the £). Barkly's idea seems to have been that each colony's quota, subdivided among counties by local agencies, could be varied according to the needs of the time and, presumably, according to concepts of justice and expediency.

your Support in case of adversity: I beg Sir I may not be reconed officious for the liberty I take, as I sincerely declare it springs from a heart who ardently wishes for the prosperity and happyness of the whole Empire: and as I am sensible His Majesty wishes for nothing so much as the lasting happiness and prosperity of all his Subjects; and as the Contest is now become extremely serious, I am prompted again to wish that His Majesty would order all his governers to call their assemblies to chuse deligates to treat with the Commissioners, which I have reason to beleive, would bring every thing to a happy period, and make the Empire once more the glory and envy of all the world. I am acquainted with several members of the Congress, who I doubt not would be chosen by the Assemblies to treat with the Kings Commissioners, on those weighty affairs, and I take the liberty to assure you, that to my knowledge the Outmost bent of their wishes is to have the differences Amacably settled, and were the Kings Commissioners and them once happily met, the best fruits might be expected from their deliberations: whereas if the differances continue Open, Victory on either side will only gall the wound, and add misfortune, to misfortune, and in the end prove a Victory to the Enemy's of the Empire, which I most fervently pray god allmighty may avirt.

I was this day in company with a gentleman returned from a toure of 150 miles back from this City, he says they have raised 800 rifle men in this Provence, who have proceeded for New England, that Marryland and Virginia are raising their proportions, and that to his knowledge there are men among them, who will promise to kill a man at the distance of 260 yards; and the generality of them without a rest, at the distance of 160 yards: the Encouragement given, is three pounds, enterance money, and fifty shillings a month pay, this provence Currancy, which is equal to one shilling Stg a day: this gentleman adds, that all the townships over the Country are regimented and officered, chosen by vote among themselves: that they give implicit faith to all they read in the Ammerican News papers and that the spirit among them (if possible) exceeds Enthiasm. Those rifle men are robust strong felows, brought up to hunting from their infancy, and enured to hardship's by lying in the woods without cover: they are dressed in the Indian fashion, and armed with a rifle gun, tomahawk, scalping knife etc. There is Orders

given at the different Iron forges in the Country for Casting Cannon etc. and gunsmiths in town and Country are busseyed in making muskets etc, so that the preperations amaking is beyond Credibility, in such a new Country; they are also making brass field pieces. . . .

22 July 1775

Sir

The ship by which I did myself the honour to write you the 17th Currt did not sail so soon as was Expected, nothing of consequence has happened since, the inclosed newspapers will show you in some degree, the sittouation of affairs. . . .

5th August 1775

Sir

Nothing of consequence has happened since my last 22d Ultimo of which the foregoing are Coppys: the Congress has Adjourned till the 5th of September: I understand both armys are strongly intrenched, and it is generally thought there will be no further fighting till the Success of the Petition to his Majesty is knowen: the inclosed news papers, will show what is adoin to which I take the liberty to refer. . . .

10th August 1774 [1775]

Sir

I did myself the honour to write you the 5th Currt. under cover to Mr. Strachan it is said and meets with Credit, that the governor of Hispaniola has offered to assist the Colonists with twenty frigates, and 2000 men, as also any quantity of gunpouder etc they may require: whether it was from the French, or Dutch, Islands, it was brought I cannot say, but it is certain a quantity of gunpouder was lately brought in to this place, and more is expected:¹⁹ The assistance of ships and men, I understand has been refused, but I doubt not but military stores will be acceptable. A million of dollars additional to the two millions I wrote of formerly, is to be struck in paper money,

¹⁹ On July 25, Christopher Marshall noted that a ship from Hispaniola had landed about 130 casks of gunpowder—seven tons—which were given into the care of the Committee of Safety. *Diary of Christopher Marshall*, 33.

which will pass Curr. from the spirit the people are in at present; By every intelligence I can get the Provincial troops are determind to keep on the defensive, during the present Campigne (I flatter myself) in expectation of getting affairs accomodated. I took the liberty Sir in my letter 17th ultimo of giving you a true acct. of the sittuation of this Country, to which I have only to add that they continue going on in their warlike preperations: Should government think it right to send out an additional number of troops and ships of war, I tremble at the Consequences, for dreadful must be the Carnage, which undoubtedly would ensue: I beg I may not be understood Sir to suggest that government, should give way to Arrogance nor the Art used by the incendrys on both sides of the watter, assuredly they will exert themselves to widen the breach, and continue the differences, for by that means only do they expect to carry their diabolical ends, without the least expectation or desire of serving their King and Country, and at the Certain risque of the lives, fortunes, and destruction of this great Country: Firmness in government is absolutely necessary; at the same time if a method could be fallen upon to undeceive the people (who's minds are continued inflamed by falsehoods) it would have a happy Effect, and I humbly apprehend a generous Proclamation from the King in Council, distributed over the Country would be the most certain and effectual mode that could be adopted, for let me assure you Sir that many of the great body of the people are well affected to the King, and their greatest pride consists in their being a branch of the British Empire: they are falsely made beleive that you mean nothing for them but slavery, and this allone makes them desperate. I am well acquaint and esteemed among the people, and every effort my Judgement can Suggest shall be used to bring about a happy reconciliation, mean time I wish to be corected if I act, unworthy of the trust reposed in me. . . .

5th September 1775

Sir

Since my last 10th. Ultimo, a large Schooner with Arms, and military stores is taken by a man of war in the river delaware, with which she has proceeded to Boston; a Small Vessel with Ten ton's of gunpouder came up the river the night before the schooner was taken

whether it was part of her cargo or not I cannot say, but I am told the powder is marked with the French kings mark:²⁰ this confirms me in the Certainty of what I wrote in my letter 10th. Ultimo, and should the unhappy differences continue, a watchful eye must be kept on the Ports of that Perfidious Nation, who's professions of friendship cannot be depended on, nor are the dutch, or hardly any other Nation, when intrest prompts their Subjects to adventure.

