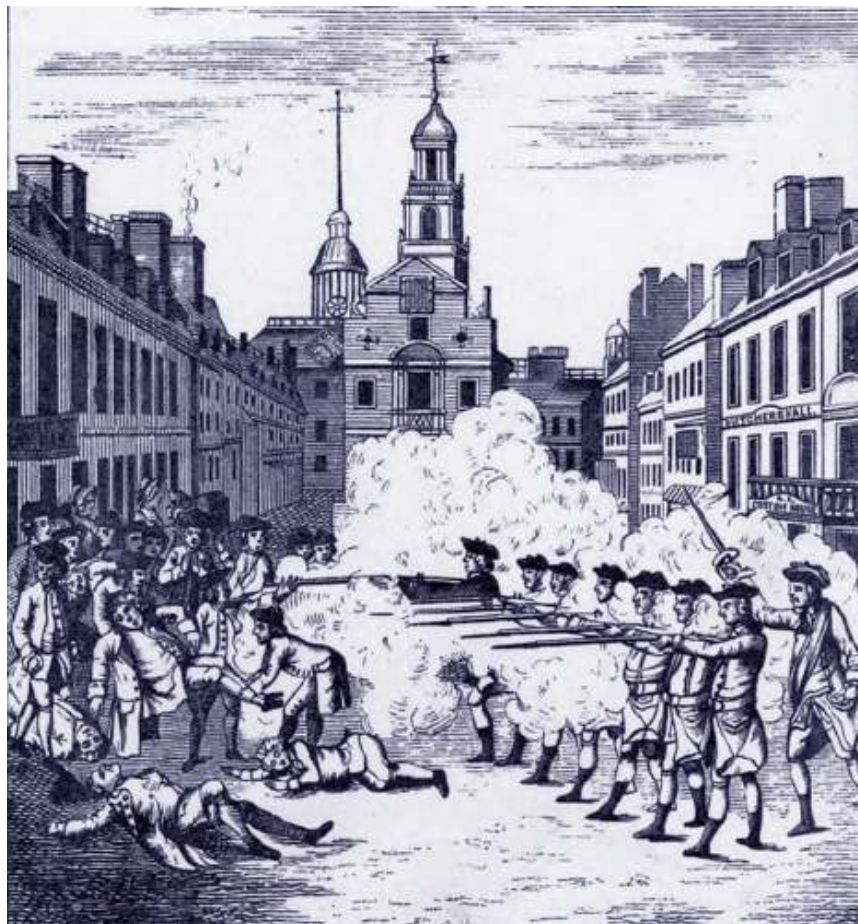


***A Letter to the Boston  
Massacre Committee 1770***

**By Charles Lucas**

**Sean J Murphy, Editor**



**250th Anniversary 2020**

**Centre for Irish Genealogical  
and Historical Studies**



***A Letter to the Boston  
Massacre Committee 1770***

**By Charles Lucas**

**Sean J Murphy, Editor**

***Edition published to mark the 250th  
anniversary of the Boston Massacre***

**Centre for Irish Genealogical and  
Historical Studies, Windgates,  
County Wicklow, 2nd Edition 2020**

Lucas's letter originally published 1771, text public domain. First edition of the present work 2013, second edition 2020, copyright © Sean J Murphy. Published in short-run hardcopy form and online at <http://homepage.eircom.net/~seanjmurphy/epubs/bostonletter.pdf>. Centre for Irish Genealogical and Historical Studies, Carraig, Cliff Road, Windgates, Bray, County Wicklow, Ireland.

This work may be freely stored on library systems for reader use and reproduced offline for fair personal and educational use, with proper acknowledgement.



**Charles Lucas MD, Dublin patriot, correspondent  
of the Boston Massacre Committee**



**Joseph Warren MD, Boston patriot, one of the  
signatories of the Massacre Committee's  
letter to Lucas**

## **Contents**

Introduction	5
Letter	13

## **Illustrations**

Print portraying shootings in Boston 5 March 1770 (Kidder, <i>History of the Boston Massacre</i> , 1870, frontispiece)	Cover
Charles Lucas MD, detail of statue by Edward Smyth in City Hall, Dublin (editor's image)	3
Joseph Warren MD, detail of portrait (Frothingham, <i>Life and Times of Joseph Warren</i> , 1865, frontispiece)	3

## ***Introduction***

The writer has termed Charles Lucas (1713-1771) a 'forgotten patriot', as he is little known outside the ranks of eighteenth-century Irish history specialists. Lucas lived a very full public and professional life, as apothecary, author, municipal reformer, radical patriot, medical doctor and parliamentarian. An Anglo-Irish or 'colonial' nationalist in the tradition of Molyneux and Swift and a precursor of Flood and Grattan, Lucas opposed what he saw as English misrule in Ireland. However, his Protestant prejudices meant that while not a complete bigot as some have claimed, he never accepted that the Catholic majority should enjoy an equality of rights, on account of their perceived obedience to the political dictates of the papacy. As a result of daring election pamphlets criticising English misgovernment, Lucas was obliged to flee abroad in 1749, but he was able to return to Ireland in 1761 and secured election as an MP for Dublin City.<sup>1</sup>

