1776

By Peter Stone
Mr. Adams!
Mr. Adams!

There you are.
 Didn't you hear me
call you, Mr. Adams?
You could've shouted down something,
saved me climbing up four flights.
A man that likes to talk as
much as you do, I'd think...
What do you keep coming
up here for, Mr. Adams?
Afraid someone's going to steal our bell?
Well, don't worry.
Been here more than 14 years, and
ain't been carried off once.
Better get yourself back
down to Congress, Mr. Adams.
Getting ready to vote,
and they said
they couldn't settle
such an important question
without Massachusetts
being there.
I can just imagine.
All right, what burning issue
are we voting on this time?
On whether or not to grant
General Washington's request
that all members of the Rhode
Island Militia be required
to wear matching uniforms.
Oh, good God.
I have come to the conclusion
that one useless man
is called a disgrace,
that two are called a law firm,
and that three or more
become a Congress.
And, by God,
I have had this Congress.
For 10 years, King George
and his parliament
have gullied, cullied and diddled these
colonies with their illegal taxes. Stamp Acts, Townshend Acts, Sugar Acts, Tea Acts. And when we dared stand up like men, they have stopped our trade, seized our ships, blockaded our ports, burned our towns, and spilled our blood. And still this Congress refuses to grant any of my proposals on independence even so much as the courtesy of open debate. Good God, what in the hell are you waiting for? Sit down, John Sit down, John Thomas, for God's sake, listen to me. For God's sake John, sit down I've had enough of you, sir. Sit down, John Sit down, John For God's sake, John, sit down Someone ought to open up a window Will you listen to me and forget the window? It's 90 degrees Have mercy, John, please It's hot as hell in Philadelphia Someone ought to open up a window I say vote yes Vote yes Vote for independency Someone ought to open up a window I say vote yes Sit down, John Vote for independency Someone ought to open up a window
No, no, no!
Too many flies, too many flies
But it's hot as hell
in Philadelphia
Are you gonna open up a window?
Can't we compromise here?
Vote yes
No, too many flies here
Vote yes
Oh, for God's sake,
John, sit down
Good God.
Consider yourselves fortunate
that you have
John Adams to abuse,
for no sane man
would tolerate it.
John, you're a bore
We've heard this before
Now, for God's sake,
John, sit down
I say vote yes No!
Vote yes No!
Vote for independency
Someone ought to
open up a window
I say vote yes
Sit down, John
Vote for independency
Will someone shut that man up?
Never!
Dear God.
For one solid year
they have been sitting here.
A whole year!
Doing nothing!
I do believe you've laid
a curse on North America
A curse that we here now
rehearse in Philadelphia
A second flood, a simple famine
Plagues of locusts everywhere
Or a cataclysmic earthquake
I'd accept with some despair
But, no, you've sent us Congress
Good God, sir, was that fair?
I say this with humility
in Philadelphia
We're your responsibility
in Philadelphia
if you don't want to see us hanging
from some far off British hill
if you don't want the voice of
independency forever stilled
Then God, Sir, get thee to it
For Congress never will
You see, we piddle,
twiddle and resolve
Not one damn thing do we solve
Piddle, twiddle and resolve
Nothing's ever solved
In foul, fetid, fuming,
foggy, filthy
Philadelphia
Someone ought to
open up a window
Oh, shut up.
I now call Congress' attention
to the petition of Mr. Melchior Meng,
who claims $20 compensation
for his dead mule.
It seems the animal was
employed transporting luggage
in the service of Congress.
The question, then, would
appear to be one of occasion.
For if the mule
expired not while carrying,
but after being unloaded,
then clearly the beast dropped
dead on its own time.
Oh, good God.
They may sit here for years
and years in Philadelphia
These indecisive
grenadiers of Philadelphia
They can't agree on what is right
and wrong or what is good or bad
I'm convinced the only purpose this Congress ever had was to gather here specifically to drive John Adams mad! You see, we piddle, twiddle and resolve Not one damn thing do we solve Piddle, twiddle and resolve Nothing's ever solved In foul, fetid, fuming, foggy, filthy Philadelphia John, John Is that you carrying on, John? Oh, Abigail, Abigail, I have such a desire to knock heads together. Then why in heaven's name do you stay there? Come home to Boston, John. It's only 300 miles. If you left tonight, you could be here in only eight days. How can I do that, Abigail? I'm no further along now than I was when I first came here. I know, my dearest. I know. But that's because you make everything so complicated. It's all quite simple, really. Just tell the Congress to declare Independency Then sign your name get out of there And hurry home to me Our children all have dysentery Little Tom keeps turning blue Little Abby has the measles And I'm coming down with flu They say we may get smallpox Madam, what else is new? Abigail, in my last letter, I wrote you that the king had collected
12,000 German mercenaries
to send against us.
I asked you to
organize the ladies
to make saltpeter for gunpowder.
Now, have you done as I asked?
No, John, I have not.
Well, why have you not?
Because you neglected to tell
us how saltpeter is made.
By treating sodium nitrate with
potassium chloride, of course.
Oh, yes, of course.
Will it be done, then?
John, I'm afraid we have
a more urgent problem.
More urgent, madam?
There's one thing every woman's
missed in Massachusetts Bay
Don't smirk at me, you egotist
Pay heed to what I say
We've gone from
Framingham to Boston
And we cannot find a pin
"Don't you know
there's a war on"
Say the tradesmen with a grin
Well, we will not make saltpeter
Until you send us pins
Pins, madam? Saltpeter.
Pins.
Saltpeter.
Pins.
Saltpeter.
Pins.
"Peter.
Pins.
"Peter. 'Peter.
Pins. Pins.
"Peter!
Pins.
Done, madam, done.
Done, John.
Hurry home, John.
As soon as I'm able.
Don't stop writing.
It's all I have.
Every day, my dearest friend.
Till then
Till then Till then
I am I am
As I ever was As I ever was
And ever shall be
And ever shall be
Yours Yours
Saltpeter
John
Pins
Abigail
For God's sake, John
Sit down
Franklin!
Franklin!
Where in hell are you?
Franklin!
I see you hiding
behind that tree.
It won't do you any good.
Damn it, this is no time
for playing games.
Franklin, I have been
looking everywhere for you.
Where in God's name
have you been?
Right here, John, being
preserved for posterity.
Do you like it?
It stinks.
As ever, the soul of tact.
Well, the man's no Botticelli.
And the subject's no Venus.
Franklin, where were you last
night when I needed you?
You should have heard
what I suffered in there.
I heard, all right. Along with
the rest of Philadelphia.
Lord, your voice
is piercing, John.
Well, I wish to heaven
my arguments were.
My God, Franklin, when are they
going to make up their minds?
With one hand
they can raise an army,
dispatch one of
their own to lead it,
and cheer the news
from Bunker's Hill.
And with the other,
they wave the olive branch,
begging the king for a happy
and permanent reconciliation.
Fat George has
declared us in rebellion.
Why in bloody hell can't they?
John, really? You talk as if
independence were the rule.
It's never been done before.
No colony has ever broken from the
parent stem in the history of the world.
Damn it, Franklin, you
make us sound treasonous.
Do I?
Treason, eh?
Treason is a charge
invented by winners
as an excuse for
hanging the losers.
I have more to do
than stand here,
listening to you quote yourself.
No, that was a new one.
Damn it, Franklin, we're at war.
To defend ourselves,
nothing more.
We expressed our displeasure,
the English moved against us,
and we in turn have resisted.
Now our fellow congressmen want
to effect a reconciliation
before it becomes a war.
Reconciliation, my ass.
The people want independence.
The people have read
Mr. Paine's Common Sense.
I doubt very much Congress has.
That's true.
John, why don't you give it up?
Nobody listens to you. You're obnoxious and disliked.
I'm not promoting John Adams.
I'm promoting independence.
Evidently, they cannot help connecting the two.
Even your own cousin.
And if Sam Adams can't put up with you, nobody can.
You're getting at something.
How can you tell?
All right,
out with it, Franklin.
What new intrigue are you cooking up?
Let someone else in Congress propose.
Never!
Why? Who did you have in mind?
I don't know. I really haven't given it much thought.
You sent for me, Benjamin?
Never.
Hello, Johnny!
Richard.
Uh, Johnny and I need some advice.
If it's mine to give, it's yours, you know that.
Thank you, Richard.
As you know, the cause that we support has come to a complete standstill.
Now why do you suppose that is?
Simple.
Johnny here is obnoxious and disliked. That's true.
Now, what's the solution, I wonder?
Get somebody else in Congress to propose.
Oh, Richard, that's brilliant.
Wasn't that brilliant, John?
Brilliant.
Yes. Now the question remains, who can it be?
The man that we need must belong to a delegation publicly committed to support independence.
And at the present time, only Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Delaware have declared our way.
And Virginia. Don't forget Virginia, Benjy.
Oh, Richard, I haven't.
How could I?
But strictly speaking, while Virginia's views on independence are well known, your legislature in Williamsburg has never formally authorized its delegation here in Congress to support the cause.
Now, if we could think of a Virginian with enough influence to go down there and persuade the House of Burgesses...
Damn me if I haven't thought of someone!
Who?
Who?
Me.
Oh, why didn't I think of that?
I'll leave tonight.
Why, hell, I'll leave
right now, if you like.
I'll just stop off in Stratford
long enough to refresh the missus,
and then straight to the matter.
Yes, sir. I really have to compliment
you on your judgment, Johnny.
Whoa, boy. Steady.
You've come to the one colony
that can get the job done.
Virginia, the land that gave us
our glorious Commander in Chief,
George Washington,
will now give the continent
its proposal on independence.
And when Virginia proposes,
the South is bound to follow.
And where the South goes,
the middle colonies go.
Gentlemen, a salute.
To Virginia, the mother
of American independence.
Incredible. We're free,
and he hasn't even left yet.
What makes you so sure
you can do it?
My name is Richard Henry Lee
Virginia is my home
My name is Richard Henry Lee
Virginia is my home
And may my horses turn to glue
If I can't deliver up to you
A resolution on independency
For I am FFV
The first family
In the sovereign colony
of Virginia
Yes, the FFV
The oldest family
In the oldest colony in America
And may the British burn my land
If I can't deliver to your hand
A resolution on independency
You see, it's here a Lee,
there a Lee
And everywhere a Lee, a Lee
Social...
Lee
Political...
Lee
Financial...
Lee
Natural...
Lee
Internal...
Lee!
External...
Lee!
Fraternal...
Lee!
Eternal...
Lee!
The FFV The FFV
The first family
The first family
In the sovereign colony
of Virginia
And may my wife refuse my bed
If I can't deliver as I said
A resolution on independency
Spoken modest-Lee.
God help us.
He will, John. He will.
They say that God in heaven
is everybody's God
Amen!
I'll admit that God in
heaven is everybody's God
But I tell you, John, with pride
God leans a little
on the side of the Lees
The Lees of old Virginia
You see,
it's here a Lee, there a Lee
And everywhere a Lee, a Lee
Here a Lee, there a Lee
And everywhere a Lee
Look out! There's
Arthur Lee, Bobby Lee
General Light-horse
Harry Lee
Willie Lee, Jesse Lee
And Richard H That's me!
And may my blood
stop running blue
If I can't deliver up to you
The resolution on independency
Yes, sir, my God,
it's here a Lee, there a Lee
Come on, boys, join in with me!
Here a Lee, there a Lee
Here a Lee, there a Lee
When do you leave?
Immediate-Lee!
Here a Lee, there a Lee
Here a Lee, there a Lee
When will you return?
Short-Lee!
Here a Lee, there a Lee
Here a Lee, there a Lee
And I'll come back
triumphant-Lee!
Here a Lee, there a Lee
Everywhere a Lee, a Lee
Forward
Ho
That was the most revolting
display I have ever witnessed.
They're a warm-blooded
people, Virginians.
Oh, not him, Franklin. You.
You and your infernal
obsession for deviousness.
If you'd come straight
out and asked the man,
he'd have been gone
a half hour ago.
Yes, and he'd have been
doing us a favor.
Cheer up, John.
At this very moment,
Sitting straight in the saddle
and in full gallop for Virginia.
And our women are serene
Oh, good God.
Full-bosomed
Full-bosomed, Benjy
Everyone a queen
Why they are Lees, damn it
Lees of old Virginia!
Yes, sir, by God,
it's here a Lee, there a Lee!
C'mon, John, step lively
Here a Lee, there a Lee
Here a Lee, there a Lee
Everywhere a Lee, a Lee
Everywhere a Lee, a Lee
Here a Lee, there a Lee
Here a Lee, there a Lee
Everywhere a Lee, a Lee!
Everywhere a Lee, a Lee!
Forward, ho
Uh, excuse me.
Yes?
I'm Dr. Lyman Hall, the new
delegate from Georgia.
I'm Andrew McNair,
congressional custodian.
If you'll be wanting anything at
all, just holler out "McNair"
as all the others do and there
won't be too long to wait.
Where does the Georgia
delegation belong?
Oh, they mill about over there in
that corner, near the two Carolinas.

