

Phila^a April 14, 1776

Dear Sir,

In this much elevated Station to which I fear I was improperly called by my Country, it has been my desire to seek the Advice and Opinions of my friends that I might with better judgment determine on the important matters that daily occur. In this number Nature gave me a right to rank you, & my knowledge ~~of you~~ taught me to expect your Wisdom & Experience would be a luminary in the present maze of Politicks. The intricacies and windings of which I own often huzzles my Understanding. To assist in finding a Clue by which my Country may safely & honourably ^{^a} [directed?] [from?] this labyrinth shall be my peculiar Study & Attention.

If in this pursuit I differ in sentiment with some of my countrymen I flatter myself their Charity will prevent any injurious imputations on the motives that influence my Actions.

Independency & total Separation from Great Britain are the interesting Subjects of all ranks & of all nations agitate our Body. It is in truth a delusive Bait which Men inconsiderately catch at without knowing the hook to which it is affixed. It is an Object to be wished for by every American, when it can be obtained with Safety & Honor. That this is not the moment

Carter Braxton Esq
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Date: April 14, 1776

Description: Carter Braxton seeking advice from uncle, Philadelphia, 1776

I will prove by Arguments that to me are decisive
& which exist with certainty. Your refined notion
of our publick Honor being engaged to await the
terms to be offered by Commissioners operates
strongly with me & many others & makes the first
reason I would offer. My next is that America
is in too defenseless a State for the declaration,
having no Alliance with a naval Power nor as
yet any Fleet of consequence of her own to pro-
tect that trade which is so essential to the prose-
cution of the War & without which I know
we cannot go on much longer. It is said by
the Advocates for Separation that France will un-
doubtedly assist us after we have asserted the
State, and therefore ^{they} urge us to make the experiment.

Would such a blind, precipitate measure as this
be justified by Prudence, first to throw off our Con-
nexion with G. Britain and then give ourselves
up to the Arms of France. Would not this Court
so famous for Intrigues & Deceptions avail herself
of our situation & from ^{it} exact much severer terms
than if we were to treat with ^{her} before hand &
settle the terms of any future Alliance. Surely
she would, but the truth of the matter is, there are
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Admission of our own terms. For however strange it may appear I am satisfied that the eastern Colonies do not mean to have a Reconciliation and in this I am justified by publick & private Reasons.

To illustrate my Opinion I will beg leave to mention them. Two of the new England Colonies enjoy a Government purely ~~purely~~ democratical the Nature & Principle of which both civil & religious are so totally incompatible with Monarchy that they have ever lived in a restless State under it. The other two tho' not so popular in their frame bordered so near upon it that Monarchical Influence hung very heavy on them. The best opportunity in the World being now offered them to throw off all Subjection & embrace their darling Democracy they are determined to accept it.

Then are aided by those of a private Nature but not less cogent. The Colonies of Massachusetts & Connecticut who rule the other two have Claims on the Province of Pennsylvania in the whole for near one third of the Land within their Provincial Bounds & indeed the Claim extended to its full extent comes within four Miles of this City - This dispute was carried to the King & Council & with them it now lies. The eastern Colonies unwilling they should now be the Arbiters have asserted their Claims by force & have at this time eight hundred Men in Arms upon the upper part of this ^{Land} called Wyoming, where they are peaceable at present only thro' the Influence of the Congress. - Thus naturally then arises

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a heart burning & Jealousy between these People & they must have two very different Objects in View.

The Province of New York is not without her Fears & apprehensions from the Temper of her Neighbors, their great swarms & small Territory.

Even Virginia is not free from Claims on Pennsylvania nor Maryland from those on Virginia.

Some of the delegates from our Colony carry their Ideas of right & Lands so far to the Eastward that the middle Colonies dread their being swallowed ^{up} between the Claims of them & those from the East. And yet without any Adjustment of these disputes & a variety of other matters, some are for Lugging us into Independence. But so long as these remain unsettled & Men act upon the Principles they ever have done, you may rely no such thing will be generally agreed on. Upon viewing the secret movements of Men & things I am convinced ~~Independence~~ the Assertion of Independence is far off. If it was to be now asserted, the Continent would be torn in pieces by intestine Wars & Convulsions.

Previous to ^{Independence} all disputes must be healed & Harmony prevail. A grand Continental League must be formed & a superintending Power also. When these necessary Steps are taken & I see a Coalition formed sufficient to withstand the Power of Britain or any other, then am I for an independent State & all its Consequences, as then I think they will produce Happiness to America.

It is a true saying of a Wit—We must hang together or separately. I will not beg yr pardon for intruding this long letter upon yr old age w^h I judged necessary in my situation & to conclude by assuring you I am with great regard
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If any of our Newspapers will be agreeable say so in yr next.