

# No Taxation without Representation

After the French and Indian War, England was broke. They had spent a lot of money to protect the colonists in America. England thought that America should help to pay off the debt.

England decided to tax the colonists. They thought this would be the best way to get the money back. They started with the Sugar Act. This taxed molasses and other items like wine and cloth. Then, England passed the Stamp Act.

The Stamp Act made Americans very angry. It required that any printed material be taxed. A stamp would be put on the paper saying the tax had been paid. The tax would affect almost all Americans. It also affected powerful people like printers and lawyers.

The phrase "no taxation without representation" became very popular. The idea was simple. American colonists did not have representatives in Parliament. There was no one who could stand up for the colonists' ideas. This was not fair. If England wanted to tax the colonists, the colonists should be able to state their opinion in Parliament.

This is also an issue in the United States today. People who live in Washington, D.C. do not have representatives in Congress. These people still have to pay taxes. This is the same idea that the colonists were fighting against.

The Stamp Act Congress met in 1765. People from seven colonies came. They wanted to protest the Stamp Act. "No taxation without representation" was their argument. The people wanted the colonists to have the same rights as the people in Britain. They sent letters to the king telling him this. They did not want to be taxed without being able to state their ideas in Parliament.

The Stamp Act was repealed in 1765. The larger issue was still there. Did England have the right to tax the colonies without representation? Parliament passed another act to answer this question. It said Parliament could make any laws for the colonists. The colonists did not agree. They continued to fight back. Soon, these two countries would fight a war to find out the answer.

1. Why did England start taxing the colonists?
2. How did Americans react to the Stamp Act?
3. Do you think it was fair for England to tax the colonists? Why or why not?

## New Taxes - Sugar and Stamp Act

<sup>1</sup> The French and Indian War had ended in 1763. England had spent a lot of money on the war. They had fought the war to protect the American colonists. England decided that the colonists should help pay the debts.

<sup>2</sup> The Sugar Act was passed on April 5, 1764. England told the colonists it was a way to help control trade. The Sugar Act taxed things like cloth and certain wines. It also put a three pence tax on molasses. This was about three cents. The act said rum and French wine could not be imported to the colonies.

<sup>3</sup> The British Navy began to sail along the coast. They wanted to catch smugglers. British officers could take goods from the smugglers without going to court. The smuggler was then tried in a British court. A British court only had a judge. It did not have a jury. The judge also received money if the smuggler was found guilty. The colonists did not think this was fair. This meant the judge would vote people guilty in order to get more money.

<sup>4</sup> Colonists complained about this tax, but they went along with it. It wasn't until the Stamp Act that the colonists began to fight back. The Stamp Act was passed in March 1765. It was the first time England taxed the colonists to raise money. The Sugar Act also raised money, but that's not what the colonists were told. The Stamp Act taxed newspapers, pamphlets, and almost all printed material. The papers would have to have a government stamp on them. This would show that the tax had been paid.

<sup>5</sup> This tax touched almost all Americans. It affected powerful people in the colonies like printers and lawyers. People reacted strongly. In October 1765, a Stamp Act Congress was held. People from nine colonies came. They discussed ways to protest the new tax. They wrote letters to the king and Parliament. The letters said that the colonies could not be taxed. The colonies did not have anyone to represent their ideas in Parliament. This argument became known as "no taxation without representation."

<sup>6</sup> Merchants also organized a boycott. A boycott is when people refuse to buy certain things. The merchants boycotted things made by the British. They would not buy them. This was hard for people who sold British goods. They weren't making any money.

<sup>7</sup> Colonists formed large groups or mobs. These groups would go to homes. In the homes were people who sold the stamp that was to be put on the printed material. The groups would threaten the stamp seller and his family. They would chase the seller from his house and steal what he owned. The mobs would destroy the house.

<sup>8</sup> Soon, most people who were supposed to sell the stamps had run away. They were afraid that they would be killed. British merchants were also unhappy. The boycott was ruining their businesses. They weren't making any money. Parliament decided the Stamp Act wasn't a good idea. They repealed it in March 1766.

- 1. Why were British courts unfair to people accused of smuggling?**
- 2. What kind of materials did the Stamp Act tax?**

### 3. What is a boycott?

## The Stamp Act

<sup>1</sup> How would you feel if you walked into your classroom one morning and your teacher told you that you had to pay a nickel for each piece of paper you used for your work and another nickel for each page you read in your textbooks that day? That is probably a little like what the American colonists felt when they got word from England that they were going to have to pay a Stamp Tax. King George III was not happy with the independent spirit being born in the new world. These people in the colonies needed to be held accountable for the support that England was giving them, even though the great majority of English leaders had never set foot on this soil, nor did they have any desire to. England had spent a lot of money protecting itself and its colonies against France and other continental armies. Its treasury was low. What better way to control the colonies and fill its coffers than to tax the very people who had left England to escape unfair treatment by the king.

