A DECLARATION FROM THE
Poor oppressed People of
ENGLAND,
DIRECTED
To all that call themselves, or are called
Lords of Manors,
through this Nation;
That have begun to cut, or that through
fear and covetousness, do intend to cut down
the Woods and Trees that grow upon the
Commons and Waste Land.

Gerrard Winstanley

Printed in the Year, 1649.
A Declaration from the Poor oppressed People of England.

E whose names are subscribed, do in the name of all the poor oppressed people in England declare unto you, that call your sires Lords of Manors, and Lords of the Land, This in regard the King of Righteousness, our Maker, hath enlightened our hearts so far, as to see, That the earth was not made purposely for you, to be Lords of it, and we to be your Slaves, Servants, and Beggars; but it was made to be a common Livelihood to all, without respect of persons:

And that your buying and selling of Land, and the Fruits of it, one to another, is The cursed thing, and was brought in by War, which hath, and still does establish murder, and theft, in the hands of some branches of Mankind over others which is the greatest outward burden, and unrighteous power, that the Creation groans under: For the power of enclosing Land, and owning Propriety, was brought into the Creation by your Ancestors by the Sword, which first did murder their fellow Creatures Men, and after plunder or steal away their Land, and left this Land successively to you, their Children. And therefore, though you did not kill or take, yet you hold that cursed thing in your hand, by the power of the Sword, and do you justify the wicked deeds of your Fathers, and that of your Fathers, shall be visited upon the Head of you, and your Children, to the third and fourth Generation, and longer too, tell your bloody and cheating power be rooted out of the Land.

And further, in regard the King of Righteousness hath made us sensible of our burdens, and the eyes and groanings of our hearts are come before him: We take it as a testimony of love from him, I lay our hearts, begin to be freed from that fear, and that we find Rebellions in us, grounded upon the inward law of Love, one towards another, To Dig and Plough up the Commons, and waste Lands through England, and that our conversation shall be unblamable, That your Laws shall not reach to oppress us any longer, unless you by your Laws will shed the innocent blood that runs in our veins.

For though you and your Ancestors got your Propriety by murder and theft, and you keep it by the same power from us, that have an equal right to the Land with you, by the righteous Law of Creation, yet we shall have no occasion of quarrelling. (So you do) about that disturbing devil, called Particular Propriety: For the Earth, with all her Fruits of Corn, Cattle, and such like, was made to be a common Store-house of Livelihood to all Mankind, friend, and foe, without exception.

And to prove all your scrupulous Objections, know this, That we must neither
cannot stand of it self, but by the same murdering power? That Government that is got over people by the Sword and kept by the Sword, is not est for up by the King of Righteousness to be his Law, but by Covetousness, the greatest god of the world; who hath been permitted to reign for a time, times, and the division of times, and his government is law, to the period of the 10th, of 1000, and then the Nations shall feel the glory of that Government that shall rule in Righteousness, without such Sword or Spear.

And feeling further, the power of Righteousness in our hearts, seeking the Liberty of others, as well as our selves, hath drawn forth our hearts to begin to dig, and plough, in the Commons and waste Land, for the Reasons already declared.

And feeling and finding our selves poor, wanting Food to feed upon, while we labor the Earth to toil in the Seed, and want the till the first Crop comes up; and wanting Ploughs, Carts, Coats, and such materials to plant the Commons withal, we are willing to declare our condition to you, and to all, that have the Treasuries of the earth, locked up in your Bags, Chests, and Barns, and will offer up nothing to this publick Treasuries but will rather see your fellow-creatures that want of seed, that have an equal right to it with your selves, by the Law of Creation: But this by the way we only declare to you, and to all that follow the sublimate art of buying and selling the Earth, with its fruits, merely to get the Treasury thereof into their hands, to lock it up from them, to whom it belongs; that so, such covetous, proud, unrighteous, selfish, selfish, may be left without excuse in the day of Judgment.

And therefore, the main thing we say, at, and for which we declare our Resolutions to go forth, and as it is this, To lay hold upon, and at we stand in need, to cut and fell, and make the best advantage we can of the Woods and Trees, that grow upon the Commons. To be a Rock for our selves, and our poor Brethren, through the Land of England, to plant the Commons withal, and to provide us bread to eat, till the fruits of our labors in the Earth bring forth increase; and we shall meddle with none of your Properties (but what is called Commons) till the Spirit in you, you make you eat up your Lands and Goods, which were got, and sold is kept in your hands by murder, and theft; and then we shall take it from the Spirit, that hath conquered you, and not from our Swords, which is an abominable, and unrighteous power, and a destroyer of the Creation: But the Son of man comes not to destroy, but to save.

