

# **An Litir Bheag**

**le Ruairidh MacIlleathain**

*An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 531 (which corresponds to Litir 835). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*The American Declaration of Independence was written in 1776. The prime author of the text was Thomas Jefferson.*

*The Americans were struggling against British tyranny. But that wasn't the official British opinion. Britain wrote an answer to the Americans. A pamphlet came out in London. Its title was 'The Rights of Great Britain Asserted against the Claims of America: Being an Answer to the Declaration of the General Congress'. There is well-written English in the pamphlet. The writer, who is not named, was very skilful.*

*Why am I telling you this? Well, I learned recently that it was a Gael who wrote the pamphlet! A man who was famous. I'll tell you who it was at the end of the Litir. It might surprise you.*

*In the pamphlet, the author says that every state in the world possesses a supreme authority. In the British Empire the power is 'where it is safest' vested in King, Commons and Lords in the*

Chaidh Agairt Neo-eisimeileachd nan Stàitean Aonaichte a sgrìobhadh ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad 's a sia (1776). B' e Tòmas Jefferson prìomh ùghdar an teacsa.

Bha na h-Ameireaganaich a' strì an aghaidh aintighearnas Bhreatainn. Ach cha b' e sin beachd oifigeil Bhreatainn. Sgrìobh Breatainn freagairt do na h-Ameireaganaich. Thàinig leabhran beag a-mach ann an Lunnainn. B' e an tiotal air 'The Rights of Great Britain Asserted against the Claims of America: Being an Answer to the Declaration of the General Congress'. Tha deagh Bheurla anns an leabhran. Bha an sgrìobhadair, nach eil ainmichte, gu math sgileil.

Carson a tha mi ag innse seo dhuibh? Uill, dh'ionnsaich mi o chionn ghoirid gur e Gàidheal a sgrìobh an leabhran! Fear a bha ainmeil. Innsidh mi dhuibh cò bha ann aig deireadh na Litreach. 'S dòcha gun cuir e iongnadh oirbh.

Anns an leabhran, tha an t-ùghdar ag ràdh gu bheil àrd-chumhachd anns a h-uile stàit san t-saoghal. Ann an Ìmpireachd Bhreatainn tha an cumhachd 'far as sàbhailte a b' urrainn a bhith' ann an Rìgh, Cumantan is Morairean anns an

*Legislature.*

*The Americans were against paying taxes if they weren't represented in the Legislature. Here [for you] is the argument that the British gave against that. The book says, 'scarce one in twenty five of the people in Great Britain is represented. Out of more than seven million people, less than three hundred thousand have a right to choose members of parliament.' It says – we don't have proper democracy. Why should you have such a thing?!*

*It also says – 'to this authority, the entire Empire must yield'. For me, as a democrat in the 21st century, it's a pity that a Gael was writing like that. But that's how it was.*

*And who wrote the pamphlet? Who but Seumas MacMhuirich of Badenoch (James MacPherson in English). He was controversial for publishing old Ossianic poems (if he can be believed). I'll have more on him next week.*

*Reachdadaireachd no Legislature.*

Bha na h-Ameireaganaich an aghaidh cìsean a phàigheadh mura robh iad air an riochdachadh anns an Reachdadaireachd. Seo agaibh an argamaid a thug na Breatannaich an aghaidh sin. Tha an leabhran ag ràdh, 'cha mhòr gu bheil aon duine ann an còig air fhichead ann am Breatainn air a riochdachadh. A-mach à còrr is seachd millean, tha còir aig nas lugha na trì cheud mìle na buill pàrlamaid a thaghadh.' Tha e ag ràdh – chan eil deamocrasaidh ceart againne. Carson a bu chòir a leithid a bhith agaibh fhèin?!

Tha e cuideachd ag ràdh – 'don ùghdarras seo, feumaidh an Ìmpireachd gu lèir a bhith a' gèilleadh'. Dhòmhsa, mar dheamocratach anns an aonamh linn air fhichead, tha e duilich gun robh Gàidheal a' sgrìobhadh mar sin. Ach sin mar a bha.

Agus cò e a sgrìobh an leabhran? Cò ach Seumas MacMhuirich à Bàideanach (James MacPherson ann am Beurla). Bha e connspaideach airson a bhith a' foillseachadh seann dàin Oisein (mas fhìor). Bidh tuilleadh agam airsan an-ath-sheachdain.