Five members has lately arrived from Georgia to attend the Congress, so that that Provence has joined the Others:²¹ Emisary's has been sent by the Congress among the Indians with large presents, and promises of Support, and protection, and it is said, the emisarys has been Successful, and procured their assurances to continue neutral, and if necessary to side with them.²²

The Congress bills of credit has begun to Circulate and are taken without scruple, they run in the folowing words: This bill entitles the bearer to recive twenty spanish milled dollars or the Value thereof in gold or Silver, according to the resolution of the Congress held at Philadelphia the 10th May 1775

Signed Saml. Morris

Signed Thos. Barton Junr.

they are for larger, and smaller sums, and quantities of them are sent to the different Provinces where I have no doubt they will pass Currant. Should the Wisdom of the Nation adopt the mode of sending out Commissioners, with powers to settle the differences, from the general acquaintance I have of the principal people, I flatter myself I can be of use, as they wou'd Oppen their minds to me with more freedom than they wou'd to strangers, and be assured Sir I will

²⁰ At this time, His Majesty's sloop of war *Nautilus*, Capt. John Collins, was lying off New Castle, below Philadelphia. Evidently, more than one small vessel carrying powder from Santo Domingo escaped her by flying French colors. William Bell Clark, *Captain Dauntless. The Story of Nicholas Biddle of the Continental Navy* (Baton Rouge, La., 1949), 75.

²¹ With the gathering of Congress, three Georgia delegates—John Houstoun, Archibald Bulloch, and the Rev. John J. Zubly—arrived in Philadelphia on the brig *Georgia* on Aug. 10, 1775. *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 16, 1775; *Diary of Christopher Marshall*, 37. The other two delegates were Noble Wymerly Jones and Dr. Lyman Hall.

²² The Continental Congress had an active concern for the Indian problem. On July 12, 1775, it resolved to establish three Indian departments with commissioners empowered to treat on behalf of the colonies to preserve the peace and friendship of the Indians and to maintain their neutrality. *Journals of the Continental Congress*, II, 174-175. Samuel Kirkland, for example, was employed among the Six Nations to promote the neutrality of these tribes. *Ibid.*, 187. Presents and speeches were sent to the Indians, and treaties were conducted.

exert myself to do honour to your recomondation, and happy wou'd it make me, could I in any degree be the means of cementing both country's. I find by the spirit of the People that a final stop will be put to trade the 10th of this month. . . .²³

11th September 1775

Sir

Since my last 5th Currt. I am credibly informed, that a large French ship called at the Cape's of Delaware river, she had 60 French and 20 English men on board with 4000 Stand of arms and other military stores on board, she was from the Island of Huspaniola, but being told that a man of war was hourly expected into the river, she proseded to the Northerd, since which I have heard nothing further of her.

The delegates from the different Provinces has arrived in this City, but nothing of their deliberations has yet transpired: military preperations still go's on with unceasing dilligence and as great numbers of laboring people will be unemployed when trade is stopt, in order to hinder them from murmering, those that are poor are to be employed as soldiers etc. Twenty New row gallys, some to carry one, and others to carry two 18 pounders in their prows and Small arms with from 50 to 80 men each, are abuilding for the defence of the City, and other Preperations are a making to shoalen the watter in the river to such a degree, that Kings Ships cannot get nigh it:²⁴ in short every mode they can Suggest to make a lasting defence is adopted, and I Verily believe should the Nation Adopt the mode of forcing them to obedience by force of Arms, the dispute will be lasting, and dreadful must be the Carnage which would Ensue. On the other hand should government adopt the more effectual and pleasing mode of sending out some Noble men and gentlemen of knowen experience, prudence and temper, I have not the least doubt, but the differences would be settled, with honour and dignity to the

²³ By the provisions of the Association of the First Continental Congress (Oct. 20, 1774), the exportation of goods to Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies was to cease on Sept. 10, 1775, unless certain acts of Parliament had by then been repealed.

²⁴ To defend Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Assembly had contracted for thirteen row galleys (not twenty), each about fifty feet long, and had begun to rearm the old fort on Mud Island and to obstruct the channel of the Delaware River south of the city with sharpened logs sunk in the French style of chevaux de frise. Clark, *Captain Dauntless*, 76.

Nation, and a line drawn by which means the affections of the people may be gained and Peace and lasting happiness again take place: if this method should be adopted (and I pray to god it may) as this is the most Central place for the Commissioners to come to, it will be Right to give me timely Nottice and directions to procure and fix apartments for them in order to have them in readiness against their arrival.

Mr Franklin I find to be a daring artful insinuating incendary: The doctrine he Preaches privately is, that if Ammerica can hold out for two years, they may have any term's they require: that the stocks will be greatly affected, the manufactories made desperate, the west India Planters be ruined, and of course great Bankruptcies happen among the marcantile body: that France and Spain, will take advantage of those distractions, which must bring a Change in the Kings Councils and Administration etc etc. I doubt not but he, with some of the Northeren delegates, do gladly wish to grasp at independence, but from what I know of the spirit of the great body of the people and many members of the Congress, they would oppose this with their lives and fortune's and indeed some of them heartely wish that an agreeable mode of accomodation was speedily proposed, in order to avoid such a dangerous Consequence. I'm Obliged to use the greatest precaution in foruarding my letters, for fear of being discovered: this I send by Capt. Murry²⁵ Via Ireland, he is to put it into the Post Office upon his arrival: he is extremely well acquaint with the whole Coast of Ammerica and as he goes to London after dischargeing his Cargo in Ireland, I'le give him a few lines for you, in case there might be Occation for a man of his knowledge of the Coast to which I have only to add that he is an honest man who may be depended on. . . .

