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United we stand, divided we fall. It's a phrase that's been said many times throughout our nation's history. The legendary Patrick Henry said it in the last speech he would ever give to the public, thundering the words so forcefully that at the end, he collapsed and had to be carried away. Abraham Lincoln famously alluded to it during his historic debates with Stephen Douglas, declaring, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." The words adorn both the flag of Missouri and state seal of Kentucky. And they could often be found on posters and flyers during World War II, urging Americans to tighten their belts, shore up their spirits, and fight for the future of the free world.

They are also words I think about every Fourth of July. Because history has proven, time and again, just how accurate they are.

But the first time the phrase appeared in America wasn't in a speech or on a flag. It was in a song.

The year was 1768. American colonists had just become subject to a new series of laws called the Townshend Acts. These were designed to force colonists to comply with British trade regulations and prove that Parliament had a right to tax the colonies without their consent. They may have even been meant to punish the people of New York for refusing to quarter British soldiers in their homes. In other words, these new laws were behind several of the grievances Thomas Jefferson would include in the Declaration of Independence.

As you can imagine, Americans didn't take these Acts lying down. In every colony, protests broke out. Ports refused to import British goods. And many leading citizens of the day wrote pamphlets, articles, and editorials on why all colonists should unite to oppose unjust laws.

One of those citizens was a man named John Dickinson. As one of the foremost legal minds of his day, he had already spilled gallons of ink on a series of essays against the Townshend Acts. But, that summer, he decided to write something that appealed to the heart more than the head. An ode to the *rightness* of fighting for liberty and freedom. He called it *The Liberty Song*. Here's how it went:¹

*Come, join in hand, brave Americans all
And rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty's call;
No tyrannous acts shall suppress your just claim,
Or stain with dishonor America's name.*

*Our worthy forefathers, let's give them a cheer,
To climates unknown did courageously steer;
Threw oceans to deserts for Freedom they came,
And dying, bequeathed us their freedom and fame.*

*The tree their own hands had to Liberty reared
They lived to behold growing strong and revered;
With transport they cried, "Now our wishes we gain,
For our children shall gather the fruits of our pain."*

*Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all,
By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall;
In so righteous a cause let us hope to succeed,
For heaven approves of each generous deed.*

*All ages shall speak with amaze and applause,
Of the courage we'll show in support of our Laws;
To die we can bear, but to serve we disdain.
For shame is to Freedom more dreadful than pain.*

*In Freedom we're born and in Freedom we'll live.
Our purses are ready. Steady, friends, steady.
Not as slaves, but as Freemen our money we'll give.*

Dickinson submitted the lyrics to two Pennsylvania newspapers. Both published the song in early July 1768. From there, the song "went viral" as we would say today. Within months, it had spread up and down the eastern seaboard, appearing in newspapers from Massachusetts to New York to Virginia. It became one of the first patriotic songs in American history.

These days, most Americans don't know about *The Liberty Song* anymore. I think that's a shame – because the words remind us that **by uniting we stand, by dividing we fall.**

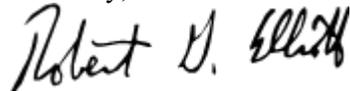
As you know, we all have different political opinions and beliefs. We all have different visions of what our country should be. But this is nothing new. When Dickinson wrote his song, America wrestled with the question of whether to fight British law. During the Revolution, America wrestled with the question of whether to declare independence. (Dickinson himself voted *not* to sign the Declaration...although he became one of the few Founding Fathers to actually fight in the Revolution, and he later helped write the U.S. Constitution.) During Lincoln's day, America wrestled with the question of slavery. In the 20th century, America wrestled with questions like isolationism or interventionism, segregation or integration.

Now, today, we have a hundred questions of our own. But *The Liberty Song* reminds me that, while we will always have differences of opinion, we are *all* Americans. We each do our best to continue rearing Liberty's tree, so that its shade covers all of us. We are all striving so that our children "gather the fruits of our pain." In other words, there will always be far more that unites us than divides us.

This Independence Day, we will sing the national anthem. We'll sing *America the Beautiful* and *My Country 'Tis of Thee*. But I also want to remember the words of *The Liberty Song*. I want to remember how far we've come as a nation. Most of all, I want to remember that by uniting we stand, by dividing we fall. And America will never fall.

On behalf of everyone at Wiley Bros, I wish you a safe and happy Independence Day!

Sincerely,



Robert G. Elliott, CFP
Vice President



Sarah L. Elliott, CFP

¹ "The Liberty Song," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Liberty_Song