

of such laws, are generally dangerous, and ought to be avoided.

N.B. It is proposed to make some alterations in this last article when reported to the house. Perhaps somewhat like the following

That all laws, having a retrospect to crimes, & punishing offences committed before the enactment of such laws are dangerous, and ought to be avoided, except in cases of great & evident necessity, when the safety of the state absolutely requires them. — This is thought to state with more precision the doctrine respecting ex post facto laws & to signify to posterity, that it is considered not so much as a law of right, as the great law of necessity, which by a well known maxim is allowed to supersede all human institutions.

Another is agreed to in committee condemning the use of general warrants, & one other to prevent the suspension of laws, or the execution of them.

The above clauses, with some small alterations & the addition of one or two more, have already been agreed to in the committee appointed to prepare a declaration of rights, when this business is finished in the house, the committee will proceed to the ordinance of government.

J. L. Lee

A Declaration of Rights, made by the Representatives of the good People of Virginia assembled in full Convention, and now assembled to sit as the House of Delegates of that Commonwealth.

That all men are equally entitled to Liberty, and that Liberty consists in the enjoyment of the most extensive Sphere of natural Rights, which is consistent with the Justice and Equity of the Laws of the Commonwealth, and the Rights of the Neighbouring Communities, and that the Legislature have the Honourable Duty of preserving and extending the same.

That Power is by God and Nature justly and equitably derived from the People, that they are in no Manner to be taxed in Person or Property, but only by their Representatives, who are in no Manner to be taken from them.

That Government is instituted among Men, to secure the Freedom, Safety and Security of the People, and that the Powers of Government should be so distributed, as to protect the People from the Oppression of the Government, and to secure to them the most extensive Sphere of Liberty, consistent with the Justice and Equity of the Laws of the Commonwealth, and the Rights of the Neighbouring Communities, and that the Legislature have the Honourable Duty of preserving and extending the same.