11th Sept 1775

Sir

This will be delivered by Capt Murry, who I mention in a Packet of this date sent by him Via Ireland he is extremely well acquainted on the whole Coast of this Country, should government have occasion to employ such a person, I know not a man of more fidelity and Vigelance and as such a person I take the liberty to recommend him.

²⁵ Capt. D. Murray of the brig *Betsy*, bound to Dublin. *Pennsylvania Journal*, Sept. 13, 1775.

A Final stop is now put to trade, and most gloomy and melancholy does every person appear, I expect no opportunity now but the Packet to write by. . . .

16th September 1775

Sir

I find Capt. Murry has not left this City yet, tho' he was obliged to dispatch his Vessel down the river before the 10th Curr: I have since procured a Copy of two letters wrote from hence by John Adams (one of the Boston deligates to the Congress) one to his wife and the other to Colonel Warren,²⁶ it seems they were intercepted by general gage, and tho' no doubt but he has sent them home, yet they are of such a Nature, that I cannot Omit inclosing Coppys of them, much pains has been taken to suppress them, nor dare the Printers in this City print them, nor indeed any thing that is not approved of by the Congress, however I shall be at pains to spread Coppys of them, not only through this, but the other Provinces, in order to open the eyes of the people who has been so long deluded by those diabolical Donquixots: the piddling genius he so much complain's of, is Mr. Dickinson, with whom I am intimate, and who to my knowledge is a man of sense and moderation, and wishes above all things to have the differences amicably settled, of this I wrote formerly.²⁷

If those letters when published in England doe's not convince the people of the designes of the New Englanders I know not what will do it.

I am told Colonel Washington was appointed to the Chief command of the New England troops on purpose to be a check on their designes: this I have from good Authority. Adams has not arrived yet from New England to attend the Congress, I will in my next give you nottice of his reception, and of the effect those letters will have on the People who (if I can beleave the general Voice) would risque their lives and fortune against those diabolical designs. Capt.

²⁶ James Warren (1726–1808), paymaster general of the Continental Army.

²⁷ The letters were intercepted in Rhode Island and widely publicized both in America and in Britain. In them Adams attacked those who wanted conciliation, and revealed that he was actively working for independence, thereby causing a hardening of opinion in Britain against the demands of the colonies, alarming moderate opinion in America, and creating deep resentment among conciliationists (including Dickinson), whom Adams had described in terms of contempt.

Falconer²⁸ is arrived from London, but brought me no letters, I long to know if the letters I wrote from time to time is arrived safe: nothing of Consequence has yet transpired from the Congress. . . .

5th October 1779 [1775]

Sir

I did myself the honour to write you the 16th. Ultimo by Capt. Murry, Adams has since arrived to attend the Congress, and I'm told met with a Very cool reception from many of the members. The Quackers and many others look on him, and all other's of his way of thinking, as the greatest enemys of this Country, of which they and others gave a prooff on monday last at the Choosing assembly men for this County, when they appointed a man of temper and good sense in place of one Thomson²⁹ (secretary to the Congress) a hot headed Creature of Franklens.

I'm affraid the Crown will find it necessary to order an armed force to this place in order to suport the friends of government etc. Should this be adopted and a Proclamation Published specifying the designes of the Crown, and the Kings Standard hoisted, I am of Oppinion Such Numbers would assosiate and join it, as would Crush those who carry every thing before them at present: a motion was made in the Congress to turn every person out of the Provence who are not of their way of thinking, but upon mature Consideration it was given up, at the same time those who don't think as they do are maltreated and insulted.

A number of New Englanders who Claim lands on the back parts of this Provence went lately with an armed force to disposses others who has settled on those lands.³⁰ The new Settlers attackted the others and killed seven, and took about sixty prisoners: great pains is taken to keep this secret, for fear of alarming the people, and ocation-

²⁸ Capt. Nathaniel Falconer of the *Mary & Elizabeth* from London.

²⁹ Charles Thomson was chosen secretary to the Continental Congress to the great annoyance of many conservatives, for he was regarded as a man of extreme radical opinions. He remained secretary to Congress throughout its existence.

³⁰ The Wyoming Valley was a source of bitter contention between Pennsylvania and Connecticut until the claim of Pennsylvania to the region was recognized in December, 1782, by a court of adjudication set up by Congress.

ing a disunion; at the same time it is a demonstrable proof of what those daring Scoundrels would do if they were able. The present Donquixot Expedition against Cannada was carryed in the Congress, by a very small Superiority of votes. The great designe of this expedition is in expectation of geting possision of the Kings military stores.³¹ I doubt not but general Carlton will make them remember the daringness of the attempt.³² I mentioned to you, in a former letter, the assiduity with which military preperation was Carryng on in this City. I have procured a plan of the Chavaux de Frise fence, they have Partly sunk in the river to shoalen the watter in order to hinder large ships from geting up to the City, and I have engaged a man of probity, who assures me he can take them up, should he be protected, and that government should recone it necessary: the Plan is inclosed to which I refere: we have not had a Kings ship in this river for some time past; what this neglect may be Owing to I cannot say, Tho' I'm of Oppinnion it cannot be too closely guarded nor can those entrusted with the Command be too Vigilant. The disguise Mr Franklin put on for some time after his arrival, is in a great degree throwen off, he appears now openly for independancy, and I believe has all along in his heart been of those principals, but he artefully at the begining lead the people such lengths that he knows now that they cannot retract: as this is the Center of all the Collonies, and the fountain from whence they are in a great degree suplied, in military stores, money, and provisions etc, I am much of Oppinnion an Armiment of respect sent to this place, would soon bring the Other Colonies to their Senses. Very little support can be expected from the southeren Provinces, they have enough ado as it is to gaurd themselves against their Slaves.

