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AN  
EXPOSITION OF THE  
**STRIKING CONFORMITY**  
OF GRIEVANCES  
COMPLAINED OF  
IN THE  
**PETITIONS**  
OF THE  
*Freeholders of Middlesex*  
IN THE YEARS  
1769 and 1810.

The whole Introduced by an appropriate Address to the Public.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

*Mr. Wilkes's Letter to his Constituents, Jan. 18, 1768; and  
Sir Francis Bardett's Letters to Mr. Sheriff Wood  
and the Freeholders of Middlesex.*

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**INTRODUCTION.**

*Cause of presenting the Middlesex Petition of 1769.*

THE evils which had been produced during the administration of the Earl of Bute, were serious causes of complaint at the commencement of the present reign; but there was nothing that agitated the public mind so much as the persecution of John Wilkes, Esq. member for Aylesbury.

It seems that the hirelings of the ministry had been employed to write down all opposition to their measures, and they published, among other periodical papers, *The Briton*. To counteract the arguments, if such they could be denominated, by which these writers fomented undue praises to those who had disgraced their country by a dishonourable peace, a society of noblemen and gentlemen set up an opposition paper, denominated *The North Briton*, which exposed the fallacy of their professions, and the iniquity of their pro-

ceedings, the ostensible publisher of which was Mr. Wilkes.

This paper was suffered to be published till forty-five numbers had made their appearance; that unfortunate number, however, attracted the notice of government; they issued a general warrant; attacked Mr. Wilkes's house in Great George Street, Westminster; broke open his escutoire, and seized his papers.

Dissatisfied with this illegal violence, they pursued Mr. Wilkes with unremitting vengeance, committed him to the Tower, whence he was released by a *Habeas Corpus*; they then caused him to be expelled the House of Commons, and outlawed. — These accumulated injuries induced him to seek shelter in France, where he was pursued and his life endangered. This happened in 1763.

He continued in France till the year 1768, when a new Parliament being summoned, Mr. Wilkes suddenly presented himself as a candidate for the city of London, in which having failed in consequence of the short time for canvassing, he was proposed as one of the knights of the Shire for the County of Middlesex, and unanimously elected.

The ministry, however, were determined to stretch every nerve to hinder his appearance in Parliament; he was committed to the King's Bench Prison for the libel, and they again urged his expulsion from the House of Commons, and ordered a new writ.

The freeholders of Middlesex felt themselves insulted; they considered their right of suffrage invaded, and they determined to elect no other representative but him who they had already chosen; consequently Mr. Wilkes was constantly returned in opposition to every court candidate.

The ministry equally obstinate, were resolved to keep such an obnoxious opponent as far from a scrutiny of their measures as possible; they therefore resorted to an arithmetical absurdity in aid of their violence, and so prevailed upon the leading men in the House of Commons on the return of the Sheriff's writ, that though the numbers on the poll were,

For Mr. Wilkes 1143

Col. Luttrell 296;

it was resolved, "That Mr. Luttrell *ought* to be the sitting member!"

Such accumulated injuries urged the famous

Middlesex Petition, of which we have given a detail.

It is unnecessary in this place to say any thing relating to the case of Sir Francis Burdett; his conduct, and the proceedings against him, are sufficiently before the public: but the comparison of circumstances which induced the Middlesex Petition to His Majesty in the year 1769, and that presented to the House of Commons in 1810; are so peculiarly accordant, that it was considered an important piece of information to ascertain how much the grievances of the people have been alleviated since the presentation of the former exposition of national ills and oppressions, and that lately delivered to the representatives of the population of the country.

A  
PETITION  
OF THE  
*FREEHOLDERS*  
OF THE  
COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX,

PRESENTED TO

HIS MAJESTY,  
THE 24th of MAY, 1769,

BY

*Mr. Serjeant Glynn*  
*John Sawbridge, Esq.*  
*James Townsend, Esq.*  
*The Rev. Dr. Wilson*  
*George Bellas, Esq.*  
*Francis Ascough, Esq.*  
*And William Ellis, Esq.*

TO THE

King's Most Excellent Majesty,

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE FREEHOLDERS  
OF THE  
COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX.

Most gracious Sovereign:

WE, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal Subjects, the FREEHOLDERS of the County of MIDDLESEX, beg leave, with all affectionate submission and humility, to throw ourselves at your royal feet, and humbly to implore your pa-

ternal attention to those **GRIEVANCES** of which this **COUNTY** and the **WHOLE NATION** complain, and those fearful **APPREHENSIONS** with which the **WHOLE BRITISH EMPIRE** is most justly alarmed.