<sup>2</sup> There had been a Glorious Revolution in England that took much of the power away from the king and placed it in the hands of Parliament. Parliament became the head of the English government. King George had some say in who the government officials would be, so he made sure that he appointed men who would be loyal to him. One of these men was Charles Townshend. He wanted to please the king, so he presented taxes to Parliament which would be harsh to the colonists but would bring much needed revenue to the king's treasury.

<sup>3</sup> One of the taxes which Townshend proposed was to be called the Stamp Tax. This tax would require the colonists to pay a tax for every piece of printed paper the colonists used. This included newspapers, playing cards, pamphlets, legal documents, and advertisements. Parliament passed this tax in 1765, and the colonists were livid. They believed that the Magna Carta had given them rights against such unfair taxes, even if they were thousands of miles away from the mother country. They were so angry, in fact, that many of the agents sent by the king to collect these taxes were covered in sticky tar and then rolled in feathers. This was a humiliating act to these representatives of the king, but it sent a message back to England that the colonists were not going to sit by and accept the king's decisions. The Stamp Tax lasted about one year before it was repealed.

- 1. What were some of the things colonists did to protest the stamp act?**
- 2. How did the King know that colonists were not going to do whatever he asked?**

# The Townshend Acts (HI)

<sup>1</sup> Charles Townshend was an English government official. He liked to party and have a good time. He liked to party so much that many Englishmen called him "Champagne Charlie" behind his back. In order for Townshend to be included in the social life of the British upper class, he made himself a favorite of King George III. The best way to make yourself the favorite of a king is to support ideas that the king likes. Charles Townshend was able to accomplish this by proposing taxes to Parliament that would keep the colonists in the new world connected to the mother country, keep the poor citizens of England poor, and fill the treasury that the English government had allowed to get frighteningly low. King George was the only person made happy by these actions.

<sup>2</sup> In 1765, Townshend proposed a tax on every piece of printed paper the colonists had. This tax was levied to require the purchase of a stamp for each newspaper page, playing card, pamphlet, or advertisement the colonists used. The colonists called it a Stamp Act. They rebelled against it and treated the tax collectors in a most humiliating manner. This Stamp Act was repealed one year later.

<sup>3</sup> Townshend proposed a tax on cider in England. The cider in England was an alcoholic drink which could be afforded by rich and poor alike. The English people protested against this tax, and it was soon forgotten.

<sup>4</sup> Townshend was not a man to give up easily. His next idea was to tax the people in the colonies for all the lead, glass, paper, paint, and tea that they had to import from England. Not only did they have to pay for these goods and the cost to ship them to the new world, but now they also had to pay an extra tax to the king. The colonists decided to try a new way of protesting this tax. This time they decided to boycott each of these products. By agreeing not to purchase any of these items, the colonists sent a very strong message to the king that they did not like the tax. It made a statement to the king, but not quite the way you might imagine. The British merchants who made their livings selling goods to the colonists started losing money. They felt the pinch much more strongly than the government. In the end, it was the British merchants who demanded and won the repeal of this particular tax.

<sup>5</sup> King George III did not like to be defeated. He was not a particularly smart fellow. As a matter of fact, he hadn't even begun to learn to read until he was ten years of age. A good king needs to have a well-rounded knowledge of people and cultures. King George lacked both. All he wanted was to be obeyed. Charles Townshend helped to convince him that they could not give up the idea of taxing the colonies altogether. His alternative plan was to keep the tax which had been levied on tea. It was a small tax, but it would remind the colonies that King George was still in charge. In 1770, all but the tax on tea was repealed.

## 1. Describe Charles Townshend.

2. **How did Townshend make the king like him?**
3. **Do you think King George was a good king? Why or why not?**

## The Intolerable Acts

<sup>1</sup> After the American colonists dumped 342 crates of tea into Boston Harbor in 1773, King George and Parliament both agreed that the colonists must be punished for their mischief. In 1774, Parliament created five laws they called the Coercive Acts. The colonists called them the Intolerable Acts because they felt that they were too cruel to be accepted.