This goes by an English gentleman (Mr. Weir) who has been some time in this Country and has been much among the people; I refere in some degree to the Accounts he can give, and as he is to be put on shore at Falmouth, and has promised to deliver this letter out of his own hand I could wish his expences from Falmouth to London was

³¹ Many members of Congress opposed the projected Canadian campaign through fear that it would render a reconciliation with Britain more difficult, and the invasion, which ended disastrously for the Americans, was undertaken only after considerable hesitation.

³² Sir Guy Carleton, British commander in Canada, badly defeated the American forces at Quebec. In 1782, he succeeded Sir Henry Clinton as commander in chief of the British forces in America.

payed him: was my writting this letter discovered, my punishment wou'd be much worse than death: I have inclosed one of our News papers. . . .

Sent Express to New York by Capt. 30th November 1775
Davidson to be foruarrdd. by
Governor Tryon per the Packet
Sir

The above is the Copy of the letter I foruarded by Mr. Weir. The Ship with which he went passenger, went down the river, and he was to go doun by land to Chester, from whence he was to go onboard, he proceeded accordingly, and arrived at Chester late, that night, and next morning, at day light, a party of rebel light horse surrounded the House where he lodged,³³ but happily he suspected their designe, and gave my Packet to a man who slept in the same room with him, and told him that his, and my life, depended on its safety. This man got away with it, but I was obliged to pay him two hundred guineas as hush money with the promise of further gratuitys, when affairs was settled, this has saved me, otherwise my Packet would have been delivered to the Congress, and in all probability my life would have suffered, and my family ruined: as Mr. Weir went home with the Vessell, I suppose he wou'd wait of you, and give you nottice of what happened. . . .

2d December 1775

Sir

As the Post Office is now entirely under the direction of the Congress and all letters Oppned and read by a Comittee appointed for that purpose, the outmost precaution is Necessary to keep my Intelligence from hence, from their knowledge, this and the importnce of the discovery I have made, Urged me to Apply to a man of who's fidelity I have the best Oppinnion, to go Express with this by the Packet from New York.

³³ On Oct. 6, members of the Committee of Safety had intercepted letters—"base and cruel invectives against the liberties of America"—from the brig *Black Prince* at Chester. The next day, on suspicion that she was carrying "inimical" letters, some committee members were sent to apprehend the snow *Patty*, bound for London, and to examine and remove all suspected mail and all suspected persons. *Diary of Christopher Marshall*, 45, 46.

Tuo Ships, one, to carry thirty four guns, and the other thirty, with tuo briganteens to mount sixteen guns each, are fitting out at this Port with great diligence, the whole of them Extream fast sailing Vessels:³⁴ My outmost Efforts have been used to find out their destination which with much dificulty I have Effectuated by the force of money.

They are to proceed to the Island of Acention, and Cruize betuixt it and the Island of St Helena for the homeward bound East India ships, which they are to take and carry into the most Convenient Ports they can get to in this Country; the great Object of this Expedition is in order to get possession of the salt petre generally brought home by them, with the assistance of which their own mills can make any quantity of gun powder they require; this discovery Sir I recone an object of the first magnitude, particularly as I flatter myself, it will arrive time enough for dispatching men of war to frustrate such an Arrogant designe.

It is Very extraordinary that there has been no kings ships in this river for above three months past, many Vessells from hence are applying at foreign Ports for gun powder and arms etc: I understand from some who arrived lately from St. Ustatia, that there was none to be got at any price in that Island, nor can I learn of any got from the French Islands of late, which has mightely damped their sanguin expectations.

There is 20000 barrels of flower just now ashiping off by order, and for account and risque of the Congress, to go ahunting to different Ports for gunpowder, and Arm's etc: the places of their destination, I cannot learn, nor do I beleive they are yet fixed on, however if Cruizers are appointed on this Coast early in the Spring, it will be deficult for them to get into Port.

The Northeren Assemblies are making Acts to encourage the fitting out Privateers and assuredly if they can only get gun powder, (as they are making Cannon and ball), those Vermin will prove troublesome. I understand there was proposals made in the Congress (before the last reinforcement of troops arrived at Boston) to attempt to take the Town by storm, but this was greatly objected to by Adams, and the other Northeren delegates: no doubt being sensible

³⁴ These vessels were converted merchantmen. The ships were the *Alfred*, 30 guns, and the *Columbus*, 28 guns; the brigs were the *Andrew Doria* and the *Cabot*.

of the Carnage that would be made among their Country men, which would damp the ardour of the survivors.

The great object they had in view by the Expedition to Cannada is the expectation of getting Possession of the Kings military stores, of which I flatter myself they will be frustrated, gunpowder above all things is the article they are most in want of, and if they are deprived in Supply's of that article, their great boastings will soon be at an end: much is expected from the Success of the Expedition I have mentioned, and in order to give it the Apperance of making a just Reprisall, they are gathering an account of the Value of the Howses, burnt at Charles town by the King's troops, and others destroyed by the Kings ships, as also the Value of the Vessells Caryed into Boston etc, by the men of war: this is adoin by express orders from the Congress.

I am still of Oppinion if a powful army, and some men of war, was sent to this place in the Spring and a Royal Proclamation published, with the promise of Pardon to those who would Join the Kings standard, that it wou'd have the best Effects: Should this happen they would disperss the Congress, and thousands of those who are at present in Army, would join the Kings forces.

I doubt not but the Vessells I have mentioned, will sail in less than a month from this date as the utmost dilligence is used in fitting them out. . . .

3d December Since I finished my letter I am informed that a twenty gun Ship from Road Island is to join those fitting out at this place:³⁵ 500 Sea men are also coming from the Northeren Provinces to man those Ships, and one million of dollars is to be struck for the avowed support of a Navy, in short they are so daring in their designes, that unless great Britain exerts her self to strick an Effectual Stroke, and that Speedely, the Consequence may prove fatal: many of the People do's not like the new paper money, and would willingly refuse it, but they dare not do it.