As discontent with British rule in the American colonies grew in the 1760s, Irish radicals such as Lucas naturally felt sympathy for the Americans and considered that they shared a common cause. The Americans too saw similarities with the Irish situation, and 'Dr Lucas and the patriots of Ireland' was among toasts raised by members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1769.<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Franklin would recall in 1772 that on a recent visit to Ireland he had dined with Lucas and found the patriots there to be 'all friends of America'.<sup>3</sup>

Comparisons could be made between perceived oppressive actions of the British government in Ireland and America. In 1769 Lord Lieutenant George Townshend suspended the Irish

1 Sean J Murphy, *A Forgotten Patriot Doctor: Charles Lucas 1713-1771*, 3rd Edition, Windgates, County Wicklow 2015, <http://homepage.eircom.net/~seanjmurphy/epubs/lucaspatriot.pdf>.

2 Vincent Morley, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-1783*, Cambridge University Press 2002, pp 71-74.

3 Benjamin Franklin to James Bowdoin, London, 13 January 1772, Jared Sparks, Editor, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, 7, Boston 1844, p 552 (accessed via Google Books, <https://books.google.com>).

Parliament because of its refusal to pass a money bill. Lucas was extremely critical of the Lord Lieutenant's policies and on account of his strenuous opposition was dubbed by Townshend 'the Wilkes of Ireland'.<sup>4</sup> Lord Townshend's brother Charles Townshend, British Chancellor of the Exchequer, was responsible for the Townshend Acts of 1767-68, designed to raise revenue in America. These measures were strongly resisted by the colonists and helped pave the way for the Boston Massacre in 1770.<sup>5</sup>

On the night of 5 March 1770 a confrontation between protesters and British soldiers in King Street in Boston resulted in the shooting dead of five civilians. It would appear that the incident was the result of over-reaction by soldiers taunted by an angry crowd. Eight soldiers were tried in Boston, and while six were acquitted, two were found guilty of manslaughter and branded as a punishment.<sup>6</sup> British imperial history features numerous examples of military excesses with serious political consequences, and the Boston episode would be no exception.

In the wake of the killings, aggrieved townsmen held several meetings at Faneuil Hall, Boston's historic marketplace and meeting hall. On 13 March a committee was appointed composed of James Bowdoin (1726-1790), Dr Joseph Warren (1741-1775) and Samuel Pemberton (1723-1779). The committee's task was to investigate the killings and to compile a 'full and just representation' of what had occurred.<sup>7</sup> Bowdoin, Warren and Pemberton were three prominent Boston patriots well suited to the task set them. Warren, a practicing physician like Lucas, was to die during the Battle of Bunker Hill on 17 June 1775, when armed hostilities had commenced between the British and the colonists.<sup>8</sup>

4 Murphy, *A Forgotten Patriot Doctor: Charles Lucas*, pp 82-3. The reference was to the British radical John Wilkes (1725-1797).

5 Robert J Chaffin, 'The Townshend Acts crisis, 1767-1770', Jack P Greene and J R Pole, Editors, *A Companion to the American Revolution*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, Massachusetts, 2004 Edition, pp 134-46.

6 Same, pp 146-48.

7 *Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston Containing the Town Records, 1770-77*, Rockwell and Churchill, Boston 1887, p 13 (accessed via Internet Archive, <http://www.archive.org>).



*A Letter to the Boston Massacre Committee*

In accordance with their brief the Boston committee published *A Short Narrative* of the massacre within weeks of the event.<sup>9</sup> Following a decision of a town meeting on 22 March 1770, copies prefaced by an introduction were sent by the committee to a range of notables which included the Duke of Richmond, Marquis of Rockingham, Earl of Halifax, Earl of Hillsborough and other peers, the radical MPs William Beckford and John Wilkes, the Irish-born statesman Edmund Burke, one lady, the republican historian and early feminist Mrs Catharine Macaulay, and finally, indicating that he was known to and respected by the Bostonians, Lucas in Ireland.<sup>10</sup>

Bowdoin, Warren and Pemberton's form letter to Lucas was dated 23 March 1770 and was published in Dublin after its receipt with the *Short Narrative* appended, obviously on Lucas's instructions.<sup>11</sup> The committee's letter to Lucas explained that after the 'execrable deed' in Boston on 5 March the town thought it expedient that 'a full and just Representation of it should be made to Persons of Character', in order 'to frustrate the Designs of certain Men' who sought 'to bring an Odium upon the Town as the Aggressors in that Affair'. The committee stated that it was the 'humble and fervent prayer' of the 'loyal and dutiful Subjects of this Town and Province' that King George III 'in his great Wisdom and Goodness' should order the removal of troops, concluding by requesting from Lucas 'the Favour of your Interposition and Influence'.<sup>12</sup>

Six months later, on 1 September 1770, reflecting the time it took for communications to arrive from America, Lucas composed a reply to the Bostonians, which would be

8 Richard Frothingham, *Life and Times of Joseph Warren*, Little, Brown & Co, Boston 1865, p 517 (accessed via Internet Archive).

