

Second Continental Congress

Information Sheet

The 2nd Continental Congress met in Philadelphia after the Battles of Lexington and Concord on May 10, 1775. There were several new faces to the Congress including Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Hancock. Hancock was elected President of the Congress.

This Congress established the Continental Army that represented all of the 13 colonies, and appointed George Washington as the Commander-in-Chief. A final plea for peace called the Olive Branch Petition was sent to King George at the request of Loyalist delegates who did not want an outright revolution. King George III rejected this last attempt for peace because he believed England could end the colonial rebellion with their military might.

The 2nd Continental Congress also formed a committee that included Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman to draft the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson surfaced as the main author of the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Paine contributed to the spirit of revolution in America and France through his influential writings. In January 1776, Paine wrote *Common Sense*, a pamphlet which attacked the monarchical system, supported independence, and outlined a new form of government. Paine became a leading propagandist of the American Revolution and fueled the fears of the colonists of the tyrannical government of Great Britain.

The influence of these ideals is evident in the Declaration of Independence which was finally adopted by the Congress on July 4, 1776. With the adoption of the Declaration, Americans officially sent the message that freedom from England would be the ultimate goal. The Declaration of Independence championed individual rights and defined the purpose of government, consent of the governed, equality, and the right to question governmental authority.

Lastly, the Congress created a national government for the colonies called the Articles of Confederation. This new government was not ratified, or approved, until 1781.