The London Corresponding Society's Regulations

price 3d

ASSURED that Man, individual Man, may justly claim LIBERTY as his birthright, we naturally conclude, that, as a Member of Society, it becomes his indispensible duty to preserve inviolate that liberty for the benefit of his Fellow Citizens, and of his and their Prosperity.

For, as in the associating, he gave up certain of his Rights in order to secure the possession of the remainder, and VOLUNTARILY yielded up only as much as was necessary for the general good, for he may not barter away the Liberties of his prosperity for the general good, nor defeat the common cause by TAMELY and SUPINELY suffering to be purloined from the People, of whom he makes a part, their natural and unalienable RIGHTS OF RESISTANCE to OPPRESSION, and of SHARING IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THEIR COUNTRY; without the full and uninterrupted exercise of which RIGHTS, no man can with truth call himself or his country free.

Yet of late, the very men who have dared to oppress the nation, have also dared to advance, that – all RESISTANCE TO THEIR OPPRESSION IS ILLEGAL :— while on the other hand, FRAUD and FORCE, sanctioned by Custom and blind Submission, has withdrawn, and now withholds, from a very great majority of the Tax-paying, industrious and useful inhabitants of Great Britain, the RIGHT of sharing in the Governing of their own Commonwealth, and in the management of THEIR own Interests.

The few who are permitted to elect Representatives, and those who are chosen by this SMALL NUMBER OF ELECTORS, disgrace the Country at large, by BUYING and SELLING Votes, by CORRUPTING, or being CORRUPTED – the former by their behaviour at Elections, and the latter by their conduct in the Senate – more than sufficient to prove that THE NATION IS UNREPRESENTED, and that THE PRESENT SYSTEM IS TOTALLY INCONSTITUTIONAL – if by the word Constitution any thing is meant.

Roused at last from their Torpor, and eager to remedy the evil – various, numerous, and respectable Societies have been formed by the people, in different parts of the Kingdom ; several have also arisen in the Metropolis ; and among them

The London Corresponding Society,

with modesty, but firmness, claim the attention of their Country to the following

RESOLUTIONS

Resolved

I. That every Individual has a RIGHT to share in the Government of that Society of which he is a Member – unless incapacitated.

II. That nothing but Non-age, privation of Reason, or an offence against the general Laws of Society, can Incapacitate him.

III. That it is no less the Right than the Duty of every Citizen to keep a watchful Eye on the Governance of his Country, that the Law, by being multiplied, do not degenerate into Oppression : and that those who are intrusted with the Government, do not substitute PRIVATE INTEREST for PUBLIC ADVANTAGE.

IV. That the People of Great Britain are not EFFECTUALLY represented in Parliament.

V. That, in consequence of a partial, unequal, and therefore INADEQUATE REPRESENTATION, together with the CORRUPT method in which the Representatives are Elected ; Oppressive Taxes, Unjust Laws, Restrictions of Liberty, and wasting of Public Money, have ensued.

VI. That the only Remedy to these Evils is a fair, equal, and impartial Representation of the People in Parliament.

VII. That a fair, equal and impartial Representation can never take place till all PARTIAL PRIVILEGES ARE ABOLISHED.

VIII. That THIS SOCIETY do express their abhorrence to Tumult and Violence; aiming to REFORM, not ANARCHY – Reason, Firmness, and Unanimity, are the only Arms they themselves will employ, or persuade their fellow Citizens to exert, AGAINST ABUSE OF POWER.

Signed, by Order of the Committee,

M. MARGAROT, CHAIRMAN,

T, HARDY, SECRETARY

WHEREAS it is notorious that very numerous, burthensome, and unnecessary Taxes are laid on the Persons and families of us, and others, the Industrious Inhabitants of Great Britain, an exceedingly great Majority of whom are, notwithstanding, excluded from all Representation in Parliament.

And as upon inquiry into th Cause of this GRIEVANCE, which is at once a reflection of our industry, and a diminution of our Property, we hold that the Constitution of our Country (which was purchased for us, AT THE EXPENCE OF THE LIVES OF OUR ANCESTORS) has, by the Violence and Intrigue of criminal and designing Men, been injured and undermined n its most essential and important parts; but particularly in the House of Commons, where the whole of te supposed Representation of the People is neither more nor less than an Usurped Power, arising either from Abuses in the mode of Election and Duration of Parliaments, or from a Corrupt Property in certain Decayed Corporations, by means of which the Liberties of this Nation are basely bartered away for private profit of Members of Parliament.

