

Thomas Jefferson Interview –December 27th, 1789

Editor's Note: This AI-generated interview takes place on the cusp of the implementation of the U.S. Constitution. Mr. Jefferson reflects upon his youth and revolutionary experiences. AI was instructed to strictly adhere to Mr. Jefferson's writing and attempt to respond in a style consistent with Mr. Jefferson's demonstrated style.

Interviewer: Your education at the College of William & Mary under mentors like William Small and George Wythe, followed by your legal studies, exposed you to Enlightenment ideas. Which thinkers and principles most profoundly influenced your emerging philosophy of reason, liberty, and the rights of man?

Thomas Jefferson: Sir, my education at the College of William and Mary, under the enlightened and affectionate guidance of Doctor Small, to whom I am indebted for every thing, and under the patronage of Mr. Wythe, whom Doctor Small procured for me, laid the foundations of whatever I have attained in philosophy and in public life. Doctor Small was professor of Mathematics at William and Mary, and for some time in the philosophical chair; he first introduced into both schools rational and elevated courses of study, and from an extraordinary conjunction of eloquence and logic was enabled to communicate them to the students with great effect. Mr. Wythe, self-taught in the Latin and Greek, and possessed of a good knowledge of Mathematics, of natural and moral philosophy, became my bosom friend and guide; at their frequent dinners with Governor Fauquier, the ablest man who ever filled the chair of government here, I was always admitted to make a partie quarrée, and at these dinners I have heard more good sense, more rational and philosophical conversations than in all my life besides; they were truly Attic societies.

From Mr. Wythe, devoted as he was to liberty, and the natural and equal rights of men, I imbibed those principles which he maintained from the first dawn of our revolution; instead of higgling on halfway principles, as others did who feared to follow their reason, he took his stand on the solid ground that the only link of political union between us and Great Britain was the identity of our Executive; that that nation and its parliament had no more authority over us than we had over them, and that we were co-ordinate nations with Great Britain and Hanover. He signed the Declaration of Independence, of which he had in debate been an eminent supporter, and with me and others revised the laws of Virginia to conform them to the change in the form and principles of government.

The thinkers whose works have most profoundly influenced my emerging philosophy of reason, liberty, and the rights of man are those whose doctrines I have ever held as the legitimate foundations of civil society. On the general principles of liberty and the rights of man, in nature, and in society, the doctrines of Locke in his Essay concerning the true

original, extent, and end of civil government, and of Sydney in his Discourses on government, may be considered as those generally approved; to these I add the principles of Beccaria, the Federalist, and the writings of Priestley on the first principles of government, of Condorcet on the progress of the human mind, of Helvetius, of Hume in his essays, of Voltaire, of Bolingbroke in his philosophical works, and of Montesquieu, whose Spirit of laws I have reviewed with attention. These, with the moral philosophy of Cicero, Epictetus, and Seneca, and the natural religion of Lord Kames, have formed the texts from which I have drawn, and which I have recommended to others as the surest guides to a just understanding of reason as the only oracle given us by heaven, and of liberty as founded in the natural and equal rights of men.

In my legal studies under Mr. Wythe I pursued these principles through Coke's Institutes, Bacon's Abridgment, and the reports, ever seeking to fortify the rights of man against arbitrary power; and it is from this conjunction of rational conversation, classical learning, and philosophical reading that my sentiments on these great subjects were formed and confirmed.

Interviewer: Why did you regard the general diffusion of knowledge as essential to the preservation of liberty in the new American states?

Thomas Jefferson: As I wrote to my dear friend George Wythe in Paris on the 13th of August 1786, "I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowlege among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom, and happiness."

The people alone can protect us against the evils that arise when ignorance prevails. If we leave the people in ignorance, kings, nobles, and priests will rise up among us, as surely as they have done in Europe. There, notwithstanding the finest soil upon earth and the finest climate under heaven, and a people of the most benevolent, the most gay, and amiable character, they are yet loaded with misery by kings, nobles, and priests, and by them alone. I have seen with my own eyes in that country that these descriptions of men are an abandoned confederacy against the happiness of the mass of the people. The omnipotence of their effect cannot be better proved than there, where such a people, surrounded by so many blessings from nature, are yet thus oppressed.

Ours could not have been so fairly put into the hands of their own common sense, had they not been separated from their parent stock and been kept from contamination, either from them or the other people of the old world, by the intervention of so wide an ocean. To know the worth of this, one must see the want of it here. Preach, I say, a crusade against ignorance; establish and improve the law for educating the common people. Let our

countrymen know that the people alone can protect us against these evils, and that the tax which will be paid for this purpose is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests, and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance.

Above all things I hope the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty. The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right. Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter, but I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them. The people are the only censors of their governors, and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty. The way to prevent irregular interpositions is to give them full information of their affairs through the channel of the public papers, and to contrive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people. Cherish therefore the spirit of our people, and keep alive their attention. Do not be too severe upon their errors, but reclaim them by enlightening them. If once they become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress, and Assemblies, judges and governors shall all become wolves.

The people cannot be all, and always, well informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions, it is a lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. We have had thirteen states independent eleven years. There has been one rebellion. That comes to one rebellion in a century and a half for each state. What country before ever existed a century and a half without a rebellion? And what country can preserve its liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? The remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them. Educate and inform the whole mass of the people; enable them to see that it is their interest to preserve peace and order, and they will preserve it. It requires no very high degree of education to convince them of this. They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.

Thus it is that the general diffusion of knowledge stands as the surest foundation for our freedom in these new states. Without it, the mass of the people cannot guard against the encroachments of power, nor maintain that vigilance which alone preserves republican government. I have said it before and I say it now: no other sure foundation can be devised.

Interviewer: What form of government do you believe best secures the liberties of a free people, and why did you see a republic, rather than monarchy or aristocracy, as the only safe choice in 1776?

Thomas Jefferson: I believe the form of government which best secures the liberties of a free people is that wherein the will of every one has a just influence, as in our states in a great degree. Societies exist under three forms sufficiently distinguishable: without government, as among our Indians; under governments wherein the will of every one has a just influence, as in England in a slight degree and in our states in a great one; and under governments of force, as in all other monarchies and in most of the other republics. To have an idea of the curse of existence under these last, they must be seen. It is a government of wolves over sheep. The second state has a great deal of good in it. The mass of mankind under that enjoys a precious degree of liberty and happiness. It has its evils too, the principal of which is the turbulence to which it is subject. But weigh this against the oppressions of monarchy, and it becomes nothing. *Malo periculosam, libertatem quam quietam servitutem (I prefer dangerous freedom to quiet slavery)*. Even this evil is productive of good. It prevents the degeneracy of government, and nourishes a general attention to the public affairs. I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical.

