

Richard Henry Lee to Landon Carter

[Letter begins at bottom half of page]

Philadelphia 2nd June 1776

Dear Sir,

Since the establishment of our Westmoreland Rider, I conclude the papers come so regularly into your neighborhood from this City, as to render it the less necessary to repeat in letters what you will find exactly detailed in the Gazette. I cannot help congratulating you on [. . .] Virginia has obtained by the resolve of Convention on the 15th of last month. A Gentleman of the first understanding here, and of very moderate passions, said on reading the resolve "Virginia has determined like a brave, sensible and injured people." Still the views of interested, weak, and wicked men, obstruct the public service in these proprietary governments.

The infamous treaties with Hesse, Brunswick, &c. (of which we have authentic copies) and the Ministerial reply to Graftons motion leave not a doubt but that our enemies are determined upon the absolute conquest and subduction of N. America.

It is not choice then, but necessity that calls for Independence, as the only means by which foreign Alliance can be obtained; and a proper confederation by which internal peace and union may be secured. Contrary to our earnest, early, and repeated petitions for peace, liberty and safety, our enemies press us with war, threaten us with danger and Slavery. And this not with her single force but with the aid of Foreigners. Now, altho we might safely venture our strength circumstanced as it is, against that of Great Britain only, yet we are certainly unequal to a Contest with her and her Allies without any assistance from without, and this more especially, as we are incapable of profiting by our exports for want of Naval force. You seem to apprehend danger from our being aided by despotic States, but remember that France assisted Holland without injury to the latter. Will the help we desire put it, by any means, in the power of France to hurt us tho she were so inclined.

Supplies of Military Stores and Soldiers Clothing, Ships of war to cover our Trade and open our Ports, which would be an external assistance altogether, could never endanger our freedom by putting it in the power of our Ally to Master us, as has been the case where weak States have admitted powerful Armies for their Defenders. When last we heard from Canada, our forces that had retreated from Quebec, on the arrival of succors, had fixt at De Chambaud, or Falls of Richlieu, about 30 miles above Quebec, and were strongly fortifying there. If they can maintain that Post, which commands 8 tenths of Canada, we shall do almost as well as if we had Quebec, as we thereby effectually cut off all communication with the upper Country, or Western Indians, and prevent the West Indies receiving supplies from that fertile

Province. We are making the best preparation to meet the numerous foreign Mercenaries with which we are to be invaded this Campaign. This expence of G. Britain this summer is estimated at 10 millions, exclusive of the ordinary expences.

With half her Trade subducted, with a debt of 140 millions, how can she go on?

The Dutch begin to fear for their money in English funds, and say they wd. give 30 per Cent discount to have it withdrawn.

Franklin the late Governor of New Jersey, you will see by the inclosed paper, is endeavoring to bring himself under the notice of Congress, and I believe he will effect it now, as the plan of calling an Assembly by a Kings Governo, the Resolve of the 15th cannot be passed.

I hope to be in Virginia in 10 or 12 days, when I shall endeavour to visit Sabine Hall. I am, with great esteem, dear Sir your affectionate and obedient servant Richard Henry Lee

P.S. We have just seen a petition from London to the King [asking] in m[ost] . . .]ng & moving language that he wd. let explicit terms of justice precede the operation of Arms in America.

His an[swer is] that he is sorry for the rebellion, but that force on his part & submission on ours is all he proposes. This is the substance of his Tyrannic answer to the most sensible & humane Address that Modern times has produced.



M. Jefferson
MONTICELLO