And as it further appears to us that, until this Source of Corruption shall be cleansed by the Information, Perseverance, Firmness, and Union of the People at large, we are robbed of the inheritance so acquired for us by our forefathers ; and that our Taxes, instead of being lessened, will go on increasing; inasmuch as they will furnish Bribes, Places, and Pensions, to our Ministers and Members of Parliament.

It being resolved by us, the Members of this Society to unite ourselves into one firm and permanent Body, for the purpose of informing ourselves and others of the exact State of the present PARLIAMENTARY Representation :— For obtaining a Peaceful but Adequate Remedy to this intolerable grievance – and for corresponding and co-operating with other Societies, united for the same objects : The following

REGULATIONS

For the internal order and government of our Society have been adopted.

I. THAT the whole body go under one Common Name of

"THE LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY, United for the Purpose of obtaining UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE and ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS."

II. That; for the more easy and orderly proceedings of the Society, to be separated into as many Divisions as there shall be Thirty Members, (that being the number required to make a Division) ; and that no Division shall divide till it amounts to forty-six.

III. That in order to distinguish between the actual and supernumerary Members, each division shall have two books : one to contain the names of the thirty members who really belong to the division, together with all monies received and expended on their account ; – the other to contain the names of all persons admitted into the Division after its own members are complete, together with their Receipt and Expenditure.

IV. Both books to be kept by the Secretary of the division to which they belong, till the number of members in the supernumerary book shall amount to sixteen ; then they shall have a number given them, and form a new division.

V. That, in order to unite all the parts of the Society in one centre, each division shall choose a Delegate ; which delegates, so chosen, shall form a General Committee for conducting the affairs of the Society.

VI. That the General Committee shall meet on Thursday Evening, at eight o'clock ; and, as soon as Seven Members are assembled, shall proceed to business, by appointing one of those seven to take the Chair.

VII. The business of the Chairman shall be to order all persons not speaking to sit ; to request each Delegate to give an account of the number of persons admitted into his Division the preceding week ;— to demand all Motions which may be sent from Divisions ; (which shall not be taken notice of unless sent in writing, signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Division) – to take the return of referred Questions:— to read all the Motions twice over, and take the sense of the Committee upon them, in order, as they were delivered to him; – to see that no Member is interrupted while speaking (provided he addresses the Chair, standing and uncovered); – to see that no speaker wanders from the Question before the Chair; – to let

every member fully deliver his opinion; – but not to offer his own till every other Member has done, and then to take the sense of the Committee by a show of Hands.

VIII. Every Delegate shall faithfully report the number of persons admitted, and deliver the motions he receives from his Division ;— each shall minute down the number of Members admitted, as they are named, and the Motions as they are read, with the Determinations of the Committee upon them, for the information of his division.

IX. The General Committee shall on Thursday next preceding Quarter-day, chose a Secretary. an Assistant Secretary, for the ensuing quarter.

X. The Secretary shall act as Treasurer ; he shall keep an Account of the Monies received and expended, of all Debts due and contracted on the part of the Society. On the first Thursday in every calendar Month, he shall make a Report of the general State of the Society, and deliver in this Account to the General Committee, leaving his Book on the Table for the inspection of any individual Delegate. He may receive or pay Monies in the Committee-room, provided he does not in the least interrupt business.

XI. The Assistant Secretary shall take minutes of the committee's proceedings :— he shall receive from every delegate lists of new made members, their names, occupation, and residence, which he shall enter in a book to be kept for that purpose :— he shall, if need be, assist the Secretary in collecting payments and paying bills, or performing any part of the Secretary's duty, for which he shall at least have one day's notice. Should he not be able to attend his duty, he shall give intimation to the Secretary, who shall appoint one in the committee to attend in his stead.

XII. The General Committee shall appoint an *Executive Committee*, to write all letters, preside over all writings that bear the society's name, and to carry into effect all the orders of the General Committee. They shall consist of six members, besides the Secretary and Assistant Secretary, for the time being, who shall, in all respects, be considered members of that committee – allowing the Committee of Delegates the power of enlarging them if necessary.

XIII. The Executive Committee shall be chosen on the first Thursday in the month, ni the following manner : each delegate shall write down six names, consisting of four members of the committee, and two persons not in office ; which list they shall deliver to the Secretary, to be read by him to the committee. While the lists are reading, each delegate shall take down the number of votes for each person, and when the reading is over, the chairman shall pronounce the number ; which the two members that shall appear to have the smallest number of votes shall go out of office, and the two candidates that have the greatest, shall come in their room. This the committee will undergo a renewal once a month, and the business never stand still from the members being strange to it.

