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*On the eighth of March 1794.*

At a GENERAL MEETING of the SOCIETY of the FRIENDS of the PEOPLE, associated for the Purpose of obtaining a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, the Draught of a *Resolution and Plan of Reform*, drawn up by Mr. FRANCIS, was laid before the SOCIETY, and ordered to be printed for the use of the Members.

On the same Day, Mr. FRANCIS gave Notice, that, at the next General Meeting, he should take the Sense of the Society on the following Proposition, viz. “ That it is the  
“ Sense and Object of this Society to recommend or support a Plan of Parliamentary Reform, founded on the  
“ Principle of giving the Exercise of the Right of voting at  
“ Elections of Members of the House of Commons, universally to every Male Adult, not convicted of Crimes, or  
“ Lunatic.”

*At a General Meeting of the SOCIETY, held at the  
Freemason's Tavern, the 5th of April, 1794.*

SAMUEL WHITBREAD, ESQ. junior, M. P. in the Chair.

Mr. FRANCIS addressed the Society in the following terms:

GENTLEMEN,

IF I am to trust to the suggestions, which I have received from many quarters on the subject of the proposition to be determined this day, I know I must address you under a great disadvantage. The sense of the Society, I am told, is against my opinion, or at least against agitating the question at present; and on this ground, it is said, I am to be opposed by persons of the greatest eloquence and ability in this Society, or perhaps in any other. I shall state to you plainly and fairly the principles of my conduct, and the motives that oblige me to persist in it. You ought to presume that, to me at least, they are important, when you consider, in what unfavourable circumstances they determine me to act; to contend at once with an unwilling audience and a powerful opposition. To the Society in general I say, Hear me for my cause; it is *your* cause as much as mine. If I am pressed by individuals, possessing a command of words, and a facility of speaking in public, which I am not master of, if advantages be taken of me, by mere dexterity in debate against substantial truth and reason, I shall take the liberty of reminding those gentlemen of their situation and of their duty. We are not contending for a victory in argument. I know my opponents and myself too well to venture into such a contest. We are here in council on a great resolution for a common benefit. To such a deliberation it is the duty of every man to bring with him a fair and honourable disposition, and if possible an unprejudiced mind; to listen with attention; to contribute, not to contend, and to yield if he be convinced. I do not question the sincerity of any man. I hope my own is unsuspected. You have seen how I have acted from the very commencement of the Society. Have I ever concealed my opinion on the subject of Parliamentary Reform; of the object, or of the means? Have I ever varied from my principles? Is it possible to suspect me of a sinister design? I hope I shall be able to satisfy you that, when I speak of my own principles, I profess none but those, which were originally adopted and declared by the Society to be the

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the foundation and the rule of all their proceedings. Surely I ought to know, as well as any man, what those principles were. If you have departed from them, it is my duty to engage you to revert to them if I can. To persevere, as I do, against what I am told is the general inclination of the Society, and what I know to be the wish of many of my friends, is surely a presumptive proof of my own conviction, that the declaration, which I shall press you to come to this day, is not only right in itself, but indispensably necessary in the present circumstances. I appeal with confidence to the testimony of those gentlemen, with whom I have all along acted in the several Committees, whether they have found me obstinate and impracticable in the transaction of business, or in general ready to yield to the wishes or opinion of others. Still however there are points fundamental in the Constitution, and essential to the honour and security of the community, on which an honest man, if he adheres to his opinion, is bound to maintain it. Obstinacy is easily distinguished from resolution. The first is the peevish child of passion and struggles against conviction. The second belongs to reason, and will not yield without it. In my conscience and honour, Gentlemen, the question, which I propose this day for your decision, is essential not only to the general object of a Parliamentary Reform, but to the peace, and happiness, and good government of the country. On such a question I cannot yield to solicitation, I cannot bend to authority, I cannot qualify my opinion, or compound with any other. By long meditation, by diligent inquiry, my understanding is satisfied, and I am criminal if I give way.

