

‘Any system tending under the guise of humanity and benevolence to establish an equality of duties between men, and to destroy those distinctions between men necessary in a well-ordered monarchy, would soon lead to disorder... The result would be the overthrow of civil society, the harmony of which is only maintained by that hierarchy of powers, authorities, pre-eminences and distinctions which keeps each man in his place and keeps all estates from confusion. This social order is not only essential to the practice of every sound government: it has its origin in divine law. The infinite and immutable wisdom in the plan of the universe established an unequal distribution of strength and character, necessarily resulting in inequality in the conditions of men within the civil order... These institutions were not formed by chance, and time cannot change them. To abolish them, the whole French constitution would have to be overturned.’

- From a letter sent to the King by the Paris Parlement (a body made up mostly by the local nobility) in 1776. The letter was in resistance to plan to replace forced labour with a tax to maintain the roads.