

LABEL TEMPLATE

Example:

Powder Horn

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
ca. 1770
Horn (cow), Wood, Iron
Museum of the American Revolution

This powder horn (used to store gunpowder) depicts Philadelphia's busy waterfront during the 1760s. America's largest port city, Philadelphia was connected by water to the British Empire's nearly-global trade network. This horn demonstrates how ordinary objects could remind colonists of the benefits and obligations of being the King's subjects.

Object:

Location where it was created:

Date it was created:

Materials:

Who Owns the Object:

Brief Description:



LABOR MOVEMENTS' DECLARATIONS



Included in this packet are the declarations below.

Labor Movement Declarations

- New York General Committee of Mechanics in Union (1776)
- Working Men's Declaration (1829)
- Excerpts of the Declaration of Independence of the American Working Class (1923)
- United Steel Workers of America (1936)

New York General Committee of Mechanicks in Union (1776)

To the Honourable Representatives of the Province of New-York, in Provincial Congress convened.

The humble Address of the General Committee of Mechanicks in union, of the City and County of New-York, in behalf of themselves and their constituents:

GENTLEMEN: We, as a part of your constituents, and devoted friends to our bleeding country, beg leave, in a dutiful manner, at this time to approach unto you, our Representatives, and request your kind attention to this our humble address.

When we cast a glance upon our beloved continent, where fair freedom, civil and religious, we have long enjoyed, whose fruitful field have made the world glad, and whose trade has filled with plenty of all things, sorrow fills our hearts to behold her now struggling under the heavy load of oppression, tyranny, and death. But when we extend our sight a little farther, and view the iron hand that is lifted up against us, behold it is our King; he who by his oath and station, is bound to support and defend us in the quiet enjoyment of all our glorious rights as freemen, and whose dominions have been supported and made rich by our commerce. Shall we any longer sit silent, and contentedly continue the subjects of such a Prince, who is deaf to our petitions for interposing his Royal authority in our behalf, and for redressing our grievances, but, on the contrary, seems do take pleasure in our destruction? When we see that one whole year is not enough to satisfy the rage of a cruel Ministry, in burning our towns, seizing our vessels, and murdering our precious sons of liberty; making weeping widows for the loss of those who were dearer to them than life, and helpless orphans to bemoan the death of an affectionate father; but who are still carrying on the same bloody pursuit; and for no other reason than this, that we will not become their slaves, and be taxed by them without our consent,— therefore, as we would rather choose to be separate from, than to continue any longer in connection with such oppressors, We, the Committee of Mechanicks in union, do, for ourselves and our constituents, hereby publickly declare that, should you, gentlemen of the honourable Provincial Congress, think proper to instruct our most honourable Delegates in Continental Congress to use their utmost endeavors in that august assembly to cause these United Colonies to become independent of Great Britain, it would give us the highest satisfaction; and we hereby sincerely promise to endeavour to support the same with our lives and fortunes.

Signed by order of the Committee,

Lewis Thibou, Chairman

Working Men's Declaration (1829)

"When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary" for one class of a community to assert their natural and unalienable rights in opposition to other classes of their fellow men, "and to assume among" them a political "station of equality to which the laws of nature and of nature's God," as well as the principles of their political compact "entitle them; a decent respect to the opinions of mankind," and the more paramount duty they owe to their own fellow citizens, "requires that they should declare the causes which impel them" to adopt so painful, yet so necessary, a measure.

"We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights" against the undue influence of other classes of society, prudence, as well as the claims of self defence, dictates the necessity of the organization of a party, who shall, by their representatives, prevent dangerous combinations to subvert these indefeasible and fundamental privileges. "All experience hath shown, that mankind" in general, and we as a class in particular, "are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves," by an opposition which the pride and self interest of unprincipled political aspirants, with more unprincipled zeal or religious bigotry, will willfully misrepresent. "But when a long train of abuses and usurpations" take place, all invariably tending to the oppression and degradation of one class of society, and to the unnatural and iniquitous exaltation of another by political leaders, "it is their right it is their due ' to use every constitutional means to reform the abuses of such a government and to provide new guards for their future security. The history of the political parties in this state, is a history of political iniquities, all tending to the enacting and enforcing oppressive and unequal laws. To prove this, let facts be submitted to the candid and impartial of our fellow citizens of all parties.

The laws for levying taxes are all based on erroneous principles, in consequence of their operating most oppressively on one of society, and being scarcely felt by the other.

The laws regarding the duties of jurors, witnesses, and militia trainings, are still more unequal and oppressive.

The laws for private incorporations are all partial in their operations; favoring one class of society to the expense of the other, who have no equal participation.

The laws incorporating religious societies have a pernicious tendency, by promoting the erection of magnificent places of public worship, by the rich, excluding others, and which others cannot imitate; consequently engendering spiritual pride in the clergy and people, and thereby creating odious distinctions in society, destructive to its social peace and happiness.

The laws establishing and patronizing seminaries of learning are unequal, favoring the rich, and perpetuating imparity, which natural causes have produced, and which judicious laws ought, and can, remedy.

The laws and municipal ordinances and regulations, generally, besides those specially enumerated, have heretofore been ordained on such principles, as have deprived nine tenths of the members of the body politic, who are not wealthy, of the equal means to enjoy "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" which the rich enjoy exclusively; but the federative compact intended to secure to all, indiscriminately. The lien law in favor of landlords against tenants, and all other honest creditors, is one illustration among innumerable others which can be adduced to prove the truth of these allegations.

We have trusted to the influence of the justice and good sense of our political leaders, to prevent the continuance of these abuses, which destroy the natural bands of equality so essential to the attainment of

moral happiness, “but they have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity.”