9 *A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston, Perpetrated in the Evening of the Fifth Day of March 1770*, Printed by Order of the Town of Boston, 1770 (accessed via Internet Archive).

10 *City of Boston Town Records, 1770-77*, pp 18-19; Frederic Kidder, *History of the Boston Massacre, March 5 1770*, Albany, New York, 1870, pp 110-11 (accessed via Google Books, <https://books.google.com>).

11 *A Letter from the Town of Boston to C Lucas Esq*, Dublin [1770], printed by Thomas Ewing (accessed via Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, <https://www.gale.com>, commercial service available to users in major libraries).

12 Same, pp 3-5.

published in two parts in the *Freeman's Journal* in Dublin the following year.<sup>13</sup> Lucas commenced by observing that 'having first been suffered to be exercised with Impunity and Success, in the more remote Parts of the Territories', tyranny 'soon after easily over-ran and subdued the whole State'. He extolled Hampden, Pym, Eliot and other 'Heroes' of the age of Charles I whose ideals had been transplanted to America.<sup>14</sup>

Regretting that he lacked influence with the current 'detestable Administration', whose ministers he characterised as 'base, perfidious, vindictive, rapacious', Lucas indicated to the Bostonians that all he could do was to loudly exclaim against 'your Oppressors' and to republish the narrative of the massacre they had sent him. He noted that Dublin as well had witnessed killings by the military and he recalled a particularly serious disorder in 1765 when Newgate Prison had been broken open by soldiers.<sup>15</sup>

Observing that Americans were well versed in the 'constitutional Rights of Englishmen', Lucas declared that if the Government of Britain should oppress and plunder its dependencies, 'the Bond of filial Affection and Duty, as well as of Allegiance must be cancelled'.<sup>16</sup> Having recalled his own political sufferings in 1749, Lucas concluded on a more optimistic note by expressing a hope 'to see wicked Ministers removed from the King's Councils and Presence, and his Throne established in Righteousness'.<sup>17</sup>

Lucas's statement that the bonds of allegiance between America and Britain might be cancelled was more than a mere warning against the consequences of continued misgovernment, but could also be interpreted as a Lockean justification of revolution. The philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) famously wrote that 'Governments are dissolved . . . when the Legislative, or the Prince, either of them act

13 Lucas, 'To the Honourable James Bowdoin, Esq; Dr. Joseph Warren, and Samuel Pemberton, Esq; the Committee appointed to make Representation of the Military Massacre at Boston', published in *Freeman's Journal*, 19 and 21 September 1771; henceforth *Letter to the Boston Massacre Committee*.

14 Same, see p 13 below.

15 Same, see pp 15-16 below.

16 Same, see p 18 below.

17 Same, see pp 18-20 below.

contrary to their Trust'.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, Lucas also revealed that but for the strength of his 'Amor Patriae' he might have left Ireland to live in the American colonies.<sup>19</sup>

Lucas's above mentioned approving reference to the trio John Hampden (c1593-1643), John Pym (1584-1643) and John Eliot (1592-1632) confirmed his attachment to the English revolutionary tradition of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, Lucas called one of his sons Lucius Hampden.<sup>20</sup> Hampden, Pym and Eliot were advocates of the rights of parliament against royal encroachment. Hampden, who died in battle during the English Civil War and opposed payment of ship money to Charles I, was regarded in particular as an inspirational figure by American patriots.<sup>21</sup>

At one point in his letter to the Bostonians, Lucas observed that it was 'the best policy never to despair of the Commonwealth'.<sup>22</sup> In the course of an oration commemorating the Massacre delivered in Boston on 6 March 1775, Lucas's correspondent Joseph Warren used the same phrase: 'It was a maxim of the Roman people, which eminently conduced to the greatness of that state, never to despair of the commonwealth'.<sup>23</sup> Warren reputedly displayed his attachment to Roman republican ideas by wearing a toga during his delivery of the oration, which became a key document of the American revolutionary period.<sup>24</sup>

One area of difference between Warren and Lucas was the degree of opposition to standing armies. Warren stated that 'it has always been considered as improper to quarter troops in populous cities, as frequent disputes must necessarily arise

18 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett editor, Cambridge University Press 1980 edition, pp 115, 412 (2nd Treatise, section 221).