<sup>2</sup> Act I-The Boston Port Act: Until the East India Tea Company was paid in full for the crates of tea they had lost during the Boston Tea Party, the port of Boston was to be closed to all sea traffic. This caused a great hardship to the colonists who made their living fishing the Atlantic waters and trading with foreign countries and other colonies.

<sup>3</sup> Act II-Massachusetts Government Act: In 1691, the colony of Massachusetts wrote a charter giving the colony the right to make its own laws and govern itself. They took great pride in their ability to function without the help of England. The Massachusetts Government Act took the right of self-government away from them.

<sup>4</sup> Act III-Administration of Justice Act: This act allowed any British official accused of a crime in the colonies to be sent back to England for trial instead of having to face a hostile jury in America.

<sup>5</sup> Act IV-The Quartering Act: The Parliament had already made it mandatory for colonists to house British soldiers in their homes back in 1765. This new act allowed the governor of Massachusetts to take control of any tavern or unoccupied building in the colony for the purpose of quartering British troops.

<sup>6</sup> Act V-The Quebec Act: This act actually had nothing to do with the citizens of Boston or Massachusetts. Parliament merely used the opportunity to increase the boundaries of the Canadian province of Quebec which they also claimed.

<sup>7</sup> In 1772, Samuel Adams had asked the people of Boston to set up a committee to "state the rights of the colonists." The idea caught on in other colonies, and by 1774 all but one of the colonies, Pennsylvania, had formed a group called the Committees of Correspondence. These committees wrote to each other keeping each of the colonies informed of any political activities going on in their area that might affect the other colonies. When the British closed the port of Boston, they thought that it would cause the rebellious colonists to bend to their rules. The closing of the port would deny the people of Boston the goods that they had grown to depend on from trade. The closing would keep many of the colonists from earning a living by fishing or ship building. The Committees of Correspondence saw the effect that this act might have on

Boston and, in turn, the other colonies, so they collected goods and money which they sent to the people of Boston. They supported the colonists in their refusal to pay the British for the destroyed tea. The colonies were beginning to work together.

- 1. Why did King George want to punish the colonists?**
- 2. There were five laws that England passed which the colonists felt were intolerable. Describe each of them.**

## The Colonists Protest

<sup>1</sup> The colonists were angry over the new taxes. They formed groups of people to protest the new taxes. There were two groups. The men called themselves the Sons of Liberty. Women were called the Daughters of Liberty.

<sup>2</sup> The Sons of Liberty in Boston were very active. They were very angry over the Stamp Act. The Sons of Liberty visited many of the people who were supposed to sell the stamps. They said that they would burn their houses down if they sold the stamps.

<sup>3</sup> There were many famous men who were members of this group. Paul Revere, Samuel Adams, John Adams, John Hancock, Patrick Henry, and many others were members of the Sons of Liberty.

<sup>4</sup> The Sons of Liberty also did fake hangings. They would make straw figures. The figures looked like British officials. They would pretend to hang the figures. This showed what would happen if the British officials tried to collect the taxes.

<sup>5</sup> Other groups did what the group in Boston did. In New Jersey, a mob attacked the governor's house. He was not home at the time. The mob went into the home and threatened his wife. She refused to leave and saved their home.

<sup>6</sup> The Sons of Liberty used other ways to protest the new taxes. They would visit merchants. They would tell them they should not sell British goods. The Sons of Liberty would also threaten people. They would tell people not to buy British goods.

<sup>7</sup> The Sons of Liberty were part of the Boston Tea Party. They dressed up as Native Americans. They went to the Boston harbor. The colonists dumped a load of tea into the water. Many colonists were happy with this. Others were very upset.

<sup>8</sup> The Daughters of Liberty were not as violent. They would parade around towns. They also organized a boycott of British cloth. They didn't want any women in the colonies to buy it. The Daughters of Liberty wanted women to raise their own sheep. Then they could make their own cloth. No one would need to buy cloth from Britain.

<sup>9</sup> The boycott of British cloth worked because of these women. Women would work from sunup to sundown to make cloth. It was needed to take the place of the cloth that was not bought from Britain. They also worked hard to think of new drinks so colonists did not have to buy tea.

<sup>10</sup> The women helped poor colonists. Women would meet together in groups. They would spin material made from wool. The women would give it to poor families. The poor families did not have sheep. They could not make their own cloth.

<sup>11</sup> The Sons and Daughters of Liberty were very important. They helped colonists boycott British goods. The men were more violent than the women. What they did would help push England and the colonists to war.

- 1. What two groups did colonists form to protest taxes?**
- 2. Why did some colonist groups do “fake hangings?”**
- 3. What did the Daughters of Liberty do to protest English taxes?**