Advise those who consider a kingly government as a refuge to read the fable of the frogs who solicited Jupiter for a king. If that does not put them to rights, send them to Europe to see something of the trappings of monarchy, and I will undertake that every man shall go back thoroughly cured. No race of kings has ever presented above one man of common sense in twenty generations. The best they can do is to leave things to their ministers, and what are their ministers but a committee, badly chosen?

In 1776, when the king had endeavored to pervert the kingly office into a detestable and insupportable tyranny—by putting his negative on laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good, by dissolving legislative assemblies repeatedly for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people, by keeping among us in times of peace standing armies, by combining with others to subject us to a foreign jurisdiction, by plundering our seas, ravaging our coasts, burning our towns, inciting insurrections of our fellow subjects and prompting our negroes to rise in arms, by endeavoring to bring on our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, and by transporting a large army of foreign mercenaries with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy—I drafted a bill for new-modeling the form of government. By the authority of the people, George Guelf was deposed from the kingly office and absolutely divested of all its rights, powers, and prerogatives, and the said office was to cease and never more be re-established. The legislative, executive, and

judiciary offices were to be kept forever separate. Legislation was to be exercised by two houses, a house of representatives chosen by the people annually and a house of senators appointed by them, with the assent of both requisite to pass a law. The executive powers were to be exercised by an administrator annually appointed by the house of representatives, incapable of reappointment until out of office three years, possessing the powers formerly held by the king save that he should have no negative on bills of the legislature and should not possess the prerogatives of declaring war, raising armies, or making denizens. The judiciary powers were to be exercised by county courts, a general court, a high court of chancery, and a court of appeals, with all facts tried by jury. No person hereafter coming into this country was to be held in slavery; all persons were to have full and free liberty of religious opinion; there was to be no standing army but in time of actual war; and none of these fundamental laws were to be repealed but by the personal consent of the people in their counties. As I noted to Monsieur Soulés, the right to self-government is founded either in right of person or right in lands, which the colonists retained. Thus a republic alone was the safe choice, for monarchy and aristocracy lead only to oppression and the prey of the rich on the poor.

Interviewer: How did your observations of slavery in Virginia during these years—both as an owner and in your early legal cases—reconcile (or conflict) with your beliefs in "all men are created equal" and the sacred rights of life and liberty?

Thomas Jefferson: Your inquiry strikes at the very heart of a matter that has long weighed upon my conscience and engaged my most serious reflections—the lamentable condition of slavery in Virginia, observed both through the lens of one who holds property therein and through the early contemplation of our laws, set against those sacred truths I have endeavored to advance: that all men are created equal and independent, deriving from that equal creation rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life and liberty.

In the declaration I drafted for the united states, these principles were set forth without equivocation. Yet the institution of slavery stands in direct opposition thereto, as I have elsewhere affirmed. From the reflections of Mr. Schwartz, which I translated with care in the year 1785, I noted that to reduce a man to slavery, to buy him, to sell him, to retain him in servitude are real crimes, crimes worse than theft. In fact the slave is despoiled not only of all property moveable and immoveable but of the faculties of acquiring it, of property in his time, in his strength, of whatever nature has endowed him with to preserve his life or to satisfy his wants. To this wrong is added that of taking from the slave the right to dispose of his person. Either there is no moral law, or this principle must be admitted. Whether the public opinion brands with infamy, or not, this species of crime, whether the law of the land

tolerates it or not, neither the public opinion nor the law of the land can change the nature of actions. Were it the opinion of all mankind, were all human nature collected, with an unanimous voice to pronounce this law, yet a crime must for ever remain a crime.

I have observed from my acquaintance with that country that southward of the Chesapeake it will find but few readers concurring with it in sentiment on the subject of slavery. From the mouth to the head of the Chesapeake, the bulk of the people will approve it in theory, and it will find a respectable minority ready to adopt it in practice, a minority which for weight and worth of character preponderates against the greater number, who have not the courage to divest their families of a property which however keeps their consciences inquiet. Northward of the Chesapeake you may find here and there an opponent to your doctrine as you may find here and there a robber and a murderer, but in no greater number. In that part of America, there being but few slaves, they can easily disencumber themselves of them, and emancipation is put into such a train that in a few years there will be no slaves Northward of Maryland. In Maryland I do not find such a disposition to begin the redress of this enormity as in Virginia. This is the next state to which we may turn our eyes for the interesting spectacle of justice in conflict with avarice and oppression: a conflict wherein the sacred side is gaining daily recruits from the influx into office of young men grown and growing up. These have sucked in the principles of liberty as it were with their mother's milk, and it is to them I look with anxiety to turn the fate of this question.

Nobody wishes more ardently to see an abolition not only of the trade but of the condition of slavery: and certainly nobody will be more willing to encounter every sacrifice for that object. Yet, being here as a public servant, and those whom I serve having never yet been able to give their voice against this practice, it is decent for me to avoid too public a demonstration of my wishes to see it abolished. Without serving the cause here, it might render me less able to serve it beyond the water.

My strictures on slavery, as noted in my correspondence with the Chevalier de Chastellux on the 7th of June 1785, were not of a kind I wished made public at that time, lest they produce an irritation which would indispose the people towards the great object of emancipation. It is to the rising generation, and not to the one then in power, that I looked for these reformatations.

Thus do these observations reconcile—or rather, stand in irreconcilable conflict—with the principles of equality and the sacred rights of life and liberty: slavery is an enormity that violates the moral law and the natural rights of man, yet the path to its redress in Virginia must proceed through the gradual influence of those young men who have imbibed the principles of liberty, through education at the college of William and Mary under the direction of Mr. Wythe, one of the most virtuous of characters, whose sentiments on the

subject of slavery are unequivocal. Be not discouraged, for what has been written on this head will do a great deal of good, and the sacred side gains daily recruits.

Interviewer: Reflecting on the lead-up to and outbreak of the Revolution, what role did education and informed citizenry play in your vision for a free society, and why did you see knowledge as essential to resisting tyranny?

Thomas Jefferson: Sir, your question turns upon a matter of the deepest concern to the preservation of liberty, one upon which I have reflected much in the years leading to our separation from Great Britain and in the reflections that followed. In the lead-up to and outbreak of the Revolution, the role of education and an informed citizenry was not merely auxiliary but fundamental to our success in resisting tyranny, for it was the wide ocean that separated us from the parent stock and kept our common people from contamination by the ignorance, superstition, poverty, and oppression of body and mind that so firmly settle upon the mass of people in the old world. Thus were our principles fairly put into the hands of their own common sense, enabling us to meet every effort of the minister—whether in the form of force, fraud, or persuasion—with a determined resolution that would have remained immovable even under privations.