I have stated the motion in an affirmative form, for the convenience of deciding it by a simple *Yes* or *No*. Before I enter into the general merits of the question, I must begin with clearing it from an objection, which, from want of consideration, I find has had weight with many of you. It is said, that we are not called upon to debate abstract questions, that it is useless to agitate, and may be dangerous to decide them. They, who make this objection, have not considered the terms of the proposition. I deny that the question before you is at all of an abstract nature. It is purely a question of fact, and nothing else. I ask for an answer, not for an opinion, much less for a debate. I do not call upon you to argue the merits of this or that particular plan of reform, or to determine now in favour of one general principle of representation in preference to any other. All I propose to you is, that you should declare now, as I think you should have done long ago, Whether it is or is not, in fact, the sense and object of this Society to give a vote to every Commoner in the kingdom, without regard to a qualification of any kind, or let his situation be what it may. By this time I suppose you know your own meaning, and have fixed upon your object. If not, I am sure, we have very little right to assume the station, or to take upon us the office of Reformers. For my own part, I cannot conceive it possible that a majority, or any number of persons in this Society, should have so far forgotten, or so little understood the original principles, on which our association was

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formed, and the declarations we have signed and delivered with our names to the public, as to entertain a serious thought of taking the elections out of responsible hands, and leaving them at the mercy of the populace\*. In others, perhaps, such a project might be thought only wild and dangerous. In us, it would be a gross inconsistency, and a scandalous contradiction to all our professions. But in all human institutions, I know, there is an insensible tendency to depart from their principles, and in ours among the rest. Let us endeavour to correct that inclination, by a frequent review of our proceedings. Allow me to recite to you a few out of many of those declarations, to which I allude. Weigh them attentively, and try whether it be possible to reconcile them with a principle so extreme and so violent as that, which I bring before you, in order that you may disavow it now, and renounce it for ever.

We began with saying, "that the constitutional objects we had in view, were, to restore to the people the freedom of election, a more equal representation, and a more frequent exercise of their right of electing their representatives. We thought it our bounden duty to propose no extreme changes, which, however specious in theory, can never be accomplished without violence to the settled opinions of mankind, nor attempted without endangering some of the most estimable advantages, which we confessedly enjoy." We said, "that a temperate reform was the only one which we could propose, and the only one to which we would give our concurrence;" and "that an early declaration of these opinions would conciliate many to the cause of a reform, who are now held in honest neutrality by their fears." "That all our language has been cautious, because all our views are moderate."—Are these the principles and objects to which you mean to adhere, or have you adopted any others? If you have, you are bound to avow them. Dissolve the present association if you will, and institute a new one, with new articles and engagements. But this and every community must keep faith with its members. A majority, that departs from principles originally agreed on by unanimous consent, exceeds its power, and cannot bind the minority. On the present question certainly I have no apprehension or idea of such a decision. But opinions prevail abroad, to which I should be sorry that any encouragement or countenance should be given, even by the silence or apparent neutrality of this Society. It is not a question, on which we can honestly continue to be silent, or pretend to be neutral. I am afraid that we

\* *Inveheris deinde in plebem, cæcam eam et brutam, regendi artem non habere, nil plebe ventosius, vanius, levius, mobilius. Conveniunt in te optime hæc omnia; et de infima quidem plebe sunt etiam vera; de media non item; quo ex numero prudentissimi fere sunt viri, et rerum peritissimi. Cæteros hinc lux et opulentia, inde egestas et inopia a virtute et civilis prudentiæ studio plerumque avertit.*

MILTON. *Defensio pro populo Anglicano, cap. 7.*

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we have already been the cause of considerable mischief, by delaying to make an explicit declaration on this point so long as we have done. We have misled others, or we have suffered them to go astray. The greatest part of those Societies, which, for want of instruction from us, have gone to excesses on the subject of universal representation, would have been ready enough to follow and be guided by us, if we had declared to them in proper time what our specific object was; to what length we intended to proceed, and at what point we were determined to stop. For want of that necessary and timely information, they have involved themselves in some inconsiderate resolutions, which we might have prevented, and which now we must condemn. If we do not speak out about our intentions, as a collective body, our union is of no use; we leave every individual at liberty to form a scheme for himself; we lay ourselves open to calumny at least, if not to serious suspicion; we defeat all hopes of reform by not fixing and uniting upon some determinate plan; and, in my opinion, we do worse than abandon our post, if we pretend to hold the station of Reformers without doing or attempting to do the essential duty that belongs to it. From our silence, the enemies of reform will draw their own conclusion, either that the thing is impracticable, and that we know it to be so, or that we mean nothing but to amuse the public, or to agitate the people for some sinister purpose of our own. If we are not equal to the station and the duty, let us surrender the office. Our business is concluded if we have nothing more to propose. If we know of no remedy for the abuses, which we have stated to parliament and to the nation, let us be honest enough to say so, and not disgrace our own character, by trifling any longer with the expectations of the public. At all events, it is time that we at least should understand one another on this subject. I, for one, have done what I thought my duty as a member of this Society, to the best of my judgement, and with a strict adherence to the original views and principles of our Association. We were unanimous when we asserted, that it was our determination to pursue a middle path between arbitrary power and ungovernable licence; between the encroachments of the crown and the excesses of the people; and, as far as any act or any council of ours could operate, to guard the commonwealth equally against both. On this day then I offer you, with one hand, a declaratory resolution, by which we shall satisfy the sober and rational part of the community, that we do not mean to encourage or comply with extravagant expectations, or to attempt or yield to any thing, for the sake of popularity, which we know would be injurious to the commonwealth. With the other hand I offer you a specific plan of reform, which will effectually secure the freedom of election against the power of the crown, the corrupt influence of individuals, and the violence of the populace; and vest it where it ought to be, in the real Commons of the kingdom. I do not call upon you now to accept or reject this plan. On that point, it may be prudent and necessary to take farther time for deliberation. If you are not prepared to adopt such a plan without

