

building, in an anonymous paper which was circulated yesterday by some unknown person, conceives, although he is fully persuaded that the good sense of the officers would induce them to pay very little attention to such an irregular invitation, his duty, as well as the reputation and true interest of the army, requires his disapprobation of such disorderly proceedings. At the same time he requests the general and field-officers with one officer from each company, and a proper representation from the staff of the army, will assemble at 12 o'clock on Saturday next, at the new building, to hear the report of the committee of the army to Congress. After mature deliberation, they will devise what further measures ought to be adopted as most rational and best calculated to attain the just and important object in view. The senior officer in rank, present, will be pleased to preside, and report the result of the deliberations to the Commander in Chief.¹

(No. 4.)

To the Officers of the Army.

GENTLEMEN, The author of a late address, anxious to deserve, though he should fail to engage your esteem; and determined, at every risque, to unfold your duty, and discharge his own, would beg leave to solicit the further indulgence of a few moments' attention. Aware of the coyness with which his last letter would be received, he feels himself neither disappointed nor displeased with the caution it has met. Ye well knew that it spoke a language, which, till now, had been heard only in whispers, and that it contained some sentiments which confidence itself would have breathed with distrust. But their lives have been short, and their observation imperfect indeed, who have yet to learn that claims may be false; that the best designs are sometimes obliged to assume the worst aspect; and that, however synonymous surprise and disaster may be in military phrase, in moral and political meaning, they convey ideas as different as they are distinct.

Suspicion, detestable as it is in private life, is the loveliest trait of political characters. It prompts you to enquiry, bars the door against design, and opens every avenue to truth. It was the first to oppose a tyrant here, and still stands centinel over the liberties of America. With this belief, it would illy become me to stifle the voice of this honest guardian; a guardian, who, authorised by circumstances

¹ A copy of this General Order is in the *Papers of the Continental Congress*, No. 152, XI, folio 117.

digested into proof, has herself given birth to the address you have read, and now goes forth among you, with a request to all, that it may be treated fairly; that it may be considered before it be abused, and condemned before it be tortured; convinced that in a search after error, truth will appear, that apathy itself will grow warm in the pursuit, and though it will be the last to adopt her advice, it will be the first to act upon it.

The general orders of yesterday, which the weak may mistake for disapprobation, and the designing dare to represent as such, wears, in my opinion, a very different complexion, and carries with it a very opposite tendency. Till now the Commander in Chief has regarded the steps you have taken for redress, with good wishes alone. His ostensible silence has authorised your meetings, and his private opinion has sanctified your claims. Had he disliked the object in view, would not the same sense of duty which forbade you from meeting on the third day of the week, have forbidden you from meeting on the seventh? Is not the same subject held up for your discussion? and has it not passed the seal of office, and taken all the solemnity of an order? This will give system to your proceedings, and stability to your resolves. It will ripen speculation into fact, and while it adds to the unanimity, it cannot possibly lessen the *independency* of your sentiments. It may be necessary to add, upon this subject, that, from the injunction with which the general orders close, every man is at liberty to conclude that the *report* to be made to *Headquarters* is intended for *Congress*. Hence will arise another motive for that *energy* which has been recommended: for, can you give the lie to the pathetic descriptions of your representations, and the more alarming predictions of our friends? To such as make a want of signature an objection to opinion, I reply, that it matters very little who is the author of sentiments which grow out of your feelings, and apply to your wants; that in this instance, diffidence suggested what experience enjoins; and that while I continue to move on the high road of argument and advice, which is open to all, I shall continue to be the sole confidant of my own secret. But, should the time come, when it shall be necessary to depart from this general line, and hold up any individual among you as an object of the resentment or contempt of the rest, I thus publicly pledge my honor as a soldier, and veracity as a man, that I will then assume a visible existence, and give my name to the army, with as little reserve as I now give my opinions.¹

¹ A copy of this second address is in the *Papers of the Continental Congress*, No. 152, XI, folio 119.