19 Lucas, *Letter to the Boston Massacre Committee*, see pp 13-14 below.

20 Murphy, *A Forgotten Patriot Doctor: Charles Lucas*, p 86.

21 See entries for Hampden, Pym and Eliot in Richard L Greaves and Robert Zaller, Editors, *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols, Harvester Press, Brighton 1982-84.

22 Lucas, *Letter to the Boston Massacre Committee*, see p 9 below.

23 Joseph Warren, *An Oration Delivered March 6th 1775*, Edes & Gill and Joseph Greenleaf, Boston 1775, p 18 (accessed via Internet Archive).

24 Anthony Grafton, Glenn W Most, Salvatore Settis, Editors, *The Classical Tradition*, Belknap Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2010, p 369 (accessed via Google Books, preview).

between the citizen and the soldier'.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, while condemning military excesses in Ireland, Lucas reflected Protestant insecurity in the face of a perceived Catholic threat by conceding that 'the Want of Union in religious and political Sentiments, among the People of this Country, has reconciled them, in a great Measure, to military Rule'.<sup>26</sup>

While the edition of Lucas's letter to the Boston Massacre Committee published in the *Freeman's Journal* is headed 'From the Boston Gazette', a full copy has not been found in the latter publication. It is possible that the letter was published in a supplement which has not survived or may yet be located. However, the newspaper did notice that Lucas's letter had been read at a Boston town meeting in March 1771, providing a summary of its contents with favourable comments.<sup>27</sup> The town meeting in question took place on 12 March and the minutes recorded the reading of the letter from 'that celebrated Patriot, Dr Lucas of Ireland', noting that it was 'attended to with the highest satisfaction'.<sup>28</sup>

Among the papers of Samuel Adams, perhaps the most prominent of the Boston patriots, there is also an apparent draft letter of a committee appointed to reply to Lucas's letter of 1 September 1770, acknowledging the 'kind Sentiments' therein and entreating him to employ his 'Abilities for our Advantage whenever a favorable Opportunity may present'. The reply also recognised the 'arduous Task' faced by Lucas 'in resisting the Torrent of Oppression & arbitrary Power in Ireland: a kingdom where the brutal power of standing Armies, & the more fatal Influence of pensions & places has left, it is to be feared, hardly any thing more than the Name of a free Constitution'.<sup>29</sup>

Lucas's interesting but little-known letter to the Boston Massacre Committee in 1770 is one of his last compositions, as he would die the following year. A few Irish historians have

25 Warren, *Oration Delivered March 6th 1775*, p 14.

26 Lucas, *Letter to the Boston Massacre Committee*, see pp 16-17 below; Murphy, *A Forgotten Patriot Doctor: Charles Lucas*, pp 71, 81-82.

27 *Boston Gazette*, 25 March 1771, (accessed via *The Annotated Newspapers of Harbottle Dorr Jr*, <http://www.masshist.org/dorr>).

28 *City of Boston Town Records*, 1770-77, p 46.

29 To Charles Lucas, [Mar 12] 1771, H A Cushing, Editor, *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, 2, New York & London 1906, p 163 (accessed via Internet Archive).

noted Lucas's reply in addition to the much better-known letter to him from the Bostonians.<sup>30</sup> Bric's reference includes the criticism that Lucas's response 'ignored the great constitutional concerns of the day' and 'largely confined itself to berating' British government ministers.<sup>31</sup> This hardly does justice to the range of themes in Lucas's letter, encompassing comparison of American and Irish experience of British misrule, abuse of constitutional rights, unfree parliaments, military misbehaviour, and as noted above, a clear implication of right to revolution.

It is true that Lucas employed the common device of distinguishing between a supposedly 'virtuous' king and 'corrupt' ministers. In this he was no different from the American colonists, who as Conroy has pointed out, 'initially organised in 1765 to protect what they conceived to be the traditional liberties of Englishmen in the British Empire, not to repudiate their connection with it'.<sup>32</sup> Thus it can be seen that the loyal but anti-ministerial language used by Lucas in his reply is exactly in accord with that used by the Bostonians in their letter to him. In America the ultimate 'republican moment' of actively seeking to establish independent government without a monarchy took some time to arrive, and would follow even later in Ireland.

The Boston Massacre was one of a series of key events, including the Stamp Act of 1765, the Declaratory Act of 1766 (modelled on an Irish act of the same name passed in 1720), the Townshend Acts of 1767-68 and the Boston Tea Party of 1773, which accelerated the process of transition from constitutional protest to republican separatism in the American colonies. Unlike the Americans, neither Lucas nor his fellow radicals in Ireland would embark on the course of violent rebellion and attempted complete separation from Britain, more extreme steps only undertaken, unsuccessfully, by the United Irishmen in the 1790s.