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without reserve, recommend it at least to the consideration of the country, and see what impression it makes abroad. But I do call upon you now to say whether you are or are not convinced by the arguments stated in this paper against that dangerous chimera, set up on purpose to delude the lower classes of the people, under the name of Universal Representation. On this subject I cannot but believe that, if we are not unanimous, the dissentient voices will be very few. But it is said, and I suspect that it has more weight in the minds of many, than they are willing to confess, that, if we come to a formal resolution against Universal Representation, we shall lose the support of the Societies, which have declared in favour of it, and which now, it is supposed, will be satisfied with nothing less. In the first place, I do not believe that our explicit declaration will be attended with that consequence. The Societies abroad have fallen into an error, because they have been left without a guide. Their intentions are good, and all they desire is to be instructed by those, who look deeper and understand the subject better than they do. If we are not qualified to give them such instruction, we have no business here. But let the consequence be what it may, I, for one, would not accept of their assistance with that condition. Hitherto their proceedings have done but little service to the cause, which however is not so much their fault as ours. They have deterred many real friends of Parliamentary Reform from embarking with us, lest they should find themselves at the mercy of a disorderly crew and ignorant pilots. With one of these Societies, we have publicly renounced all intercourse, because *"their views and objects appeared to us irreconcilable with the real interests of the people, and the genuine principles of the constitution"*.—The others, I am convinced, would allow us to take the lead and be ready to follow us, provided we would speak openly and plainly, and tell them what we meant. Deceit of every kind, particularly in dealing with the people, is as foolish as it is criminal. I speak from experience. I have known many of these false politicians. They began with deceiving the public; but they invariably ended with deceiving themselves.—Mr. Fox has declared himself frankly and openly against the idea of Universal Representation. Has he lost the confidence of the public, or the friendship of any man, by that declaration? Has he forfeited the favour of any class of men, by telling them fairly his opinion and his resolution on this subject? On the contrary, I firmly believe that, by declaring himself explicitly, even against their inclination, he has gained many friends, and lost none. Have I lost the good opinion of any man in this Society, by this part of my conduct? Would you be less disposed to confide in me, because I spoke to you without reserve on an ungrateful topic? No, I am certain of the contrary. But have I lost credit abroad by it; I mean with these Societies? Allow me to state to you a fact material to the present question, as well as to shew you how easily these Societies might have been guided and conducted by us, if we had declared our object in proper time. On

\* 12th May, 1792.