**It's after 10:**
I was told Congress

**convenes at 10:**
Well, they'll be wandering
in any time now, sir,
with Old Grape and Guts
leading the pack.
Old who?
McNair!
'Nair!
Fetch me a rum.
Mr. Hopkins, you'll be pleased to meet Dr. Lyman Hall.
I don't need a doctor, damn it.
New delegate from Georgia.
Well, why didn't you say so?
I'm Stephen Hopkins, old delegate from Rhode Island.
McNair, fetch two rums.
Oh, I fear it's a little early in the day.
Nonsense.
It's a medicinal fact that rum gets a man's heart started in the morning.
I'm surprised you didn't know that.
Speaking as the oldest man in the Congress, I can tell you...
Uh-uh. Ben Franklin is older by almost a year.
Rum!
Tell me, Doctor.
Where does Georgia stand on the question of independence?
With South Carolina, of course.
Neddy, good morning.
Neddy, come over here and shake the hand of Dr. Lyman Hall of Georgia.
Dr. Hall, this here is Edward Rutledge from...
Whichever Carolina he says he's from.
God knows I can't keep them straight.
It's a pleasure,
Dr. Hall.
Your servant,
Mr. Rutledge.
You've met the long and the short of it now, Doctor.
Neddy here is just a lad.
He's the youngest of us.  
Except for Ben Franklin.  
McNair!  
Your rum!  
Well, where did you go  
for it, man? Jamaica?  
Well, now,  
come along, Dr. Hall.  
I know you must be anxious to meet  
your colleagues from the South.  
Doctor, may I present  
to you Joseph Hewes.  
This is Dr. Lyman Hall, the  
ew new delegate from Georgia.  
An honor and a pleasure,  
gentlemen.  
Uh, where do you stand on  
independence, Dr. Hall?  
I'm here without  
instructions, Mr. Hewes,  
able to vote my own  
personal convictions.  
And they are?  
Personal.  
Now, Dr. Hall,  
the Deep South speaks  
with one voice.  
It's traditional.  
Even more, it is historical.  
Enter Delaware.  
Speak plain, Rutledge.  
You know I can't follow  
a word of your damn French.  
It's Latin, Colonel McKean,  
a tribute to the eternal peace and  
harmony of the Delaware delegation.  
What are you saying, man?  
You know perfectly well  
that neither Rodney nor I can  
stand the sight of this louse.  
Now, Thomas...  
Gentlemen, please.  
This is Dr. Lyman Hall  
of Georgia.
Caesar Rodney.
An honor, sir.
Sir.
George Read and
Colonel Thomas McKean.
Dr. Hall...
Your servant.
I wonder if I might speak to
you for a moment in private.
By all means.
McNair!
I'm coming! I'm coming!
Help me. I'm stuck.
Tell me, sir,
would you be a doctor
of medicine or theology?
Both, Mr. Rodney.
Which one can be of service?
By all means,
the physician first.
Then we shall see
about the other.
I shall call at
your convenience, sir.
I trust, Caesar,
when you're through
converting the poor fellow
to independency
that you'll give the opposition
a fair crack at him.
You're too late, John.
Once I get them, they're got.
Dr. Lyman Hall of Georgia, Mr.
John Dickinson of Pennsylvania.
An honor, sir.
Your servant, sir.
Tell me, Doctor.
Where do you stand
on the question of...
Independence?
Treason.
I've no stomach for it.
Ah! Then be careful
not to dine with John Adams.
Between the fish
and the souffle,
you'll find yourself
hanging from an English rope.
Your servant, sir.
Oh, Judge Wilson, forgive me,
but how can anyone see you
if you insist on standing
in Mr. Dickinson's shadow?
James Wilson,
also of Pennsylvania.
Sir.
An honor, sir.
Good morning.
Good morning.
Good morning, ladies.
Good morning.
Steady, steady.
Make gangway, sir.
Make gangway!
Good morning,
Mr. Wilson. Good morning.
Watch where you're going, damn it.
Over there.
McNair, get me
out of this thing.
Watch out for my foot.
Good morning, all.
- Morning, Ben.
- Morning, Ben.
Here you are.
Two coppers apiece.
Now, straight back
to jail with you.
Good morning, Stephen.
All right, Benjamin.
Dear God.
What are you staring at?
Haven't you ever seen
a great man before?
Good Lord, sir. Do you have
the honor to be Dr. Franklin?
Yes, I have that honor.
Unfortunately, the gout
accompanies the honor.
Been living
too high again, eh, pappy?
Oh, Stephen, I only wish King George
felt like my big toe all over.
McNair! Fetch a pillow
and two more rums.
Well, Franklin,
where's that idiot Lee?
Is he back yet?
I don't see him.
Softly, John. Your voice
is hurting my foot.
One more day, Franklin.
That's how long
I'll remain silent,
not a minute longer.
That strutting popinjay
was so damn sure of himself.
He's had time to bring back
a dozen proposals by now.
Tell me, James.
How do you explain the
strange, monumental quietude
that Congress has been treated
to these past 30 days?
Has the ill wind of independence
finally blown itself out?
Well, if you ask me...
For myself, I must confess that a
month free from New England noise
is more therapeutic
than a month in the country.
Don't you agree, James?
Well, I feel...
Mr. Adams, pray look
for your voice, sir.
It cannot be far,
and God knows we need
the entertainment in Congress.
Congratulations, John.
You just made your greatest
contribution to independence.
You kept your flap shut.
One more day, Franklin.
Then I shall do the proposing.
Gentlemen, the usual morning festivities concluded,
I will now call Congress to order.
Mr. Thomson.
The Second Continental Congress meeting
in the city of Philadelphia is now in session.
7 June, 1776, the 380th meeting.
Sweet Jesus!
The Honorable John Hancock of Massachusetts Bay, president.
Thank you, Mr. Thomson.
Mr. McNair.
The stores of rum and other drinking spirits are hereby closed to the colony of Rhode Island for a period of three days.
Yes, sir.
Johnny, you can't do that.
Sit down, Mr. Hopkins.
You've abused the privilege.
The chair would like to take this opportunity to welcome Dr. Lyman Hall of Georgia to this Congress, and hopes he will make the best of it.
My God, it's hot.
The secretary will read the roll.
All members present with the following exceptions. "Mr. Paine, Mr. Gerry, Mr. Samuel Adams of Massachusetts, "Mr. Morton of Pennsylvania, "Mr. Wythe and Mr. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia."
And the entire delegation of New Jersey.
I'm concerned over
the continual absence
of one-thirteenth of this Congress.
Where is New Jersey?
Somewhere between
Thank you very much.
Dr. Franklin, have you heard anything?
Your son resides there.
Son, sir? What son?
The royal governor
of New Jersey, sir.
As that title
might suggest, sir,
we are not in touch
at the present time.
Yes. Well...
Now for the weather report,
Mr. Jefferson of Virginia.
Mr. Jefferson!
Present, sir.
May we hear about the weather?
As if it weren't
speaking for itself.
Eighty-seven degrees
of temperature,
thirty-point-aught-six
inches of mercury.
Wind...
From the southwest
for the rest of the day.
And tonight...
Tonight I'm leaving for home.
On business?
Family business.
Give her a flourish for me,
young feller.
Whoa!
"From the Commander, army of the
United Colonies to New York,
dispatch number 1, 137."
Ah, sweet Jesus!
"To the Honorable Congress,
John Hancock, president.
"Dear sir, it is with grave apprehension
that I have learned this day
"of the sailing from Halifax,
Nova Scotia,
"of a considerable force
of British troops
"in the company of
foreign mercenaries
"and under the command
of General Sir William Howe."
"There can be no doubt that
their destination is New York,
"for to take and hold this city
and the Hudson Valley beyond
"would serve to separate New England
from the rest of the colonies,
"permitting both sections
to be crushed in turn.
"Sadly, I see no way of stopping
them at the present time,
"as my army is
absolutely falling apart.
"My military chest
is totally exhausted.
"My commissary general has
strained his credit to the last.
"My quartermaster has no food,
no arms, no ammunition,
"and my troops are in
a state of near mutiny.
"I pray God some relief arrives
"before the armada,
but fear it will not.
"Your obedient,
"G. Washington."
Mr. President!
Colonel McKean.
Surely we have
managed to promote
the gloomiest man on this continent
to the head of our troops.
Those dispatches are the
most depressing accumulation
of disaster, doom and despair in the
entire annals of military history.
Colonel McKean, please!
What?
It's too hot.
Well, I suppose so.
General Washington will continue
wording his dispatches as he sees fit.
And I'm sure we all pray
he finds happier thoughts
to convey in the near future.
Mr. Thomson,
are there any resolutions?
Dr. Josiah Bartlett
of New Hampshire.
"Resolved, that for the duration
of the present hostilities,
"the Congress discourage every type
of extravagance and dissipation,
"elaborate funerals and
other expensive diversions,
"especially all
horse racing, gambling,
"and other forms of
sinful activity, which..."
Fire wagon!
Where's the fire?
Can anybody tell?
Looks like the Pemberton House.
It couldn't be.
It's brand new.
It might be the city tavern.
Bite your tongue, man.
Whoo-hoo!
Benjy, I'm back!
I'm back, Johnny!
Richard, lad, welcome back.
Lee, is it done?
First things first. Tom!
Tom! Tom, your little bride wants
to know, "When's he coming home?"
I leave tonight.
Never mind that, man.
Is it done?
Done? Why, certain-Lee.
Mr. President, I have returned from
Virginia with the following resolution,
"Resolved, that these United Colonies
are, and of a right ought to be,
"free and independent States,
"that they are absolved from
allegiance to the British Crown,
"and that all political
connection between them
"and the state of
Great Britain is,
"and ought to be,
totally dissolved."
Hear, hear!
Mr. President,
I second the proposal.
The resolution has been
proposed and seconded.
The chair will now
entertain debate.
Mr. Dickinson.
Mr. President.
Pennsylvania moves, as always,
that the question of independence
be postponed indefinitely.
I second the motion.
Judge Wilson,
in your eagerness to be loved,
you seem to have forgotten
that Pennsylvania
cannot second its own motion.
Delaware seconds.
You would, you lousy wart.
The motion to postpone
has been moved and seconded.
Mr. Thomson.
On the motion to
postpone indefinitely
the resolution on independency
or proceed with the debate,
all those in favor
of debate say "yea,"
all those for
postponement say "nay."
New Hampshire?
New Hampshire favors debate, and says yea.
New Hampshire says yea.
Massachusetts?
Massachusetts, having borne the brunt of the King's tyranny...
Yes, I said tyranny!
Massachusetts now, and for all time, says yea.
Massachusetts says yea.
Rhode Island?
Mr. Hopkins?
Where's Rhode Island?
Rhode Island is out visiting the necessary.
After what Rhode Island's consumed, I can't say I'm surprised.
We'll come back to him, Mr. Thomson.
Rhode Island passes.
Connecticut?
While Connecticut has, till now, been against this proposal, our legislature has instructed me that in the event it is introduced by any colony outside of New England, we could not any longer withhold our support. Connecticut says yea.
Hear! Hear!
Connecticut says yea.
New York?
New York abstains courteously.
New York abstains.
Courteously.
New Jersey?
Absent, Mr. Secretary.
New Jersey's absent.
Pennsylvania?
Pennsylvania, for the 24th time, says nay.
Pennsylvania says nay.
Delaware?
Delaware, as ever
for independence, says yea.
Delaware says yea.
Maryland?
Maryland would welcome
independence if it were given,
but is highly skeptical
that it can be taken.
Maryland says nay.
Maryland says nay.
Virginia?
Virginia, the first colony,
says yea!
Virginia says yea.
North Carolina?
North Carolina respectfully
yields to South Carolina.
South Carolina?
Mr. President,
although we of South Carolina
have never seriously considered
the question of independence,
when a gentleman proposes it,
attention must be paid.
However, we in the Deep South,
unlike our friends
in New England,
have no cause for impatience
at the present time.
If at some future date it becomes the
wish of all our sister colonies,
to effect a separation,
we will not stand in the way.
But for the time being,
South Carolina
will wait and watch.
The vote is nay.
North Carolina...
Says nay.
Yes, Mr. Hewes. I know.
Georgia.
Mr. President,
Georgia seems to be split
right down the middle
on this issue.
The people are against it, and I'm for it. However, I'm afraid I'm not quite certain whether representing the people means relying on their judgment or on my own. In all fairness, until I can figure that out, I'd better lean a little on their side. Georgia says nay. Rhode Island? Second call, Rhode Island! Rhode Island! I'm coming! I'm coming! Hold your damn horses. We're waiting on you, Mr. Hopkins. Well, it won't kill you. You'd think the Congress would have its own privy. All right, where does she stand? Five for debate, five for postponement, one abstention and one absence. So it's up to me, huh? Well, I'll tell you. In all my years, I never seen, heard nor smelled an issue that was so dangerous it couldn't be talked about. Hell, yes! I'm for debating anything. Rhode Island says yea. McNair, get Mr. Hopkins a rum.