XIV. The Executive Committee shall meet on *Friday*, and as much oftener as they may find it necessary. They shall, on the first night after their

election, appoint a Reporter, to receive orders from, and return their answer to the General Committee.

XV. The Reporter shall be punctual in his attendance in the General Committee ; he shall take all adjourned motions into his custody, and request the Chairman to take the sense of the committee, whether or not they shall be considered before the regular motion of the evening. He shall apprize the chairman of the committee when the time arrives to choose officers, or audit accounts ; and, at the expiration of the quarter, he shall demand the books from the Secretary and Assistant, in order that they may be deposited with the Executive Committee, who shall instruct the new officers in the method of keeping them.

XVI. The Executive Committee shall take minutes of their proceedings for the General Committee's inspection, if called for.

XVII. All letters sent to the Executive Committee, and all letters received and approved of by them, shall be published quarterly. Such publications to be delivered gratis to members and sold to strangers.

XVIII. The Executive Committee shall, on no pretence, exceed their orders ;— they may, on a sufficient occasion, summon a special meeting of the General Committee ; which shall not be a partial summons, but a general application to every delegate. Nor shall they on special occasions proceed to business, while less than one-third of the delegates are present.

XIX. They shall be entitled to a seat in the General Committee, but shall neither speak, nor vote, except their Reporters misrepresent them.

XX. They shall issue new division books to the delegates who demand them ; for which is old one shall be their receipt. The old one shall be deposited with them ;— They shall appoint the number to be borne by any new division that may hereafter be formed. For which purpose every delegate shall deliver to them his supernumerary book, as soon as it contains sixteen names ; at which time he shall inform them when and where the new division intend to meet. They shall, in the first page of such book, write a certificate of the number to be borne by the new division, signed by two of their own body, — and they shall deliver the book to some one or more persons to organize, and establish the new division in the following manner :—

XXII. Each division shall meet at eight o'clock any evening, except Thursday and Sunday.

XXIII. Every division shall have a delegate and sub-delegate, secretary, and as many Tithingmen as there shall be ten members in the division ;— the three former to be chosen by ballot, on the next meeting after quarter-day, and the latter on the sixth.

XXIV. The business of the secretary is, to write the names and enter them, together with the occupation and residence of the persons admitted into his division, with those who propose them ; of which he shall make out a list, and request the delegate to deliver it to the assistant secretary, He shall receive and keep a fair account of all monies paid into the division, which he shall also deliver into the hands of the delegate, to be conveyed to the

treasurer once a week, accompanying all such monies with a written receipt, specifying the amount. – The delegate shall produce it as a testimony of the sum he has to pay ;— the treasurer shall sign it, and it shall be returned to the secretary to certify that he has paid it :— to be kept by him till the expiration of the quarter ; then to be produced, and accounted for, by a comparison with the books, for the satisfaction of the division.

XXVI. He shall apprize the division when it is time to elect officers, or settle accounts. It being the night of the election that his accounts are to be audited that shall be done first. He shall give every member present a slip of paper, and desire him to write on it two names for delegate and sub-delegate : He shall receive all the slips and read them, when the president shall pronounce the person with the greatest number delegate, and the next greatest sub-delegate. Should it ever happen that two persons have an equal number, the president shall decide who it shall be.

XXVII. The secretary shall then write a certificate of the election, which being signed by the president and himself, shall introduce them to the committee.

XXVIII. The secretary shall then be chosen by ballot, and it a new one is elected, the surrender of his books and papers into the hands of the president shall terminate his office.

XXIX. It shall be the business of the secretary to provide a meeting-place for his division ; to pay the expence of which he shall levy an equal charge on every member whose name is on the books ; provided always he shall not expend more than 1s. 6d. per week, without consulting the division. – He shall be allowed stationary, not exceeding One Shilling per quarter.

XXX. It shall be his business, when the supernumerary book contains the names of sixteen members, to provide a place for them, and desire the delegate to inform th Executive Committee where to send and form the new division, where he shall meet to receive the committee's messengers, and act as secretary there that night.

XXXI. As soon as ten members are assembled, the secretary shall desire them to appoint a chairman, and the messengers shall deliver into this hand the book, specifying the number of their division, and the supernumerary book. A delegate and sub-delegate shall then be chosen, and demand of the president their certificate, which he shall accompany with the following address:—

'FELLOW CITIZENS,

'We have chosen you to represent us in the Committee of Delegates, because we believe You will not altogether consult YOUR OWN WILL, but OUR INTEREST.

