

Module 2: The Constitution

Topic 2 Content: Colonial Tensions With England

Introduction



Demi Tracy: Welcome to WUSG News. I'm Demi Tracy, here with Glover Mint, who will be examining the growing tensions between colonial America and England leading up to the American Revolution. Glover, what initiated the conflict with England?

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Sugar Act



Sugar Act

- Great Britain saw the colonies as a way to gain revenue to pay massive debts.
- The Sugar Act was the first of a series of taxes imposed on the colonies in 1764.
- There were taxes on coffee, wines, fabric, tropical foods, lumber, and iron.
- These new taxes hurt the economies of New England and the Middle colonies.



Glover Mint: Well, Demi, one could argue that the conflict stemmed from a lack of government representation, as well as economic oppression. Great Britain had incurred massive debts as a result of the French and Indian War. The British government looked to the colonies to gain revenue and eliminate its debt: beginning with the Sugar Act in 1764, Parliament imposed a series of taxes on the colonies. These taxes caused economic hardship in the colonies, as colonists struggled to pay taxes not only on sugar, but also coffee, specified wines, fabric, and tropical foods. Parliament also increased regulations on the lumber and iron industries. These new taxes were especially detrimental to the New England and Middle colonies, as their economies were based on trade and shipbuilding.

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Stamp Act



Stamp Act

- Parliament passed the Stamp Act in March 1765.
- It imposed a tax on all paper goods in the colonies.
- In October 1765, representatives from nine colonies were sent to the Stamp Act Congress in New York.
- A petition was sent to King George III, which reaffirmed loyalty, but also expressed strong objection to taxation without representation in Parliament.



Glover Mint: Parliament passed the Stamp Act in March 1765. The Stamp Act imposed a tax on all paper goods in the colonies. Everything from playing cards and government documents to newspapers and printed sermons was required to bear a government tax stamp. American newspapers used their public platforms to denounce the Stamp Act. They viewed it as an assault on journalism, which is illustrated in this political cartoon.

In October 1765, representatives from nine of the colonies were sent to the Stamp Act Congress in New York. The delegates discussed the appropriate action to take in response to the Stamp Act. The representatives decided to send a petition to King George III, as it was their right as citizens of England to petition the government. In the petition, they reaffirmed their loyalty to the monarch, but also expressed their strong objection to taxation without representation in Parliament.

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Boston Massacre



Boston Massacre

- On March 5, 1770, an angry mob in Boston surrounded a British soldier.
- The soldier was harassed and threatened by words and thrown objects.
- He was joined by other soldiers.
- They fired into the crowd, killing five colonists.



Glover Mint: The colonists began protesting what they viewed as unfair treatment by the crown. Anger toward England grew, sometimes resulting in violence. On March 5, 1770, an angry mob in Boston surrounded a British soldier. The soldier was harassed and threatened by words and thrown objects. He was eventually joined by eight additional British soldiers who were also threatened and harassed. The situation escalated to the point where the soldiers fired into the crowd, without orders, killing five of the colonists. American patriots utilized the incident to gain support for independence. Paul Revere produced this engraving for propaganda, depicting British troops firing at peaceful citizens under an officer's orders.

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Boston Tea Party



Boston Tea Party

- In 1773, a group of colonists dressed as Native Americans boarded three British ships that were carrying tea to be sold in the colonies.
- All of the tea was dumped into the Boston Harbor as a form of protest against the Tea Act.
- This event resulted in punitive measures from Parliament.



Glover Mint: Intense taxation continued along with protests from the colonists. In 1773, a group of colonists dressed as Native Americans boarded three British ships that were carrying tea to be sold in the colonies. All of the tea was dumped into the Boston Harbor as a form of protest against the Tea Act. This event became known as the Boston Tea Party and resulted in punitive measures from Parliament.

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Intolerable Acts

Intolerable Acts

- Parliament responded with a series of laws that restricted freedom and self-government in Massachusetts.
- The Boston Harbor was closed.
- The elected council was dissolved and replaced with royal appointees.
- Colonists were forced to house British soldiers.
- Colonists believed they should only be taxed by their own legislative bodies in the colonies, since they had no representation in Parliament.



Glover Mint: Parliament responded to the Boston Tea Party with the Intolerable Acts, which were a series of laws that restricted freedom and self-government in Massachusetts. Parliament closed the Boston Harbor, delivering a devastating blow to the colonial economy by limiting trade. They dissolved Massachusetts' elected council of representatives and replaced its members with royal appointees. In an effort to establish more control over the actions and protests of the colonists, Parliament required colonists to house British soldiers.

The taxation of the colonists was particularly resented, since they had no representation in Parliament. They believed that only their own colonial legislative bodies should have the right to tax them. The rising tensions between the American colonies and Great Britain would lead to the start of the Revolutionary War and America's independence from the British.

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Ending of Episode



Demi Tracy: Thank you Glover, for that brief but informative overview of the tension between the American colonies and England. It seems like the grievances that the colonists had with English rule directly influenced the new American government that was developing. Thank you for joining us. See you next time!