With great grief and sorrow we have long beheld the endeavours of certain evil-minded Persons, who attempt to infuse into your royal mind notions and opinions of the most dangerous and pernicious tendency, and who promote and counsel such measures as cannot fail to destroy that **HARMONY** and **CONFIDENCE** which should ever subsist between a just and virtuous **PRINCE** and a free and loyal **PEOPLE**:—for this disaffected purpose they have introduced into every part of the administration of our happy, legal **CONSTITUTION**, a certain unlimited and indefinite **DISCRETIONARY POWER**; to prevent which is the sole aim of **ALL OUR LAWS**, and was the sole cause of all those disturbances and revolutions which formerly distracted this unhappy country; for our ancestors, by their own fatal experience well knew, that in a State where **DISCRETION** begins, **LAW**, **LIBERTY**, and **SAFETY** end. Under the pretence of this **DISCRETION**, or, as it was formerly, and has been lately called—**LAW OF STATE**—we have seen

English subjects, and even a **MEMBER** of the **BRITISH LEGISLATURE**, arrested by virtue

of a **GENERAL WARRANT** issued by a secretary of state, contrary to the **LAW** of the **LAND**.

Their houses rifled and plundered—their **PAPERS** seized, and used as evidence upon trial.

Their **BODIES** committed to close imprisonment.

The **HABEAS CORPUS** eluded.

A Trial by Jury discountenanced, and the first **LAW-OFFICER** of the Crown publicly insinuating, that **JURIES** are not to be trusted.

*Printers* punished by the ministry in the Supreme Court without a trial by their equals—without *any* trial at all.

The remedy of the *Law* for *False Imprisonment* barred and defeated.

The Plaintiff and his Attorney, for their *Appeal* to the *Law* of the *Land*, punished by expences and imprisonment, and made by forced engagements to desist from their *Legal* claim—

A writing determined to be a *Libel* by a Court, where it was not cognizable in the first instance—contrary to *Law*, because all appeal is thereby cut off, and inferior Courts and *Juries* influenced by such pre-determination.

A person condemned in the said court as the author of the supposed *Libel* unheard, without defence or trial.

Unjust treatment of petitions, by selecting only such parts as might be wrested to criminate

the Petitioner, and refusing to hear those which might procure him redress.

The thanks of one branch of the legislature proposed by a minister to be given to an acknowledged offender for his offence, with the declared intention of screening him from *Law*.

Attachments wrested from their original intent, of removing obstructions to the proceedings of Law, to punish by sentence of arbitrary fine and imprisonment, without trial or appeal, supposed offences committed out of court.

Perpetual imprisonment of an Englishman without trial, conviction, or sentence, by the same mode of *attachment*, wherein the same person is at once *Party, Accuser, Judge, and Jury*.

Instead of the ancient and legal Civil Police, the military introduced at every opportunity, *unnecessarily* and *unlawfully* patrolling the streets to the alarm and terror of the inhabitants.

The lives of many of your Majesty's innocent subjects destroyed by military execution—such military execution solemnly adjudged to be legal.

Murder abetted, encouraged, and rewarded—the civil magistracy rendered contemptible by the appointment of improper and incapable persons.

The civil magistrates tampered with by administration, and neglecting and refusing to discharge their duty.

Mobs and riots hired and raised by the minis-

try, in order to justify and recommend their own illegal proceedings, and to prejudice your Majesty's mind by false insinuations against the loyalty of your Majesty's subjects.

The freedom of election violated by corrupt and undue influence, by unpunished violence and murder.

The just verdicts of Juries, and the opinion of the Judges overruled by false representations to your Majesty, and the determinations of the law set aside by new, unprecedented, and dangerous means, thereby leaving the guilty without restraint, and the injured without redress; and the lives of your Majesty's subjects at the mercy of every ruffian protected by administration.

Obsolete and vexatious claims of the Crown set on foot for partial and election purposes.

Partial attacks on the liberty of the press—the most daring and pernicious libels against the *Constitution*, and against the liberty of the subject, being allowed to pass unnoticed; whilst the slightest libel against a *Minister* is punished with the utmost rigor.

