Causes of the American Revolution Primary Source Packet 1

Document 1

The Proclamation of 1763

Author: King George III
Date: 1763

Annotation:

In 1773, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) published a brief history of the British government's actions during the preceding decade. Its title: Rules by Which a Great Empire May be Reduced to a Small One. Beginning in 1763, successive British ministries made a series of political missteps that gradually stirred the colonists to assert American liberties against British oppression.

Before 1763, the colonists largely accepted Parliament's right to take actions on their behalf--and even the primacy of England's economic interests over their own. Prior to the Seven Years' War, however, almost all parliamentary actions had been designed to regulate trade, and while the colonies sometimes regarded these acts as unfair or inexpedient, they did not regard them as especially oppressive or burdensome.

After 1763, however, Parliament's actions appeared to clash with the colonists' interests. At the end of the Seven Years' War, France surrendered Canada and much of the Ohio and Mississippi valley--two-thirds of eastern North America--to British rule. Many colonists regarded these new lands as a godsend. But the Proclamation of 1763 reserved lands west of the Appalachian mountains for Indians and forbade white settlement there.

Equally disturbing, new British politics restricted Indian trade to traders licensed by the British government. For the first time, power over westward expansion was placed in the hands of British officials, outside the colonists' control. By preventing the colonial population from moving inland, the British ministry hoped to avoid costly Indian wars, protect the western fur trade, and keep western land speculation under the control of the crown. To enforce the proclamation, the British cabinet decided to station up to 10,000 troops along the frontier, at a cost of 250,000 pounds sterling annually. The colonists, who wanted to expand westward without the interference of British troops, deeply resented the proclamation. They feared that if they were walled in along the eastern coast, the results would be overpopulation, the growth of crowded cities, and social stratification along rigid class lines.

Document:

WHEREAS WE have taken into Our Royal Consideration the extensive and valuable Acquisitions in America, secured to Our Crown by the late Definitive Treaty of Peace, concluded at Paris...and being desirous that all Our loving Subjects...may avail themselves with all convenient Speed, of the great Benefits and Advantages which
must accrue therefrom to their Commerce, Manufactures, and Navigation, We have thought fit...to issue this Our Royal Proclamation....

And whereas it is just and reasonable and essential to Our Interest and the Security of Our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under Our Protection should not be molested or disturbed...no Governor...in any of Our other Colonies or Plantations in America, do presume for the present...to grant Warrants of Survey, or pass Patents for any Lands beyond the Heads or Sources of any of the Rivers which fall into the Atlantic Ocean....

And whereas great Frauds and abuses have been committed in the purchasing Lands of the Indians, to the great Prejudice of Our Interests, and to the great Dissatisfaction of the said Indians; in order to prevent such Irregularities for the future, and to the End that the Indians may be convinced of Our Justice and determined Resolution to remove all reasonable cause of Discontent, We do...enjoy and require that no private Person do presume to make any Purchase from the said Indians of any Lands reserved to the said Indians....

**Document 2**

**The Stamp Act Crisis**

Author: Archibald Hinschelwood  
Date:1765

**Annotation:**

Eleven years before the Declaration of Independence, a crisis took place that defined the issue that would help provoke the American Revolution: taxation without representation.

In order to raise new revenue, Parliament in 1764 passed the Sugar Act, which imposed new charges on foreign wines, coffee, textiles, and indigo imported into the colonies and enlarged the customs service, requiring shippers to fill out documents detailing each ship's cargo and destination. The British navy was ordered to patrol the American coast to search for smugglers, who, if caught, were to be tried in a special court without a jury. That same year, the Currency Act banned the colonists from issuing paper money. Since the colonies had trouble getting gold or silver coins, the prohibition on paper money forced many colonists to resort to barter.

Also in 1764, the British ministry announced plans to institute a stamp tax, to go into effect on November 1, 1765, to make the colonists pay part of the cost of stationing British troops in America. This act required the colonists to pay a tax, represented by a stamp, on newspapers, playing cards, diplomas, and legal documents. Violations of the Stamp Act would be tried in Vice-Admiralty Courts, which had traditionally been used only in cases involving maritime law. Thus, the Stamp Act also appeared to threaten the right to trial by jury.
Reactions to the Stamp Act included riots and boycotts of British goods. Crowds calling themselves Sons of Liberty prevented stamped papers from being unloaded from British ships. Daughters of Liberty, organizations formed by colonial women, promoted the manufacture of homespun cloth, as a substitute for imported British cloth, and circulated protest petitions.