It is thought that some of the ships who have sailed, and others who are ready to sail with Flowr, are intended for France, and Spain,

³⁵ The armed sloop *Katy*, which sailed into port on Dec. 5, 1775, and was rechristened the *Providence*. Clark, *Captain Dauntless*, 88.

in order to procure gunpouder and Arms, and I'm told some Vessells, are gone to Denmark, and Sueden, on the same designe, in short every Effort they can think of is made use of to get provided in those Articles.

Should the wisdom of the Nation think it right to send a respectable Army to this place, I would willingly Supply them with Provisions on the same Conditions the Contractars doe's in Cannada and Nova Scotia, should this prove agreable Mr. Ross of Austin Friars, with some other Freind he may find will be my security, may I beg your good offices to procure this for me. . . .

2d Decemr 1775

Sir

My necessary disbursments on account of government, in which I have been supported by some of my freinds, Obliges me to acquaint you, that I payed One hundered guinea's for the Plann and sending the depth of the river inclosed in my letter 5th October, and tuo hundered guineas to buy off the man to whom Mr Weir entrusted the Packet, which inclosed it, and which was so nigh bringing on my destruction. I have also payed tuo thousand guineas for discovering the destination of the armament fitting out at this place: This no doubt, will be reconed a high reward but double the sum was required, and the affair is of such a Nature, that I durst not put it off for an other Packet; I have also given the Express Capt. John Davidson, money and bills to the ammount of One hundered guineas, for his Expence and trouble; and as he has been for some time in this place, I refere in some degree to the accounts he can give, at the same time he nor any person else is not made acquaint with the Contents of the despatches he brings, and as Mr Davidson is a man that may be depended on I wish him to return with such Orders for me as you may recone Necessary. I have been Obliged to draw bills on my freind William Ross Esqr. of Austin Friars for the amount of the money above mentioned, and I have wrote a few lines under his cover, and desired him to wait of you with it, Requesting the favour of you to put him in Cash to enable him to take up my bills, which I flatter myself will be done, indeed it is my Oppinion the East India Cy ought to pay the tuo thousand guineas, but that is a matter that

does not belong to me to mention: you may be assured Sir I will continue Vigelant to execute with fidelity the trust reposed in me, and that I will not hesitate at Expence or hazard to procure you every intelligence I possibly can, at the same time, I must remark to you Sir, that the command of money is Necessary: I beg care may be taken, that the person from whom you have your Intelligence be kept a profound secret, as much pains is taken by emisarys employed by the Congress to procure intelligence, and indeed they arrogantly give out, that they have procured Coppys of letters of intelligence, sent to your board, which I cannot give credit to. I intend to write Governor Tryon³⁶ of New York by Mr. Davidson requesting, he should dispatch the Packet, as delays may prove dangerous, of this I flatter myself you will approve. Since writting the above Mr. Davidson has been with me, he now declines going to England with the Packet, but I have engaged him to go to New York, and to deliver my Packet to governor Tryon, who I have no doubt will forward it speedily. This makes the Charge less than I expected agst. government, I cannot at present say how much he will Charge for going to New York, I could wish to have a letter from you in order to know if the part I act be agreeable, governor Tryon would get a letter sent me with safety. . . .

per Express to New York
Sir

10th January 1776

The two ships and tuo briganteens I mentioned in my last fell down the river the 4th Currt.³⁷ the ships has 250 men including marine's each of them, and the Briganteens 100 men each, they are Joined by a sloop of 12 guns from New England,³⁸ there is also a Briganteen, and a Sloop fitted out at Baltimore in Marry land which Joins them before they leave this river:³⁹ the reason (no doubt) for their shiping such a great number of men, is that they intend to board their antaganists sword in hand: they have hoisted what they

³⁶ Gov. William Tryon.

³⁷ An entry in the log of the *Andrew Doria* for Jan. 4, 1776, reads: "At 2 P.M. Cast off from ye Warf In Company with ye Comodore Ship Alfred, Columbus & Cabot. Light airs from ye Westward & much Ice in ye River." Clark, *Captain Dauntless*, 94.

³⁸ The *Providence*.

³⁹ In February, this fleet was joined by the sloop *Hornet* and the schooner *Wasp*, both outfitted in Maryland. *Ibid.*, 97.

call the Ammerican Flag viz the British Union, with thirteen stripes red and white, for its field, Representing the thirteen United Colonies:⁴⁰ there is a Ship on the Stocks and nigh finished to mount 20 heavey Cannon,⁴¹ to support the fort on the Island,⁴² a floating battery is also a building to mount 25 heavey Cannon, and a Strong Iron Chain, is a making, to be put across the Chas'm betwixt the Island battr'y and the Cheaux de Frise, there is also above thirty five floats preparing to be made use of as occation require: Three Frigates to mount 36 guns each are apreparing to be put on the Stock's,⁴³ and are expected to be ready for launching in April or May, and it is said, the other Collonies are to Build twelve more. Four millions of dollars is also struck lately, and are now asigning, additional to what I mentioned formerly: while Paper passes Currant, money will not be wanted, but as I have formerly said, it is not liked by many of the People, tho' they dare not refuse it: a Ship arrived tuo days ago from France, with sixty tons of salt Petre, and another is hourly expected with arms and military Stores, and above Fifty tons of gunpouder has arrived since my last; it is very extraordinary that this river, (the most Consequential in Ammerica) has been so much neglected by the Kings ships: Four new battalions additional to the tuo first raised, are now appointed, and the field officers received their Commissions, you may be assured Sir from those proceedings nothing but an independancy is intended, tho' the great body of the People are kept blind. Tuo French gentlemen⁴⁴ (but are called Noble men) arrived about eight days ago in this City, they made their first apperance in general Washingtons Camp, and he recommended them to the Congress, with whom they have been frequently and it is said they are authorized to offer the assistance, and protection of that Crown with Supply's of Arms Ammunition

⁴⁰ The Grand Union flag was raised on the *Alfred* on Dec. 7, 1775, by the senior lieutenant in the fleet, John Paul Jones. *Ibid.*, 89, 278.