McNAIR: Get him the whole damn barrel if he wants. The chair now declares this Congress a committee of the whole for the purpose of debating Virginia's
resolution on independence.
Mr. Dickinson.
Well, now, you've got your
way at last, Mr. Adams.
The matter may now be discussed.
I confess I'm almost relieved.
There's a question I've been
fairly itching to ask you.
Why?
Why what, Mr. Dickinson?
Well, why independence,
Mr. Adams?
Well, for the obvious reason
that our continued association
with Great Britain
has grown intolerable.
Well, to whom,
Mr. Adams? To you?
Well, then I suggest you
sever your ties immediately.
But please be kind enough to leave
the rest of us where we are.
For myself,
I have no objection at all
to being part of the
greatest empire on Earth,
to enjoying its protection
and sharing its benefits.
Benefits?
What benefits?
Crippling taxes?
Cruel repressions?
Abolished rights?
Is that all England
means to you, sir?
Is that all the pride and
affection you can muster
for the nation that bore you?
For the noblest, most civilized
nation on the face of this planet?
Well, would you have us forsake
Hastings and Magna Carta,
Strongbow and Lionheart,
Drake and Marlborough,
Tudors, Stuarts
and Plantagenets?
For what, sir?
Well, tell me. For what?
For you?
Some men are patriots,
like General Washington,
and some are anarchists,
like Mr. Paine.
Some even are internationalists,
like Dr. Franklin.
But you, sir...
You are merely an agitator,
disturbing the peace,
creating disorder, endangering
the public welfare.
And for what?
Your petty little
personal complaints.
Your taxes are too high.
Well, sir, so are mine.
Come, come, Mr. Adams.
If you have grievances,
and I'm sure you have,
our present system must provide
a gentler means
of redressing them
short of revolution.
Yes, that's what he wants.
Nothing less will satisfy him.
Violence, rebellion, treason.
Now, Mr. Adams,
are these
the acts of Englishmen?
Not Englishmen, Dickinson.
Americans.
No, sir. Englishmen!
Please, Mr. Dickinson,
must you start banging?
How is a man to sleep?
Forgive me, Dr. Franklin,
but must you start speaking?
How is a man to stay awake?
We'll promise to be quiet, sir.
I'm sure everyone prefers that you remain asleep. If I'm to hear myself called an Englishman, sir, I assure you I prefer I'd remained asleep. Oh, now, what's so terrible about being called an Englishman? The English don't seem to mind. Nor would I, were I given the full rights of an Englishman. But to call me one without those rights is like calling an ox a bull. He's thankful for the honor, but he'd much rather have restored what's rightfully his. When did you first notice they were missing, sir? Fortunately, the people of these colonies maintain a higher regard for their mother country. Higher, certainly, than she feels for them. Never was such a valuable possession so stupidly and so recklessly managed than this entire continent by the British Crown. Our industry discouraged, our resources pillaged. Worst of all, our very character stifled. We've spawned a new race here, Mr. Dickinson. Rougher, simpler, more violent, more enterprising, less refined. We're a new nationality. We require a new nation. Well, that may be your opinion, Dr. Franklin,
but, as I said, the people
feel quite differently.
Now, what do you know
about the people, Dickinson?
You don't speak for the people.
You represent only yourself.
And that precious status quo
you keep imploring the people
to preserve for their own good
is nothing more than the eternal
preservation of your own property.
Mr. Adams,
you have an annoying talent
for making such delightful words
as "property" sound
quite distasteful.
In heaven's name,
what's wrong with property?
Perhaps you've forgotten that many
of us first came to these shores
in order to secure
rights to property,
and that we hold these rights no less
dear than the rights you speak of.
Yes. So safe, so fat,
so comfortable in Pennsylvania.
And what is this
independence of yours
except the private grievance
of Massachusetts?
Why is it always Boston
that breaks the King's peace?
My dear Congress, you must
not adopt this evil measure.
It is the work of the devil.
Leave it where it belongs.
In New England.
Brother Dickinson,
New England has been
fighting the devil
for more than 100 years.
And as of now, Brother Sherman,
the devil has been
winning hands down.
Why, at this very moment, he's sitting right here in this Congress. Don't let him deceive you. This proposal is entirely his doing. It may bear Virginia's name, but it reeks of Adams, Adams and more Adams. Look at him. Ready to lead this continent down the fiery path of total destruction. Oh, good God! Why can't you acknowledge what already exists? It has been more than a year since Concord and Lexington. Damn it, man, we're at war, right now! You may be at war. You, Boston and John Adams. But you will never speak for Pennsylvania. Nor for Delaware. Mr. Read, you represent only one-third of Delaware. The sensible third, Mr. Rodney. Sit down, you scurvy dog, or I'll knock you down. Sit down, all three of you! McNair, do something about that damn dog! And here, fetch me a rum. Get that dog first! Rum, rum! I only got two hands. Christ, it's hot! Please do go on, gentlemen. You're making the only breeze in Philadelphia. Mr. Adams, perhaps you could clear up something for me? After we have achieved independence,
who do you propose would
govern in South Carolina?
The people, of course.
Which people, sir?
The people of South Carolina
or the people of Massachusetts?
Why don't you admit it, Neddy?
You're against independence
now and you always will be.
Aye.
Gentlemen,
you refuse to understand us.
We desire independence. Yes.
For South Carolina.
That is our country.
And as such, we don't
wish to belong to anyone.
Not to England and not to you.
We intend to have
one nation, Rutledge.
A nation of
sovereign states, Mr. Adams.
United for our
mutual protection,
but separate for
our individual pursuits.
Now, that is what
we have understood it to be,
and that is what
we will support.
As soon as everyone supports it.
Well, there you are,
Mr. Adams.
You must see that we need time.
Time to make certain who we are
and where we stand
in regard to one another.
For if we do not determine the nature
of the beast before we set it free,
it will end by consuming us all.
For once in your life, Wilson,
take a chance.
I say the time is now.
It may never come again.
Your clock is fast, Mr. Adams.
I say we're not yet ripe for independence.
Not ripe? Hell, we're rotting for want of it.
Gentlemen, please, what in God's name is the infernal hurry?
Why must this question be settled now?
What's wrong with now, Mr. Chase?
General Washington is in the field.
If he's defeated, as it now appears, we'll be inviting the hangman.
But if, by some miracle, he should actually win, we can then declare anything we damn please.
The sentiments of North Carolina precisely.
Has it ever occurred to either of you that an army needs something to fight for in order to win? A purpose? A goal? A flag of its own?
Mr. Adams, how can a nation of only 2 million souls stand up to an empire of 10 million?
Think of it. 10 million.
How do we compensate for that shortage?
It's simple, Mr. Chase. Increase and multiply. How's that?
We will more than compensate with spirit.
I tell you, there is a spirit out there among the people
that is sadly lacking
in this Congress.
Yes, of course.
Now it's spirit.
Well, why didn't
I think of that?
No army, no navy,
no arms, no ammunition,
no treasury, no friends,
but, bless our soul, spirit.
Mr. Lee, Mr. Hopkins,
Mr. Rodney, Colonel McKean,
Dr. Franklin.
Why have you joined
this incendiary little man,
this Boston radical,
this agitator,
this demagogue,
this madman?
Are you calling me
a madman, you...
You fribble!
You and your
Pennsylvania proprietors,
oh, you cool, considerate men,
you hang to the rear
on every issue,
so that if we should go under,
you'll still remain afloat.
Are you calling me a coward?
Yes. Coward!
Madman!
Landlord!
Lawyer!
Stop it! Stop it!
This is the Congress.
Stop it, I say!
The enemy's out there.
No, Mr. Rodney,
the enemy is here.
No. I say he's out there.
England.
England closing in,
cutting off our air.
There's no time!
No air.
Dr. Hall.
Colonel McKean.
Aye. It's the cancer.
But he should go home.
A man should die in his own bed.
I'm here, Caesar.
I leave you
a divided Delaware.
Forgive me.
I'll take you home, Caesar.
I'll be back within the week.
Mr. President, South
Carolina calls the question.
What's that, Mr. Rutledge?
I said, Mr. President,
South Carolina desires
to end the debate
and calls the question
of independence.
Delaware seconds.
Thank you.
Gentlemen, please!
The question has been
called and seconded.
The secretary
will record the vote.
Franklin, do something.
Think.
I'm thinking,
but nothing's coming.
All those in favor of the
resolution on independence
as proposed by the colony of
Virginia, signify by saying...
Mr. Secretary.
Will you please read
the resolution again?
What?
I've forgotten it.
Now, Benjamin...
"Resolved, that these
united colonies are, "and of a right ought to be, free and independent..."

Excuse me. Is this the Continental Congress?
Yes, I can see that it must be.
It's all right.
We found it.
We've been looking for you everywhere, you see.
Someone told us that you might be at Carpenters' Hall and someone else suggested Library Hall, and...
So, finally, we asked a constable...

Excuse me, sir, but, if you don't mind, the Congress is about to decide the question of American independence.
Oh, how splendid. That means we're not too late.
These gentlemen are Mr. Francis Hopkinson, Mr. Richard Stockton, and I'm the Reverend John Witherspoon. We're the new delegates from New Jersey.