Wicked attempts to increase and establish a standing army by endeavouring to vest in the Crown an unlimited power over the militia, which, should they succeed, must sooner or later subvert the *Constitution*, by augmenting the power of administration in proportion to their delinquency.

Repeated endeavours to diminish the importance of Members of Parliament *individually*, in order to render them more dependant on administration *collectively*, even though having been employed by ministers to suppress the freedom of debate: and the *wrath* of *Parliament* denounced against measures authorized by the *Law of the Land*.

Resolutions of one branch of the Legislature set up as the *Law of the Land*, being a direct usurpation of the rights of the two other branches, and therefore a manifest infringement of the *Constitution*.

Public money shamefully squandered and unaccounted for, and all inquiry into the cause of arrears in the *Civil List* prevented by the *Ministry*.

Inquiry into a *Paymaster's Public Accounts* stopped in the *Exchequer*, though the sums unaccounted for by that *Paymaster* amount to *above forty millions sterling*.

Public loans perverted to private ministerial purposes.

Prostitution of public honours and rewards to men who can neither plead public virtue nor services.

Irreligion and immorality so eminently discountenanced by *your Majesty's* royal example, encouraged by administration both by example and precept.

The same *discretion* has been extended by the same evil counsellors to your Majesty's dominions in *America*, and has produced to our suffering fellow-subjects in that part of the world grievances and apprehensions similar to those of which we complain at home.

Most gracious Sovereign—

Such are the *grievances* and *apprehensions* which have long discontented and disturbed the greatest and best part of your Majesty's loyal subjects. Unwilling, however, to interrupt your royal repose, though ready to lay down our lives and fortunes for your Majesty's service, and for the *Constitution* as by law established, we have waited patiently, expecting a constitutional remedy by the means of our own representatives: but our legal and free choice having been repeatedly rejected, and the right of election now finally taken from us, by the unprecedented seating of a candidate who was never chosen by the county, and who, even to become a candidate, was obliged fraudulently to vacate his seat in parliament under the pretence of an insignificant place, invited thereto by the prior declaration of a minister, that whoever opposed *our* choice, though but with *four* votes, should be declared Member for the County:—we see ourselves, by this last act, deprived even of the franchises of Englishmen, reduced to the most abject state of slavery, and

left without hopes or means of redress, but from *your Majesty or God.*

Deign then, *Most Gracious Sovereign*, to listen to the prayer of the most faithful of your Majesty's subjects; and to banish from your royal favour, trust, and confidence for ever, those evil and *pernicious Counsellors*, who have endeavoured to alienate the affection of your Majesty's most sincere and dutiful subjects, and whose suggestions tend to deprive your people of their dearest and most essential rights, and who have traitorously dared to depart from the spirit and letter of those *Laws* which have secured the Crown of these Realms to the *House of Brunswick*, in which we may make our *most earnest prayers to God*, that it may continue untarnished to the latest posterity.

*Signed by Fifteen hundred and sixty-five  
Freeholders.*

*Summary of the Debate in the House of  
Commons, Wednesday, May 2, 1810,  
on the Middlesex Petition recently  
Presented.*

Mr. *Byng* presented the Petition of the Freeholders of the County of Middlesex, which was read by the Clerk, complaining of the commitment of John Gale Jones and Sir Francis Burdett, in which it alledged, that "the House of Commons exercised a power and a right unknown to the law, and unwarranted by the Constitution."

Mr. *Byng* moved, that the Petition be laid on the table.

Mr. *Mellish* rose, he said, to second the motion, as he thought it was his duty, having been instructed so to do at the meeting of the Freeholders, but it remained in the breast of the House whether it would receive the Petition or not.

Mr. *Percival* desired that the Petition should be read again, which was accordingly done by the Clerk. The following is a copy of it:—



TO THE HONOURABLE THE HOUSE OF  
COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM  
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND  
IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

*The Petition of the Freholders of Middlesex,  
agreed to in full County, this 26th day of April,  
1810,*

SHEWETH,

That we have observed with concern, that in the cases of Mr. John Gale Jones and Sir Francis Burdett, Bart. your House assumed and exercised a Power unknown to the Law, and unwarranted by the Constitution.

Your Speaker's Warrant has been executed by military force; an Englishman's house, his sanctuary, has been violated, and the blood of unoffending Citizens has been shed in the streets.

Against the existence as well as the exercise of this Power, we solemnly protest, a protest the more necessary, because your votes in its support are entered on your Journals—not so the letter of Sir Francis Burdett to your Speaker, denying you such jurisdiction.