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On the sixth day of May, 1793, I received a deputation of four persons from the London Corresponding Society, to desire that I would present a petition from them to the House of Commons,—Mr. Margarot, Mr. Hardy, and two others, whose names I forget. I knew none of them. I read the petition, and, as it seemed unexceptionable in the form, I agreed to present it. But I objected expressly to the prayer of it; because, instead of being left generally, as it should have been, to the wisdom of the House, it stated and requested a particular remedy, viz. by Universal Representation on the principles laid down by the Duke of Richmond, being decidedly of the same opinion with his grace†. On that point I gave them my opinion as frankly as I do now, and as I did in my place, when I presented the petition.—They seemed to me then to be prudent and reasonable men; at least they behaved so. Instead of quarrelling with me for my objection, they said that, if they had known it sooner, they should have been ready to yield to it, and to have stated the prayer of the petition in general terms; but it was now too late, as the petition was already signed by great numbers, and could not be altered. But it is said, I have admitted, that the right of election is the common right of the whole body of British subjects, except peers. I have so; and yet I affirm, without involving myself in any the smallest contradiction or inconsistency, that it belongs to the wisdom, and is the right and duty of Society to restrain the exercise of that common right in every individual, by whatever limitations or qualifications they may think necessary for the safety or benefit of the community. Shew me a Society if you can, shew me a Republic ever so democratical in its constitution, in which that restraining power has not been assumed, in which similar restraints and limitations have not been imposed by the wisdom of the few, and submitted to by the many. It is not enough to say that restraints are invented for the uses or convenience of Society; I contend and affirm, that Society itself is instituted for the sake of restraints, and for that purpose only; that the strong man may be restrained from oppressing the weak; that the powerful multitude may be restrained from destroying the few, and that the few, in return, may be restrained from acting in combination against the interests and the happiness of the many. Take away this cause for entering into Society, and why should any man renounce the individual liberty that belongs to a state of nature? In that state he might possibly enjoy all the advantages of a free and independent communication with his fellow-creatures. Of restraint alone, the essence of Society he could not have the benefit. He therefore brings his common right in every instance along with him; and, for his own good, submits to have it limited, or modified, or totally suspended. Every law you make is, some way or other, a restriction on the common right of individuals. Why do men submit to government of any kind? Because, when once we have assembled in Society, there is no possibility of freedom for any, if there be not a strict and vigorous government over all; and on that prin-

† Vide votes, 6th May, 1793.

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principle I conclude that no government is free but in proportion as it is absolute; that is, where the power, which ought to command, is implicitly obeyed. Civil Society is an army with different arms, and subject alike to discipline and command. When these are gone, the Society and the army are equally dissolved. They who have not bent their minds to these subjects, are apt to confound the idea of an absolute with that of an arbitrary government. But wide is the difference. Instead of being absolute, or, in the strict meaning of the term, *complete and perfect*, an arbitrary government is, of all others, the most dissolute and the worst obeyed, the most feeble and ineffectual, not only to the mass of its duties, but even to its own sinister objects. Wherever the power of the despot instantly presses, the subject yields. Take away the immediate pressure or remove the terror, and there his obedience ends. While the direct force acts on his person, or the fear of it on his mind, he submits or pretends to submit, but never voluntarily, never from principle, or a sense of duty. If he cannot resist, he evades. If he cannot refuse, he defrauds. Compare these dissolute monarchies, which are supposed to be all powerful, with the mild government of North America. I hope the accounts we have heard of that fortunate country, and of its wise inhabitants, are true. If they are, you have the example before you of a wise and steady government on one side, and of an active implicit obedience on the other\*.—In that country only, where freedom has been best provided for and secured, the magistrate is absolute; resistance or disobedience, or even evasion is unheard of. These, I know, are generalities. I state them to shew, that no man is intitled to plead or oppose his common right against the benefit, and much less against the safety of the community. The necessity, the use, and the degree of the restriction must be determined by the wisdom, which assuredly does not reside in the lower orders of Society. Still I am answered with phrases instead of arguments. The right of election is a common right, and that's enough. Then let every man qualify himself to exercise his common right. The qualification demanded of him is so moderate that, with industry and good conduct, the lowest man in the kingdom may obtain it. Any thing below this mark would neither secure nor indicate a state of independence. But he, who is dependent, if he had twenty votes, would only be an instrument of power in the hands of another. Still I am told that a common right is not to be restricted. Go tell the river then that it is the common elementary right of water to find or to force a passage

\* Quomodo Spartæ Reges Ephoris assurrexerunt; et reliquorum, ut quisque vocatus erat, non lento gradu sed cursim per forum se proripiens obedientiam suam civibus ostentabant, exultantes in honore, quem magistratibus tribuebant.

PLUTARCHUS. in reip. gerendæ præceptis. p. 817.

Τὸ εὖ βέρον ἐν τῇ τὰ κληρονομήναι  
Ποιεῖν τῆς πόλεως.

Dion. Halic. in Isocrate.

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in every direction; that you invade his natural liberty, if you attempt to confine the stream within the channel, or to prevent his overflowing his banks, and laying the country desolate.

Per sata, perque vias fertur, nec ut ante solebat,  
Riparum clausas margine finit aquas.