New Jersey?
Dr. Franklin,
I regret that I must be the bearer of unhappy tidings, sir, but your son, the royal governor of New Jersey, has been taken prisoner and has been moved under guard to the colony of Connecticut for safekeeping.
Is he unharmed, sir?
When last I heard, he was. Yes, sir.
Well, then why the long face?
I hear Connecticut is an excellent location.
Tell me. Why did they arrest the little bastard?
Our, uh...
New Jersey legislature has recalled the old delegation to this Congress and has sent a new one.
Quickly, man, where do you stand on independence?
Well, haven't I made that clear?
No.
Well, I suppose I haven't. But that's the reason for the change.
See, we've been instructed to vote for independence.
Mr. President!
Massachusetts is now ready for the vote on independence, and reminds the chair of its privilege to decide all votes that are deadlocked.
I won't forget, Mr. Adams. The chair takes this opportunity to welcome the New Jersey delegation and appoints the Reverend Witherspoon congressional chaplain if he will accept the post. With much pleasure, sir. Very well.
Mr. Thomson, you may now proceed with the vote on independence. All in favor of the resolution on independence as proposed by the colony of Virginia, signify by saying...
Mr. President. Pennsylvania moves that any vote in favor of independence must be unanimous. What? I second the motion.
Judge Wilson!
Oh, my God.
Delaware seconds,
Mr. President.
No vote has ever had to be unanimous,
Dickinson, and you know it.
Yes, but this one must be.
On what grounds?
That no colony be torn from its mother
country without its own consent.
Hear! Hear!
But it will never be
unanimous, damn it.
If you say so, Mr. Adams.
It has been moved and seconded
that the vote on independence
must be unanimous
in order to carry.
All those in favor,
signify by saying yea.
Yea!
One, two, three,
four, five, six.
Six colonies say yea.
Against?
Nay!
One, two, three,
four, five, six.
Six colonies say nay.
Mr. Secretary, New York
abstains courteously.
Mr. Morris, why does New
York constantly abstain?
Why doesn't New York
simply stay in New York?
Very well.
The vote is tied.
The principles of independence
have no greater
advocate in Congress
than its president.
That is why I must join those
who vote for unanimity.
Good God, John! What are you doing?
You've sunk us.
Now, hear me out.
Don't you see that any colony
who opposes independence
will be forced to fight
on the side of England?
That we'll be setting
brother against brother,
that our new nation will carry
as its emblem the mark of Cain.
I can see no other way.
Either we all walk together, or
together we must stay where we are.
The man's from Massachusetts.
Very well.
Proceed, Mr. Thomson.
A unanimous vote
being necessary to carry,
if any be opposed to the
resolution on independence
as proposed by the colony
of Virginia, signify by...
Mr. President.
Oh, for heaven's sake,
let me get through it once.
Mr. President.
I move for a postponement.
Postponement?
I wish you the same
luck I had with it.
Mr. Adams is right.
We need a postponement.
On what grounds?
Mr. President, how can this
Congress vote on independence
without a written declaration
of some sort defining it?
What sort of declaration?
Ah, well, you know, listing the
reasons for the separation,
our purposes, goals,
so forth, so on.
Ditto, Ditto.
Ditto, ditto,
et cetera, et cetera.
We know those, don't we?
Oh, yes, good God, we know them,
but what about
the rest of the world?
Certainly we require
the assistance
of a powerful nation
such as France or Spain.
And such a written declaration
would be consistent
with European delicacy.