⁴¹ This ship, later to be christened the *Montgomery*, was a unit of the Pennsylvania Navy. William Bell Clark, *Gallant John Barry* (New York, 1938), 70-71.

⁴² Mud Island.

⁴³ The *Randolph*, *Delaware*, *Washington*, and, later, the *Effingham*.

⁴⁴ Barkly apparently is referring to M. Penet and M. de Pliarne, who were sent by Washington, then in Massachusetts, to Congress in December, 1775, with proposals for supplying arms and ammunition. They were employed by Congress for this purpose. Worthington C. Ford, ed., *The Writings of Washington* (New York, 1889-1893), III, 276.

etc etc provided they (the Congress) agree to grant them a free trade: one of them (Im told) is to return directly to France, and the othir is to Continue at this place, to negotiate the affairs of that Perfidious Kingdom, who great Britain may be assured, watches every opportunity to involve and distress, though at the same time they are Sensible, they are plunging thousands into death and destruction, but this they matter not Provided they carry their diabolical ends.

Since I wrote the above the Kings Speech⁴⁵ is arrived and I'm happy to find by it that the dignity of the Empire is to be supported with that weight and respect, it Chalanges from all the world, at the same time that its great and glorious Monarch breaths Compassion and forgiveness to those of his deluded subjects who returns to their duty, may god allmighty long preserve him, to rule over a brave, and generous free people: Undoubtedly Sir the appointment of Commissioners, with powers to propose a line, and to settle the differences will be productive of the best Effects; at the same time there is an absolute Necessity for a Powerfull fleet, and army to give weight to their Negotiations.

This is forwarded by Express to New York, to be forwarded to you by the governor. . . .

16th March 1776

Sir

Since my last 10th January Via New York, a Capt. Meason⁴⁶ arrived in this Port from France, with Nigh Sixty Tones of salt Petre, 17 tones of gunpouder, and 500 Stand of Arms; several small parcels of gun Pouder and Arm's, has allso arrived from 6 different ports in the West Indies, and the 4th of this month a Briganteen arrived from Zeland with 37 tones of gunpouder 17 ton's Salt Petre and 500 Stand of Arms and many other Vessells are Expected with military Store's etc.

⁴⁵ In a speech of Oct. 26, 1775, the King asserted that the aim of the colonial opposition to Parliament was the establishment of an independent empire, and that this would be resisted by force. At the same time, a policy of clemency was to be adopted, and pardon granted to all who returned to their allegiance.

⁴⁶ Capt. Thomas Mason. For information on Mason's mission, see *Autobiography of Charles Biddle*, 79.

The fleet of armed Vessells I mentioned in my last, did not leave the Capes of delaware river till Saturday the 17th of February⁴⁷ Vizt one ship of 34 gun's and one of 30 do., tuo briganteens of 16 guns Each, a sloop of 12 guns, all fitted out in Marryland, and a Small sloop from New England: no accounts of them since they Sailed. One of the French gentlemen of whom I wrote in my last is gone for France, the other Continus still in this City, I am told they have agreed to furnish the Congress with £80,000 Value of military stores of all kinds: last week a Baron De Waidtke⁴⁸ formerly a general in the Prussian Service arrived here, no doubt in expectation of being Employed, but I cannot yet find he has got any Appointment: general Lee is at present in this place, but is appointed to Command in Virginia, and the other Southeren Provinces, and leav's this City next week for that purpose. That arch traitor Franklin, and tuo other members of the Congress Setts out for Cannada next week, they bring a Roman catholic Priest with them, in order to Baptize Some Cannadian Children (which it seems their oun Priests refuses to do), no doubt this is done in order to gain over to their party as many of those people as possible: Those dellegates are to exert themselves to get the Cannadians to receive the Congress paper money: to assure them of the support of the United Collonies, and to Encourage them to send a delegation to the Congress etc etc:⁴⁹ I understand since I began this letter, that Mr Franklin is to bring the Prussian general with him to Cannada: This week dependance, or independance, on great Britain, was strongly debated in Congress, Mr Franklin and the Northeren dellegates spoke and supported independancy, with all their might, the southeren dellegates (a few excepted) opposed it strongly, it was at last put to the Vote, when dependancy was carried by a Considerable Majority.

⁴⁷ Barkly accurately reports the date of the sailing of the first American naval fleet.

⁴⁸ On Mar. 16, 1776, Baron de Woedtke was appointed a brigadier general and ordered by Congress to proceed first to New York and then to Canada, where he was to serve under the commander of the Continental troops.

⁴⁹ On Feb. 15, Congress commissioned Franklin and Samuel Chase to go to Canada in an effort to win the French Canadians to the American cause. They were accompanied by Charles Carroll of Carrollton and John Carroll, a Jesuit priest. The commission left Philadelphia during the last week in March and went to Montreal. Franklin was back in New York on May 26. Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1941), 541-547.

