Primary Source: George Sims' An Address to the People of Granville County [1]

On June 6, 1765, North Carolina backcountry teacher George Sims drafted an address expressing dissatisfaction with government officials and accusing local court officers of malpractice. He blamed corrupt lawyers and public officials for the problems of small farmers in the area we now call the Piedmont. His address found a receptive audience in Granville County (today Vance County) and surrounding frontier counties like Orange. The address circulated widely in the area, and it led to increased agitation by residents. And it was later used by Regulator leaders to bolster their movement against government corruption. Sims address has become known as the "Nutbush Address," named after the area of then Granville County (present-day Vance County) known as Nutbush.

Read the address below:

Gentlemen, it is not our mode, or form of Government, nor yet the body of our laws, that we are quarrelling with, but with the malpractices [2] of the Officers of our County Court, and the abuses which we suffer by those empowered to manage our public affairs...

[L]et us make an estimate of the difference between getting our livings by honest industry and getting them by these cursed practices. We will suppose ourselves all to be men, who labour for our livings, and there is a poor man among us, who has dealt for about 4 or 5 pounds in such things as his family could not possibly do without and in hopes of being spared from the lash of the law till he can sell some of his effects to raise the money; he gives a judgment bond to his Merchant, and before he can accomplish his design his bond is thrown into Court, and Benton the poor mans Burgess has it to enter on the Court docket and issue an execution the work of one long minute. Well, Gentlemen, what has our poor neighbour to pay Mr. Benton for his trouble? Why, nothing but the trifling [3] sum of forty one shillings and five pence. Well he is a poor man, and cannot raise the money. We will suppose Mr. Benton condescends [4] to come to terms with him. Come (says he) and work. I have a large field and my corn wants weeding (or something like that). I will give you 1/6 a day, which is the common wages of a labourer in these times till you pay it off because you are a poor man, and a neighbour I will not take away your living. Well how many days work has our honest neighbour to pay Mr. Benton for his trouble and expense in writing about a minute? Why, he must work something more than 27 days before he is clear of his clutches. Well the poor man reflects within himself. At this rate says he when shall I maintain my own family. I have a wife and a parcel of small children suffering at home and I have none to labour but myself, and here I have lost a month's work and a parcel of small children suffering at home and I have none to labour but myself, and here I have lost a month's work and... it to enter on the Court docket and issue an execution the work of one long minute. Well, Gentlemen, what has our poor neighbour to pay Mr. Benton for his trouble? Why, nothing but the trifling [3] sum of forty one shillings and five pence. Well he is a poor man, and cannot raise the money. We will suppose Mr. Benton condescends [4] to come to terms with him. Come (says he) and work. I have a large field and my corn wants weeding (or something like that). I will give you 1/6 a day, which is the common wages of a labourer in these times till you pay it off because you are a poor man, and a neighbour I will not take away your living. Well how many days work has our honest neighbour to pay Mr. Benton for his trouble and expense in writing about a minute? Why, he must work something more than 27 days before he is clear of his clutches.

Well Gentlemen, if this were the case, would it not be a melancholy thing? But it is worse by ten degrees than any thing to pieces to satisfy their cursed hungry caterpillars, that are eating and will eat out the bowels of our Commonwealth, if they be not pulled down from their nests in a very short time, and what need I say, Gentlemen, to urge the necessity there is for a reformation. If these things were absolutely according to law, it would be enough to make us turn rebels, and throw off all submission to such tyrannical [5] laws...... But, as these practices are diametrically [6] opposite to the law, it is our absolute duty, as well as our Interest, to put a stop to them, before they quite ruin our County. Or, Are become the willing slaves of these lawless Officers, and hug our chains of bondage and remain contented under these accumulated calamities...... No, Gentlemen, I hope better things of you...... [F]irst, let us be careful to keep sober, that we do nothing rashly; but act with deliberation. Secondly, Let us do nothing against the known and established laws of our land, that we may not appear as a faction [7] in endeavouring [8] to subvert [10] the laws, and overturn our system of government. But, let us appear what we really are. To wit, free subjects by birth, endeavouring to recover our native rights according to law, and to reduce the malpractices of the Officers of our Court down to the standard of law....
George Sims drafted his protest address in the Nutbush area of Granville (present-day Vance) County, N.C. A Highway Historical Marker is located near the site at Townsville, N.C.

Related Topics:

"Nutbush Address"