

ONE MAY WELL ASK, WHAT WILL BE THE PRICE PAID BY AUSTRALIANS FIGHTING TO FREE OUR COUNTRY OF TODAY'S TYRANTS? IN REFLECTION OF WHAT FORMER ONE NATION LEADER PAULINE HANSON WAS SUBJECTED TO, THE ANSWER SEEMS PURELY ACADEMIC.

Have you ever wondered what happened to the 56 men who signed the American Declaration of Independence? Or were you never taught?

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons serving in the revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured.

Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War. They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honour. What kind of men were they?

Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants; nine were farmers and large plantation owners, men of means, well educated. But they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.

Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him and poverty was his reward.

Vandals or soldiers looted the properties of Dillery, Hall, Clymer, Walton, Gwinnett, Hayward, Rutledge and Middleton.

At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson Jr. noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. He quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months.

John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later he died from exhaustion and a broken heart. Norris and Livingston suffered similar fates.

Such were the stories and sacrifices of the American Revolution. These were not wild-eyed, rabble-rousing ruffians. They were soft-spoken men of means and education. They had security, but they valued liberty more.

Standing tall, straight and unwavering, they pledged "For the support of this declaration, with firm reliance on the protection of the divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honour."

Author unknown.

They created a free and independent America. The history books hide much of what happened in the Revolutionary War, or even its true underling cause. They did not just fight the British. They were British themselves, and therefore they were fighting their own government. Some take liberties so much for granted, they shouldn't. Australia too has a wealth of gratitude to those early American revolutionaries in relation to gaining our own independence from England, Her Bank and Taxes. As the Empire feared a repeat of the American war, this factor weighed heavily in the equation and thus resulted in the "Federation of Australia" and then the "Australian Commonwealth".

Do men with the integrity, such as those 56, exist in Australia? Only time will tell. Perhaps they are waiting for Hell to freeze over, of which now by all accounts is starting to happen. Meanwhile people like Dick Smith, Brian Wiltshire, Alan Jones and David Oldfield, continue to wage one-man wars, hopelessly outnumbered and under repetitive cowardly attack for upholding our constitutional rights. Few in Australian Politics know this experience better than ONE NATION.

Andrew Webber