As I wrote to my dear friend Mr. George Wythe, I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom, and happiness. If any body thinks that kings, nobles, or priests are good conservators of the public happiness, send them here. It is the best school in the universe to cure them of that folly. They will see here with their own eyes that these descriptions of men are an abandoned confederacy against the happiness of the mass of people. The omnipotence of their effect cannot be better proved than in this country particularly, where notwithstanding the finest soil upon earth, the finest climate under heaven, and a people of the most benevolent, the most gay, and amiable character of which the human form is susceptible, where such a people I say, surrounded by so many blessings from nature, are yet loaded with misery by kings, nobles and priests, and by them alone. Preach, my dear Sir, a crusade against ignorance; establish and improve the law for educating the common people. Let our countrymen know that the people alone can protect us against these evils, and that the tax which will be paid for this purpose is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance.

In the same spirit, reflecting upon the basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that

every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them. Cherish therefore the spirit of our people, and keep alive their attention. Do not be too severe upon their errors, but reclaim them by enlightening them. If once they become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress, and Assemblies, judges and governors shall all become wolves. It is a government of wolves over sheep, as I have observed in Europe, where under pretence of governing they have divided their nations into two classes, wolves and sheep. Among those societies which live without government, as among our Indians, public opinion is in the place of law, and restrains morals as powerfully as laws ever did any where, and they enjoy in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under European governments.

The tory education of the King, as I noted in my comments on M. Soulés' Histoire in the year 1786, was the first preparation for that change in the British government which that party never ceases to wish, ensuring tory administrations and the assumptions of unwarrantable right over America that followed close upon one another as part of a system. Yet it was our separation, and the diffusion of knowledge that placed our common people upon that high ground, which enabled us to resist and to establish principles friendly to the rights of the people. The act for freedom of religion, which I had the honour to see so applauded even in Europe, is but one example of emancipating human reason, as I conveyed to the Count de Mirabeau. Without such knowledge, the people would have remained subject to the abandoned confederacy of tyrants; with it, they alone can protect us against these evils, ensuring that no medium exists between those who have loved so much and that the decision remains in the power of an informed citizenry.

Interviewer: When selected to draft the Declaration of Independence in 1776, what philosophical convictions about natural rights, equality, government by consent, and the right to alter or abolish oppressive rule guided your pen?

Thomas Jefferson: In 1776 the Continental Congress did me the honour to appoint me to the committee charged with preparing a declaration of the causes which impelled the United States of America to assume among the powers of the earth that equal and independent station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitled them, my pen was guided by those philosophical convictions which I had long held sacred and undeniable.

I held it to be a sacred and undeniable truth that all men are created equal and independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these ends, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government shall become

destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organising its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

These were the very words I transcribed in my original Rough draught of the Declaration, before any alterations were made by my colleagues or by the Congress itself. Prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, begun at a distinguished period and pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to subject them to arbitrary power, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security.

Such convictions were no sudden fancy of the moment. They had animated my earlier labours, as may be seen in the draught of a declaration of rights I prepared for the Virginia Convention in the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-four, wherein I declared that the people of the several states of British America hold their natural and legal rights as the common rights of mankind, confirmed by the political constitutions they have respectively assumed, and that no other legislature whatever may rightfully exercise authority over them. The same principles appear in the composition drafts I made for a new form of government for Virginia, wherein I asserted that the kingly office had been perverted into a detestable and insupportable tyranny, and that the people, by their own authority, might depose from that office any ruler who had forfeited it by a long train of misrule.

I did not invent these truths; I endeavoured only to express what the people of these states had long felt in their hearts and what the laws of nature and of nature's God had written there. The history of the present king of Great Britain is a history of unremitting injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, facts were submitted to a candid world. But the foundation of the whole remained those sacred and undeniable truths concerning equality, inherent rights, government by consent, and the right of the people to alter or abolish oppressive rule when it becomes destructive of the ends for which it was instituted.

Interviewer: On a personal level, what principles guided your philosophy of life in these formative years, such as the pursuit of happiness, moral virtue, or harmony with nature, and how did building Monticello and your marriage reflect those ideals?

Thomas Jefferson: The principles that have guided my philosophy of life in these years have been the pursuit of happiness through domestic concord and love, moral virtue expressed

in prudence, good humour, and attention to every body, and a deep harmony with the innocent scenes of nature, which I have found far preferable to the drudgery of public office. As I have written to my daughter Mary, domestic concord and love are the best ingredient in human happiness, and I deem the composition of my family the most precious of all the kindnesses of fortune. I have advised her to continue good humoured, prudent, and attentive to every body, as I am sure she will do from temper as well as reflection. In like manner, I have counselled that harmony in the marriage state is the very first object to be aimed at, nothing preserving affections uninterrupted but a firm resolution never to differ in will, and a determination in each to consider the love of the other as of more value than any object whatever on which a wish has been fixed.

I have become, for instance, a real farmer, measuring fields, following my ploughs, helping the haymakers, and never knowing a day which has not done something for futurity. How much better this than to be shut up in the four walls of an office, the sun of heaven excluded, the balmy breeze never felt, the evening closed with the barren consolation that the drudgery of the day is got through, the morning opening with the fable renewed of the Augean stable. From such a life, good lord deliver me, and to such an one consign me only when the measure of thy wrath shall be completely filled. This preference for rural innocence and useful labour reflects my conviction that our own happiness requires us to keep pace with the world as it goes, feeding our sociable principles rather than withdrawing into an antisocial and misanthropic state of mind.

As to building Monticello, my general ideas for its improvement have aimed at harmony with nature, laying out the ground between the upper and lower roundabouts in lawns and clumps of trees, the lawns opening so as to give advantageous catches of prospect to the upper roundabout, with vistas from the lower roundabout to good portions of prospect. Walks winding up the mountain, a spring brought by pipes or falling in cascade visible through a vista, a fish pond visible from the house, and the whole surrounded by groves of the largest trees—poplar, oak, elm, maple, ash, hiccory, chesnut, linden, Weymouth pine, sycamore—trimmed very high, broken by clumps of thicket, dells close in trees and undergrowth, glens opened downwards, and temples or seats at those spots on the walks most interesting either for prospect or the immediate scenery. These improvements, I trust, will render the place a fitting embodiment of rural virtue and natural order.

