

**American Satirical Response to  
Burgoyne's Proclamation of June 23, 1777  
*New York Journal*, September 1777**

Most high, most mighty, most puissant, and sublime General. When the forces under your command arrived at Quebec, in order to act in concert and upon a common principle with the numerous fleets and armies which already display in every quarter of America the justice and mercy of your King, we, the reptiles of America, were struck with unusual trepidation and astonishment.

But what words can express the plentitude of our horror when the Colonel of the Queen's regiment of light dragoons advanced towards Ticonderoga. The mountains shook before thee, and the trees of the forest bowed their lofty heads; the vast lakes of the north were chilled at thy presence, and the mighty cataracts stopped their tremendous career, and were suspended in awe at their approach. Judge then oh ineffable Governor of Fort William in North Britain, what must have been the terror, dismay, and despair that overspread this paltry continent of America, and us its wretched inhabitants. Dark and dreary, indeed, was the prospect before us, till, like the sun in the horizon, your most gracious, sublime, and irresistible proclamation opened the doors of mercy, and snatched us, as it were, from the jaws of annihilation.

We foolishly thought, blind as we were, that your gracious master's fleets and armies were come to destroy us and our liberties. But we are happy in hearing from you (and who can doubt what you assert?) that they were called forth for the sole purpose of restoring the rights of the constitution to a froward and stubborn generation.

And is it for this, oh sublime lieutenant general, that you have given yourself the trouble to cross the wide Atlantic, and with incredible fatigue traverse uncultivated wilds? And we ungratefully refuse the proffered blessing? To restore the rights of the constitution you have called together an amiable host of savages, and turned them loose to scalp our women and children, and lay our country waste—this they have performed with their usual skill and clemency, and we yet remain insensible of the benefit, and unthankful for so much goodness!

Our Congress have declared Independence, and our Assemblies, as you highness justly observes, have most wickedly imprisoned the avowed friends of that power with which they are at war, and most profanely compelled those whose consciences will not permit them to fight to pay some small part towards the expenses their country is at in supporting what we call a necessary defensive war. If we go on thus in our obstinacy and ingratitude, what can we expect but that you should, in your anger, give a stretch to the Indian forces under your direction, amounting to thousands, to overtake and destroy us; or which is ten times worse, that you should withdraw your fleets and armies and leave us to our own misery, without completing the benevolent task you have begun in restoring to us the rights of the constitution.

We submit, we submit, most puissant Colonel of the Queen's regiment of light dragoons, and Governor of Fort William in North Britain! We offer our heads to the scalping knife and our bellies to the bayonet. Who can resist the force of your eloquence? Who can withstand the terror of your arms? The invitation you have made in the consciousness of Christianity, your royal master's clemency, and the honor of soldiership, we thankfully accept. The blood of the slain, the cries of injured virgins and

innocent children, and the never-ceasing sighs and groans of starving wretches now languishing in the jails and prison ships of New York, call on us in vain, whilst your sublime proclamation is sounded in our ears. Forgive us, oh our country! Forgive us, dear posterity! Forgive us, all ye foreign powers who are anxiously watching our conduct in this important struggle, if we yield implicitly to the persuasive tongue of the most elegant Colonel of her Majesty's regiment of light dragoons.

Forbear then, thou magnanimous lieutenant general! Forbear to denounce vengeance against us! Forbear to give a stretch to those restorers of constitutional rights, the Indian forces under your direction. Let not the messengers of wrath await us in the field, and devastation, famine, and every concomitant horror, bar our return to the allegiance of a prince, who, by his royal will, would deprive us of every blessing of life, with all possible clemency.

We are domestic, we are industrious, we are infirm and timid; we shall remain quietly at home, and not remove our cattle, or corn, or forage, in hopes that you will come at the head of troops in the full powers of health, discipline, and valor, and take charge of them for yourselves. Behold our wives and daughters, or flocks and herds, our goods and chattels. Are they not at the mercy of our Lord the King, and of his lieutenant general, member of the House of Commons, and governor of Fort William in North Britain?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by Frank Moore, *Diary of the American Revolution*, 225-227. New York: Charles Scribner.