

Well after the session had begun, Pitt—in spite of the intense pain he was suffering and determined to voice his opinion in the growing crisis over America—hobbled into Parliament. He was recognized immediately by the Speaker. He spoke so softly at first that it was difficult to hear him, but he gathered energy as he went along, and soon his voice could be heard in every part of the Commons. He stunned the members by announcing that taxes could be legally imposed only on those whom the imposers represented: "It is my opinion that this kingdom has no right to lay a tax upon the colonies. . . . They are the subjects of this kingdom, equally entitled with yourselves to all the natural rights of mankind and the peculiar privileges of Englishmen." Eloquently, vehemently, he had placed before the Commons the Americans' appeal for no taxation without representation.

Fired by enthusiasm, he continued:

*William Pitt*

"Equally bound by its laws, and equally participating of the constitution of this free country, the Americans are the sons, not the bastards of England. Taxation is no part of the governing or legislative power. The taxes are a voluntary gift and grant of the Commons alone. . . .

When in this House we give and grant, we give and grant what is our own. But in an American tax . . . we give and grant to Your Majesty the property of Your Majesty's commons of America. It is an absurdity in terms. . . .

The Commons of America, [have the] constitutional right of giving and granting their own money. . . . [But we cannot take] their money out of their pockets without their consent.<sup>4</sup>

An incensed George Grenville, now out of office, retorted:

*George Grenville*

I cannot understand the difference between external and internal taxes. They are the same in effect, and differ only in name. That this kingdom has the sovereign, the supreme legislative power over America is granted. It cannot be denied; and taxation is part of that sovereign power. It is one branch of legislation. . . .

Protection and obedience are reciprocal. Great Britain protects America; America is bound to yield obedience. If not, tell me when the Americans were emancipated?<sup>5</sup>

Pitt shot back: "The gentleman asks, when were the colonies emancipated? But I desire to know, when were they made slaves?"

"I rejoice that America has resisted," he continued in one of his most splendid defenses of American liberty. "Three millions of people, so dead to all feelings of liberty as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest."<sup>6</sup>

At this point, an incensed member of the Commons jumped up and declared that the Great Commoner ought to be sent to the Tower to be hanged. He was betraying England. He was sacrificing the rights of the mother country "to the pitiful ambition of obtaining an huzza [a cheer] from American rioters." By approving rioting and rebellion in America, the member continued, Pitt had encouraged the colonists in their unruly ways and made more difficult the task of those who upheld the rights of Great Britain over the colonies.

Many in the Commons "immediately joined in the idea and gave such shouts of applause as I never heard," one member reported.<sup>7</sup>

Pitt, startled by the response, attempted to explain: "I am no courtier of America. I stand up for this kingdom. . . . Parliament has a right to . . . restrain America." But they must rule so as "not to contradict the fundamental principles that are common to both."

Then, replying to Grenville, he continued: "If the gentleman does not understand the difference between external and internal taxes, I cannot help it; but there is a plain distinction between taxes levied for the purposes of raising a revenue, and duties imposed for the regulation of trade."

An impassioned Pitt concluded: "The Americans have not acted in all things with prudence and temper; they have been wronged; they have been driven to madness by injustice. Will you punish them for the madness you