In the early part of this reign, in the case of Mr. Wilkes, the rights of this County and the nation, were repeatedly and grossly violated by the House of Commons. At length the Law

triumphed; after a struggle of nearly twenty years, the House abandoned the pretensions they had arrogated, and “expunged” from their Journals all their “declarations, orders, and resolutions, as being subversive of the rights of the whole body of Electors of this kingdom.”

You have *during your pleasure* deprived the Citizens of Westminster of their share in the Representative, and the public at large of the exertions of a faithful servant, in whose ability, firmness, and integrity, they pre-eminently confide.

We view with jealousy and suspicion the shutting up Sir Francis Burdett in prison, when the attention of the nation is directed with anxiety to his intended Motion for a Reform in the Representation of the People in your Honourable House—that House in which the traffic in Seats has been avowed, in the case of Mr. Percival and Lord Castlereagh, “to be as notorious as the sun at noon day,” a practice, at the mention of which, in the emphatic language of your Speaker, our ancestors “would have started with indignation.”

We therefore pray you to follow the example of your predecessors, to “expunge all your declarations, orders, and resolutions on the subject as tending to the subversion of our Liberties,” and to the introduction of a military despotism; and to recall Sir Francis Burdett to the service of

the Country in Parliament, that he may there enforce that Plan of Reform, which last Sessions he so powerfully recommended, and which, in our opinion, is absolutely necessary for the stability and honour of the Throne, and the safety and well being of the People.

Signed in the name and in the behalf of this Meeting.

The *Chancellor* of the *Exchequer* said, when the Westminster Petition was presented, and when many Gentlemen entertained an opinion that it ought not to be received, he recommended, after mature deliberation, that it should be laid upon the table of the House, for he would not be upbraided with an indisposition to receive the Petitions of the people. It appeared to him, from the language of the present Petition, that it was hardly possible to look at its contents without being convinced that it was intended distinctly to insult the House of Commons. If it required a Reform in Parliament, and the Petitioners stated their reasons in becoming and decent language, it ought not to be rejected, nor ought it even to be looked at with a captious eye. When, however, he perused the present Petition, he put it to the House whether it ought to be received, if Gentlemen attended to the passage where it was stated, "that the House assumed a power and a right unknown to the Laws, and unwarranted by the Constitution." It seemed to be the intention of the Petitioners to try the forbearance of the House, and to discover how far they might proceed with impunity to insult Parliament. The language of the Petition of the Elec-

tors of Westminster, though coarse, expressed an opinion merely with respect to the conduct of the Serjeant at Arms; but the present made a direct charge, and passed judgment on the privileges of the House. In his opinion, the time was arrived when a line should be drawn, as there was a disposition to insult the House, and therefore he submitted to it, as being consistent with its dignity, if the present Petition ought not to be rejected.

Mr. Alderman *Combe* was of opinion that the Petition ought to be received in the same manner as the Petition of the Electors of Westminster, for if it were not, there would be another meeting of the Freeholders of Middlesex, who were not likely to address the House in more moderate language.

Mr. *Calcraft* said, it did not appear to him that the reason adduced by his Hon. Friend was sufficient to prevent the House from sending the Petition back, if it were of opinion that it ought not to be received. He was of opinion that the present Petition stood in the same point of view as the Westminster Petition, nor did he perceive that the language was less exceptionable. It was the duty of the House to open its doors wide to the receiving of the Petitions of the people. With respect to the language used as to the people not being duly represented, and that it would be better to put it on a more seemly footing, considering the irritation of the public mind on the subject, the House could not expect to be addressed in language satisfactory to its feelings. It has been asserted that the seats of the House had been sold like stalls for cattle at Smithfield market, which was a truism and no libel, and therefore the House must pocket the affront.

Mr. *Davis Giddy* agreed that the doors of the

House should be thrown widely open for the reception of Petitions, but then they should be couched in becoming and decorous language. The present Petition could not be considered as any thing else but something to conceal an insult offered to the House. With respect to Reform, it meant nothing else than an actual delegation of the people, and therefore it was time that a stand should be made against the insults offered to the House.

Mr. *H. Browne* declared himself adverse to a Parliamentary Reform, which he considered at present a party matter for something else. He objected to the Petition, as being a vehicle of insult, and a dogmatical denial of the privileges of the House, which were essential, as the safeguard of the liberty of the subject.