And we are moved to send forth this Declaration abroad, to give notice to every one, whom it concerns, in regard we hear and see, that some of you, that have been Lords of Manors, do cause the Trees and Woods that grow upon the Commons, which you pretend a Royalty unto, to be cut down and sold, for your own private use, whereby the Commons Land, which your own mouths doth belong to the poor, is impoverished, and the poor oppressed people robbed of their Rights, while they are giving them cheating words, by telling some of our poor oppressed Brethren, That the time of us that have begun to dig and plough the Commons, will hinder the poor; and to blind their eyes, that they see not their Privileges, while you, and the rich free holders, make the most profit of the Commons, by over-landing them with Sheep and Cattle; and the poor that have the names to own the Commons, have the lost share therein; nay, they are checked by you, if they cut Wood, Heath, Turf, or Furzeys, in places about the Commons, where you disallow.

Therefore
Therefore we are resolved to be cheated no longer, nor be held under the shameful fear of you no longer, feigning the earth to be made for us, as well as for you; And if the Common Land belongs to us as well as the poor oppressed, surely the woods that grow upon the Commons belong to us likewise: therefore we are determined to try the uttermost in the light of reason, to know whether we shall be free men, or not.

If we lie still, and let you steal away our birthright, we perish; and if we Petition we perish also, though we have paid taxes, given free quarter, and ventured our lives to preserve the Nations freedom as much as you, and therefore by the law and excellence of you, freedom in the land is our portion as well as yours, equal with you: And if we strive for freedom, and your murdering, governing Laws destroy us, we can but perish.

Therefore we resolve and we resolve to take both Common Land, and Common woods to be a liveliness for us, and look upon you as equal with us, not above us, knowing very well, that England, the land of our Nativity, is to be a common Treasury of liveliness to all, without respect of persons.

So that we declare unto you, that do intend to cut our Common Woods and Trees, that you shall not do it; unless it be for a flock of you, as of foretimes, and we do not know of it, by a public declaration abroad, that the poor oppressed, that live thereabouts, may take, and employ it, for their public use, therefore take notice we have demanded it in the names of the Commons of England, and all of the Nations of the world, it being the righteous freedom of the Creation.

Likewise we declare to you, that have begun to cut down our Common Woods and Trees, and to fell and carry away the same for your private use, that you shall forbear, and go no farther, hoping that none that are friends to the common wealt of England, will endeavour to buy any of those Common Woods and Trees of any of those Lords of Manors, so called, who have, by the murdering and cheating law of the sword, stolen the Land from younger brothers, who have by the law of Creation, a standing portion in the Land, as well, and equal with others. Therefore we hope all Wood-mongers will discontinue such private merchandise, as being a robbery of the poor oppressed, and take notice, they have been told our resolution: But if any of you, that are VVood-mongers, will buy it of the poor, and for their use, to flock the Commons, from hence as may be expedient, as we are resolved not to leave it, you shall have it quietly, without diminution; but if you will fight us in this thing, blame us not, if we make stop of the Craft you send and convert the VVoods to our own use, as need requires, it being our own, equal with him that calls himself the Lord of the Manor, and not his peculiar right, disturb us not, but he shall share with us as a fellow creature.

For our purpose is to take those Common Woods to fell them, now at first, to be a flock for our cattle, and children, after we have gained and manoeuvred the Common land withall; for we shall endeavour by our righteous actions, not to leave the earth any longer intangled unto our children, by self-seeking proprietors; But leave it a free forest, and common treasury to all, without respect of persons; And this we count is our duty, to endeavour to the uttermost, every man in his place (According to the national Covenant which the Parliament first set forth.)

Reformation, to preserve the people's liberties, one as well as another: As well those as have paid taxes, and given free quarter, as those that have either born the sword, or taken our money, to defend them for public use: And if the Reformation must be according to the word of God, then every one is to have the benefit and freedom of his creation, without respect of persons; we count this our duty, to endeavour to the uttermost, and to stand up in our name, against them that rise up to oppale us without excuse. In their day of Judgment, and our precious blood, we hope, shall not be dear to us, to be willingly laid down at the door of a priuate, or foot of a gallows, to justify this righteous cause, if those that have taken our money from us, and promised to give us freedom for it, should turn Tyrants against us: for we must not fight, but suffer.