Come now, Mr. Adams. You'll
have to do better than that.
Answer straight.
What would be its purpose?
Yes. Well...
To place before mankind the
common sense of the subject
in terms so plain and firm
as to command their assent.
Mr. Jefferson,
are you seriously suggesting
that we publish a paper
declaring to all the world
that an illegal rebellion
is, in reality, a legal one?
Mr. Dickinson,
I'm surprised at you.
You should know that rebellion is
always legal in the first person,
such as "our rebellion."
It's only in the third person,
"their rebellion,"
that it is illegal.
Mr. President,
I second the motion
to postpone the vote
on independence
for a period of time sufficient
for the writing of a declaration.
It has been moved and seconded.
Mr. Thomson.
All those in favor of the motion to
postpone, signify by saying yea.
Yea!
One, two, three,
four, five, six.
Six colonies say yea.
Against?
Nay!
One, two, three,
four, five, six.
Six colonies say nay.
Mr. Secretary, New York
abstains courteously.
Mr. Morris, what in hell
goes on in New York?
I'm sorry, Mr. President,
but the simple fact is that
our legislature has never sent us
explicit instructions on anything.
Never?
That's impossible.
Mr. President,
have you ever been present
at a meeting of
the New York legislature?
They speak very fast
and very loud,
and nobody listens
to anybody else
with the result that
nothing ever gets done.
I beg the Congress' pardon.
My sympathies, Mr. Morris.
The vote again being tied, the chair
decides in favor of postponement.
So ruled.
A committee will now be formed
to manage the declaration.
Said document to be written, debated,
approved by the beginning of July,
some three weeks hence.
At which time,
Virginia's resolution
on independence
will finally be voted.
Is that clear?
Very well. Will the following gentlemen serve on the Declaration Committee, Dr. Franklin?
Gladly.
Mr. John Adams?
Yes.
Mr. Sherman?
Mr. Livingston?
Right.
And, of course, Mr. Lee.
Oh, excuse me, but I must be returning to the sovereign colony of Virginia as I have been asked to serve as governor. And therefore I must decline respectful-Lee.
Very well, Mr. Lee, you're excused then. I suppose we could leave it a four-man committee. Just a moment. This business needs a Virginian. Therefore I propose a replacement.
Mr. Thomas Jefferson.
No. Mr. Adams...
Very well, Mr. Adams.
Mr. Jefferson will serve. I'm going home, too, to my wife.
Move to adjourn!
Wait.
I second.
Mr. Hancock, I haven't seen her for six months.
Moved and seconded. Any objections? I have objections. I have lots of objections. So ruled!
Congress stands adjourned!
John, I need to see my wife.
It's all right.
Come along, come along.
No. I'm going
home tonight.
Of course you are.
Of course.
McNair, some rum
up to my office.
Oh, don't worry, Tom.
Let me handle it.
I'll get Adams to write it.
I don't know. He had a funny look on his face.
He always does.
All right, gentlemen,
let's get on with it.
Which of us will write our Declaration of Independence?
Mr. Adams,
I say you should write it
To your legal mind
and brilliance we defer.
Is that so?
Well, if I'm the one to do it
They'll run their quill pens through it
I'm obnoxious and disliked
You know that, sir
Yes, I know
But I say you should write it, Franklin, yes you
Hell no!
Yes, you, Dr. Franklin, you
But...
You!
But...
Mr. Adams, but, Mr. Adams
The things I write are only light extemporanea
I won't put politics on paper, it's a mania
So I refuse to use the pen
in Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania
Refuse to use the pen
Mr. Sherman,
I say you should write it
You are never
controversial as it were
That is true
Whereas if I'm the one to do it
They'll run their
quill pens through it
I'm obnoxious and disliked
You know that, sir
Yes, I do
So I say you should
write it, Roger, yes, you
Good heavens, no
Yes, you, Roger Sherman
You!
But...
Mr. Adams, but, Mr. Adams
I cannot write with any
style or proper etiquette
I don't know
a participle from a predicate
I am just a simple cobbler
from Connecticut
Connecticut
A simple cobbler, he
Ah.
Mr. Livingston,
maybe you should write it
You have many friends
and you're a diplomat
Oh, that word
Whereas if I'm the one to do it
They'll run their
quill pens through it
He's obnoxious and disliked
Did you know that?
I hadn't heard
So I say you should
write it, Robert, yes, you
Not me, Johnny
Yes, you, Robert Livingston
You!
But...
Mr. Adams, dear Mr. Adams
I've been presented with a
new son by the noble stork
So I am going home
to celebrate and pop the cork
With all the Livingstons
together back in old New York
New York
Livingston's going to pop a cork
Mr. Adams
Leave me alone
Mr. Jefferson...
Mr. Adams, I beg of you.
I've not seen my wife
these past six months.
"And we solemnly declare that
we will preserve our liberties,
"being with one mind resolved to die
free men rather than to live slaves."
Thomas Jefferson, "On the Necessity
of Taking Up Arms," 1775.
Magnificent.
You write 10 times better
than any man in Congress,
including me.
For a man of only 33 years,
you possess a happy talent
for composition
and a remarkable felicity
of expression.
Now, then, sir.
Will you be a patriot
or a lover?
A lover.
No.
But I burn, Mr. A.
So do I, Mr. J.
You?
You do?
John.
Who'd have thought it?
Mr. Jefferson  
Dear Mr. Jefferson  
I'm only 41,  
I still have my virility  
And I can romp through Cupid's  
grove with great agility  
But life is more than  
sexual combustibility  
Jefferson, stop right there.  
'Bustability  
Combustibili...  
Quiet!  
Now, you'll write it, Mr. J.  
Who will make me, Mr. A.?  
I.  
You?  
Yes.  
How?  
By physical force, if necessary.  
It's your duty, damn it.  
Your duty!  
Mr. Adams  
Damn you, Mr. Adams  
You're obnoxious and disliked  
That cannot be denied  
Once again you stand between  
me and my lovely bride  
Lovely bride  
Oh, Mr. Adams, you are  
driving me to homicide  
Jefferson, stop right there!  
Homicide  
Homicide  
Quiet!  
The decision is yours,  
Mr. Jefferson.  
Do as you like with it.  
We may see murder yet  
Damn the man.  
God damn the man.  
Sorry.  
Pardon me, sir.  
Step aside. Step aside.  
How are you?
Franklin.
Jefferson!
What is that racket?
Latest thing from Europe, John.
It's called music.
I came here hoping to hear a
pen scratching, not a bow.
Jefferson!
I know you're in there!
Ah! Jefferson,
are you finished?
Well, is it written yet?
Well, you've had
a whole week, man.
Is it done?
Can I see it?
"There comes a time in the lives
of men when it becomes necessary
"to advance from
that subordination
"in which they
have hitherto..."
This is terrible.
Where's the rest of it?
Do you mean to say
that it is not yet finished?
No, sir.
I mean to say that
it's not yet begun.
Good God!
A whole week.
The entire Earth
was created in a week.
Someday you must tell me
how you did it.
Disgusting.
Look at him, Franklin.
Virginia's most famous lover.
Virginia abstains.
Well, cheer up, Jefferson.
Get out of the dumps. It'll come
out all right, I assure you.
Now, get back to work.
Franklin, tell him to
get back to work.
I think he's asleep.
Wake up, Franklin!
Hello! And whose
little girl are you?
John, who is she?
His wife.
I hope.
What makes you think so?
Because I sent for her.
You what?
Well, it simply
occurred to me that
the sooner his problem
was solved,
the sooner our problem
is solved.
That's good thinking, John.
Good thinking.
Madam, may I present myself?
John Adams.
Adams.
John Adams.
Oh, and Dr. Franklin.
The inventor of the stove.
Jefferson, kindly
present me to your wife.
She is your wife, isn't she?
Well, of course she is.
Look at the way they fit.
Come along, John, come along.
Franklin, where are you going?
Come along, John.
Come along where?
There's work to be done.
Obviously.
Good God. You don't
mean to say that...
I mean, they're not going to...
In the middle of the afternoon?
Not everybody's
from Boston, John.
Incredible.
Well, goodbye, John.
Uh... Uh...
Franklin?
Have you eaten?
Not yet, but...
I understand the turkey's fresh at Bunch of Grapes.
Well, the fact is
I have a rendezvous, John.
I'd ask you along, but talking makes her nervous.
Yes, of course.
Incredible.
Abigail?
I'm very lonely, Abigail.
Are you, John?
As long as you were sending for wives, why didn't you send for your own?
Oh, now, don't be unreasonable, Abigail.
Now I'm unreasonable.
You must add that to your list.
List?
The catalog of my faults you included in your last letter.
Oh, they were fondly intended, madam.
That I play at cards badly?
A compliment.
That my posture is crooked?
An endearment.
That I read, write and think too much?
An irony.
That I'm pigeon-toed?
Well, now there you have me, Abby.
I'm afraid you are pigeon-toed.
Please. Come to Philadelphia.
Please come.
Oh, thank you, John.
I do want to, but you know
now it's not possible.
The children have the measles.
So you wrote.
Tom and little Abby.
Only now it's
Quincy and Charles.
And it appears the farm here
in Braintree is failing, John.
The chickens and the geese
have all died.
The apples never survived
the late frost.
How do you suppose
she managed to get away?
Well, the winters
are softer in Virginia.
And their women, John?
Fit for Virginians, madam,
but pale, puny things
beside New England girls.
John.
I thank you for that.
Abigail, how goes it with you?
Not well, John.
Not at all well.
I live like a nun in a cloister
Solitary, celibate I hate it
And you, John?
Ugh!
I live like a monk in an abbey
Ditto, ditto I hate it
Write to me
with sentimental effusion
Let me revel
in romantic illusion
Do you still smell of
vanilla and spring air?
And is my
favorite lover's pillow
Still firm and fair?
What was there, John
Still is there, John
Come soon as you can
to my cloister
I've forgotten
the feel of your hand
Soon, madam, we shall walk
in Cupid's grove together
And we'll fondly survey
And we'll fondly survey
That promised land
That promised land
Till then, till then
Till then, till then
I am as I ever was
I am as I ever was
And ever shall be
And ever shall be
Yours Yours
Saltpeter
John
John?
John!
Hmm?
What?
What are you doing down here?
I thought you'd be up there,
cracking the whip.
Oh, well, the shutters
are still closed.
My word! So they are.
Well, as the French say...
Oh, please, Franklin!
Spare me your bawdy mind
first thing in the morning.
Dare we call?
A congressman dares anything.
Go ahead.
Me?
Your voice is more piercing.
Oh, John, look at her.
Just look at her.
I am.
She's even more magnificent
than I remember.
Of course, we didn't see
much of her front last night.
Good morrow, madam.
Good morrow.
Is it the habit in
Philadelphia for strangers
to shout at ladies
from the street?
Not really, but...
And for men of your age it is not
only unseemly, it is unsightly.
Uh, excuse me, madam,
but we met last evening.
I spoke to no one last evening.
Indeed, you did not.
Nonetheless,
we did present ourselves.
This is Mr. John Adams.
I'm Dr. Benjamin Franklin.
The inventor of the stove.
Please! I know your names
very well, but...
Well, you said you presented
yourselves last night?
It's of no matter. Your thoughts
were well-taken elsewhere.
Oh.
My husband is not yet up.
Well, then shall we start over again?
Won't you join us?
Yes, of course.
Well, no wonder
the man couldn't write.
Who would think of
independence married to her?
I feel an absolute fool.
That's good for you, John.
I tell you, Franklin,
it's positively indecent.
John, they're young
and they're in love.
Not them, Franklin. Us.
Standing down here,
waiting for them to, uh...
Well, what will people think?
Don't worry, John. The history
books will clean it up.
Well, it doesn't matter.
I'll not appear in the history
books anyway. Only you.
Franklin did this
and Franklin did that,
and Franklin did
some other damned thing.
Franklin smote the ground
and out sprang
George Washington,
fully grown and on his horse.
Franklin then electrified him
with his miraculous lightning rod
then the three of them, Franklin,
Washington and the horse,
conducted the entire
revolution all by themselves.
I like it.
I beg your pardon, gentlemen.
It is indeed an honor to meet the
two greatest men in America.
Certainly the greatest
within earshot anyway.
I'm not an idle flatterer,
Dr. Franklin.
My husband
admires you both greatly.
Then we are doubly flattered,
for we admire very much that
what your husband admires.
Uh, did you sleep well, madam?
Hmm?
Huh!
Oh. Uh...
Well, I mean, did you lie...
Damn it, you know what I mean.
Yes, John, we know
what you mean.
Tell us about yourself.
We've heard precious little.
What's your first name? Martha.
Martha!
He might at least
have told us that.
Your husband
doesn't say very much.
Most silent man in Congress.
I have never heard him utter
three sentences together.
Not every man's a talker, John.
Yes, it's true, you know.
Tom is not a talker.
Oh, he never speaks his passions
He never speaks his views
Whereas other men speak volumes
The man I love is mute
In truth I can't recall
Being wooed with words
At all
Even now
Oh, don't stop, madam.
No. Tell us,
how did he win you?
And how does he hold on
to a bounty such as you?
Well, surely you've noticed that Tom
is a man of many accomplishments.
Of course.
Author, lawyer, statesman,
architect, farmer.
And still one more that
I hesitate to mention.
Don't hesitate, madam.
Don't hesitate.
No, tell us. What else can
that redheaded tombstone do?
He plays the violin
He tucks it right under his chin
And he bows
Oh, he bows
For he knows Yes, he knows
That it's
hi-hi-hi-diddle diddle
'Twixt my heart,
Tom and his fiddle
My strings are unstrung
Hi-hi-hi
I am undone
The violin, madam?
I hear his violin
And I get that feeling within
And I sigh Oh, I sigh
He draws near, very near
And it's
hi-hi-hi-diddle diddle
And goodbye to the fiddle
My strings are unstrung
Hi-hi-hi
Hi
I'm always undone
That settles it, John.
We're taking up the violin.
Very well, madam. You have us playing
the violin. What happens next?
Next, Mr. Adams?
Yes. What does
Tom do now?
Why, just what you'd expect.
We dance.
Dance?
Dance? Incredible!
One, two, three.
One, two, three!
Who's playing the violin?
John, really?
John, you can dance.
We still do a few
things in Boston, Franklin.
Hi-hi-hi
Hi
When heaven calls to me
Sing me no sad elegy
Say I died
Loving bride
Loving wife, loving life
For it was
hi-hi-hi-diddle diddle
'Twixt my heart,
Tom and his fiddle
And ever 'twill be
Hi-hi-hi
Hi
Through eternity
He plays the violin
He plays the violin
Look! Look, Franklin,
he's done it. He's written it.
"Dear Mr. Adams, I am
taking my wife back to bed.
"Kindly go away. Your obedient, T.
Jefferson."
Incredible!
You know, perhaps
I should have written
the declaration after all.
At my age, there's little doubt
the pen is mightier
than the sword.
For it's
hi-hi-hi-diddle diddle
And God bless
a man who can fiddle
And independency
Hi-hi-hi
Hi-hi-hi
Hi Hi
Ya-da-da-da-da
Ya-da-da-da-da
Through eternity
Through eternity
He plays the violin
He plays the violin
Violin Violin
Violin Violin
Pennsylvania, Delaware,
Maryland, Virginia's absent,
and North Carolina,
South Carolina and Georgia.
And what follows is a
complete and up-to-date list
of all the committees
of this Congress,
now sitting, about to
sit or just having sat.
"A committee formed to investigate
a complaint made against
"the quality of yeast manufactured by Mr.
Henry Pendleton's mill
"designated as
the Yeast Committee."
"A committee formed to consider
the most effective method
"of dealing with spies
"designated as
the Spies Committee."
"A committee formed to
think, perhaps to do,
"but in any case, to gather,
to meet, to confer, to talk,
"and perhaps even to resolve
that each rifle regiment
"be allowed at least one drum and
one fire attached to each company,
"designated as the
Drum and Fife Committee."
"A committee formed to..."
Where is that committee?
What do you think of it,
Doctor? Democracy?
What Plato called
"a charming form of government
"full of variety
and disorder."
I never knew Plato had been
to Philadelphia.
Ben, I want you
to see some cards
I've gone and had printed up.
Ought to save everybody here
a lot of time and effort,
considering the epidemic
of bad disposition
that's been going
on around here lately
"Dear sir, you are, without
any doubt, a rogue, a rascal,
"a villain, a thief, a
scoundrel and a mean, dirty,
"stinking, sniveling, sneaking,
pimping, pocket-picking,  
"thrice double-damned  
no-good son-of-a-bitch."
And you sign your name.
What do you think?
I'll take a dozen right now.
A-ha! Here it is.
"A committee formed to answer all  
congressional correspondence,  
"designated as the Congressional  
Correspondence Committee."
All right, Franklin, enough socializing.
There's work to be done.
Good morning, John.
What?
Good morning.
Oh. Good morning,  
good morning.
Now then, let's get to it.
Get to what?
Unanimity, of course.
Look at that board.
Six nays to win over  
in little more than a week.
"A committee formed to consider  
the problem of counterfeit money  
"designated as the Counterfeit  
Money Committee."
Oh, God! What...
All right, John, all right.
Where shall we start?
Well, what about Delaware?
Sad thing to see them on the  
wrong side after all this time.
Any news of Rodney?
Yes. McKean's back.
Thomas!
"A committee formed  
to study the causes  
"of our military  
defeat in Canada."
Thomas,  
how did you leave Caesar?  
Is he still alive?
Aye, but the journey to Dover was fearful hard on him. He never complained, but I could see the poor man was suffering terrible. But you got him safely home. I did, but I doubt he'll ever set foot out of it again. That leaves you and Read split down the middle. Will he come over? I don't know. He's a stubborn ignoramus. Work on him. Keep after him till you wear him down. Look, John, face facts, will you? If it were just Read standing in our way, it wouldn't be so bad, but look for yourself, man. Maryland, Pennsylvania and the entire South. It's impossible! Well, it's impossible if we all stand around complaining about it. To work, McKean! One foot in front of the other! I believe I put it a better way. Never leave off until tomorrow... Shut up, Franklin. But what good will it do? You know Dickinson. He'll never give in. And you haven't heard the last of Rutledge either. Never mind about them. Your job is George Read. Talk him deaf if you have to, but bring us back Delaware. There's a simpler way. What? This'll break the tie.
All right, John, who's next?
"A committee
formed to keep secrets
"designated as
the Secrets Committee."
Pennsylvania and Maryland.
Now, I suggest you try to get
your own house into order
and I'll take a crack
at old vacant-face.
Lord, look at him stuff himself.
Ah, Mr. Chase!
How about it, Chase? When are
you coming to your senses, man?
Please, Mr. Adams,
not while I'm eating.
Mr. Wilson, sir?
It's time to assert yourself.
Tell me something.
When you were a judge,
how in hell did you
ever make a decision?
The decisions I made were all
based on legality and precedence.
But there is no legality here
and certainly no precedent.
Because it's a
new idea, you clot!
We'll be setting
our own precedent!
No, Mr. McKean.
No, no, no!
Damn your eyes, Read!
You come into this
world screaming "no,"
and you're determined to leave
it the same way, you slimy worm!
The Congress is
waiting on you, Chase!
America is waiting!
The whole world is waiting!
What's that? Kidney?
Leave me alone,
Mr. Adams!
You're wasting your time.
If I thought we
could win this war,
I'd be at the front
of your ranks.
But you must know
it's impossible.
You've heard General
Washington's dispatches.
His army has fallen to pieces.
Washington is exaggerating
the situation
in order to arouse this
torpid Congress into action.
Why, as chairman of
the War Committee,
I can state for a fact
that the army has never
been in better shape.
Never have troops
been more cheerful.
Never have soldiers
been more resolute.
Never have training and
discipline been more spirited.
Oh, good God.
May we have
your ears, gentlemen?
Mr. Thomson
has a dispatch.
"From the Commander, army of the
United Colonies in New York,
"dispatch number 1, 157,
"to the Honorable Congress,
John Hancock, president.
"Dear sir, it is with the utmost
despair that I must report to you
"the disorder and confusion
"that reign in
every department."
Oh, sweet Jesus!
"The Continental soldier
is as nothing ever seen
"in this or any other century.
"He is a misfit, ignorant of hygiene, destructive, disorderly and totally disrespectful of rank. Only this last is understandable, as there is an incredible reek of stupidity amongst the officers. The situation is most desperate at the New Jersey training ground in New Brunswick where every able-bodied whore in the...

Whore? In the colonies has assembled. There are constant reports of drunkenness, desertion, foul language, naked bathing in the Raritan River, and an epidemic of the French disease. I have placed this town off-limits to all military personnel with the exception of officers. I beseech the Congress to dispatch the War Committee to this place in the hope of restoring some of the order and discipline we need to survive. Your obedient, G. Washington.