I cannot persuade myself that, among those gentlemen, whose rank and abilities intitle them to a lead in this and every Society, there is a single man, who would venture to vote in the affirmative for the proposition as it stands. No ambitious man; no man, who expects at any future time to share in the government of the country, would dare to set his name to such a resolution; No, nor even to a doubt upon the question; because he knows with certainty that, if he did so in earnest, it would be an everlasting insurmountable bar to his advancement, and that he would pronounce a veto and exclusion against himself for ever; unless indeed he aimed at elevation on the ruins of his country. Ambitious men will never seriously lend their names to Universal Representation. But others perhaps, who look only to popularity and fame, may think that this is the road to it, and that by catching at the first, they secure the second. I do not think that fame of itself, and much less popularity, ought to be the direct object of any man's actions. He, who makes it the object, ought to lose it as the reward. "Yet I would not wish to leave ambition without popular motives\*." I, perhaps, am as fond of popularity and fame as another; provided it be secure;—provided it be of a quality and consistence, to resist the power of time, and grow and expand under the hand of the general destroyer. Such is the popularity, which follows, not that which is followed†. I use the words of the late Lord Mansfield, because the words are wise, and much better than the authority. Yet I take him to have been a weak man, rather than a wicked one. Certainly neither his virtues nor his vices were at all on a level with his capacity. He, who trusts to mere popularity, will find that the sudden favour of the people is no better than the hasty growth of a mushroom, that comes to its perfection in a night, and perishes the day after. But true fame, the fame that endures, must be earned with labour, and secured by perseverance. *Vera gloria radices agit*. The growth of the oak is slow and tenacious: by holding deeply in the soil, he contends with the storm, and, in proportion as he strikes his vigorous root into the earth, rears his immortal head to heaven. It is indeed a delightful imagination to hope that our names may survive our dissolution, and that we shall live in the memory of those, who inherit the benefit of our labours. It is the only human recompence, of which they, who deserve it, cannot be defrauded. To hope is to possess, to expect is to enjoy it. My own conduct, I know, has excluded me from the common gratifications of interest or ambition. But defeat in that sense is victory in a better. My life, I trust, has not been utterly useless to the community; nor shall I close it without a hope that, when they, who occupy the stations and

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\* Mr. Burke.

† Sequi enim gloria, non appeti debet.

PLIN. 1. 8.

advantages of the world, are forgotten, even my inconsiderable name may be remembered with gratitude by my country, and that posterity will scatter some flowers upon my tomb. Some gentlemen are pleased to say, that we have properly no right to propose a specific plan of reform to the country, because we have no authority to bind the public opinion. —Then what are our pretensions to the name of Reformers? The title we take supposes the right. The station indicates the duty. But if, by stating the grievance to Parliament and to the Nation, we have done all we undertook, our business is finished, and now we should dissolve. For a purpose so very limited, I think it was hardly necessary to associate. The grievance was perfectly understood, and did not require the assistance of our association to state or explain it. Other gentlemen say that, by proposing a specific plan, we shall withdraw the attention of the public from the grievance to the remedy, from a consideration of the abuse, in which all might unite, to cavils and controversies about this or that particular mode of correcting it. I do not admit or believe that this would be the consequence. But, if the objection has any weight, it can never be removed. If I yield to it to day, I must yield to it to-morrow. Delay is no security against cavil or contradiction. At some period or other, you must meet the difficulty; or you must be reduced to confess what you ought to declare now, if it be true, that the case is beyond your capacity. Is that the way to recall the attention of the public and to fix it on the grievance, which it seems you are afraid they should forget? In my mind, gentlemen, the sure and certain means to make men careless and indifferent about this or any other disorder, is to tell them it admits of no cure, or that it is not within the reach of medicine. What answer do you think the patient would make to such a physician? "For what purpose do you afflict me? If you have no relief to offer, if my situation be desperate, leave me to myself; I'll think no more of it; you are my tormentor not my friend." Such is the answer, which human nature invariably makes, when reminded of its miseries by those, who cannot or will not relieve them. Some gentlemen say that this society ought to continue to press the House of Commons, by repeated remonstrances and petitions, to acknowledge the abuse, and that, when they have acknowledged, they will be ready to correct it. I do believe so. Confession is certainly a step to repentance, and repentance to amendment. But do you seriously believe that any thing we can say will persuade the House of Commons to confess or to repent? You may wait for that event, till the river ceases to flow. Again I tell you, it is in vain to expect that a body of men, so interested as individuals, and so countenanced by their number, should ever be the authors of their own reformation. They ought to be the formal instruments of it; but to make them so, some power external to the House of Commons, I mean the power of the nation, must act upon them. No influence of individuals, no union of parties can effect it. If Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox were to unite ever so heartily on this point, it would avail nothing. In the instance of the Slave Trade, we have seen how little was obtained by their union. Nay, if the King were to throw

