
Option 4

RIGHTS AND HONOR ARE NOT WORTH BLOODSHED

The United States and its citizens are being asked to risk too much for the sake of principles and honor. Engaging in a military conflict with Great Britain not only threatens to undermine our cherished constitutional government, it threatens America's existence as an independent country.

The injustices heaped upon us by the British are many. We do not and cannot ignore the unwarranted British interference with American shipping on the high seas. Nor do we turn a blind eye to the unacceptable practice of impressment. These intolerable behaviors must stop. But a war with Great Britain that would align us with the tyrant Napoleon is not the answer.

For almost two decades while Great Britain and France have engaged in an epic battle, our sailors and merchants have paid a heavy price. The loss of both men and goods to the warring parties has caused both personal sorrow and financial loss. Is a response that will extend this sorrow and loss far beyond the confines of those associated with transatlantic shipping a justified response? Should American civilians risk death and destruction for the rights and honor of a few? Even worse, the British have continually demonstrated their interest in returning America to a state of colonial dependence. Why should we give the British the justification and occasion for doing so?

What about the cost? Americans look unfavorably upon the tax man. Our War of Independence was precipitated in many ways by unjustified attempts at taxation. Since independence, domestic turmoil (like the Whiskey Rebellion), has been caused by unwanted taxes. A war with Great Britain will cost Americans dearly. All taxes until this point will seem modest and in fact insignificant in comparison with the taxation that will be necessary to wage war against the world's strongest military power. In addition, by resorting to war, we risk losing the millions of American dollars deposited in British banks and losing our cargoes currently on the high seas.

Finally, whether we like it or not, war against the British allies us with Napoleon. Did our forefathers sacrifice their blood in the American Revolution so that we would have the freedom to ally ourselves with one of history's most bloodthirsty dictators? Hasn't France seized more of our ships over the past five years than Great Britain has? Have we worked so hard to establish a constitutional republic at home so that we would have the freedom to support tyranny abroad? No. Freedom at home is inextricably connected to freedom abroad. The United States should not support, directly or indirectly, the work of emperors.

The risk to our nation is too great and the rewards are too few to justify war against Great Britain. Injustices have occurred, but greater injustices will occur if we choose war. Is it worth risking the demise of the world's largest constitutional republic for the rights of a few or the sake of principle? Let the costs be weighed and reason prevail.

FROM THE RECORD

Josiah Quincy, Congressman from Massachusetts:

"If our ills were of a nature that war would remedy, if war would compensate any of our losses or remove any of our complaints, there might be some alleviation of the suffering in the charm of the prospect. But how will war upon the land protect commerce upon the ocean? What balm has Canada for wounded honor? How are our mariners benefited by a war which exposes those who are free, without promising release to those who are impressed? But it is said that war is demanded by honor. Is national honor a principle which thirsts after vengeance, and is appeased only by blood?... If honor demands a war with England, what opiate lulls that honor to sleep over the wrongs done us by France?

John Randolph, Congressman from Virginia:

"An insinuation had fallen from the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy) that the late massacre of our brethren on the Wabash had been instigated by the British government. Has the President given any such information? Has the gentleman received any such, even informally, from any officer of this government? Is it so believed by the administration? ... This insinuation was of the grossest kind—presumption the most rash, the most unjustifiable... But is war the true remedy? Who will profit by it? Speculators; a few lucky merchants who draw prizes in the lottery; commissaries and contractors. Who must suffer by it? The people. It is their blood, their taxes, that must flow to support it."

Excerpts from a Resolution of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts:

"A war with Great Britain would furnish temptations to her Government to sequester the millions belonging to our citizens deposited in that country, and an opportunity to her navy and cruisers to sweep the ocean of the remains of our once flourishing commerce. The conquest of Canada, the only point in which she is assailable, would afford no indemnification, if achieved, for the losses to which we should be exposed upon our unprotected seaboard, and upon the ocean. Destitute as we are of a navy, and the means of immediate maritime defence, we cannot perceive in what mode a war with this nation, so powerful on the ocean, can promise the attainment of its

avowed object—the revocation of the Orders in Council."

