

# DECLARATION NOT ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE

By **WILLIAM C. KASHATUS**

**H**ere we go again! The Fourth of July is upon us here in the City of Brotherly Love and we've planned a star-studded extravaganza to celebrate. This year, the 225th anniversary of our nation will be highlighted by actor Mel Gibson's reading of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence atop the Art Museum steps.

Let's forget about the fact that his timing will be off by two full days, since Congress actually declared independence on July 2. All that happened on the 4th was the approval of the declaration in a vote that wasn't even unanimous.

What's more disturbing, though, is the reverence that will be heaped on the biggest piece of propaganda ever written in this country's history.

Yo, Mel! Get a clue about the following words and what they actually mean:

**"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."**

Not so. In the 18th century, African-Americans did not enjoy the "unalienable rights" of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Most were the property of white masters. Nor did all white men enjoy the ability to vote or hold political office because of the property qualifications that existed in most colonies.

**"That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government."**

Aside from the fact that Jefferson plagiarized John Locke's Two Treatises on Government, this statement is extraordinarily presumptuous. It assumes that a petty dispute over trade and commerce is actually a universal struggle for freedom.

It also assumes that the colonists are "a people" distinct from England when, in fact, most

men who enjoyed the benefits of their political association with that country.

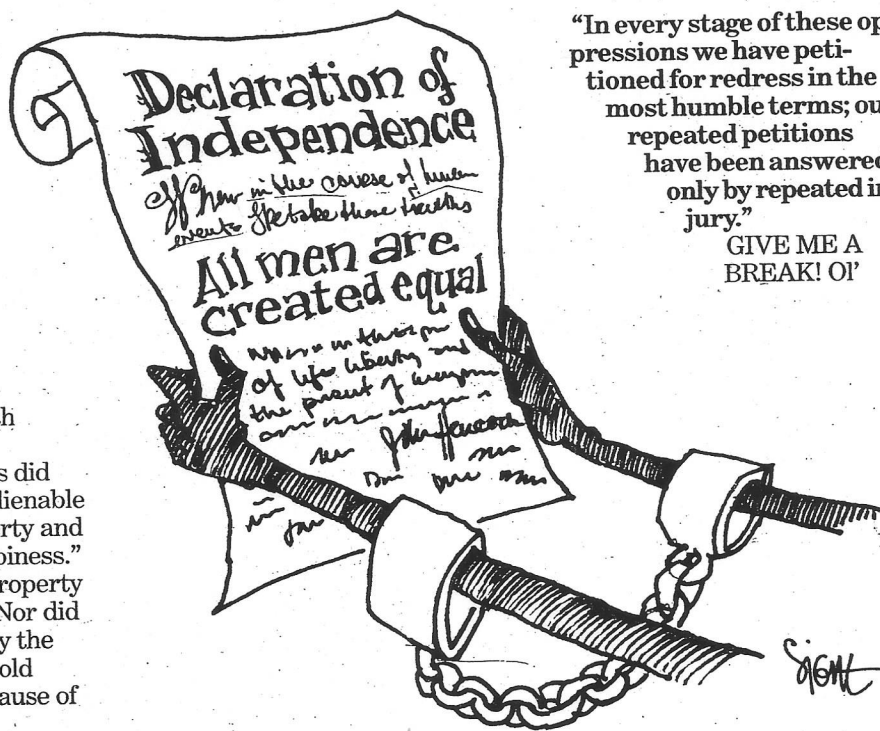
**"He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution and unacknowledged by our laws, giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation."**

Of course, we now know that "He" is King George III and "others" is Parliament, though Jefferson didn't have the guts to say that at the time. That of course, would have been treason.

Yet Jefferson launched a frontal attack against the king in the form of 27 specific grievances, while Parliament is treated as a less willing accomplice in only 9 of those cases. In fact, the central point of dispute since 1765 had been Parliament's legislative powers.

**"In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury."**

**GIVE ME A BREAK! O!**



Tom has assumed the position of victim for the colonists when, in fact, they are the offenders. Who dumped English tea into Boston harbor? Who refused to abide by the regulations of trade established to promote British markets, the very purpose for which the colonies were founded in the first place?

Spare me your felicitous guilt-tripping, Tom. You and the other so-called "founding fathers" were just begging for a fight.

Truth be told, Jefferson's declaration insisted that America's illegal rebellion against the mother country was, in fact, a legal one. But even that won't stop me from shedding a patriotic tear or two when Mel reads it tomorrow night. ★

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