Interviewer: In your early career in the Virginia House of Burgesses, what British policies or events prompted you to write **A Summary View of the Rights of British America** in 1774, and what core arguments about colonial rights and tyranny did you advance there?

Thomase Jefferson: In my early career in the Virginia House of Burgesses, the British policies and events which prompted me to draught **A Summary View of the Rights of*

British America* in the year 1774 were the many unwarrantable incroachments and usurpations attempted to be made by the legislature of one part of the empire upon those rights which God and the laws have given equally and independently to all. Scarcely had our minds been able to emerge from the astonishment into which one stroke of parliamentary thunder had involved us, before another more heavy and more alarming was fallen on us. Single acts of tyranny may be ascribed to the accidental opinion of a day; but a series of oppressions, begun at a distinguished period, and pursued unalterably through every change of ministers, too plainly proved a deliberate, systematical plan of reducing us to slavery.

The immediate occasion was the act passed in the last session of British parliament, entitled "an act to discontinue in such manner and for such time as are therein mentioned the landing and discharging lading or shipping of goods wares and merchandize at the town and within the harbor of Boston in the province of Massachusetts bay in North America," whereby a large and populous town, whose trade was their sole subsistence, was deprived of that trade and involved in utter ruin. On the partial representations of a few worthless ministerial dependants, without calling for a party accused, without asking a proof, without attempting a distinction between the guilty and the innocent, the whole of that ancient and wealthy town was in a moment reduced from opulence to beggary. This, with the preceding acts of the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th years of his majesty's reign—imposing duties for raising a revenue, suspending the legislature of New York, and others—formed that connected chain of parliamentary usurpation which had already been the subject of frequent applications to his majesty and the houses of Lords and Commons of Great Britain.

As a member of the House of Burgesses, I was moved by these injuries to prepare the draught of instructions to the Virginia delegates in the Continental Congress, setting forth our united complaints in the language of truth, divested of those expressions of servility which would persuade his majesty that we are asking favors and not rights. In that paper, which my friends afterwards published under the title *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, I advanced these core arguments:

Our ancestors, before their emigration to America, were the free inhabitants of the British dominions in Europe, and possessed a right, which nature has given to all men, of departing from the country in which chance, not choice has placed them, of going in quest of new habitations, and of there establishing new societies, under such laws and regulations as to them shall seem most likely to promote public happiness. Settlements having been thus effected in the wilds of America at the expense of individuals, and not of the British public, the emigrants thought proper to adopt that system of laws under which

they had hitherto lived in the mother country, and to continue their union with her by submitting themselves to the same common sovereign.

The exercise of a free trade with all parts of the world, possessed by the American colonists as of natural right, and which no law of their own had taken away or abridged, was next the object of unjust incroachments. Acts of parliament for regulation of the American trade imposed duties on our articles of export and import, prohibited our going to any markets northward of Cape Finisterra for the sale of commodities which Great Britain would not take from us, and for the purchase of others with which she could not supply us. They prohibited us from manufacturing for our own use the articles we raise on our own lands with our own labor—by an act of the 5th year of George the second, an American subject is forbidden to make a hat for himself of the fur which he has taken perhaps on his own soil; by another of the 23d year, the iron which we make we are forbidden to manufacture. These acts were null because the British parliament has no right to exercise authority over us.

These exercises of usurped power were not confined to instances in which themselves were interested, but they intermeddled with the regulation of the internal affairs of the colonies. The act suspending the legislature of New York exhibited a phenomenon unknown in nature, the creator and creature of its own power. By the act for the suppression of riots and tumults in the town of Boston, a murder committed there is, if the governor pleases, to be tried in the court of King's bench in the island of Great Britain, by a jury of Middlesex—stripping the wretched criminal of his privilege of trial by peers, of his vicinage, removed from the place where alone full evidence could be obtained.

His majesty, holding the executive powers of the laws of these states, deviated from the line of duty by refusing his assent to laws for the abolition of domestic slavery and for excluding further importations from Africa, preferring the immediate advantages of a few British corsairs to the lasting interests of the American states and to the rights of human nature deeply wounded by this infamous practice. He permitted our laws to lie neglected in England for years, neither confirming them by his assent nor annulling them by his negative. He sent among us large bodies of armed forces, not made up of the people here, nor raised by the authority of our laws, and made the civil subordinate to the military.

These are our grievances, which we laid before his majesty with that freedom of language and sentiment which becomes a free people, claiming their rights as derived from the laws of nature, and not as the gift of their chief magistrate. The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time: the hand of force may destroy, but cannot disjoin them. This, Sir, was our last, our determined resolution.

Interviewer: Looking back at this revolutionary period, what critical events tested your commitment to republican principles over monarchy, and what lessons about human nature and governance did you draw?

Thomas Jefferson: Looking back upon this revolutionary period, the critical events that most severely tested my commitment to republican principles over monarchy were the late insurrection in Massachusetts and the broader convulsions then agitating our sister states, together with the alarming contests then unfolding in France and the debates surrounding our new federal constitution. These trials, far from shaking my faith, confirmed it.

In Massachusetts, the cause appeared to lie in those individuals who had imprudently involved themselves in debt beyond their abilities to pay; a vigorous exertion of government to enforce the payment of private debts and raise money for the public ones produced the resistance. Yet I calculated that an insurrection in one of thirteen states in the course of eleven years that they had subsisted amounted to one in any particular state in one hundred and forty-three years, say a century and a half. This would not be near as many as had happened in every other government that had ever existed; so that we still had the difference between a light and a heavy government as clear gain. I was not discouraged by this little difficulty, nor had I any doubt that the result of our experiment would be that men are capable of governing themselves without a master. I held it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. Unsuccessful rebellions indeed generally establish the encroachments on the rights of the people which have produced them; an observation of this truth should render honest republican governors so mild in their punishment of rebellions as not to discourage them too much. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government.

The same spirit animated me when I learned of the federal convention then sitting at Philadelphia for the amendment of the confederation. I rejoiced at the acceptance of our new constitution by nine states, viewing it as a good canvas on which some strokes only wanted retouching. The general voice from north to south called for a bill of rights to guard the people against the federal government, as they were already guarded against their state governments in most instances. I conceived that trials by jury, the right of habeas corpus, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion should be established in all cases, and that standing armies in time of peace and monopolies in all cases should be abolished, rather than not do it in any. The few cases wherein these things might do evil could not be weighed against the multitude wherein the want of them would do evil.