30 Morley, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution*, p 72; Maurice J Bric, 'The American Revolution and Ireland', Greene and Pole, Editors, *Companion to the American Revolution*, p 511.

31 Bric, 'American Revolution and Ireland', p 511.

32 David W Conroy, 'Development of a revolutionary organisation, 1765-1775', Greene and Pole, Editors, *Companion to the American Revolution*, p 216.

*A Letter to the Boston Massacre Committee*

In a classic study Robbins has described the transmission of seventeenth-century British radical and republican ideas by a group of 'Commonwealthmen' in the eighteenth century. These figures included Molesworth, Trenchard, Gordon and Toland, and more preoccupied with the case of Ireland, Molyneux and Lucas. Robbins observed that the efforts of these men 'served to maintain a revolutionary tradition and to link the histories of English struggles against tyranny in one century with those of American efforts for independence in another'.<sup>33</sup> Noting that there was a 'remarkable parallel' between the American and Irish struggles for self-government, McIlwain has stated that there has been insufficient recognition of the influence of Molyneux and Lucas 'in the development of American constitutional institutions and political ideas'.<sup>34</sup>

As the writer has argued elsewhere, despite frequent declarations of devotion to the British monarchy, republican themes are obvious in Lucas's writings, and as well as paralleling developments in America they prefigure the ideology of the United Irishmen.<sup>35</sup> Certainly, it is the writer's contention that Lucas's Boston letter, which employed terms such as 'liberty', 'rights', 'tyranny', 'corruption', 'military execution', 'virtue', 'public spirit' and indeed 'commonwealth',<sup>36</sup> is a work heavily influenced by the same 'Commonwealthman' and classical republican ideals which guided his radical contemporaries in the American colonies.

Sean J Murphy MA  
Centre for Irish Genealogical and  
Historical Studies  
Windgates, County Wicklow, Ireland  
5 March 2020

33 Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, originally published Harvard University Press 1959, Atheneum, New York 1986 edition, p 4 and passim, and for an account of Lucas (slightly dismissive) see in particular pp 153-55.

34 Charles H McIlwain, *The American Revolution: A Constitutional Interpretation*, Macmillan Company, New York 1923, pp 28-29, 35-36 (accessed via Internet Archive).

35 Murphy, *A Forgotten Patriot Doctor: Charles Lucas*, pp 30-31.

36 Lucas, *Letter to the Boston Massacre Committee*, see below pp 13-20 passim.

## **From the Boston Gazette<sup>37</sup>**

**To the Honourable James Bowdoin, Esq; Dr Joseph Warren, and Samuel Pemberton, Esq; the Committee appointed to make Representation of the Military Massacre at Boston, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, 1770.**

Gentlemen,

A Person less anxious for the Liberty of Mankind in general, of his fellow Subjects in particular, than I have always been, must acutely feel every unjust Exertion of Power, ever so remotely tending to inroach upon the sacred Rights of the People.

I have early observed, that Tyranny got Footing in the inslaved States that once were free, by having first been suffered to be exercised with Impunity and Success, in the more remote Parts of the Territories; where, having once been permitted to make a Lodgement, it soon after easily over-ran and subdued the whole State.

Though my Lot is cast in a Country, for Centuries past, subject to the worst Exertions of the most lawless and impolitic Power, against which I have, from my Youth up, maintained a constant, though unequal, Conflict; I have not been Inattentive to the State of those virtuous Sons of Liberty, who, unable to support British Freedom in Europe, amidst unspeakable Hazards and Perils, transplanted, propagated, and establishes it beyond the Atlantic.

Every sensible Lover of Liberty, with Exultation, beheld in America, the glorious Spirit of Hampden, Pym, Eliot, and other Heroes, of the contentious Age of the unfortunate Charles the First, survive the Wreck of the Britanic Constitution. We viewed you at once, as the School of Liberty and good Policy, and the Asylum of the persecuted Sons of Freedom in Europe; insomuch, that had not the Enthusiasm

<sup>37</sup> Copy of *Boston Gazette* version not located, text reproduced from *Freeman's Journal*, Dublin, 19 and 21 September 1771. In general the original spelling, capitalisation and punctuation of Lucas's letter have been retained, and while the latter in particular may look overdone to modern eyes, it marks the rhetorical phrasing style of the period.

of the Amor Patriae strongly possessed my Heart, I had long since added one inconsiderable Person to your Number.

Hence, you will more easily conceive, that I can express, the just Indignation with which I must have seen the late wicked Stretches of invidious Power, to overturn those Liberties, so dearly purchased by your virtuous Ancestors; I sincerely sympathised with you, alas! I could do no more.

