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In Congress Assembled

By Anthony Lewis

"When in the Course of human Events . . ." MR. JEFFERSON commenced the reading of the draft Declaration.

MR. HUTCHINSON said all could agree with the general sentiments expressed, and he congratulated the gentleman from Virginia on his phrases, but the question before this Continental Congress was necessarily one of specifics. What had the King done to call for so drastic a remedy?

MR. JEFFERSON referred to the facts enumerated in the Declaration. The King has obstructed the Administration of Justice, affected to render the military independent of the civil power, imposed taxes on us without our consent and refused his assent to laws most wholesome and necessary for the public good. There had been a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations.

The enumeration smacked too much of Policy, MR. RHODES thought. These were actions on which statesmen might differ. A tax on tea, a few troops quartered here or there, and obstruction of justice: What did such things really matter? The King might have been wiser to adopt other policies but mistakes were not ground for grave retribution.

MR. DENNIS agreed. Where were the crimes? he asked. His people had no stomach for regicide, and they would not want him to break with the King unless there were unanswerable proof of some awful crime.

MR. J. ADAMS said the gentleman asked for proof but closed his eyes to what all others could see. Did he expect a confession? This King had trampled on the legal rights of thousands; his ministers had brazenly admitted it, and his own words were spread on the record. On such overwhelming evidence the ordinary citizen would long since have been indicted and jailed. Was the King to face no accounting?

MR. LOTT thought there was more emotion than reason in such arguments. A king was not like other men. If we called him to account for his wrongs, we risk the stability of institutions. Our concern should be not for the monarch but for the monarchy. Injure the order of society, and no one would gain but the Radicals.

Similar sentiments were expressed by MR. WIGGINS. The country's business was in a parlous state and it would be foolhardy to risk radical political measures. In truth he suspected that underneath the lofty lan-

ABROAD AT HOME

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guage of the Declaration lay arguments of party and sect, and they must be resisted by men with a stake in the established order.

MR. BARRY said the Congress should never have allowed itself to be pushed to this point. The King had done nothing that other kings had not done before him. The press had exaggerated—had mangled the King's character. Indeed, the press was the villain of the piece. It was rank with prejudice.

DR. FRANKLIN expressed astonishment at what he had heard. Could any reasonable man really defend this King, or pretend that the case against him was partisan or biased? Why it was only a few months since a leading figure in the King's party, MR. SCOTT, had described his performance as "shabby, immoral and disgusting."

This view was supported by MR. HANCOCK. The press that had criticized the King lately included some that had been his faithful adherents. The great Tribune had called for an end to his reign. MR. HEARST said he had been "convicted by his own words."

GENERAL ST. CLAIR advised against hasty action. The evidence was not as it seemed. Time should be allowed to consider the King's arguments. There was no special significance in today's date, July 4, 1776; why rush to a decision that might be regretted later?

Several delegates moved to table the Declaration. MR. JEFFERSON expostulated.

MR. RHODES offered a substitute incorporating some of the language of the original draft:

Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes. We therefore petition His Majesty, in the most humble Terms, to respect our unalienable Rights and restore peace and commerce with his Colonies."