Roles for Shays’ Rebellion Activity


Farmers

"I have been greatly abused, have been obliged to do more than my part in the war; been loaded with class rates, town rates, province rates, Continental rates and all rates… been pulled and hauled by sheriffs, constables, and collectors, and had my cattle sold for less than they were worth."—"Old Plough Jogger" (from newspaper) at convention in tavern (Starkey, 14)

"I have been obliged to pay and nobody will pay me. I have lost a great deal by this man and that man and t'other man, and the great men are going to get all we have, and I think it is time for us to rise and put a stop to it, and have no more courts, nor sheriffs, nor collectors, nor lawyers, and I know that we are the biggest party, let them say what they will."—"Old Plough Jogger" (from newspaper) at convention in tavern (Starkey, 15)

"Address to the Yeomanry of Massachusetts
…The extreme distress the people have suffered [for want of] food of the most homely kind gives the lie direct [to such charges] and unless their intended lordships are resolved that we should follow the example of the oppressed Irish and live wholly on potatoes and skimmed milk, I know not what method of support they have charted out for us."—George Brock, *Independent Chronicle* of Boston (Starkey, 18)

"I can tell you what we're here for. We've come to relieve the distresses of the people. There will be no court until they have redress of their grievances."—Adam Wheeler of Hubbardston (Starkey, 37)

"to crush the power of the people at one bold stroke and render them incapable of ever opposing the cruel power of tyranny, by bringing those who stepped forth to ward off the evil that threatens the people…to an unconditional submission and their leaders to infamous punishment."—response to the Governor's address (Starkey, 127-128)

"Your petitioners are not of the wicked, dissolute and abandoned… [their cause] is not confined to a factious few, but extends to towns and counties and almost every individual who derives his income from the labor of his hands…or from a farm." They were motivated by "those sufferings which disenabled them to provide for their wives and children and the discharge of honest debts… The eyes and breasts of women and children have been wounded…the houses of innocent broken into, their limbs mangled, their friends conveyed to gaol in another county and now languishing, if alive, under their wounds." "They were not afraid of "the injuries of hunger, cold, nakedness and the infamous name of rebel, as under all these disadvantages they once before engaged and through the blessing of God came off victorious. To that God they now appeal, conscious of the innocence of their intention…from a love of the people and horror of the thoughts of the cruelty and devastation of a civil war. For the prevention of so great an evil your
petitioners humbly pray for the love, candor...of your excellency and honors in releasing our unfortunate and suffering friends."—petition to the Governor and council (Starkey, 107-108)

**Daniel Shays**

"the sole motive with me in taking the command at Springfield was to prevent the shedding of blood, which would absolutely have been the case if I had not; and I am so far from considering it a crime, that I look upon it that the government are indebted to me for what I did there."—Daniel Shays, attributed to him by General Rufus Putnam (Starkey, 119-120)

"Gentlemen: By information from the General Court they are determined to call all those who appeared to stop the court to condign punishment. Therefore I request you to assemble your men together, to see that they are all armed and equipped with sixty rounds, each man to be ready to turn out at a minute's warning. Likewise be properly organized with officers."—circular letter dated October 13 and signed Daniel Shays (Starkey, 90-91)

"The seeds of war are now sown; two of our men are now bleeding... I request you to let this letter be read and for you and every man to supply men and provision to relieve us with a reinforcement... We are determined her to carry our point. Our cause is yours. Don't give yourself a rest and let us die here, for we are all brethren."—Daniel Shays, December 2, from Worcester (Starkey, 101-102)

**Governors**

"to subvert all law and government and introduce riot, anarchy and confusion, which would probably terminate in absolute despotism, consequently destroying the fairest prospects of political happiness that any people was ever favored with."—Governor Bowdoin, September 2 proclamation denouncing attempt to shut down court in Northampton (Starkey, 35)

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**General Shepard**

"the subversion of the constitution and government at one bold stroke...and to erect a military government for the coercion of the state by setting up his own standard...to be supported by great numbers from all the states, and be able to declare himself dictator of the whole union."—General Shepard on Shays' plans
"We do not yet feel that sameness or unity of interest which is the only cement for any nation—but this is not surprising, for our national existence is but of yesterday."—Samuel Lyman, aide to General Shepard (Starkey, 117)

**Revolutionary War Veteran**

"We have lately emerged from a bloody war in which liberty was the glorious prize aimed at. I earnestly stepped forth in defense of this country, and cheerfully fought to gain this prize, and liberty is still the object I have in view." Actions a consequence of his distress in seeing "valuable and industrious members of society dragged from their farms to prison, to the great damage not only of their families but the community at large."—Moses Smith (Starkey, 41)  
(http://wikisource.org/wiki/Shall_Liberty_or_Empire_Be_Sought%3F.  (A summary of the Newburg Conspiracy and links to Washington's Newburg Address)

**MA Legislature**

"however great the public burdens are, attempts have not been wanting on our part to alleviate them; no member in the community is exempt from these burdens; the members of the Legislature have their full share, and can it be thought that they would designedly impose burdens on themselves or omit anything that might tend to their relief?" "And must the minor part therefore rise against the government? …Unless we submit to be controlled by the greater number, the Commonwealth must break in pieces."—Address to the People by the Legislature