

Thomas jefferson



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The third President of the United States, the main propounder of the Declaration of Independence, and one of America's greatest founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson had a vision of America that was thought to be idealist in his lifetime. But though a few of his ideas about how America should be and how it should be seen by the world were not implemented, the essentially free-thinking, liberal image of today's America is actually the result of Jefferson's vision.

Jefferson was greatly influenced by one of the most popular thinkers of his time, John Locke, who believed in the "natural" rights of human beings. In 1698, much before the birth of Jefferson, Locke wrote in the second chapter of his famous *Second Treatise on Government*: "All men by nature are equal...in that equal right that every man hath to his natural freedom, without being subjected to the will or authority of any other man; ... being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions..."

Jefferson understood these natural rights to be the most significant for the preservation of human dignity and happiness. He said: "Perhaps it will be found that to obtain a just republic (and it is to secure our just rights that we resort to government at all) it must be so extensive as that local egoisms may never reach its greater part; that on every particular question, a majority may be found in its councils free from particular interests, and giving, therefore, an uniform prevalence to the principles of justice".

For him the ideal political system for America was one which respected and upheld these rights, the rights which were a man's by birth, which could not be created by a government but could of course be violated by it. To this end, Jefferson's contribution to the constitution were the first ten

amendments which together constitute the "The Bill of Rights". These were put in place to ensure that the American government could never supersede the natural, God-given rights of the American citizen.

Jefferson's vision for America saw a nation where the people were the first priority, not the institutions and organizations. He never wanted institutions to have the power to manipulate people, and saw governments, organized religions and commercial monopolies as threats to the people. He opposed the formation of banks, commercial monopolies and a standing military.

To Jefferson, the agrarian ideal of a farming community seemed ideal, where the people were not dependent on external agencies for their subsistence. He believed that self-government was the best ideal for America, on the lines of the American Indians: he supported an American government only if the people gave their consent to be governed.

Jefferson respected the people's right to resistance to the government, saying, "What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that this people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms". This is one of the reasons why many of his contemporaries dubbed him a philosophical anarchist.

A standing military and extensive taxation was thought to be indispensable by the other minds of the times like Hamilton and Adams' Federalists, who held the notion that a government could not be entirely chosen and run by its people. They feared that a weak government without military, commercial monopolies and financial strength could not cope with internal and external threats.

Today's America may have flourished with the ability of commercial monopolies to exist, and on the strength of its powerful fiscal and military

institutions. But what makes it a truly great nation is the freedoms of its people which were only made possible through the powerful if idealistic American vision of one man: Thomas Jefferson.