Mr. *Hibbert* observed, that the Petitioners were in a different situation from the Members of the House. They doubted of the legality of the exercise of its privileges, and they felt warmly on the subject, and the House ought not to use warmth in judging of the expressions of the Petitioners. The passage alluded to expressed an opinion, certainly in coarse language, but he did not deem it a sufficient reason for rejecting the Petition.

Mr. *Barham* was of opinion, that the subject was of that importance, that Gentlemen should have time to consider it. For his own part he was not prepared to decide, and therefore suggested the propriety of adjourning the debate until to-morrow. If the present Petition was rejected, another more strong would be presented, and he agreed with other Gentlemen that a stand should somewhere be made, and a resolution ought to be adopted by the House to prevent a recurrence of similar insult. He therefore moved,

that the debate should be adjourned till to-morrow.

Mr. *Wingfield* seconded the motion.

Mr. *Sumner* was against receiving the Petition.

Mr. *Lambe* spoke in favour of the amendment; he observed that a disposition prevailed throughout the country, not so much to obtain a correction of abuses, as to attempt convincing the people that the House of Commons were not their legal Representatives.—The Petition was couched in gross and offensive terms, and therefore ought to be rejected.

Mr. *Wardle* said, he would support the receiving of the Petition; he was of opinion that the assertion which gave so much offence was founded in truth, but if he was of opinion that it was intended as an insult, he would be the first to oppose the Petition being received. If it was rejected, the Freeholders could still propagate their opinions by resolutions.

Mr. *Abencromby* was happy to find the Honourable Member who spoke last, was desirous to explain away what he asserted in other places. He would vote for the Petition, because the Freeholders had a right to express their doubts with respect to the legality of the proceedings of the House, though with respect to himself, he was decidedly of opinion that Parliament only exercised a power that it had a right to do, and that the House do not outstep the bounds of Law on the occasion.

Mr. *Stephen* said, he agreed with the Hon. Member who spoke last, as far as regarded the rights of the House, but differed with him as to the propriety of receiving the Petition. He was of opinion that it were better to adjourn the debate until to-morrow, for he had no idea that it would be considered as a morbid insensibility of

the House to its own dignity, to wait until there was a fuller attendance of Members, as it would give more weight and dignity to its decision. It was said by an Hon. Member, if the Petition was rejected the Freeholders may enter into resolutions and circulate them, but he did not mean to say that they could not be prosecuted for a libel. Was, he asked, the House of Commons the only body that could be libelled with impunity? and were they, by receiving such petitions, to be made the servile instruments of their own defamation? When the Petition was laid upon the table it was incorporated with the proceedings of the House, and he was of opinion, that Members who presented an improper petition ought to be made amenable for its contents. In the Courts of Law, no paper would be suffered to be filed defaming the Court, and any Barrister that advised such a measure would receive a severe reproach from the Bench. If any Hon. Member in the House was of opinion that it was not the legal Representative of the United Kingdom, then his honour should prescribe to him his immediate secession from Parliament.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* concurred in the amendment, and the debate was adjourned accordingly till to-morrow.

The House then disposed of the other orders of the day, and adjourned till next day.

THURSDAY, May 3. Mr. *Barham* moved the order of the day for resuming the adjourned debate on the Petition of the Freeholders of the County of Middlesex.

The *Speaker* said, the question before the House was, that the Petition be laid on the table.

The Petition was then read by the Clerk.

Mr. *Barham* observed, when he moved that

the debate should be adjourned last night, it was for the purpose of discussing the subject when the House was more numerously attended, and expected on the occasion a fuller attendance than there was at present. He did so, that the House should not be liable to the imputation of rejecting the Petition when the House was thinly attended. He declared, after giving the subject the most mature consideration, he found himself constrained to vote against the reception of the Petition; he was as anxious as any man to throw open the doors of the House to receive the Petitions of every class of people, nor would he refuse enquiry into their allegations, or the prayer of their petitions, when couched in decent, becoming, and decorous language. The present, however, did not come under that description, as it was a protest against the proceedings of the House, and not a petition.—(A cry of Hear! hear!) It was therefore time that the House should make a stand, and put an end to such insults. If the Petitioners called upon the House to consider and revise its proceedings with respect to Sir Francis Burdett or Gale Jones, he would be the first to hearken to the prayer of the Petition, if couched in becoming language, and such as petitioners ought to use. He had drawn up a resolution, he said, to the following effect, which the House would adopt, if it thought fit, "That this House will at all times willingly receive Petitions from the people, but cannot receive what in fact is a protest against their proceedings;" for this reason he was against receiving the Petition.