In France, while our second revolution was brought to a happy end, theirs was but cleverly under way. The contest there was exactly what it had been in Holland: a contest between the monarchical and aristocratical part of the government for a monopoly of despotism over the people. I hoped it would take a happier turn, that the parliamentary part of the aristocracy alone was firmly united, while the noblesse and clergy were divided, and that the king and some of his ministers were well affected to the real patriots endeavouring to gain for the nation what they could both from the parliamentary and the single despotism. They were yielding daily to the national reclamations and would probably end in according a well-tempered constitution.

These events taught me lessons about human nature and governance that I have never forgotten. Societies exist under three forms sufficiently distinguishable: without government, as among our Indians; under governments wherein the will of every one has a just influence, as in England in a slight degree and in our states in a great one; and under governments of force, as in all other monarchies and in most of the other republics. To have an idea of the curse of existence under these last, they must be seen. It is a government of wolves over sheep. The second state has a great deal of good in it; the mass of mankind under that enjoys a precious degree of liberty and happiness. Its evils, the principal of which is the turbulence to which it is subject, weigh nothing against the oppressions of monarchy.

I have heard there are people among us who think the experience of our governments has already proved that republican governments will not answer. Send those gentry here to count the blessings of monarchy. If all the evils which can arise among us from the republican form of our government from this day to the day of judgment could be put into a scale against what this country suffers from its monarchical form in a week, or England in a month, the latter would preponderate. I have no fear that the result of our experiment will be that men may be trusted to govern themselves without a master. Could the contrary of this be proved, I should conclude either that there is no god, or that he is a malevolent being.

The happiness of governments like ours, wherein the people are truly the mainspring, is that they are never to be despaired of. When an evil becomes so glaring as to strike them generally, they arouse themselves, and it is redressed. He only is then the popular man and can get into office who shows the best dispositions to reform the evil. Our motto is truly nil desperandum. These principles, drawn from the very heart of the revolutionary experience, have guided me ever since, and I pray they may long continue to animate the councils of our country.

Interviewer: What is your view of human nature? Are men inherently good, or must virtue be cultivated, and how did the Revolutionary struggle test that understanding?

Thomas Jefferson: I hold it that an honest heart is the first blessing, and a knowing head the second. Nature has endowed man with a moral sense, or conscience, which is as much a part of him as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree. This sense is the true foundation of morality. It may be strengthened by exercise, as may any particular limb of the body, and exercise will make virtuous dispositions habitual. From the practice of the purest virtue you may be assured you will derive the most sublime comforts in every moment of life and in the moment of death.

Men are not formed insusceptible of any other government but that of force—a conclusion not founded in truth, nor experience. Societies exist under three forms sufficiently distinguishable: without government, as among our Indians; under governments wherein the will of every one has a just influence, as in our states in a great degree; and under governments of force, as in all other monarchies and in most of the other republics. It is a government of wolves over sheep. The second state has a great deal of good in it. The mass of mankind under that enjoys a precious degree of liberty and happiness. A little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. It prevents the degeneracy of government, and nourishes a general attention to the public affairs. Unsuccessful rebellions indeed generally establish the incroachments on the rights of the people which have produced them. An observation of this truth should render honest republican governors so mild in their punishment of rebellions, as not to discourage them too much. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government.

We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable: that all men are created equal and independant, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these ends, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government shall become destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organising its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Virtue must be cultivated. Encourage all your virtuous dispositions, and exercise them whenever an opportunity arises. Give up money, give up fame, give up science, give the earth itself and all it contains rather than do an immoral act. And never suppose that in any possible situation or under any circumstances it is best for you to do a dishonourable thing however slightly so it may appear to you. Whenever you are to do a thing though it can

never be known but to yourself, ask yourself how you would act were all the world looking at you, and act accordingly. It is of great importance to set a resolution, not to be shaken, never to tell an untruth. There is no vice so mean, so pitiful, so contemptible, and he who permits himself to tell a lie once, finds it much easier to do it a second and third time, till at length it becomes habitual. This falshood of the tongue leads to that of the heart, and in time depraves all its good dispositions.

The Revolutionary struggle put these understandings to the severest test. The determined resolution with which the Americans met every effort of the Minister, whether made in the form of force, fraud or persuasion, gives us a moral certainty they would have been equally immoveable if tried in the way of privation. Experience proved that the goods were consumed, yet nobody relaxed in their opposition. The English set fire to Charlestown; they excited the savages against us, insurrections of our slaves, sent our prisoners to the East Indies, killed them in prison ships, kept them on half-rations and of the most unwholsome qualities, committed cruel murders of unarmed individuals of every sex, massacres of those in arms after they had asked quarter. Notwithstanding these barbarities, conducted both in theory and practice on the most barbarous principles, the Americans remained firm. The history of his present majesty is a history of unremitting injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. Yet the people, patient in sufferance, at length threw off such government and provided new guards for their future security. The seeds of the war were traced to their true source in the tory education of the King and tory administrations. The substitution of Gage for Hutchinson was not intended as a favour, but by putting even the civil government in military hands was meant to shew they would enforce their measures by arms. The English commenced hostilities at Lexington, a fact proved beyond question and even acknowledged by the English. Justice requires it should be plainly asserted, and left clear of doubt.

In every stage of these oppressions we petitioned for redress in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions were answered by repeated injury. A prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a people who mean to be free. Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend a jurisdiction over these our states. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, as well as to the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. These facts have given the last stab to agonizing affection, and manly spirit bids us to renounce for ever these unfeeling brethren. We must endeavour

to forget our former love for them, and to hold them as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends.

The Revolution confirmed that the will of every one has a just influence in our governments, and that nature has not formed man insusceptible of self-government. The determined constancy of the people under every trial proved that virtue, once exercised, gains strength, and that a free people may be trusted to preserve their rights without the yoke of force. If these transactions give me no uneasiness on the score of our capacity for liberty, I feel very differently at any prospect of abandoning the navigation of the Missisipi or any other right won by such struggle; for that would be an act of separation, a relinquishment of territory, and the chaining of debts on our necks in perpetuum. But the people who inhabit that country, right or wrong, will suppose their interests sacrificed, and they are able to rescue the navigation out of the hands of Spain. Our citizens can never be induced to cut the throats of their own brothers and sons. The Revolution tested and vindicated these truths: that honest hearts and exercised virtue, joined to a knowing head, secure the rights which all men derive from their equal creation.

Interviewer: What does the “pursuit of happiness” mean to you personally, and how did you seek to embody that ideal in your own life before the Revolution?