And further we intend, that not one, two, or a few men of us shall sell or exchange the said woods, but it shall be known publicly in print or writing to all, how much every fish, and such parcel of wood is sold for, and how it is laid out, either in vituals, corn, ploughs, or other materials necessary.

And we hope we may not doubt (at least we expects) that they that are called the great Council and powers of England, who so often have declared themselves, by promises and Covenants, and confirmed them by multitudes of falling dates, and devout Professions, to make England a free people, upon condition they would pay moneys; and adventure their lives against the success of the Norman conqueror under whose oppressing power England was enslaved; And we look upon this freedom promised to be the inheritance of all, without respect of persons; And this cannot be, unless the land of England be freely set at liberty from proprietors, and become a common Treasury to all her children, as every part of the Land of Canaan was the Common livelihood of such and such a tribe, and of every member in that tribe, without exception, neither hedging in any, nor hedging out.

We say we hope we need not doubt of their sincerity to us herein, and that they will not gainay our determinate course; however, their actions will prove to the view of all, either their sincerity, or hypocrisy: We know what we speakis our privilege, and our cause is righteous, and if they doubt of it, let them but lend a child for us to come before them, and we shall make it manifest four ways.

First, the National Covenant, which we stand in force to bind Parliament and people to be faithful and sincere, before the Lord God Almighty, wherein every one in his several place hath covenanted to preserve and seek the liberty of each other, without respect of persons.

Secondly, by the late Victory of King Charles, we do claim this our privilege, to be quietly given us, out of the hands of Tyrant-Government, as our bargain and contract with them; for the Parliament promised, if we would pay taxes, and give free quarter, and adventure our lives against Charles, his party, whom they called the Common enemy, they would make us free, and free us all done by us, as well as by themselves; we claim this our bargain, by the law of contract from them, to be a free people, and to have an equal privilege of Common livelihood with them, they being chosen by us, but for a peculiar work, and for an appointed time, from among us, not to be our oppressing Lords, but servants to succour us. But the two are our weakest proofs. And yet by them (in the light of reason and equity that drives it men's hearts) we shall with ease cast down all of them former enleving, Norman retained laws, in every Kings reign, since the Common tooth, which as thorns in our sides, and pricks in our sides, and which are called the Ancient Government of England.

Thirdly, we shall prove, that we have a free right to the land of England, being borne therein as well as elder brothers, and that it is our right equal with them, and they with us, to have a comfortable livelihood in the earth, without owning any
of our owne kinde, to be either Lords, or Land Lords over us: And this we shall prove by plain Text of Scripture, without exposition upon them, which the Scholars and great ones generally say, is their rule to walk by.

Forthwith, we shall prove it by the Righteous Law of our Creation, That mankind in all his branches, is the Lord of the Earth, and ought not to be in subjection to any of his own kind without him, but to live in the light of the law of righteousness, and peace established in his heart.

And thus in love we have declared the purpose of our hearts plainly, without flattering, expecting love, and the same sincerity from you, without grumbling, or quarreling, being Creatures of your own Image and mould, intending no other matter herein, but to observe the Law of righteousness, endeavoring to shut out of the Creation, the cursed thing, called Particular Propriety, which is the cause of all wars, bloodshed, theft, and enslaving Laws, that hold the people under misery.

Signed for and in the behalf of all the poor oppressed people of England, and the whole world.

Gerard Vinson
John Coulton
John Palmer
Thomas Star
Samuel Webb
John Hayman
Thomas Edcer
William Hodgill
Daniel Vesey
Richard VVheeler
Nathaniel Tate
William Clifford
John Harrison
Thomas Hadon
James Hall

James Manley
Thomas Barnard
John South
Robert Sayer
Christopher Clifford
John Beebee
William Coones
Christopher Boucher
Richard Taylor
Urian VVorthington
Nathaniel Hockenbe
Giles Child, senior
John VVeb
Thomas Tarwel
William Bennigton

John Aso
Ralph Ayer
John Pra
John VVilkington
Anthony Spire
Thomas East
Allen Brown
Edward Parre
Richard Gray
John Morda
John Bacon
William Child
William Hatham
Edward VVisher
William Touch

FINIS.