Therefore, we, the working class of society, of the city of New York, “appealing to the supreme judge of the world,” and to the reason, and consciences of the impartial of all parties, “for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the spirit, and by the authority of that political liberty which has been promised to us equally with our fellow men, solemnly publish and declare, and invite all under like pecuniary circumstances, together with every liberal mind, to join us in the declaration, “that we are, & of right ought to be,” entitled to equal means to obtain equal moral happiness, and social enjoyment, and that all lawful and constitutional measures ought to be adopted to the attainment of those objects. “And for the support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to each other” our faithful aid to the end of our lives.

Excerpt of the Declaration of Independence of the American Working Class (1923)

The American labor movement has a very interesting history. But now for the first time the labor movement itself is making history. The working class in America has been until now an appendage either of the capitalists or the lower middle class. Now for the first time the American working class is beginning to play an independent historical role. The workers have time and again played the role of supers on the political stage while the great “heroes” Bryan, Roosevelt or Wilson took the stellar roles. There were even times when the workers were promoted to minor character parts in the tragic-comedy of lower middle-class movements. But only now, with the appearance of the Labor Party movement of the post-war period, is the American working class grasping the initiative, and is the hero of the political stage. From 1918 on, we see an uninterrupted development of the Labor Party movement in America. Like the giant in the fairy tale, the idea of a Labor Party is advancing with seven-league strides. A few of these strides: In 1918, the California and Chicago federations of labor declared for a Labor Party. In 1919, the Illinois and Pennsylvania State Federations of Labor and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers. In 1920, the State Federations of Labor of Michigan and Indiana. In 1921, the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor and the United Mine Workers. In February 1922 in Chicago the Conference of eighteen international unions belonging to the American Federation of Labor, and seven unions outside of the A.F. of L. In December 1922, in Cleveland, the representatives of two million workers and one million farmers.

All the resolutions have remained paper resolutions up to now. In Chicago, the betrayal by the trade union officialdom and the Socialist Party blocked the formation of a Labor Party. In Cleveland, the sabotage of the leaders again betrayed the Labor Party. The various local labor parties have remained isolated until now, and therefore powerless. But colorblind are those who only see the betrayal, and not the mighty advance of the labor party idea. They are incurably crippled by skepticism – those who content themselves with asserting that the American Federation of Labor leaders are traitors, failing at the same time to perceive the increasing determination, and the growing class-consciousness of the masses of the rank and file. We still have so-called revolutionists in America who believe in nothing except their own disbelief, and they believe faithfully that movement of labor in America is no more than a vicious circle. In a period when the whole edifice of capitalism is tottering, and even the prophets of capitalism can but promise the return of normalcy, there are still labor leaders who say that nothing uncommon is taking place in America, nothing new, and that we are living in a period of normalcy. These people – and we find them at the extreme right wing of the labor movement, in the Gompers entourage, as well as at the extreme left wing, in the so-called Proletarian Party – are like the seismograph. They can record a political earthquake when it is far away from here, in Turkey, in India, or in Bulgaria, but they are rendered useless when a political earthquake occurs right here in America, in their vicinity.

The Labor Party movement is a political earthquake of the first magnitude. The American capitalist class issued its Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The day of the Declaration of Independence of the American working class will be the day of the founding of its independent political party. July 3 and 4, 1923, the date of the Convention of the Farmer-Labor Party, can be in history the date of the declaration of independence of the American working class; however, that Convention will not be the end, but rather the beginning of the formation of a genuine Labor Party.

United Steel Workers of America (1936)

On July Fourth, 1776, the American people declared their independence of political tyranny from which they had long suffered. They pledged themselves to protect the right of all to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

DESPOTISM OF THE LORDS OF STEEL

But today we find the political liberty for which our forefathers fought is made meaningless by economic inequality. In the steel and other like industries a new despotism has come into being.

Through their control over the hours we work, the wages we receive, and the conditions of our labor, and through their denial of our right to organize freely and bargain collectively, the Lords of Steel try to rule us as did the royalists against whom our forefathers rebelled.

COMPANY UNIONS, SPIES, THUGS

They have interfered in every way with our right to organize in independent unions, discharging many who have joined them.

They have set up company unions, forcing employees to vote in their so-called elections.

They have sent among us swarms of stoolpigeons, who have spied upon us in the mills, in our meetings, and even in our homes.

They have kept among us armies of company gunmen, with stores of machine guns, gas bombs, and other weapons of warfare.

COMPANIES HEED NO APPEAL—

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms.

We have used every channel of the so-called representation to put forward our requests and grievances. But all we have found is that the employers control these plans and refuse to grant requests which are not backed by independent organizations.

—OR LAW

We have appealed to the government to protect us in our right to organize freely without interference from our employers.

We have presented cases of interference and discrimination without number to government labor boards. They have ruled that our employers must observe the law by reinstating discharged unionists and ceasing to interfere with their employees' rights. But our employers have defied these rulings.

WE ARE AMERICANS!

So we steel workers do today solemnly publish and declare our independence. We say to the world: "We are Americans." We shall exercise our inalienable rights to organize into a great industrial union, banded together with all our fellow steel workers.

WE PLEDGE OUR LIVES—

Through this union, we shall win higher wages, shorter hours, and a better standard of living. We shall win leisure for ourselves, and opportunity for our children. Together with our union brothers in other industries, we shall abolish industrial despotism. We shall make real the dreams of the pioneers who pictured America as a land where all might live in comfort and happiness.

In support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to each other our steadfast purpose as union men, our honor and our very lives.