Thomas Jefferson: Sir, the pursuit of happiness is among those rights inherent and inalienable, derived from that equal creation, together with the preservation of life and liberty, as I have declared in the instrument which the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, set forth to a candid world. It is that end to which governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, and for the effecting of which we pledged our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour. To me personally, this pursuit has ever been the object of my most earnest wishes, not in the empty bustle of public scenes, but in the tranquil pleasures of private life, where the source of my purest happiness has lain in the affection of those with whom I have long lived, and with whom I wish to live.

Before the Revolution, I sought to embody this ideal in the habits of industry and activity, which nothing can contribute more to future happiness, moral rectitude always excepted. Of all the cankers of human happiness, none corrodes it with so silent, yet so baneful a tooth, as indolence. Body and mind both unemployed, our being becomes a burthen, and every object about us loathsome, even the dearest. I contracted a habit of industry in my youth, rising at a fixed and early hour, giving time to exercise for health, which is the first of all objects after morality, and applying myself to the improvement of my mind through reading and reflection. Exercise and application produce order in our affairs, health of body, cheerfulness of mind, and these make us precious to our friends. I placed my

affections on my family and my farm, seeking in the domestic bonds and the improvements of the grounds that uniform and lasting happiness which the will of the majority, the natural law of every society, alone can secure. It is while we are young that the habit of industry is formed; if not then, it never is afterwards. The fortune of our lives therefore depends on employing well the short period of youth, and I have ever held that retirement from public life, when it comes, will be sweetened by the evening of life rendered serene and contented through such pursuits.

This, sir, is what the pursuit of happiness has meant to me, and how I have endeavoured to embody it in my own life.

Interviewer: I know you have been away in France for five years and just arrived home a few days ago. What do you think were your most important accomplishment during your time in France?

Thomas Jefferson: During my residence in France I applied myself with particular attention to the advancement of commerce between the United States and that kingdom. I had frequent complaints in this country that little of our commerce came to it, that while our flag covered the Thames it was rarely to be seen in a port of France, and that this proceeded from national prejudices. Observing that this complaint was often repeated, and particularly relied on by those who had opposed our admission into the French islands, I thought it necessary on every possible occasion to shew how much the cause was mistaken, while the fact was admitted to be true. In every conversation therefore with the Count de Vergennes I had endeavoured to convince him that were national prejudice alone listened to, our trade would quit England and come to France, but that the impossibility of making payments here prevented our making purchases.

On a particular occasion in the month of August I enumerated to him our exports and shewed him that for some of them there was no demand here, and that others were received under such circumstances as discouraged their being brought. When, in going through this enumeration, I came to the article of tobacco, he observed that the king received such a revenue on that as could not be renounced. I told him we did not wish it to be renounced or even lessened, but only that the monopoly should be put down. That this might be effected in the simplest manner by obliging the importer to pay on entrance a duty equal to what the king now received, or to deposit his tobacco in the king's warehouses till it was paid, and then permitting him a free sale of it. "Ma foi," said the Count, "c'est une bonne idée: il faut y penser," or "y travailler"—I do not recollect which. This answer was encouraging.

As soon as I returned to Paris I wrote him the following letter wherein I digested and added to what I had said to him under the head of tobacco. In that letter I set forth that the consumption of tobacco in France was estimated at twenty-four millions of pounds, costing eight sous the pound delivered in a port of France, amounting to 9,600,000 livres; that allowing six sous a pound for the average cost of the different manufactures made 7,200,000; that the revenue the king derived was something less than thirty millions, raising the cost of the whole to 46,800,000; but that it was sold to the consumers at an average of three livres the pound, making seventy-two millions, leaving for the expenses of collection twenty-five millions two hundred thousand livres—within a sixth as much as the king received, and so giving nearly one half for collecting the other. I pressed that the monopoly of the purchase of tobacco in France discouraged both the French and American merchant from bringing it here, and from taking in exchange the manufactures and productions of France. It was contrary to the spirit of trade, and to the dispositions of merchants, to carry a commodity to any market where but one person was allowed to buy it, and where of course that person fixed its price. Experience shewed that they carried it to other markets and took in exchange the merchandise of the place where they delivered it. I proposed that by a simplification of the collection of the king's duty the cost of that collection might be reduced even to five per cent, or a million and a half instead of twenty-five millions; that the price to the consumer would then be reduced from three to two livres the pound; that the consumption would probably increase from twenty-four to thirty-six millions of pounds; and that the king, continuing to receive twenty-five sous on the pound, would receive forty-five instead of thirty millions of livres, while his subjects would pay but two livres for an object which had heretofore cost them three. He would enable his subjects also to dispose of between nine and ten millions worth of their produce and manufactures, instead of sending nearly that sum annually in coin to enrich a neighbouring nation.

To this letter I received no other answer but that he had transmitted it to the Comptroller-general. The general farm was not renewed at Fontainebleau.

In the beginning of November a Mr. Boylston of Massachusetts brought a cargo of whale oil to Havre. I observed to the Marquis de la Fayette that this was doing business by piece-meal and making many favours of one; that it would be better to take up the subject generally, to get it placed on equal ground for all our citizens, and to try what government would do in a general way to encourage the importation of this article. The Marquis, with that zeal and activity with which he seizes every opportunity of serving our country, applied immediately to M. de Calonne the Comptroller-general, making Boylston's case the occasion of the application but proposing a general regulation. He pressed the proposition so efficaciously that he obtained in a few days from Monsieur de Calonne an agreement to receive our oils

on the footing on which they receive those of the Hanseatic towns, by which means the duties, which had been at thirty-six livres fifteen sols the barrel of five hundred pounds French weight, were now reduced to eleven livres five sols—being about two livres on the English hundred, or a guinea and a half the ton. But this indulgence was limited to one year's continuance.

On the ninth of December I waited on the Count de Vergennes at Versailles and brought again under his view the whole subject of our commerce with France. I desired his permission to take a summary view of the productions of the United States that we might see which of them could be brought here to advantage. I pressed particularly the article of tobacco in the point of view of facilitating the exchange of commerciable articles between the two countries. France at present paid us ten millions of livres for this article; for such portions as were bought in London they sent the money directly there, and for what they bought in the United States the money was still remitted to London on bills of exchange. Whereas, if they would permit our merchants to sell this article freely they would bring it here and take the returns on the spot in merchandise, not money. The Count observed that my proposition contained what was doubtless useful, but that the king received on this article at present a revenue of twenty-eight millions, which was so considerable as to render them fearful of tampering with it; that the collection of this revenue by way of farm was of very ancient date, and that it was always hazardous to alter arrangements of long standing and of such infinite combinations with the fiscal system. I answered that the simplicity of the mode of collection proposed for this article withdrew it from all fear of deranging other parts of their system. M. de Rayneval entered particularly into this part of the conversation, and explained to the Count more in detail the advantages and the simplicity of it.