Mr. *Grenfell* said, he had the honour to second the motion last night for adjourning the debate, though he was convinced that the Petition was so coarse and insulting, that it ought

not to be received, if it were, the table of the House would be loaded with Petitions calumniating and defaming Parliament, as it was the object of those with whom it originated to vilify and degrade the House of Commons. Though he did not admit that there was a general wish to that effect, yet it was manifest that there was great dissatisfaction in the country, one great cause of which was the vexatious and oppressive manner in which the taxes were levied, which was much more offensive to the generality of the people than the taxes themselves.—(Hear! hear!) He was, he observed, much less apprehensive of the consequence of the Meetings in Old Palace Yard and at Hackney, than he was of the proceedings of the Board of Taxes. The Hon. Member concluded, by observing, that he would vote for rejecting the Petition.

The Hon. Mr. *Ward* desired, that the Petition of the Electors of Westminster should be read, which was accordingly done by the Clerk. He observed, that he considered the Petition, which the House had heard just read, as highly indecent, though some Gentlemen wished it to be received *sub silentio*. It was however received, and the House, therefore, in consulting its dignity, should consult the dignity of consistency by receiving the Petition of the Freeholders of Middlesex. He was of opinion, that the arguments which applied to one Petition, was applicable to the other. He did not think it was consistent to receive the Westminster Petition, because it was supported by mere quibble, and reject that agreed to at a meeting of the Freeholders at Hackney.

Mr. *Dundas* said he agreed, in a great measure, with the Hon. Member who commenced the debate, and concurred in his doctrines, but he did

not agree with the Hon. Member who spoke last with respect to his sentiments of consistency. He had contended, that because the Westminster Petition was received, the House would act inconsistent, and depart from its dignity, if it rejected the Middlesex Petition. As to what had been said of the Board of Taxes, that did not apply, for the Members of the Board were only the instruments for executing the Acts of the House, and therefore the blame imputed to them attached to the Hon. Member who made the observation, and the Legislature who passed the Acts.

Mr. *Ponsonby* supported the motion for laying the Petition on the table.

Mr. *Wardle* spoke on the same side.

Mr. *William Smith* and Mr. *Wilberforce* were against receiving the Petition.

Mr. *Maurice Fitzgerald* spoke in favour of the Petition.

Mr. *Morris* thought that the Petition ought to be received.

Colonel *Wood*, as an Elector of Middlesex, entered his solemn protest against the Petition being received, upon the ground that two-thirds of those who attended the Meeting were not Electors, and nine out of every ten Electors would consider themselves disgraced by having such a Petition attributed to them.

Mr. *Mellish* and Mr. *Byng* supported the Petition, but the former stated, that it was not agreed to by many Electors, and that he was not suffered to deliver his sentiments.

A division then took place, when the numbers were,

For receiving it	-	58
Against it	-	139
		<hr/>
Majority	-	81
	E	

MR. WILKES'S LETTER TO THE GENTLEMEN, CLERGY, AND FREEHOLDERS, OF THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, JUNE 18, 1768.

GENTLEMEN,

After every kind of opposition from the tools of ministerial power, and every hour of delay, which could be gained by the power of law, I find myself at last happy even under this day's sentence, (*his conviction in the Court of King's Bench*), that, by the unanimous determination of all the judges of the Court of King's Bench, I am restored to my birth-right, to the noble liberties and privileges of an Englishman. The *outlawry*, which is now reversed, has appeared clearly to be an act of equal injustice and cruelty—from the beginning erroneous and illegal. In the whole progress of ministerial vengeance against me for several years, I have shewn, to the conviction of all mankind, that my enemies have trampled on the laws, and been actuated by the spirit of tyranny and arbitrary power.

The *outlawry*, so long the topic of virulent abuse, is at last declared to have been contrary to law; and on the ground first taken by my learned

counsel, Mr. Serj. Glynn, is formally reversed. It still remains in this public cause that the justice of the nation should have placed against the first and great criminal, the late Secretary of State, Lord Halifax, not so much for the punishment he has merited, as for example of terror to any present or future minister, who might otherwise be tempted to invade the sacred liberties of our country. I pledge myself to you, that my strongest efforts shall be exerted to carry this through with a spirit and firmness becoming an affair of national consequence, yet without the smallest degree of private rancour or malice, which neither my long and hard imprisonment, nor the past provocation, shall make me harbour against any man.