William Coleman, Federalist Editor of the New York Evening Post:

"Citizens, if pecuniary redress is your object in going to war with England, the measure is perfect madness. You will lose millions when you will gain a cent. The expense will be enormous. It will, ruin our country. Direct taxes must be resorted to. The people will have nothing to pay. We once had a revenue; that has been destroyed in the destruction of our commerce... These remarks will have little weight with men whose interest leads them to advocate war. Thousands of lives, millions of money, the flames of cities, the tears of widows and orphans, with them are light expedients when they lead to wealth and power. But to the people who must fight, if fighting must be done - who must pay if money be wanted—who must march when the trumpet sounds, and who must die when the battle bleeds—to the people I appeal. To them the warning voice is lifted. From a war they are to expect nothing but expenses and suffering—expenses disproportionate to their means, and sufferings lasting as life."

Editor of the Boston Centinel quoted in The Weekly Register:

"It is evident that under the circumstances of this country, a declaration of war would be in effect a license and a bounty offered by our government to the British fleet to scour our coasts—to sweep our remaining navigation from the ocean, to annihilate our commerce, and to drive the country, by a rapid declension, into the state of poverty and distress which attended the close of the revolutionary struggle... Other considerations come in aid of our confidence—The proposed enemy is invulnerable to us, while we are on all sides open to assault. The conquest of Canada would be less useful to us than that of Nova Zembla, and could not be so easily achieved. Our red brethren, forgetful of the patriotic "talks" of their "father" JEFFERSON, would pour down upon our frontier, and our black brethren would show themselves not less enamoured with the examples of liberty taught in St. Domingo than their masters are with those derived from its mother country. New Orleans and the Floridas would pass into the hands of the enemy. Our sea-

ports would be under a strict blockade, and the mouths of our rivers would be bridged with frigates."

John Randolph, Congressman from Virginia:

"My design is simply to submit to you the views which have induced me to consider a war with England, under existing circumstances, as comporting neither with the interest nor the honor of the American people; but as an idolatrous sacrifice of both on the altar of French rapacity, perfidy, and ambition. France has for years past offered us terms of undefined commercial arrangements as the price of war with England, which hitherto we have not wanted firmness and virtue to reject. That price is now to be paid. We

are tired of holding out; and, following the example of continental Europe, entangled in the artifices, or awed by the power of the Destroyer of Mankind, we are prepared to become instrumental to his projects of universal dominion. Before these pages meet your eye, the last Republic of the earth will have enlisted under the banners of the tyrant and become a party to his cause. The blood of the American freemen must flow to cement his power, to aid in stifling the last struggles of afflicted and persecuted man, to deliver up into his hands the patriots of Spain and Portugal, to establish his empire over the ocean and over the land that gave our fathers birth—to forge our own chains!"

BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING OPTION 4

1. Neither honor nor greed can justify bloodshed.
2. War with Great Britain aligns us with France and the tyranny of Napoleon.
3. Anything but defensive war goes against the spirit on which this nation was founded: the individual's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS FOR OPTION 4

1. Great Britain's navy commands the oceans of the world and will surely seize our merchant ships. Why provide Britain with another excuse to seize our wealth?
2. France has seized more of our ships in the past five years than Britain has. Why should we help the French by attacking Britain?
3. Indian attacks on the frontier do not justify declaring war against Great Britain. Those claiming British involvement in these attacks have been called upon to offer proof, but have consistently been unable to provide evidence to support their inflammatory claims.
4. The expense of war must be borne by our citizens. Taxes will be levied, an army must be raised, and the blood of our sons will flow. Those advocating war are those who stand to gain not those who will pay the horrible price of war. There will be little benefit to our citizens—only increased hardships.