throw the whole weight and influence of the Crown into the scale, I do not believe it would be effectual. The interests, that oppose a real substantial Reform of Parliament, are too numerous and extensive, too powerful in the mass, and too active in the individual, to yield to any thing less than the compulsory will of the nation at large. We have heard it said, that it would be useful to impose an obligation upon individuals not to accept of places in the Administration, but on a condition to be made with the Crown of carrying a Reform of Parliament; that is, to pass a bill of exclusion against themselves, without any possible benefit to the public. On one side, we should lose the services of the best men in the country, and gain nothing on the other. I neither would impose nor submit to such a restriction. A country, that will never act for itself, does not deserve the services of men of honour, nor would they be of any use. I have now done every thing in my power to assist the endeavours, and to promote the views of the Society;—what I thought their views were—what I am sure they ought to be. If this be not the time for the Society to declare its opinion, and to propose a plan for consideration, tell me distinctly, at what time and in what circumstances you intend to be more explicit. For my own part, I have every reason to believe that some specific proposition on the subject is generally expected from us. I hear it from our enemies with triumph and defiance—I hear it from our friends with anxiety and impatience. Mr. Hollis has just put into my hands a letter on this subject from Mr. Wyvill, an honest, an able, and a persevering friend of Reform. Allow me to read you a passage out of this letter.

*Extract of a letter from the Reverend Mr. WYVILL to Mr. HOLLIS, dated the 13th of March, 1794.*

"I should be happy to hear your Society gains strength; and I own I cannot entirely agree with you, in thinking specific plans should be avoided at present. Now is the very time, when a specific plan on moderate principles seems to be absolutely necessary, and the want of it is what principally enables the Minister to discredit the Society, by representing your intentions to be hostile to the Constitution, and tending to throw the country into confusion." I agree with Mr. Wyvill. You have a principle and a plan before you, and this is the time to declare it. The plan, if executed, I affirm would be effectual to every purpose, which this Society has hitherto professed. It would take the elections completely out of the influence of Government, and out of the disposal of individuals. On this plan, the choice of a House of Commons, by corruption of the electors, would be impracticable, and, if it were practicable, would be useless. A majority of a million and a half of voters cannot be bribed at any time; much less can they be bribed once a year. The plan therefore goes to its object, and does not go beyond it. It is effectual to its purpose, and moderate, because nothing less would be effectual. It is folly, not moderation; it is prodigality, not economy, to stint the expence, when the service is unattainable without it. An imperfect measure is worse than none; and the efforts to accomplish it are worse than thrown

thrown away. A partial reform must always act in a minority. Progressive improvements, which some men recommend, would all be successively absorbed and sink into the standing system. Corruption acts in a mass, and must be opposed in the same form. The whole measure of reform must proceed at once, and with all its force. If you attack a phalanx by detachment, what can you expect but to be defeated in detail? With respect to the period, there is one consideration, which surely will have weight with every man, who values the peace and happiness of his country, or who would wish to save it from the greatest calamity. Suppose a day of external trouble should come. Suppose the country in general should be roused, and the interests and powers, now in possession of the elections, should be compelled to give way. In such a moment of general commotion, would you not think it wise and fortunate to have pre-occupied the public mind by some determined plan, to which the country might gradually attach and be prepared to resort for an immediate settlement? Or, would you leave the commonwealth in such a sea of trouble, at the mercy of the storm, without a compass to direct, without a harbour to receive her?—You cannot mean it. I trust I have been acting with men of honour. But, if you seriously differ from me in opinion, if you think it right to keep your own project, whatever it may be, in reserve, and the country in suspense, dismiss me from your service. I cannot serve you on that principle. On the question immediately before you, I think you are bound to give a direct answer. If you think that Universal Representation is a principle of Reform fit to be recommended or supported by this Society, avow it. If the contrary be your opinion, declare it. Never suffer a doubt to hang on such a proposition. At all events, I hope no attempt will be made to get rid of it by the disgraceful expedient of a previous question, so often practised in another place, and so often reprobated by ourselves. If you mean to reform the House of Commons, beware how you follow their example,

*After some debate the previous question, on Mr. Francis's motion, was put and carried.*