My virtuous fellow Subjects of America seem to know my Heart, but not my Abilities. My much honoured and beloved Friends of Boston, seem to know how I sympathized with them in particular, and have done me the Honour of imparting their Sufferings, particularly in a late Military Massacre to me, through your most worthy and much esteemed Hands; for which, they and you, will please to accept the most grateful and respectful Acknowledgments of a most faithful fellow-feeling Heart, which is all that is in my poor Power to offer.

Had I any Influence in obviating the general Oppressions in America, the consequent cruel military Execution at Boston in particular, I should, long since, unmoved, unsolicited by the Cries of my bleeding fellow Subjects, have interposed and exerted my utmost Power and Means, even at the Hazard of Life and Fortune, to preserve their Freedom and Rights, or to avenge their Wrongs.

But, honored Gentlemen, if you were all well acquainted with the present State and Circumstances of these Kingdoms, you could not, imagine, that a Man of my Character, though in a higher Station, could have any sort of Weight or Influence, in your Affairs, or even in the immediate domestic Concerns of these Kingdoms, with the present Administration.

Your fatal Experience must, by this, have convinced you, that England never suffered under such a wretched, unconstitutional Administration, as the late and the present.

It is true, indeed, you have a virtuous King upon the Throne; but unfortunately, for us all there is not the Appearance of one wise, one honest Man, or one true Friend of him or his Family, about him. You have the best System of Laws, that ever Mortals framed; Laws, which, if duly executed, must prove the Bond and Measure of Allegiance, the People's sure Safeguard, and the Crown's best Support.



But, we see those strained, stretched and distorted, to the manifest Prejudice, Distress and Dishonour of both. And this, to serve the wicked Purposes of base, perfidious, vindictive, rapacious Ministers. You have Rapine and Murder, not onely pardoned, but rewarded, instead of punished, and Criminals and Prostitutes of the most atrocious Complexion, distinguished with Titules, and profusely payed the Wages of Iniquity, out of the Spoils of a betrayed and plundered People. You have, it is true, a Parlement; but, at present, it exists in Name and Form onely, not in Essence: The vital Spring of the Constitution is poisoned in its Parlement. Open Debauchery and Corruption are become the avowed Measures of Administration. The Servants and Guardians of the People are seduced from their Duty to their Ward and Constitutents, and set at Variance with them, by a shameful and iniquitous Profusion, or rather Prostitution of the public Treasure. Formerly, in all Contests with incroaching Power, the People found their onely, their never-failing Resource in a dutiful and faithful Parlement. Now, the Conflict is between the headless Multitude of the People and the Ministers of the Crown, supported by a Parlement, perverted from the Principles of the Institution!

These prevailing, anti-constitutional Measures, founded in Treachery and Fraud, cannot long be supported without illicit Force. Therefore, such Force is universally employed, or preparing for the Purpose.

One of the most determined Maxims of our Rulers seem to have always been, that Ireland should not be permitted to enjoy any of the common Benefits, to which, she is equally intituled with her Sister Kingdom. So that, when ever any good Disposition has happened to be shewn, by the Administration in England; we have generally been sure of the sad Reverse, in Ireland. And whatever is found but bad, in the Administration of the one Kingdom, must be found bad, in all the Extremes, in the other.

This Kingdom has long been forcibly deprived of its legal, as well as natural Rights, and that, though to the apparent confessed Prejudice of England, as well as of Ireland.

It is true, the People are still amused here, with the Name and Appearance of a Parlement; provided it does what is directed, not else. And even the last, immediately after

granting all that was asked by Government, including a shameful, unnecessary, disproportionate and destructive Augmentation of the military Establishment, and that partly to be employed in Stations, with which, we are not permitted to have any Intercourse; was prorogued,<sup>38</sup> and no Complaints or Intreaties of the People could since prevail, to get it re-assembled, to revive expiring Laws, to provide for the decaying Trade, Manufactures, Agriculture, Defence and Support of the Nation. And so, the Subjects of this Kingdom cannot get their faithful and loyal Parlement called, to transact the national Business; while the People of England are unable to procure the Dissolution of their Parlement, after having confessedly run counter to the Laws and Principles of their Institution!

As for military Execution, your more immediate Grievance, it has long been carried to the greatest Excess, here. Numbers of the Subjects have, almost every where, been murdered by the Soldiery, and that with Impunity. And we hardly ever see a military Man punished, for any Offence against the Civil Power. A Sheriff of the City has been known to be dragged through the public Streets of this Capital, at Noon Day, during the Sitting of Parlement too, by a Mob of armed Soldiers, and by them imprisoned for several Hours in the Barrack, without any Punishment inflicted, or any Reparation for the Insult given to the Civil Magistrate. And in the Year 1765, the chief Gaol in this City has been two Days, successively, broke open by the Soldiers, each Day openly rendezvouzing in the Barracks, and openly marching, armed, through the Streets; 'till on one Day, they discharged a Criminal of their own Corps, and on the other, upwards of seventy other Criminals.<sup>39</sup> I had the Rise and Progress of these military Riots enquired into in a Committee of the House of Commons; but could never get the Report received, or the Grievances laid before the Throne; nor will you wonder at it, when, by the express Order of Government, the Magistrates were prohibited meddling with the military

38 The Irish Parliament was prorogued in December 1769 by Lord Lieutenant Townshend (see Murphy, *A Forgotten Patriot Doctor: Charles Lucas*, p 82).

