

of such laws, are generally dangerous, and ought to be avoided.

N.B. It is proposed to make some alterations in this last article when reported to the house. Perhaps somewhat like the following —

That all laws having a retrospect to crimes, & punishing offences committed before the enactment of such laws are dangerous, and ought to be avoided, except in cases of great & evident necessity, when the safety of the State absolutely requires them. — This is thought to state with more precision the doctrine respecting ex post facto laws & to signify to posterity that it is considered not so much as a law of right, as the great law of necessity, which by a well known maxim is — allowed to supersede all human institutions.

Another is agreed to in committee condemning the use of general warrants; & one other to prevent the suspension of laws, or the execution of them.

The above clauses, with some small alterations & the addition of one or two more, have already been agreed to in the Committee appointed to prepare a declaration of rights, when this business is finished in the house, the committee will proceed to the ordinance of government.

T. L. Lee

A Declaration of Rights, made by the Representatives of the good People of Virginia, assembled in full Convention, and now recorded to posterity as the Basis and Foundation of their Government.

That all men are born equally free & independent, and have certain inherent natural rights, which cannot be denied, depraved or divested from them; among which are the enjoyment of life, liberty, with the means & acquired of acquiring property, and pursuing and obtaining Happiness and Safety.

That Power is by God and Nature vested in the People; that the Powers of Government are consequently derived from the People; that the People have their Trustees and depositories of Power inalienable to them.

That Government is instituted to secure the common Benefit and Security of the People, Protection of Community. Of all the various Modes of Government that which is best calculated to produce the greatest Degree of Happiness, Safety, and is most effectually secured by the People, is that of a Representative Government. And that such Government shall be found inadequate to the carrying to these purposes, the People shall have recourse to other Means, and shall be, signed and attested by the People.

That no man, or set of men are entitled to a exclusive
or separate Privileges, or Privileges from the
Community, but in consideration of public services,
which not being descendible, or hereditary, the title of
a Man born a Magistrate, a Legislator or a Judge is
unnatural and absurd.

That the legislative and executive power of the
State should be separate and distinct from the judiciary,
and that the Members of the Congress may be restrained
from Oppression, by feeling and participating the
Sufferings they may lay upon the People; they
should, if fixed Periods be induced to a private Station,
and returned, by frequent, certain and regular Elections,
into that body from which they were taken.

That no part of a Man's Property can be taken
from him, or applied to public uses, without the
Consent of himself, or his legal Representatives,
nor are the People bound by any laws, but such
as they have in like manner assented to for their
common good.

That in all capital or criminal Prosecutions a
Man hath a right to demand the Cause and Nature of
his Accusation, to be confronted with the Accusers or
Witnesses, to call for Evidence in his favour, and to
a speedy Trial by a Jury of his Neighbours; without
any unreasonable Delay. He can not be bound
to give Evidence against himself, or to give Evidence
against a Man, except in cases
of capital crimes or treason, or in cases
of high crimes and misdemeanors.

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That the freedom of the press, being the
great bulwark of liberty, can never be
restrained but in a despotic government.

That laws having a retrospect to crimes,
or punishing offenses committed before the existence