

Exerts from “Common Sense” by Thomas Paine

Published in 1776

“I have heard it asserted by some, that as America has flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument. We may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. But even this is admitting more than is true; for I answer roundly that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power taken any notice of her. The commerce by which she hath enriched herself are the necessaries of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe.”

“From the errors of other nations, let us learn wisdom,”

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“To bring the matter to one point, Is the power who is jealous of our prosperity, a proper power to govern us? Whoever says, No, to this question, is an independent, for independency means no more than this, whether we shall make our own law, or, whether the king, the greatest enemy which this continent hath, or can have, shall tell us there shall be no laws but such as I like.”

“Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries by a government, which we might expect in a country without government, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer...”

“Common sense will tell us, that the power which hath endeavored to subdue us, is of all others, the most improper to defend us.”