That man would depress a hyena. Well, Mr. Adams, you're chairman of the War Committee. Do you feel up to whoring, drinking, deserting and New Brunswick? There must be some mistake. I have an aunt who lives in New Brunswick. You must tell her to keep up the good work.
Come, come, Mr. Adams. You must see that it's hopeless. Let us recall General Washington and disband the Continental Army before we're overwhelmed. Yes, indeed. The English would like that, now, wouldn't they? Why not ask them yourself? They ought to be here any minute. And when they hang you, Mr. Adams, I hope you will put in a good word for the rest of us. Face facts, Mr. Adams. A handful of drunk and disorderly recruits against the entire British Army, the finest musket men on Earth. How can we win? How can we even hope to survive? Answer me straight, Chase. If you thought we could beat the Redcoats, would Maryland say yea to independence? Well, I suppose... No supposing. Would you or wouldn't you? Very well, Mr. Adams. Yes, we would. Then come with me to New Brunswick and see for yourself. John, are you mad? You heard what Washington said. It's a shambles. They're pushing you into it, Johnny! What do you say, Chase? Go ahead, Sam. It sounds lively as hell up there.
All right.
Why not?
And maybe it'll be John Adams
who comes to his senses.
Mr. President,
the War Committee
will heed General
Washington's request.
A party consisting of
Mr. Chase, Dr. Franklin
and myself will
leave immediately.
Is that...
Is that satisfactory
with you, Dr. Franklin?
Wake up, Franklin! You're
going to New Brunswick.
Like hell I am.
What for?
The whoring and the drinking.
All right, Chase! Move all that lard.
Not a moment to lose.
Left, right, left, right.
Left, right, left, right.
Left, right, left!
Mr. McNair, all this
talk of independence
has left a certain
foulness in the air.
My friends and I
would appreciate it
if you could open some windows.
Well, what about the flies?
The windows,
Mr. McNair.
Open the windows,
close the windows.
Sweet Jesus!
Oh, say, do you see what I see?
Congress sitting
here in sweet serenity
I could cheer,
the reason's clear
For the first time in a year
Adams isn't here
And look, the sun is in the sky
A breeze is blowing by
And there's not a single fly
I sing hosanna
Hosanna
Hosanna, hosanna
And it's cool
Come, ye cool,
cool, conservative men
Our like may never
ever be seen again
We have land, cash in hand
Self-command,
future planned
Fortune thrives,
society survives
In neatly ordered lives
With well-endowed wives
Come sing hosanna
Hosanna
In our breeding and our manner
We are cool
Come, ye cool,
cool, considerate set
We'll dance together
to the same minuet
To the right, ever to the right
Never to the left,
forever to the right
Let our creed be never to exceed
Regulated speed
No matter what the need
Come sing hosanna
Hosanna
Emblazoned on our banner
ls keep cool
To the right, ever to the right
Never to the left,
forever to the right
Hands attach, tightly latch
Everybody match
I have a new dispatch
"From the Commander, army of the
United Colonies in New York,
"dispatch number 1, 158,
to the Honorable Congress,
John Hancock, president.
"Dear sir, I awoke this morning
to find that General Howe
"has landed 25,000 British
regulars and Hessian mercenaries
"on Staten Island,
"and that the fleet,
under the command
"of his brother,
Admiral Lord Howe,
"controls not only the
Hudson and the east rivers,
"but New York Harbor,
"which now looks like
all of London afloat.
"I can no longer,
in good conscience,
"withhold from the
Congress my certainty
"that the British
military object
"at this time is Philadelphia.
"Happy should I be if I could see
the means of preventing them,
"but, at present,
I confess I do not.
"How I wish I had never
seen the Continental Army.
"I would have done better to
retire to the back country,
"and to live in a wigwam.
"Your obedient,
"G. Washington."
What we do, we do rationally
We never, ever go
off half-cocked, not we
Why begin till we
know that we can win
And if we cannot win,
why bother to begin?
We say this game's
not of our choosing
Why should we risk losing?
We're cool, cool men
Mr. Hancock,
you're a man of
property, one of us.
Why don't you join
us in our minuet?
Why do you persist in
dancing with John Adams?
Good Lord, sir, you
don't even like him.
That is true.
He annoys me quite a lot
But still I'd rather trot
to Mr. Adams' new gavotte
Why? For personal glory?
For a place in history?
Be careful, sir. History will brand
him and his followers as traitors.
Traitors, Mr. Dickinson?
To what?
The British Crown or
the British half crown?
Fortunately, there are
not enough men of property
in America to dictate policy.
Perhaps not, but don't forget
that most men with nothing
would rather protect the
possibility of becoming rich
than face the reality
of being poor.
And that is why
they will follow us...
To the right, ever to the right
Never to left,
forever to the right
Where there's gold,
a market to behold
Tradition that is old
Reluctant to be bold
I sing hosanna
Hosanna
In a sane and lucid manner
We are cool!
We're the cool,
cool, considerate men
Whose like may never,
ever be seen again
We've got land, cash in hand
Self-command, future planned
And we'll hold to our gold
Tradition that is old
Reluctant to be bold
We say this game's
not of our choosing
Why should we risk losing?
We're cool
Cool
Cool, cool men
How'd you like to try and borrow
a dollar from one of them?
You want some more rum, General?
General?
Lord, I ain't even a corporal.
Yeah, well, what's
the army know?
Here, son.
There you go.
Sit down, gentlemen. The chair
rules it's too damn hot to work.
Well, General, what's
it like out there?
You probably know more than me.
Sitting here?
Sweet Jesus, this
is the last place
to find out what's going on.
I'm aiming to join up.
What are you talking about?
You don't have to join up.
You're in Congress.
What's that got to do with it?
Well, you don't see them rushing
off to get killed, do you?
They sure are great ones for sending
others, I can tell you that.
Hey, who sits here?
Caesar Rodney of Delaware.
Where are you from, General?
Watertown.
Now where's that?
Massachusetts.
Well, then you
belong over there.
But be careful.
There's something
about that chair
that makes a man awful noisy.
You seen any fighting?
Sure did.
I see's my two best friends get
shot dead on the very same day.
And at Lexington it was, too.
Right on the village green.
When they didn't
come home for supper,
their mamas went down the
hill looking for them.
Mrs. Lowell,
she found Timothy.
Right off.
But Mrs. Pickett...
She looked near half
the night for William.
He went and crawled
off the green
before he died.
Mama, hey, Mama
Come looking for me
I'm here in the meadow
By the red maple tree
Mama, hey, Mama
Look sharp
Here I be
Hey, hey
Mama, look sharp
Them soldiers, they fired
Oh, Ma, did we run
But then we turned round
And the battle begun
Then I went under
Oh, Ma, am I done?
Hey, hey
Mama, look sharp
My eyes are wide open
My face to the sky
Is that you I'm hearing
In the tall grass nearby
Mama, come find me
Before I do die
Hey, hey
Mama
Look sharp
I'll close your eyes
My Billy
Them eyes that cannot see
And I'll bury you
My Billy
Beneath the maple tree
And
Never again
Will you whisper to me
Hey
Oh, Mama
Look sharp
The secretary
will now read the report
of the Declaration Committee.
Mr. Thomson.
"A declaration by
the representatives
"of the United
States of America,
"in general Congress assembled.
"When in the course
of human events
"it becomes necessary
for one people
"to dissolve the political bands
"which have connected
them with another
"and to assume among
the powers of the Earth
"the separate and equal station
"to which the laws of nature
"and of nature's
god entitle them,
"a decent respect to the
opinions of mankind
"requires that they
should declare the causes
"which impel them
to the separation.
"We hold these
truths to be self-evident,
"that all men are created equal.
"They're endowed
by their creator
"with certain
inalienable rights,
"that among these are life, liberty
and the pursuit of happiness,
"that to secure
these rights...

Jefferson! We're back,
and we've got Maryland.
That is, we will,
as soon as Chase
gets through telling
the Maryland assembly
what we saw in New Brunswick.
He's in Annapolis right now,
describing a ragtag collection
of provincial militiamen
who couldn't drill
together, train together
or march together.
But when a flock
of ducks flew over
and they saw their first
meal in three full days,
sweet Jesus, could
they shoot together!
It was a slaughter.
A slaughter.
They're reading the declaration.
Good God! How far
have they gotten?
"To render the military independent of "
"and superior to "
the civil power."
"independent of "
and superior to..."