After this tedious and harsh confinement, I hope, Gentlemen, to pass the rest of my life among you, my countrymen; and give me leave to declare, that on every emergency, whenever the rights of the people are attacked, I shall be ready to stand forward, and risk all for what is nearest to my heart, the freedom of England. In this glorious cause we are equally engaged. We have only one common interest, that of our country, its laws, and liberties, and in consequence, the preservation of our sovereign and the Brunswick line. These objects we will steadily pursue, and freedom shall not perish among us, neither by the treachery and

corruption of ministers, nor by the fate of arms, while we remain men and Englishmen.

I observe, Gentlemen, in the speech of the Lords Commissioners at the opening of this Parliament, that *no matters of general business*, are to come on this sessions. Before the winter I beg to be honoured with your commands for the next Session, on any point of importance which you may judge proper to be submitted to the great council of the nation, either respecting the kingdom in general, or our county in particular. In all our common concerns I entreat for myself your candour and indulgence, of which I feel that I stand in great need. My views, however, will be approved by you, for they shall be public spirited, and in no instance selfish or partial. I would not for a moment lie under the suspicion of a mean, private, interested plan of conduct, or personal ambition. I am determined to remain utterly independent, uncorrupted, even unbiassed in an improper manner, and never to accept from the crown either place, pension, gratuity, or emolument of any kind. I will live and die in your service, a private gentleman, perfectly free, under no controul but the laws, under no influence but yours, and I hope, by your favour and kindness, one of the representatives in parliament for the County of Middlesex. On these terms only I expect through life the continuance of your support, as well the favourable opinion

of you, and all other good men, the friends of liberty and my country.

I am,

with gratitude and esteem,

Gentlemen,

Your faithful and obedient humble Servant,

JOHN WILKES.

*King's Bench Prison,*

*Sat. June 18.*

Mr. Wilkes's good intentions were frustrated by his expulsion from the House of Commons on the 4th of February, 1769; the consequence was, that a meeting of the Freeholders took place, when it was unanimously resolved to re-elect him, without a shilling expence, and on the 16th he was again chosen by upwards of Two Thousand Electors. The House of Commons again refused him his seat, and on the 16th of March he was re-elected. The House of Commons repeated their refusal, and on the 13th of April another memorable election took place between Mr. Wilkes and Col. Luttrell, the result of which is stated in the Introduction.

SIR FRANCIS BURDETT'S LETTERS TO  
MR. SHERIFF WOOD, AND THE FREE-  
HOLDERS OF MIDDLESEX.

TOWER, *May 5, 1810.*

SIR,

Through you I beg leave to transmit my acknowledgment to the Freeholders of

Middlesex, for the honour conferred upon me by the Meeting at which you presided, at Hackney, on the 26th of April.

I take this opportunity, Sir, of returning you my thanks, for the very handsome manner in which you executed your commission, and remain,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

FRANCIS BURDETT.

To Matthew Wood, Esq.  
High Sheriff for the  
County of Middlesex.

TOWER, May 5, 1810.

GENTLEMEN,

The over-flattering Address and Resolutions I had the honour to receive from the High Sheriff of your County, attended by Mr. Byng, and, as Mr. Sheriff Wood informed me, according to the order of a very numerous and respectable Meeting of Freeholders, in full County Court assembled, on April the 26th, would, did I need any, afford me great consolation, and does give me great satisfaction.

It is extremely gratifying to me, Gentlemen,

under these circumstances, to renew my intercourse with a county so renowned for its many noble, though ineffectual struggles; sometimes, indeed, successful; never, I trust, altogether unavailing in the same cause—resistance to arbitrary power; which, however it may be disguised, or from whatever quarter it may come, is equally to be feared and to be guarded against.

Gentlemen, highly as I esteem the honour you have done me, I esteem still higher the service you have done the public. In following the conduct and example of the City of Westminster, the great Metropolitan County of Middlesex has pointed out to the country at large a safe and ready way of arriving, by a simple expression of its will, at that Reform good men have long sighed for; but which, perhaps, they never until now clearly discerned, a quiet, easy, and peaceable method of obtaining.

I remain,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

FRANCIS BURDETT.

To the Freeholders of Middlesex.

FINIS.

W. Nicholson, Printer, Warner Street.



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 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20240

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