A Pamphlet (called commonSense) was published about tuo month's ago, Franklin is generally allowed to be the author,⁵⁰ tho' he deny's it, I have given it and some News papers to a Mr. Dowglass who goes passenger in a Ship to Ireland, with directions to put them under cover to you, after his arrivall and to put them and this letter in to the Post Office: a ship has sailed for London this week, but I durst not risque a letter by her, every person and place being searched, and I'm now uncertain if Dowglass will venture to take them with him, this Pamphlet has debauched many of the People, and I'm sorry to be obliged to add, that the Perfidious traitor Franklin Exerts himself to aleinate the affection of the People, from the best of Kings, in short I know not a worse nor a more dangerous man. A Mr. Temple⁵¹ arrived by the Packet to New York, and came to this City tuo days ago, it is said he brought letters from the minority to the Congress, but nothing of their contents (that can be depended on) has transpired, some people say, that the minority desires to know, whether or not they (the Congress) mean independancy, that if they do, they are determined to abandon them: be this as it may it is certain he has brought them letters, and I am assured they were Concealed in the buttons of his Coat: Dowglass has agreed to take my Packet and conceals it in a feather bed till he gets to sea. . . .

20th May 1776

Sir

Since my last 16th. March, the Ammerican fleet (as they are Called) arrived at New London in New England, Hopkins the Comodore⁵² finding himself unequal to the task (as he say's) broke his orders, and proceeded to the Island of Providence,⁵³ where he expected a large quaintity of gunpouder, and Arms etc: he arrived at that Island accordingly, and took possession of it in the name of the Congress, made the governor and some other's Prisoners, took off a

⁵⁰ The reference is to Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*, which was first published in Philadelphia on Jan. 10, 1776.

⁵¹ William Temple was on a mission to Congress, bearing, so it was said, messages from the Marquis of Rockingham and the Duke of Grafton. William H. W. Sabine, ed., *Historical Memoirs from 16 March 1763 to 9 July 1776 of William Smith* (New York, 1956), 268-269.

⁵² Esek Hopkins of Providence, R. I., commanded the fleet.

⁵³ New Providence, the principal island of the Bahama group.

parcel of Cannon and ball etc, and thereafter proceeded for New London: the governor having some notice of his intentions, shipped off the gunpouder, in a small Vessell and ordered her to sea. They are now blocked up in New London by some of the Kings Ships: They fell in with the Glasgow man of war on the Coast, the Commodor and tuo Others engaged the glasgow, who killed and wounded a great number of the Rebels.⁵⁴ On the fourth of April the Roebuck man of war, arrived in the river delaware,⁵⁵ soon thereafter she took a Brigenteen belonging to this Port, loaded with 7000 Stand of Arms, gunpouder etc etc. She is Since joined by the Liverpool frigate, so that this Port is at last effectually guarded, those ships has been extremely Vigilant, and have taken many prizes, since their arrival in the river.

The great body of the people are much divided, those who have nothing to lose are Violent preachers of the doctrin of independancy, but the greatest and most respectable part are for Peace, and the Continuation of the former dependancy on the mother Country: The Country people are become Clamorous for want of many Necessarys, particularly Salt, and west India produce, as also many Necesserary articles of British manufacture, they threaten to come down from the Country to the City and brake oppen Sellers and ware howses, and dispose of those goods at moderate prices: we now have a report of the arrival of the Commissioners⁵⁶ at Halifax, and of their intention of proceeding for this place, I most heartely pray to god they were safely arrived, they will find many freinds to support them who dare not at present show themselfe's.

By the last accounts from the back Country the Indians are in motion, which greatly Alarm's the people, great bodys of them it is said intend to Invade Cannada by the lakes: last night advice was recived from thence, which has damped the sanguin hopes of all the

⁵⁴ This action, which commenced on Apr. 6, 1776, ended with the escape of the *Glasgow*, a 20-gun British frigate. The combined casualty toll of the *Alfred*, *Columbus*, and *Andrew Doria* was nine dead, sixteen wounded. Clark, *Captain Dauntless*, 110-112.

⁵⁵ The *Roebuck*, a 44-gun frigate, had orders to open up the Delaware and destroy all obstructions to navigation placed by "the inhabitants of Pennsylvania in open Rebellion against the King." William Bell Clark, *Lambert Wickes, Sea Raider and Diplomat* (New Haven, Conn., 1932), 9.

⁵⁶ The Howe Commission. Barkly is reporting a false rumor. Lord Howe did not arrive in Halifax until after General Howe left for New York, on June 10.

wrong head's, for particulars I refer to a letter in one of the inclosed papers, published by Order of the Congress; in the other paper you will see their last resolves, on which I leave the wrong heads on your side of the watter to Comment.

The Assembly (recommended by the Congress) has formed a New Court of Admerality in this City where a tender of six guns, and thirty men under the Command of a Leut. belonging to the Liverpool was Condemned, she was taken by a Briganteen of sixteen guns fitted out by the Congress;⁵⁷ and I was this day told that some homward bound Jamaica Ships has been taken by a small privatier belonging to this place.⁵⁸ We have advice of six transports with troops being arrived in North Carolina, and more was hourly expected: it is allso said that general Lee has gone from Virginia to that Provence: Mr John Ross the gentleman who takes the Charge of this goes passenger in a fast sailling ship to Lisbon, he has promised to forward this by the first Packet, and as I think him to be a gentleman of probity and a freind to government, I have given him a few lines to be delivered by himself on his arrival in London, he will give you a particular account of the situation of every thing in this Country. . . .

N.B.: wrote Sir Grey Cooper the 30th November by the Tamer Sloop of War from New York, and Sent him a Cobby of the following Memorial, of which I delivered a Cobby to Lord Howe and one to General Howe the 10th November being the day I arrived at New York.

MEMORIAL

On tuosday the 29th of October I left Philadelphia, and that day dined at Trentown with Leut. Colonel Elliot⁵⁹ of a Virginia Rejement of 600 men, raised to serve during the War, tuo more Virginia Rejmts. was on their March after him, at the same time, they ex-

⁵⁷ The sloop *Edward*, tender to the frigate *Liverpool*, was captured by the *Lexington*, commanded by John Barry, on Apr. 7, 1776. Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 80.