Nothing to fear.
It's a masterpiece.
I'm to be congratulated.
You?
For making him write it.
Oh, of course.
It's a masterpiece, I say
They will cheer
every word, every letter
I wish I felt that way
I believe I can put it better
Now then attend
as friend to friend
Our Declaration Committee
For us I see immortality
In Philadelphia City
A farmer, a lawyer
And a sage
A bit gouty in the leg
You know, it's quite bizarre
To think that here we are
Playing midwives to an egg
Egg? What egg?
America. The birth
of a new nation.
If only we could be sure
of what kind of
a bird it's going to be.
Tom has a point. What sort
of bird shall we choose
as the symbol of
our new America?
The eagle.
The dove.
The turkey.
The eagle.
The dove.
The eagle!
The eagle.
The turkey.
The eagle is a majestic bird.
The eagle is a scavenger,
a thief and a coward.
A symbol of over 10 centuries
of European mischief.
A turkey?
The turkey is
a truly noble bird.
Native American. Source of
sustenance of our original settlers.
An incredibly brave
fellow who will not flinch
at attacking a regiment
of Englishmen
single-handedly!
Therefore, the national bird
of America is going to be...
The eagle!
We're waiting for
the chirp, chirp, chirp
Of an eaglet being born
Waiting for the chirp,
chirp, chirp
On this humid Monday morning
In this congressional incubator
God knows the
temperature's hot enough
To hatch a stone,
let alone an egg
We're waiting for the
scratch, scratch, scratch
Of that tiny little fellow
Waiting for the egg to hatch
On this humid Monday morning
In this congressional incubator
God knows the
temperature's hot enough
To hatch a stone
But will it hatch an egg?
The declaration will be a triumph.
I tell you, a triumph.
If I was ever sure of
anything, I'm sure of that.
A triumph.
And if it isn't,
we've still got four days left
to think of something else.
The eagle's going
to crack the shell
Of the egg that England laid
Yes, sir, we can
tell, tell, tell
On this humid Monday morning
In this congressional incubator
And just as Tom here has written
Though the shell may
belong to Great Britain
The eagle inside belongs to us
And just as Tom here has written
We say, "To hell
with Great Britain"
The eagle inside belongs to us
"and to do all
other acts and things
"which independent
states may of right do.
"And for the support
of this declaration,
"we mutually pledge to
each other our lives,
"our fortunes and
our sacred honor."
Thank you, Mr. Thomson.
The Congress has
heard the report
of the Declaration Committee.
Are there any here who
wish to offer alterations,
deletions, amendments
to this declaration?
Mr. President!
Gentlemen!
Gentlemen, please!
Colonel McKean,
I saw your hand first.
Mr. Jefferson,
it's a funny paper you've written, Tom, but somewhere in it, you mention Scottish and foreign mercenaries sent to destroy us. Scottish, Tom?
That is in reference to a Highland regiment which stood against us at Boston.
It's more likely Germans wearing kilts to disguise their being there. I ask you to remove the word and avoid giving offense to a good people.
Mr. Jefferson?
The Reverend...
Witherspoon.
Mr. Jefferson, nowhere do you mention the Supreme Being.
Now, surely this was an oversight, for how could we hope to achieve a victory without His help? Therefore, I most humbly suggest the following addition to your final sentence. "With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence."
Mr. Jefferson?
Mr. Read.
Among your charges against the king, Mr. Jefferson, you accuse him of depriving us of the benefits of trial by jury. This is untrue, sir. In Delaware, we've always had trial by jury. In Massachusetts, we have not. Well, then I suggest that the words "in many cases" be added.
Mr. Jefferson?
"In many cases"?
Brilliant!
I suppose every time
you see those three words,
your puny chest
will swell with pride
over your great
historical contribution.
It's more memorable
than your unprincipled whitewash
of that race of barbarians!
Race of barbarians?
Why, I'll have you...
Colonel McKean,
Mr. Read, that's enough!
Mr. Hopkins. I've no
objections, Johnny.
I'm just trying to get a drink.
I should've known.
McNair, get him a rum.
Mr. Bartlett.
Mr. Jefferson.
I beg you to remember that we
still have friends in England.
I see no purpose in antagonizing
them with such phrases as...
"Unfeeling brethren"
and "enemies at war."
Our quarrel is with the British
king, not the British people.
Be sensible, Bartlett.
Remove those phrases,
and the entire paragraph
becomes meaningless.
And it so happens that it's one
of the most stirring and poetic
of any passage in the
entire document. Now...
We're a Congress, Mr. Adams,
not a literary society.
I ask that the entire
paragraph be stricken.
Mr. Jefferson?
Good God.
Jefferson, when are you going
to speak up for your own work?
I had hoped that the work
would speak for itself.
Mr. Hancock?
What is it,
Mr. McNair?
I can't say I'm very fond of
"The United States of America"
as a name for a new country.
I don't care what you're fond of, Mr.
McNair.
You're not a member
of this Congress!
Mr. Sherman.
Brother Jefferson,
I noted at least
two distinct and
direct references
to the British Parliament
in your declaration.
Do you think it's wise to
alienate that august body
in light of our contention
that they've never had any
authority over us anyway?
This is a revolution, damn it!
We're going to have
to offend somebody.
Brother Hancock!
You'll give yourself an attack of
apoplexy if you're not careful.
Have you heard what
they're doing to it?
Have you heard?
I heard.
And, so far, that's
just our friends.
Can you imagine what
our enemies will do?
The word "parliament" will
be removed wherever it occurs.
They won't be satisfied
till they remove
one of the "F's"
from Jefferson's name.
Courage, John. It won't
last much longer.
Mr. Dickinson.
Mr. Jefferson,
I have very little
interest in your paper,
as there's no doubt in my mind
that we've all but
heard the last of it.
But I am curious
about one thing.
Why do you refer to King
George as a tyrant?
Because he is a tyrant.
I remind you,
Mr. Jefferson,
that this tyrant
is still your king.
When a king becomes a tyrant,
he thereby breaks the contract
binding his subjects to him.
How so?
By taking away their rights.
Rights that came from
him in the first place?
All except one.
The right to be free
comes from nature.
And are we not free,
Mr. Jefferson?
Homes entered without warrant.
Citizens arrested
without charge.
And in many places,
free assembly itself denied.
No one approves of such things,
but these are dangerous times.
Be careful,
Mr. Dickinson.
Those who give up
some of their liberty
in order to obtain a
little temporary safety,
deserve neither
liberty nor safety.
Mr. Wilson.
Do we in Pennsylvania
consider King George a tyrant?
Well, I don't know.
He...
Oh. Uh...
No. No, we don't.
He's not a tyrant.
In Pennsylvania.
There you are,
Mr. Jefferson.
Your declaration does
not speak for us all.
I demand the word
"tyrant" be removed.
Very well.
Just a moment,
Mr. Thomson.
I do not consent.
The king is a tyrant
whether we say so or not.
We might as well say so.
But I already scratched it out.
Then scratch it back in.
Put it back, Mr. Thomson.
The king will remain a tyrant.
Mr. Hewes.
Mr. Jefferson.
Nowhere do you mention
deep-sea fishing rights.
Oh, good God!
Fishing rights!
How long is this
piddling to go on?
We have been here
for three full days.
We have endured, by my count,
85 separate changes,
and the removal of
close to 400 words.
Now, would you whip it and beat it till you break its spirit?
I tell you that document is a masterful expression of the American mind!
If there are no more changes, then I can assume the report of the Declaration Committee has been...
Just a moment, Mr. President.
Look out.
I wonder if we might prevail upon Mr. Thomson to read again a small portion of Mr. Jefferson's declaration.
The one beginning "He has waged cruel war."
"He has affected...
He's combined...
"He's abdicated...
He's plundered...
"He's constrained... He's excited...
He's incited...
"He's waged cruel war."
Here it is.
"He's waged cruel war against human nature itself "in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, "captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, "Determined to keep open a market "where men should be bought and sold, "he has prostituted his..."
That will suffice, Mr. Thomson.
I thank you, sir.
Mr. Jefferson, I can't quite make out what it is you're talking about.
Slavery, Mr. Rutledge.
Oh, yes.
You're referring to us
as slaves of the king.
No, sir. I'm referring
to our slaves.
Black slaves.
Why didn't you say so, sir?
Were you trying to
hide your meaning?
No, sir.
Just another
literary license, then.
If you like.
I don't like at all,
Mr. Jefferson.
To us, in South Carolina,
black slavery is
our peculiar institution,
and a cherished way of life.
Nevertheless,
we must abolish it.
Nothing is more certainly
written in the book of fate
than that these
people shall be free.
I am not concerned with the book
of fate right now, Mr. Jefferson.
I'm more concerned with what is
written in that little paper there.
That little paper there
deals with freedom
for Americans.
Oh, really?
Mr. Adams
is now calling our
black slaves "Americans."
Are they, now?
Yes, they are.
They're people and they're here.
If there's any other requirement,
I've never heard of it.
They are here, yes, but they are not
people, sir. They are property.
No, sir. They are people who are being treated as property. I tell you, the rights of human nature are deeply wounded by this infamous practice. Then see to your own wounds, Mr. Jefferson, for you are a practitioner! Are you not? I have already resolved to release my slaves. Then I'm sorry, for you've also resolved the ruination of your personal economy. Economy. Always economy. There's more to this than a filthy purse string, Rutledge. It's an offense against man and God. It's a stinking business, Mr. Rutledge. A stinking business. Is it really, Mr. Hopkins? Then what is that I smell floating down from the North? Could that be the aroma of hypocrisy? For who holds the other end of that filthy purse string, Mr. Adams? Our Northern brethren feeling a bit tender toward our slaves. They don't keep slaves. Oh, no. But they're willing to be considerable carriers of slaves to others. They're willing.
For the shilling.
Or haven't you heard,
Mr. Adams?
Clink, clink.
Molasses to rum
To slaves
Oh, what a beautiful waltz
You dance with us
We dance with you
In molasses and rum
And slaves
Who sail the ships out of Boston
Ladened with Bibles and rum?
Who drinks a toast
to the Ivory Coast?
Hail Africa,
the slavers have come
New England with Bibles
And rum
And it's off with
the rum and the Bibles
Take on the slaves, clink, clink
Then hail and
farewell to the smell
Of the African coast
Molasses to rum
To slaves
'T isn't morals,
'its money that saves
Shall we dance to the sound
Of the profitable pound?
In molasses and rum
And slaves
Who sail the ships out of Guinea
Ladened with Bibles and slaves?
'Tis Boston can boast
to the West Indies coast
Jamaica, we brung what ye craves
Antigua, Barbados
We brung Bibles
And slaves
Gentlemen, you mustn't think
that our Northern friends
see our black slaves as
merely figures in a ledger.
Oh, no.
They see them as
figures on a block.
Look at the faces at
the auctions, gentlemen.
White faces on African wharves.
Seafaring faces.
New England faces.
"Put them in the ships."
"Cram them in the ships."
"Stuff them in the ships."
Hurry, gentlemen.
Let the auction begin.
Ya-ha, ya-ha-ma-cundah
Gentlemen, do you hear? That's
the cry of the auctioneer.
Ya-ha, ya-ha-ma-cundah
Slaves, gentlemen!
Black gold!
Living gold!
Gold from Angola!
Guinea, Guinea, Guinea!
Blackbirds for sale
Ashanti, Ibo, Ibo, Ibo!
Blackbirds for sale
Handle them!
Fondle them!
But don't finger them!
They're prime
Ya-ha, ya-ha-ma-cundah
For the love of God,
Mr. Rutledge, please.
Molasses to rum
To slaves
Who sail the ships
back to Boston
Ladened with gold
See it gleam
Whose fortunes are made
in the triangle trade
Hail slavery,
the New England dream
Mr. Adams,
I give you a toast
Hail, Boston
Hail, Charleston
Who stinketh the most?
Mr. Rutledge,
please!
Mr. Hewes.
Dr. Hall.
Don't worry, John.
They'll be back.
Aye, to vote us down.
Adams! Franklin!
It's done. I have it.
And the Maryland
Assembly's approved it.
I told them about
one of the greatest
military engagements in history
against a flock of...
What's wrong?
I thought...
You'll have to forgive them, Mr.
Chase.
They just suffered
a slight setback.
And after all,
"What is a man profited
"if he shall gain Maryland
and lose the entire South?"
Matthew, Chapter 16, Verse 26.
McNair.
Oh, I know.
The flies.
No.
The rum..
Well, what are we
all sitting around for, hmm?
We're wasting time.
Precious time.
Thomas, I want you
to ride down into Delaware
and fetch back Caesar Rodney.
John, are you mad? It's 80
miles, and he's a dying man.
No, he's a patriot.
John, what good will it do?
The South's done us in.
And suppose they
change their minds?
Can we get Delaware
without Rodney?
God! What a bastardy
bunch we are.
Stephen, I want you to...
I'm going to the tavern, Johnny.
If there's anything I can do
for you there, let me know.
Chase.
Bartlett!
What's the use, John? The
vote's tomorrow morning.
There's less than
a full day left.
Roger.
Face facts, John.
It's finished.
I'm sorry, John.
We have no choice, John.
The slavery clause
has got to go.
Franklin, what are you saying?
It's a luxury we can't afford.
A luxury?
A half million souls in chains,
and Dr. Franklin
calls it a luxury.
Maybe you should've
walked out with the South.
You forget yourself, sir.
I founded the first anti-slavery
society on this continent.
Don't wave
your credentials at me.
Perhaps it's time
you had them renewed.
The issue here is independence.
Perhaps you've forgotten
that fact, but I have not.
How dare you
jeopardize our cause
when we've come so far!
These men,
no matter how much
we may disagree with them,
are not ribbon clerks
to be ordered about.
They're proud, accomplished men.
The cream of their colonies.
And whether you like it or not,
they and the people
they represent
will be part of this new
country you hope to create.
Now either learn how to live with
them or pack up and go home.
In any case, stop acting
like a Boston fishwife.
Good God.
What's happened to me?
John Adams.
The great John Adams.
What have I come to?
Law practice down the pipe.
Farm mortgaged to the hilt.
At a stage in life
when other men prosper,
I'm reduced to
living in Philadelphia.
Philadelphia.
Abigail, what am I going to do?
Do, John?
I need your help.
You don't usually ask my advice.
Yes, well, there doesn't appear
to be anyone else right now.
Very well, John.
What is it?
The entire South has just
walked out of this Congress,
George Washington is on the
verge of total annihilation,
and the precious cause for which I
have labored these several years
has come to nothing.
And it seems that I'm
obnoxious and disliked.
Nonsense, John.
That I am unwilling
to face reality.
Foolishness, John.
That I'm pigheaded.
Ah, well, there you
have me, John.
I'm afraid you are pigheaded.
Well, yes.
Oh, Abby.
Has it been any kind
of a life for you?
God knows I haven't
given you very much.
I never asked for more.
After all,
I am Mrs. John Adams.
That's quite a lot
for one lifetime.
Is it, Abby?
Well, think of it, John.
To be married to the man
who is always the first
in line to be hanged...
Yes. The agitator.
Why, Abby?
You must tell me
what it is. l...
Well, I have always been dissatisfied.
I know that.
But lately, I find that I
reek of discontentment.
It fills my throat
and it floods my brain.
Sometimes I fear there
is no longer a dream,
but only the discontentment.
Oh, John.
Can you really know
so little about yourself?
Can you think so little of me
that you'd believe I'd marry
the man you've described?
Have you forgotten what you
used to say to me? I haven't.
"Commitment, Abby.
"Commitment.
"There are only two creatures of
value on the face of this Earth.
"Those with a commitment,
"and those who require
the commitment of others."
Do you remember, John?
Yes, I remember.