39 Soldiers broke open Newgate Jail in Dublin in August 1765 (see same, p 71).

Miscreants; so that not one individual Offender suffered the smallest Punishment, by the Civil Power.

You must now be sensible, that the ministerial Plan of Government is the despotic, which must ever rely for Support on the Military. In England, indeed, there still remains some just Aversion to an unnecessary standing Army; but the Want of Union in religious and political Sentiments, among the People of this Country, has reconciled them, in a great Measure, to military Rule, and even to the making this Kingdom a Place of Arms: For, we now pay Forces, little short of those of the two united Kingdoms.<sup>40</sup>

What Redress then, Sirs, are you to expect for Grievances in America, which are grown familiar in England, and almost the established, the sole Mode of Government in Ireland?

Though it is the best Policy, never to despair of the Commonwealth;<sup>41</sup> I hardly hope there is common Virtue enough to restore the Rights, or avenge the Wrongs of America, or of Ireland; in the present Administration, this is evident, there is neither Sense or Virtue to correct one wrong Step, they have taken. And therefore, I am persuaded, they will go stumbling on, 'till they fall. But whether this, or the overturning the national Constitution will first happen, is not easily determined, at present.

One Thing, however, is certain, which is, that, during this detestable Administration, no Man of Character can have any Influence. And therefore my Interposition, which you are pleased to desire, can be of no further Use to your Cause, than in loudly exclaiming against your Oppressors, and in republishing the Narrative, you sent me, which I have had constantly and carefully done.<sup>42</sup>

While I thus lament the Narrowness of the Prospect of your obtaining the just Redress of your Wrongs, I console myself with the Consideration, that it will never be in the Power of the most abandoned and profligate Administration, in Europe, to enslave the loyal and brave Americans: No

40 England and Scotland, united in 1707.

41 For Joseph Warren's use of the phrase 'never to despair of the commonwealth', see above, p 9.

42 This ends the first part of Lucas's letter as published in the *Freeman's Journal*, 19 September 1771, and the second part which follows was published in the next edition of the paper on 21 September 1771.

*A Letter to the Boston Massacre Committee*

People ever losted their Liberty, while they were sensible and worthy of the Blessing. You are well versed in the constitutional Rights of Englishmen, which is your sacred, unalienable Inheritance. You justly prize, and are therefore duly tenacious of this invaluable Inheritance. While England is wisely and constitutionally governed; she must prove a tender, fond Parent and Guardian to her Colonies, and she will find in them, loving and dutiful Children. But, if the Government of Britain be once forced to run counter to the Principles of the Institution, and withdrawing the due parental Tenderness and Regard, and the necessary Protection, oppresses and plunders its Dependancies; the Bond of filial Affection and Duty, as well as of Allegiance must be cancelled; the mutual Obligation being broken, on the one Side, becomes necessarily dissolved on the other, and a virtuous Exertion of the same Spirit, which founded the Colonies, and a just Union of Sentiments must preserve their Freedom, against the most artful Machinations of wicked Ministers in Europe.

You have this further Assurance of Success, in every loyal Effort to preserve your Freedom, that every Man of a free, virtuous Spirit, and of true constitutional Principles, is of your Side. Would I could say, that these made the Majority, in either Kingdom! But, alas! I cannot.

For my own Part, I look upon every Attempt to injure the Health or invade the Liberty or Rights of any set of Men, or even of any Individual, of what Nation or Complexion soever, in any, even the remotest Part of the Dominions of the Crown, as an Assault upon the whole Constitution, as a Wound given the Body Politic, dangerous, not onely to the Members, but to the Head itself.

These have always been my invariable Principles. And this Doctrine, I have ever inculcated, though to my own unspeakable Detriment.

One of the many violent Shocks given to the Constitution of this Kingdom, was levelled at me. And that, onely for asserting the Rights and Liberties of the Subject, upon these Principles.

A corrupt, unconstitutional, perpetual Parlemt, without being able to prove, or even attempting to prove, any other Crime; for these, voted me an Enemy to my Country, and

ordered me to Prison, and to further Prosecution, in the Year 1749; purely to prevent my Election into Parlement for the Metropolis, then agreed upon by the Electors.<sup>43</sup> And though a righteous Attorney-general refused to support the illicit Prosecution, asserting, that he found nothing, in the Papers, written, published, and conscious of Innocence and Loyalty, delivered to Government by me, which were the Charges against me, contrary to Law; Recourse was had to the Star-chamber Practice, since revived in England, of filing an Information against me, in the King's bench, and blackening the most lawful Sentences and Expressions, with the most false, strained Constructions, and criminating Innuendos.