⁵⁸ The *Franklin* was reported to have taken a British store ship carrying, among other items, seventy-five tons of gunpowder and one thousand stand of arms. *Diary of Christopher Marshall*, 73.

⁵⁹ Lt. Col. Thomas Elliott of the 6th Virginia Regiment. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army* (Washington, D. C., 1914), 215.

pected to winter at and about Trentown, (30 miles from Phila.) he told me that the men were extremely sickly, and that in the Regiment he Commanded, four men only, had, had, the small Pox: they have been since ordered to March to Elisabeth town and thereafter to follow the directions of General Mercer.⁶⁰

In Pennsylvania the officers are appointed for raising 15 Battalions of 600 men Each to serve during the war, recruiting partys were beating up for those Regiments, some weeks before I left the Place, and large premiums given, notwithstanding of which, their success were but trifling 19 out of 20 of the People being disgusted.

As I was ordered out to Philadelphia by Lord North in March 1775 with Orders to exert myself to bring about an accomodation, and to give intelligence of the Proceedings of the Congress etc, and as it is my duty to communicate every intelligence to the Kings Admiral and Generals, I employed men I could confide in to go into the Country, and mix among the great body of the people, in order to get master of their sentiments: those men assured me, that the People in general (some desperados's who are fond of fishing in troubled watters excepted) wishes for nothing so much, as for a happy settlement of the Present dispute, and that a Small support of the Kings troops with a Proclamation forgiving past offences and promising them the security of their lives and fortunes, their former laws and liberty, would at once determine them to joine the Kings forces. I made it my Particular business to sownd the disposition of three fourths of those at Philadelphia, who have appeared in Arms, and joined in the militia, they assured me that though they appeared in arms, and joined in the militia, it was against their Principals, and to save themselves and familys from distress, and that the moment the Kings troops appeared they were determined to joine them, to this I add that to my knowledge they are sick and tired of their present sittuation, and wish for nothing so much as to be put in their former Condition.

It may be reconed presumption of me, to offer my Sentiments on affairs of the highest moment at this Consequential period: however I take the liberty to say, that from my general knowledge of the people of Pensilvynia (the Provence from whence springs 9/10ths of

⁶⁰ Hugh Mercer, who had taken part in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 and afterward emigrated to America, distinguished himself in the New Jersey campaign of 1776 and was killed in action at Stony Brook in January, 1777.

the support of the rebellion) that if a number of Transports was ordered into the river Delaware, with troops etc and at the same time a more Considerable army was to land in the Jerseys, receive the Arms and Oath of alligance of the people to the King, as they marched along, their success would be undoubted, and by stoping that grand spring of support, the other Provinces wou'd send deputations, to implore the Kings mercy. I now take the liberty to mention the opposition that may be expected in the Delaware.

About 150 fire floats Charged with Combustables for destroying shiping are now, at the Island battery Eight miles below the City of Philadelphia

2 fire Vessels (a Briganteen and a sloop) at Anchor at the same place

2 Floating Batterys One of 10 twelve pounders, and one of 12 Eighteen pounders at anchor at the same place

The Provence Ship of 16 Eighteen pounders at anchor at the same place

15 galleys with one Eighteen pounder in the Prow of each, with suivle guns and musketry and from 50 to 80 men Each at the same place

The Island Fort mounts 7 heavy Cannon

On Billans point on the Jearsey side of the river a Fort is Errecting on which heavy Cannon is to be planted.⁶¹

Above 40 Chevaux de Frise are sunk in the Channel, within point blank shot of the Island Battery and a large Iron Chain laid across the pilot channel.

Below this the river is defenceless, tho' skilful pilots will be necessary to bring up the shiping to Chester (within 15 milles of Philadelphia) from whence there is a good Country and Road to the City, the small river Skowlkill, might retard, but a bridge of boats could be soon thrown over it, and it is foardable in many places a few miles above the Comon road this river is within less than tuo miles of the City.

I have Sir taken the liberty to give you my sentiments impartialy on this great subject, at the same time you may be assured, that many desperado's continue to Exasperate the people and keep the flame allive: in my way thorow' the Jearseys to this City, I came up

⁶¹ A redoubt was built at Billingsport, N. J.

with many hundereds of waggons with provisions, and all kinds of stores from Philadelphia on their way to the rebell army: that City is the fountain from whence Springs the greatest part of their Support.

Some Hessian Prissoners was brought to Philadelphia, some time ago, those men were Treated and entertained, when the British Prisoners, taken with them, were throwen into prisson and clossly Confined; large promises was made the Hessians and money given them, to engage to return to Statan Island (from whence they were made prissoners) and perswade their Countrymen to desert.⁶² Eight of them, accordingly arrived at Elisabeth town, on thursday last from whence they were to get over among their Countrymen. Immediately after my arrival in that Island, I waited of Collonel Dalrymple⁶³ (the commanding officer) and gave him notice of this.

Above tenty Privateers are now a fitting out at Philadelphia,⁶⁴ and West India Ships are daily Brought in to that Port, taken by Privateers, they have sent to sea. four beautifull frigates are a fitting out at that Port, who will undoubtedly be sent to Sea this winter, if not retarded by the Kings Ships. . . .⁶⁵

New York 10th November 1776

To His Excelency The Honble. General Howe etc

⁶² See William Ward Condit, "Christopher Ludwick, Patriotic Gingerbread Baker," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXI (1957), 375-376.

⁶³ Lt. Col. William Dalrymple of the 14th Foot.

⁶⁴ For a list of these privateers, see *ibid.*, XXVI (1902), 146-147.

⁶⁵ See Note 43. Of the four frigates, only the *Randolph* ever put to sea under American colors. The *Delaware* was captured at Philadelphia by the British and converted to their service; the *Washington* and the *Effingham* were sunk in the upper Delaware to avoid capture.