McNAIR:
Mmm.
Are you up there,
Mr. Adams?
What do you want?
There's a delivery
down here for you.
What is it?
Where did it come from?
Who sent it?
Compliments of the Concord
Ladies' Coffee Club
And the Sisterhood
of the Truro Synagogue
And the Friday Evening
Baptist Sewing Circle
And the Holy Christian
Sisters of St. Claire
All for you
John
I am as I ever was
And ever shall be
Yours, yours, yours
Yours
Abigail, what's in these kegs?
Saltpeter, John
McNair!
McNair, go out and buy every damned
pin you can find in Philadelphia.
Pin?
What sort of pin?
Well, I don't know. Whatever the ladies use for their sewing.
Franklin, Jefferson, what are you all sitting around for?
Didn't you hear a word I said before?
Oh, never mind about that.
Now, here's what I want you to do.
John, I'm not even speaking to you.
It's too late for that, damn it.
There's work to be done.
Jefferson, go find Rutledge.
Don't come back until you've worn him down.
Now, you're both Southern aristocrats.
If he'll listen to anybody, he'll listen to you.
Franklin, out of that chair!
What good is the South if you can't deliver Pennsylvania, hmm?
Talk to Wilson.
Get him away from Dickinson.
That's the only way to do it.
Go on, now, both of you.
John...
Time's running out, damn it.
Now move.
I'm still from Massachusetts, John.
You know where I stand.
I'll do whatever you say.
No.
No, you're the president of Congress.
You're a fair man, Hancock.
Stay that way.
Tell me, Mr. Thomson, out of curiosity, do you stand with Mr. Dickinson,
or do you stand with me?
I stand with the General.
Well, lately, I've had the
oddest feeling that he's been
writing to me.
I have been in expectation
Of receiving a reply
On the subject of
my last 15 dispatches
Is anybody there?
Does anybody care?
Does anybody care?
"Your humble
and obedient..."
"Is anybody there?
"Does anybody care?"
Does anybody see what I see?
They want me to quit
They say,
"John, give up the fight"
Still to England, I say
Good night, forever, good night!
For I have crossed the Rubicon
Let the bridge
be burned behind me
Come what may
Commitment!
The croakers all say
we'll rue the day
There'll be hell to pay
in fiery purgatory
Through all the gloom,
through all the gloom
I can see the rays
of ravishing light
And glory
Is anybody there?
Does anybody care?
Does anybody see what I see?
I see fireworks
I see the pageant
and pomp and parade
I hear the bells ringing out
I hear the cannons roar
I see Americans
All Americans free
Forevermore
How quiet,
how quiet the chamber is
How silent,
how silent the chamber is
Is anybody there?
Does anybody care?
Does anybody see what I see?
Yes, Mr. Adams.
I do.
Dr. Hall.
I didn't know anyone was...
I'm sorry if I startled you.
I couldn't sleep.
And in trying
to resolve my dilemma,
I remembered something
I'd once read.
That a representative owes the
people not only his industry,
but his judgment.
And he betrays them if he
sacrifices it to their opinion.
That was written
by Edmund Burke,
a member of
the British Parliament.
Good night,
Mr. Adams.
Good night.
It's never been done before.
No colony has ever broken from the
parent stem in the history of the world.
If you have grievances,
and I'm sure you have,
our present system must provide
a gentler means
of redressing them
short of revolution.
We've spawned a new race here.
Rougher, simpler,
more violent, more
enterprising, less refined.
"My quartermaster has
no food, no arms, no ammunition,
"and my troops are in
a state of near mutiny."
No army, no navy... THOMSON:
"I pray God some relief arrives
"before the armada,
but fear it will not."
No arms, no ammunition,
no treasury, no friends.
And when
they hang you, Mr. Adams,
I do hope you'll put in a
good word for the rest of us.
England closing in,
cutting off our air.
There's no time!
To place before mankind
the common sense of the subject...
The issue here is independence.
Perhaps you've lost sight of
that fact, but I have not.
"We mutually pledge
to each other our lives
"our fortunes
and our sacred honor."
Can you really know
so little about yourself?
Very well.
The Congress will now vote on
Virginia's resolution on independence.
Thank you for coming, Caesar.
God bless you, sir.
The secretary
will call the roll.
And I remind you, gentlemen,
that a single "nay" vote
will defeat the motion.
Mr. Thomson.
New Hampshire?
New Hampshire says yea.
New Hampshire says yea.
Massachusetts?
Massachusetts says yea.

Rhode Island?
Rhode Island says yea.
Rhode Island says yea.
Connecticut?
Connecticut says yea.
Connecticut says yea. New York? 
Mr. Secretary, New York 
abstains courteously.
New York abstains.
Courteously.
New Jersey?
New Jersey says yea.
New Jersey says yea.
Pennsylvania?
Mr. Secretary,
Pennsylvania is not ready.
Please come back to us later.
Pennsylvania passes.
Delaware?
Just a moment.
Delaware, by majority vote...
Aye.
Says yea.
Delaware says yea.
Maryland?
Maryland says yea.
Maryland says yea.
Virginia?
Virginia says yea.
Virginia says yea.
North Carolina?
North Carolina yields 
to South Carolina.
South Carolina?
Well,
Mr. Adams?
Well,
Mr. Rutledge.
Mr. Adams,
you must believe that I will 
do what I promised to do.
What is it you want, Rutledge?
Remove the offending passage from your declaration. If we did that, we would be guilty of what we ourselves are rebelling against. Nevertheless remove it, or South Carolina will bury now and forever your dream of independence. John, I beg you, consider what you're doing. Mark me, Franklin, if we give in on this issue, posterity will never forgive us. That's probably true, but we won't hear a thing. We'll be long gone. Besides, what will posterity think we were? Demigods? We're men, no more, no less, trying to get a nation started against greater odds than a more generous God would have allowed. First things first, John. Independence. America. If we don't secure that, what difference will the rest make? Jefferson, say something. What else is there to do? Well, man, you're the one that wrote it. I wrote all of it, Mr. Adams. There. There it is, Rutledge. You have your slavery. Little good may it do you. You now vote, damn you! Mr. President, the fair colony of South Carolina says yea. South Carolina says yea.
North Carolina says yea.
Georgia?
Georgia says yea.
Pennsylvania, second call.
Mr. President,
Pennsylvania regrets
all of the inconvenience
that such distinguished men as
Adams, Franklin and Jefferson
were put to just now.
They might've kept
their document intact
for all the difference
it will make.
Mr. President,
Pennsylvania says...
Just a moment.
I ask the delegation
to be polled.
Dr. Franklin,
don't be absurd.
A poll, Mr. President.
It's a proper request.
Yes, it is.
Poll the delegation,
Mr. Thomson.
Dr. Benjamin Franklin.
Yea.
Mr. John Dickinson.
Nay.
Mr. James Wilson.
Judge Wilson?
There it is, Mr. Wilson.
It's all up to you now.
The whole question
of American independence
rests squarely
on your shoulders.
An entirely new nation ready
to be born or to die at birth,
all on
your say-so.
Which will it be,
Mr. Wilson?
Every mapmaker in the world
is waiting for your decision.
Come now, James.
Nothing has changed.
We mustn't let Dr. Franklin
create one of his confusions.
The question is clear.
Most questions are clear when
someone else has to decide them.
It would be a pity for a man
who's handed down
hundreds of wise decisions
from the bench
to be remembered only
for the one unwise decision
he made in Congress.
James, you're keeping
everybody waiting.
The secretary has
called for your vote.
Please.
Don't push me, John. I know
what you want me to do.
But Mr. Adams is correct
about one thing.
I'm the one who'll
be remembered for it.
What do you mean?
I'm different from you, John.
I'm different from
most of the men here.
I don't want to be remembered.
I just don't want the
responsibility.
Yes, well, whether you
want it or not, James,
there's no way of avoiding it.
Not necessarily, John.
If I go with them,
I'll just be one among dozens.
No one will ever remember
the name of James Wilson.
But if I vote with you,
I'll be the man who prevented
American independence.
I'm sorry, John.
I just didn't bargain for that.
And is that how new
countries are formed?
By a non-entity
trying to preserve
the anonymity he
so richly deserves?
Revolutions come into this world
like bastard children,
Mr. Dickinson.
Half improvised
and half compromised.
Our side has provided
the compromise.
Now Judge Wilson is
supplying the rest.
James.
I'm sorry, John.
My vote
Mr. Secretary,
Pennsylvania says yea.
The count being 12 to none
with one abstention,
the resolution on independence
is adopted.
It's done.
Mr. Thomson,
is the declaration
ready to be signed?
It is.
Then I suggest we do so.
And the chair further proposes,
for our mutual security
and protection,
that no man be allowed
to sit in this Congress
without attaching
his name to it.
I'm sorry, Mr. President.
I cannot, in good conscience,
sign such a document.
I will never stop hoping for our
eventual reconciliation with England. But because, I regard America no less than does Mr. Adams, I will join the army and fight in her defense even though I believe that fight to be hopeless. Goodbye, gentlemen.

Gentlemen of the Congress, I say yea, John Dickinson. Very well. Are there any objections to the declaration being approved as it now stands? I have one, Mr. Hancock. You, Mr. Adams? Yes. Uh, Mr. Jefferson, it so happens that the word is "unalienable," not "inalienable." I'm sorry, Mr. Adams, but "inalienable" is correct. I happen to be a Harvard graduate, Mr. Jefferson.

I attended William and Mary, Mr. Adams. Gentlemen, please! Mr. Jefferson, will you yield to Mr. Adams' request? No, sir. I will not. Oh, very well. I withdraw it. Oh, good for you, John. I'll speak to the printer about it later on. Very well, gentlemen. We're about to brave the storm in a skiff made of paper. And how it shall end, God only knows. That's a pretty large signature, Johnny. So Fat George in London can read it without his glasses.
All right, step right up, gentlemen. Don't miss your chance to commit treason. Ooh.
Hancock is right. This paper is our passport to the gallows. But there's no backing out now, for if we do not hang together, we shall most assuredly hang separately. In my case, hanging won't be so bad. One snap and it'll be all over, just like that. But look at Read there. He'll be dancing a jig long after I'm gone! Gentlemen, forgive me if I don't join in the merriment, but if we are arrested now, my name is still the only one on the damn thing!
"From the Commander, army of the United Colonies in..."
Army of the United States in New York, "dispatch number 1,209, "to the Honorable Congress, John Hancock, president. "Dear sir, I can now report with some certainty "that the eve of battle is near at hand. "Toward this end, I have ordered the evacuation of Manhattan "and directed our defenses to take up "stronger positions on the Brooklyn Heights. "At the present time, my forces consist "entirely of Haslet's Delaware Militia
"and Smallwood's Marylanders, 
a total of 5,000 troops
to stand against
twenty-five thousand
of the enemy.
And I begin to notice
that many of us
are lads under 15 and old men,
none of whom could truly
be called soldiers.
One personal note to Mr. Lewis Morris of New York.
I must regretfully report
that his estates have
been totally destroyed,
but that I have taken the liberty
of transporting Mrs. Morris
and eight of the children
to Connecticut and safety.
The four older boys are now
enlisted in the Continental Army.
As I write these words,
the enemy is plainly in sight
beyond the river.
How it will end,
only Providence can direct."
"But, dear God, what brave men
I shall lose
before
this business
ends.
Your obedient,
G. Washington."
Very well, gentlemen.
McNair.
Go ring the bell.
Mr. President.
Mr. Morris.
To hell with New York.
I'll sign it anyway.
Thank you, Mr. Morris.
Stephen, sit down.
No.
I want to remember
each man's face as he signs.
Very well.
Mr. Thomson.
New Hampshire.
Dr. Josiah Bartlett.
Massachusetts.
Mr. John Adams.
Rhode Island.
Mr. Stephen Hopkins.
Connecticut.
Mr. Roger Sherman.
New York.
Mr. Lewis Morris.
New Jersey. The Reverend
John Witherspoon.
Pennsylvania.
Dr. Benjamin Franklin.
Delaware.
Mr. Caesar Rodney.
Maryland.
Mr. Samuel Chase.
Virginia.
Mr. Thomas Jefferson.
North Carolina.
Mr. Joseph Hewes.
South Carolina.
Mr. Edward Rutledge.
Georgia.
Dr. Lyman Hall.