

BEGINNINGS OF CONFLICT (1763-1766)

The French and Indian War had been a learning experience for colonists who fought in the war. The British had looked down on them; Wolfe called them "contemptible cowardly dogs." The colonials did not care much for the redcoats either: they considered them too immoral and led by brutal officers.

In 1763 colonists heard the joyous news: "France ousted from North America." The natives would no longer be stirred up by the French, more settlers would come, and the frontier could move beyond the mountains. The 200 blockhouses, built at mountain passes to stop Indian attacks, could now be torn down.

Then, just as the war was winding down, Pontiac, an Ottawa chief, stirred up tribes north of the Ohio River. He planned to destroy every British post west of the mountains. Many smaller forts were seized by the Indians, but Detroit and Fort Pitt held. These defeats hurt Pontiac's plans, but even worse for him was France's defeat in the war.

To satisfy English fur merchants and reduce the chance of another Indian uprising, the PROCLAMATION OF 1763 was passed by Parliament. No one could settle beyond the crest of the Appalachian Mountains. To enforce the law, 6,000 British troops were sent to North America. Frontiersmen were upset by the Proclamation Line, but most colonists did not care.

The years of war had been costly to England. Despite heavy taxes, the national debt stood at £129.5 million in 1764, far too high to suit Parliament. They chose George Grenville to solve the problem. Grenville was the right man for the job. Tight-fisted and hard-headed, he intended to raise money not only in England, but in the colonies as well. It was his financial policy, not the Proclamation Line, that aroused their fury.

England had always claimed the right to control its colonists. The king's Board of Trade never wanted them to compete against British industries. From the beginning, the British believed colonies existed for the good of the mother country, to supply it with raw materials and buy its products. The NAVIGATION ACTS (passed from 1650-1767) were part of that policy. The acts limited what could be shipped and who could ship it. To enforce these acts, the "writ of assistance" was created in 1696. It allowed customs collectors to search anywhere for smuggled goods. The Navigation Acts were seldom enforced, however, and were ignored by colonists.

Now England needed to raise more tax money, and it seemed to Grenville that since Americans had gained the most from victory over France, they should be willing to pay some of the cost. The SUGAR ACT (1764) reduced the tax on sugar from the old six pence to three pence per gallon, but this time, Grenville intended to see that the law was enforced. Customs



Rioters protesting the Stamp Act and other taxes hung tax collectors in effigy.

laws were tightened; anyone accused of smuggling was presumed guilty and had to prove his innocence in Admiralty court, not before a jury.

The CURRENCY ACT (1765) said colonies could not issue paper money. This hurt colonies short on currency and seemed to colonists to be an attempt to ruin their economies. Merchants in Boston and New York protested by refusing to buy some British products.

The QUARTERING ACT (1765) required colonies to supply housing and supplies for British troops. That same year, the STAMP ACT was passed. It required people to purchase a revenue stamp for every newspaper, legal document, insurance policy, deck of cards, and die. Americans argued Parliament had no right to levy a direct tax on Americans who were not represented in Parliament. Others said it hurt the already weak economy.

Two colonists were especially important in protesting the new policies. James Otis was a brilliant, hot-headed Boston lawyer who saw the threat of using the writs of assistance as a weapon by royal officials to harass colonists. He charged it violated the sacred principle that "a man's home is his castle." In Virginia, Patrick Henry blasted the British policy of taxation without representation (taxing people not represented in Parliament) and advised George III to remember what had happened to Julius Caesar and Charles I. In Parliament, Colonel Issac Barré, an admirer of Americans, called them "Sons of Liberty."

Sons of Liberty organizations developed in northern cities during the summer of 1765. Their purposes were to force stamp agents to resign and "persuade" merchants to cancel orders for British goods. Their riots and looting of homes of royal officials caused all stamp agents to resign before the Stamp Act ever went into effect.

The STAMP ACT CONGRESS met in New York in June 1765 and was attended by delegates from nine colonies. After expressing their loyalty to the king, they denied that his government had the right to tax without consent of the governed; only colonial legislatures could tax Americans, they said. More important than resolutions were agreements by merchants not to purchase English goods until the Stamp Act was repealed.

In Parliament William Pitt spoke up for the Americans and called for the repeal of the Stamp Act. Spokesmen from the colonies were allowed to speak on the floor of the House of Commons. Benjamin Franklin spoke for Pennsylvania and told the members how expensive the war had been for his colony and how the Stamp Act would ruin the colonial economy. Repeal of the bill was supported by King George III as well, and it passed. The same day, however, Parliament passed the DECLARATORY ACT, claiming they had every right to pass any kind of law they chose to regulate the colonies.

Americans cheered repeal of the Stamp Act and totally ignored the Declaratory Act. In New York, statues were erected honoring Pitt and the king. The crisis seemed to have passed; in fact, it was only beginning.

Activity

Make a list of Americans who were going to be hurt by British policies from 1763 to 1765. Were people more interested in their billfolds or their rights?

Name _____ Date _____

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why were frontiersmen more upset by the Proclamation Line than settlers along the coast were?

2. What is a boycott? Why is it effective?

3. Some people had suggested that the colonists be given a few seats in Parliament (perhaps as many as 20 or 30). Was that what they were wanting when they protested the Stamp Act?

Name _____ Date _____

CHALLENGES

1. At what points on the frontier did Pontiac fail to achieve his goals?

2. Why did Parliament create the Proclamation Line?

3. Where did Grenville intend to raise the money England needed?

4. What had the Navigation Acts been created to do?

5. What was a writ of assistance? Can you think of a modern document that resembles a writ of assistance?

6. Where was a person accused of smuggling sugar to be tried?

7. What did merchants do to protest the Currency Act?

8. Why did Americans say Parliament could not require them to pay the Stamp tax?

9. Who were two of the most outspoken critics of the Stamp Act?

10. What did the Declaratory Act say?