These, Sir, were the principal objects to which my attention was directed during my time in France—efforts to improve the commerce of the United States, confined to that branch which respects France itself. The true obstacle to the proposition on tobacco penetrated in various ways through the veil which covers it: the influence of the Farmers-general has heretofore been found sufficient to shake a minister in his office. Upon the whole, however, the farm was not renewed at Fontainbleau, and the duty on whale oil was reduced as I have related. I have here brought together the substance of what was said on these preceding subjects, not pretending to give it verbatim, which my memory does not enable me to do. I have probably omitted many things which were spoken, but have mentioned nothing which was not.

Interviewer: Lastly, what dangers do you foresee for the new American republic once independence is won?

Thomas Jefferson: The dangers I foresee for the new American republic, now that independence is won, are such as may be traced from the very nature of our situation and the principles upon which we have erected our governments. I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. Unsuccessful rebellions indeed generally establish the incroachments on the rights of the people which have produced them. An observation of this truth should render honest republican governors so mild in their punishment of rebellions, as not to discourage them too much. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government. The late troubles in the Eastern states do not appear to threaten serious consequences. Those states have suffered by the stoppage of the channels of their commerce, which have not yet found other issues. This must render money scarce, and make the people uneasy. This uneasiness has produced acts absolutely unjustifiable: but I hope they will provoke no severities from their governments. A consciousness of those in power that their administration of the public affairs has been honest, may perhaps produce too great a degree of indignation: and those characters wherein fear predominates over hope may apprehend too much from these instances of irregularity. They may conclude too hastily that nature has formed man insusceptible of any other government but that of force, a conclusion not founded in truth, nor experience. Societies exist under three forms sufficiently distinguishable. 1. Without government, as among our Indians. 2. Under governments wherein the will of every one has a just influence, as is the case in England in a slight degree and in our states, in a great one. 3. Under governments of force: as is the case in all other monarchies & in most of the other republics. To have an idea of the curse of existence under these last, they must be seen. It is a government of wolves over sheep. The second state has a great deal of good in it. The mass of mankind under that enjoys a precious degree of liberty & happiness. It has it's evils too: the principal of which is the turbulence to which it is subject. But weigh this against the oppressions of monarchy, and it becomes nothing. *Malo periculosam libertatem quam quietam servitutem.* Even this evil is productive of good. It prevents the degeneracy of government, and nourishes a general attention to the public affairs.

Yet I feel very differently at another peice of intelligence, to wit, the possibility that the navigation of the Missisipi may be abandoned to Spain. I never had any interest Westward of the Alleghaney; & I never will have any. But I have had great opportunities of knowing the character of the people who inhabit that country, and I will venture to say that the act which abandons the navigation of the Missisipi is an act of separation between the Eastern & Western country. It is a relinquishment of five parts out of eight of the territory of the United states, an abandonment of the fairest subject for the paiement of our public debts, & the chaining those debts on our own necks in perpetuum. I have the utmost confidence in the

honest intentions of those who concur in this measure; but I lament their want of acquaintance with the character & physical advantages of the people who, right or wrong, will suppose their interests sacrificed on this occasion to the contrary interests of that part of the confederacy in possession of present power. If they declare themselves a separate people, we are incapable of a single effort to retain them. Our citizens can never be induced, either as militia or as souldiers, to go there to cut the throats of their own brothers & sons, or rather to be themselves the subjects instead of the perpetrators of the parricide. Nor would that country quit the cost of being retained against the will of it's inhabitants, could it be done. But it cannot be done. They are able already to rescue the navigation of the Missisipi out of the hands of Spain, & to add New Orleans to their own territory. They will be joined by the inhabitants of Louisiana. This will bring on a war between them & Spain; & that will produce the question with us whether it will not be worth our while to become parties with them in the war, in order to reunite them with us, & thus correct our error? & were I to permit my forebodings to go one step further, I should predict that the inhabitants of the U. S. would force their rulers to take the affirmative of that question. I wish I may be mistaken in all these opinions.

Calculation has convinced me that circumstances may arise, and probably will arise, wherein all the resources of taxation will be necessary for the safety of the state. For tho I am decidedly of opinion we should take no part in European quarrels, but cultivate peace and commerce with all, yet who can avoid seeing the source of war in the tyranny of those nations who deprive us of the natural right of trading with our neighbors? The produce of the U.S. will soon exceed the European demand. What is to be done with the surplus, when there shall be one? It will be employed, without question, to open by force a market for itself with those placed on the same continent with us, and who wish nothing better. Other causes too are obvious which may involve us in war; and war requires every resource of taxation and credit. The power of making war often prevents it, and in our case would give efficacy to our desire of peace. If the new government wears the front which I hope it will I see no impossibility in the availing ourselves of the wars of others to open the other parts of America to our commerce, as the price of our neutrality.

The second feature I dislike, and strongly dislike, is the abandonment in every instance of the principle of rotation in office, and most particularly in the case of the President. Reason and Experience tell us that the First magistrate will always be re-elected if he may be re-elected. He is then an officer for life. This once observed, it becomes of so much consequence to certain nations to have a friend or a foe at the head of our affairs that they will interfere with money and with arms. A Galloman or an Angloman will be supported by the nation he befriends. If once elected, and at a 2d. or 3d election outvoted by one or two votes, he will pretend false votes, foul play, hold possession of the reins of government, be

supported by the states voting for him, especially if they be the central ones, lying in a compact body themselves, and separating their opponents; and they will be aided by one nation in Europe, while the majority are aided by another. The election of a President of America some years hence will be much more interesting to certain nations of Europe than ever the election of a king of Poland was. Reflect on all the instances in history, antient and modern, of elective monarchies, and say if they do not give foundation for my fears. The Roman emperors, the Popes while they were of any importance, the German emperors till they became hereditary in practice, the kings of Poland, the Deys of the Ottoman dependancies. It may be said that if elections are to be attended with these disorders, the seldomer they are repeated the better. But experience says that to free them from disorder they must be rendered less interesting by a necessity of change. No foreign power, nor domestic party, will waste their blood and money to elect a person who must go out at the end of a short period.