When the Cruelty of my Persecutors was such, that I could not obtain an Apartment, which I had previously engaged for me, in the common Gaol, and that the just Resentment of my Fellow citizens was likely to cause much civil Bloodshed, by prepared, irresistible military Force; I had Recourse to England, to make the melancholy Case known there, in Hopes of Redress; but there alas! I found all Access to the Throne totally obstructed, 'till his present Majesty's Regne; nor could I obtain the smallest Countenance, from the Councils of the great City, though I layed a full State of these Grievances before them, in a dedicatory Address to the Corporation, delivered first in my own Hand-writing, and afterwards in Print, to the Lord Mayor, first, and afterwards to the Recorder and Sheriffs, in the Year 1751.<sup>44</sup>

But, my Persecutors, not contented with having thus banished me, to prevent my Election into Parlement, resolved totally to extinguish the constitutional Spirit of Liberty, I had raised; therefore, the whole Weight of Government was opposed to the Election of the two Candidates, set up, upon my Principles. One of them, however, carried his Election, by a very great Majority; yet, was he rejected, in the House of Commons, and his Antagonist established in one of the Seats of the Metropolis in Parlement, regardless of the general Sense, and Voice of the Majority of the Electors.<sup>45</sup>

Had the noble Spirit, which now seems to actuate the best Part of the People of England, then prevailed; this Violation of

43 See Murphy, *A Forgotten Patriot Doctor: Charles Lucas*, p 42.

44 See same, p 50.

45 The unseated MP was James Digges La Touche (see same, p 44).

*A Letter to the Boston Massacre Committee*

the Rights of Election in Ireland, had not stood a Precedent for the late Violations in England.

It is, however, some Satisfaction to find the People improve in a Sense of Virtue and public Spirit; and it must certainly be our own Fault, if we suffer this Spirit to be extinguished, or even to subside, until ample Justice is done to all the suffering Subjects, until the Britannic Constitution is revived and re-established, throughout the remotest Dominions of the Crown.

Those, who contend for this, can alone be justly called, the true Friends of their Country or their King. His Interest can be but one and the same with that of his Subjects. Those, who attempt to set up a separate Interest, between the King and his People, or between any one Part of his Dominions and another, are the worst and most dangerous Enemies of all. And those, who most zealously contend for the Rights and Privileges of the Subject, upon the Principles and Spirit of the Laws and the Constitution, must prove in the End, the best Support of the Crown. And I pray, that Heaven may preserve the Life of our present Sovereign, 'till he becomes convinced of these important Truths, and able to distinguish his real and true from the pretended and false Friends, that surround him. Then, may we hope to see wicked Ministers removed from the King's Councils and Presence, and his Throne established in Righteousness, upon the onely permanent Foundation, the Hearts of a brave, loyal and free People.

This, I must be persuaded, is all that America, all that Ireland or Great Britain can wish; and in these happy Purposes, none can more heartily concur, than,

Honored Gentlemen,

Your most affectionate Fellow-  
Subject, and most faithful and  
most obliged, Humble Servant,

Dublin, Sept. 1, 1770.

C. Lucas



# ***A Letter to the Boston***

## ***Massacre Committee 1770***

**By Charles Lucas**

As discontent with British rule in the American colonies grew in the 1760s, Irish patriots such as Charles Lucas (1713-1771) naturally felt sympathy for the Americans and considered that they shared a common cause. In the wake of the infamous 'Boston Massacre', when British soldiers shot dead five civilians on the night of 5 March 1770, the citizens appointed a committee composed of James Bowdoin, Dr Joseph Warren and Samuel Pemberton. The committee's task was to investigate the killings and to compile a 'full and just representation' of what had occurred.

Lucas was among those to whom the committee members sent their account of the Massacre, which the Irish patriot arranged to have reprinted in Dublin in 1770. In the same year Lucas sent a sympathetic letter in reply to the Bostonians in which he declared that if the Government of Britain should oppress and plunder its dependencies, 'the Bond of filial Affection and Duty, as well as of Allegiance must be cancelled'. This statement could be interpreted as a justification of revolution, echoing the words of the philosopher John Locke who famously wrote that 'Governments are dissolved . . . when the Legislative, or the Prince, either of them act contrary to their Trust'. Lucas's interesting but little-known 1770 letter to the Boston Massacre Committee, one of his last compositions, is now reprinted in full here from the pages of the *Freeman's Journal* as a contribution to the 250th anniversary commemoration of the event.

**Centre for Irish Genealogical and Historical Studies  
Carraig, Cliff Road, Windgates, Bray, Co Wicklow, Ireland**