"You will recollect, that as no Delegate is any thing more than the Representative of his Constituents, it is your Duty to support such Motions as We direct, and vote for such Measures as we approve.

"As we have to obtain UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE and ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS we desire You to use every legal and constitutional Endeavour to accomplish our Wishes ; and we enjoin you to guard against

every snare that may be laid ti interrupt you in your Constitutional Pursuits, as well as every Attempt to delude you beyond Constitutional Bounds."

XXXII. The secretary shall then be chosen ; and the chairman shall inquire if any person present wishes to become a member.

XXXIII. Every person, before he is admitted a member of this society, must be proposed by two of its members ; to whom the president shall put the following questions:—

"Are you acquainted with the person you propose ? And are you of opinion, that his general character is such as will not disgrace this Society ?"

XXXIV. If they shall answer in the affirmative, and no other member shall make a sufficient objection, the members being covered, and the candidates standing (uncovered) the president shall ask them the following questions:—

"Are you convinced that the present representation of this country is INADEQUATE and IMPERFECT ?

"Are you thoroughly persuaded that the welfare of the nation requires, that every person of adult years, in possession of his reason, and not incapacitated by crimes, ought to have a vote for a Representative in Parliament, and not more than one vote ?

"Are you convinced, that the Representatives of the people ought to be ANNUALLY elected ? — Will you, by all justifiable means, endeavour to promote such Reformation in Parliament ?"

XXXV. These questions being answered in the affirmative, the president shall declare their admission in the following manner:—

"Then, Citizen, it is with pleasure I pronounce you a Member of this Society. You are, aware how important the object is for which we have associated ; you will , therefore, see that we need to be assisted by the wisdom of all our friends ; and we hope that will stimulate you to attend your Division constantly, in order that we may be benefited by your advice.

'It is also necessary for me to say, that as the Society is at great Expence in diffusing knowledge among our countrymen, it is requisite that every Member should contribute his share. It is therefore determined, that every Member, at his admission, shall pay One Shilling and One penny per quarter ; and that every member, at his Admission, shall pay his contribution for the twelve ensuing weeks at least. – It is also a part of my duty to desire you, as we have associated with no other view than that of obtaining a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, to let your conduct and conversation be perfectly legal and constitutional."

XXXVI. The secretary shall then give him an admission ticket, with his receipt indorsed at the back, specifying the time to which his contribution is paid ; which ticket shall admit him to any division of this Society.

XXXVII. As soon as the business of admitting members is over, the president shall call upon the delegate to report the proceedings of the General Committee. He shall state the number of the members made in all the divisions the preceding week. He shall report all the motions received,

and how they were disposed of, with the reasons why. When any delegate or sub-delegate goes out of office, be shall report who succeeds them ; and, after election, who are the officers chosen. In fine, everything done there that relates to the object or interest of the Society, he shall relate to his division.

XXXVIII. When his report is finished, any member present may give his opinion upon any part that attracts his notice. – Motions may also be formed, and resolutions passed thereon.

XXXIX. In the discussion of any question, visitors, being members of the Society, may join : but none shall vote who are not members of the division.

XL. The chairman shall maintain order, and adjourn the meeting at Ten o'Clock.

XLI. If it should not be time for the division to adjourn when the ordinary business is over, the rest of the time may be employed in reading political books, or discussing political question:— whichever is most agreeable to the meeting.

XLII. On the sixth meeting after the quarter-day, (the discussion of the delegate's report being over) the Tythingmen shall be chosen thus:

The ten persons whose names stand first upon the book, shall nominate out of their number, and the Chairman shall collect the sense by a show of hands. It two persons nominated shall have an equal number, he that is the oldest member shall take the office :— So the second and third tens ; and as soon as ten are on the supernumerary book. they shall choose a tythingman ; and when their number amounts to twenty, they shall choose their second tythingman.

XLIII. The duty of the tythingman is to acquaint their tything in case of the place of meting being removed : to call on them who shall neglect to pay their subscription money three meetings after quarter-day, for payment ;— issue tickets to them in case of a general meeting ;— to inquire after such characters as the delegates may direct ;— to keep the door at the division, each in his turn ;— and to let every member bring one friend with him (provided such friend repeats his visit by twice ; except for admission.)

XLIV. No member shall introduce friends to any division but that to which he belongs.

XLV. No person shall serve two offices at the same time.

LONDON, May 24, 1792