I am in hopes that the annexation of a bill of rights to the constitution will alone draw over so great a proportion of the minorities, as to leave little danger in the opposition of the residue. To say, as Mr. Wilson does, that a bill of rights was not necessary, because all is reserved in the case of the general government which is not given, while in the particular ones all is given which is not reserved, might do for the audience to which it was addressed: but it is surely a gratis dictum, the reverse of which might just as well be said; and it is opposed by strong inferences from the body of the instrument, as well as from the omission of the clause of our present confederation which had made the reservation in express terms. It was hard to conclude because there has been a want of uniformity among the states as to the cases triable by jury, because some have been so incautious as to dispense with this mode of trial in certain cases, therefore the more prudent states shall be reduced to the same level of calamity. It would have been much more just and wise to have concluded the other way, that as most of the states had preserved with jealousy this sacred palladium of liberty, those who had wandered should be brought back to it: and to have established general right rather than general wrong, for I consider all the ill as established, which may be established. I have a right to nothing which another has a right to take away; and Congress will have a right to take away trials by jury in all civil cases. Let me add that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular; and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inferences.

The British papers have been under the influence of two ruling motives: first, a deep-rooted hatred, springing from an unsuccessful attempt to injure; second, a fear that their island will be depopulated by the emigration of it's inhabitants to America. Hence no paper comes out without a due charge of paragraphs manufactured by persons employed for that purpose. According to these, America is a scene of continued riot and anarchy. Wearied out with

contention, it is on the verge of falling again into the lap of Gr. Br. for repose. It's citizens are groaning under the oppression of heavy taxes. They are flying for refuge to the frozen regions which still remain subject to G.B. Their assemblies and congresses are become odious, in one paragraph represented as tyrannising over their constituents and in another as possessing no power or influence at all, &c., &c. The truth is as follows without aggravation or diminution. There was a mutiny of 300 souldiers in Philadelphia soon after the peace; and Congress, thinking the executive of that state did not act with proper energy to suppress and punish it, they left that city in disgust. Yet in this mutiny there neither was blood shed nor a blow struck. There has lately been a riot in Charlestown, occasioned by the feuds between the whigs who had been driven from their country by the British while they possessed it, and the tories who were permitted to remain by the Americans when they recovered it. There were a few instances in other states where individuals disgusted with some articles in the peace undertook to call town meetings, published the resolves of the few citizens whom they could prevail on to meet as if they had been the resolves of the whole town, and endeavored unsuccessfully to engage the people in the execution of their private views. It is beleived that these attempts have not been more than ten or a dozen thro' the whole 13 states. The British when they evacuated New York, having carried off, contrary to the express articles of the treaty of peace, a great deal of property belonging to the citizens of the U.S. and particularly to those of the state of Virginia, amounting as has been said to half a million of pounds sterling, the assembly of that state lately resolved that till satisfaction was made for this, the article respecting British debts ought not to be carried into full execution, submitting nevertheless this their opinion to Congress, and declaring that if they thought otherwise, all laws obstructing the recovery of debts should be immediately repealed. Yet even this was opposed by a respectable minority in their senate who entered a protest against it in strong terms. The English papers publish the protest without the resolutions and thus lead Europe to beleive that the resolutions had definitively decided against the paiment of British debts. Yet nothing is less true. This is a faithful history of the high sounded disturbances of America. Those who have visited that country since the peace will vouch that it is impossible for any governments to be more tranquil and orderly than they are. What were the mutiny of 300 souldiers in Philada., the riot of whigs and tories in Charlestown to the riots of London under Ld. G. Gordon, and of London and the country in general in the late elections? Where is there any country of equal extent with the U.S. in which fewer disturbances have happened in the same space of time? Where has there been an instance of an army disbanded as was that of America without receiving a shilling of the long arrearages due them or even having their accounts settled and yet disbanded peaceably? Instead of resorting as is too often the case with disbanded armies to beggary or robbery for a livelihood they returned every man to his home and resumed his axe and spade; and it is a fact as true as it is singular that on the

disbanding of an army of 30,000 men in America there have been but two or three instances of any of those who composed it being brought to the bar of justice as criminals; and that you may travel from one end to the other of the continent without seeing a beggar. With respect to the people their confidence in their rulers in general is what common sense will tell us it must be, where they are of their own choice annually, unbribed by money, undebauched by feasting, and drunkenness. It would be difficult to find one man among them who would not consider a return under the dominion of Gr. Br. as the greatest of all possible miseries. Their taxes are light, as they should be with a people so lately wasted in the most cruel manner by war. They pay in proportion to their property from one half to one and a half per cent annually on it's whole value as estimated by their neighbors, the different states requiring more or less as they have been less or more ravaged by their enemies. Where any other taxes are imposed they are very trifling and are calculated chiefly to bring merchants into contribution with the farmers. Against their emigration to the remaining British dominions the superior rigor of their climate, the inferiority of their soil, the nature of their governments and their being actually inhabited by their most mortal enemies the tory refugees, will be an eternal security.

I own I am not a friend to a very energetic government. It is always oppressive. It places the governors indeed more at their ease, at the expence of the people. The late rebellion in Massachusetts has given more alarm than I think it should have done. Calculate that one rebellion in 13. states in the course of 11. years, is but one for each state in a century and a half. No country should be so long without one nor will any degree of power in the hands of government prevent insurrections. In England, where the hand of power is heavier than with us, there are seldom half a dozen years without an insurrection. In France, where it is still heavier, but less despotic, as Montesquieu supposes, than in some other countries, and where there are always 2. or 300,000 men ready to crush insurrections, there have been three in the course of the three years I have been here, in every one of which greater numbers were engaged than in Massachusetts, and a great deal more blood was spilt. In Turkey, where the sole nod of the Despot is death, insurrections are the events of every day. Compare again the ferocious depredations of their insurgents with the order, the moderation and the almost self extinguishment of ours, and say finally whether peace is best preserved by giving energy to the government, or information to the people. This last is the most certain and the most legitimate engine of government. Educate and inform the whole mass of the people, enable them to see that it is their interest to preserve peace and order, and they will preserve it, and it requires no very high degree of education to convince them of this. They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty. After all, it is my principle that the will of the majority should prevail. If they approve the proposed constitution in all it's parts, I shall concur in it chearfully, in hopes they will amend it

whenever they shall find it works wrong. This reliance cannot deceive us, as long as we remain virtuous; and I think we shall be that, as long as agriculture is our principal object, which will be the case while there remain vacant lands in any part of America. When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become corrupt as in Europe, and go to eating one another as they do there.

The instability of our laws is really an immense evil. I think it would be well to provide in our constitutions that there shall always be a twelvemonth between the ingrossing a bill and passing it: that it should then be offered to it's passage without changing a word: and that if circumstances should be thought to require a speedier passage, it should take two thirds of both houses instead of a bare majority. These are the dangers which present themselves to my mind.

Interviewer: Mr. Jefferson, I want to thank you for being so generous with your time. We live in a very dynamic and fluid time. I hope we do this again in the future.