In October 1765, delegates from nine colonies met in New York City and prepared a statement protesting the Stamp Act. The Stamp Act Congress, which was the first united action by the colonies against unpopular British policies, acknowledged that Parliament had a right to regulate colonial trade. It denied, however, that Parliament had the power to tax the colonies, since the colonies were unrepresented in Parliament. The power of taxation resided only with the colonists themselves and their representatives.

Under pressure from London merchants, Parliament abolished the Stamp Act in 1766. But at the same time it passed the Declaratory Act, which stated that the King and Parliament had full legislative authority over the colonies in all matters.

In December 1765, John Adams (1735-1826), who would later become the second president of the United States, wrote that this had "been the most remarkable year of my life." The Stamp Act, "that enormous engine...for battering down all the rights and liberties of America," had raised a spirit of resistance throughout mainland British North America. "In every colony, from Georgia to New Hampshire inclusively," he observed, "the stamp distributors and inspectors have been compelled by the unconquerable rage of the people to renounce their offices. Such and so universal has been the resentment of the people, that every man who has dared to speak in the favor of the stamps, or to soften the detestation in which they are held, how great soever his abilities and virtues had been esteemed before, whatever his fortune, connections, and influence had been, has been seen to sink into universal contempt and ignominy."

Adams was particularly struck by the political consequences of the Stamp Act. "The people, even to the lowest ranks, have become more attentive to their liberties, more inquisitive about them, and more determined to defend them, than they were ever before known.... Our presses have groaned, our pulpits have thundered, our legislatures have resolved; our towns have voted; the crown officers have everywhere trembled, and all their little tools and creatures been afraid to speak and ashamed to be seen...."

The following document offers a first-person account of the escalating conflict over the Stamp Act from a pro-British perspective.

**Document:**

I had the pleasure to receive your letter...and am greatly obliged to you for your kind remembrance of me, and the pains you have taken to get me appointed for the disposal of the stamps in this province [Nova Scotia]....

There is a violent spirit of opposition raised on the continent against the execution of the Stamp Act, the mob in Boston have carried it very high against the Secre[tar]y [Andrew Oliver]...for his acceptance of an office in consequence of that Act. They
have even proceeded to sow violence, and burnt him in effigy. They threaten to pull down & burn the stamp office row building; and that they will hold every man as infamous that shall presume to carry the Stamp Act into execution, so it is thought Mr. Oliver will resign.

I don't find any such turbulent spirit to prevail among us, if it should, the means are in our Hands to prevent any tumults or Insults; what the consequences may be in the colonies who have no military force to keep the rabble in order, I cannot pretend.

Source: Gilder Lehrman Institute

**Document 3**

**Resolutions on the Stamp Act**

*Digital History ID 4117*

**Date:** 1765

**Annotation:** Resolutions on the Stamp Act, Massachusetts Assembly

**Document:** WHEREAS the just rights of his majesty's subjects of this province, derived to them from the British constitution as well as the royal charter, have been lately drawn into question: In order to ascertain the same, this house do unanimously come into the following resolves.

I. Resolved, --That there are certain essential rights of the British constitution of government, which are founded in the law of God and nature, and are the common rights of mankind;—therefore,

II. Resolved, --That the inhabitants of this province are unalienable entitled to those essential rights in common with all men: and that no law of society can, consistent with the law of God and nature, divest them of those rights.

III. Resolved, --That no man can justly take the property of another without his consent; and that upon this original principle the right of representation in the same body, which exercises the power of making laws for levying taxes, which is one of the main pillars of the British constitution, is evidently founded.

IV. Resolved, --That this inherent right, together with all other essential rights, liberties, privileges, and immunities of the people of Great Britain, have been fully confirmed to them by Magna Charta, and by former and later acts of parliament.

V. Resolved, --That his majesty's subjects in America are, in reason and common sense, entitled to the same extent of liberty with his majesty's subjects in Britain.

VI. Resolved, --That by the declaration of the royal charter of this province, the inhabitants are entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of free and natural subjects of Great Britain, to all intents, purposes, and constructions whatever.
VII. Resolved, --That the inhabitants of this province appear to be entitled to all the rights aforementioned, by an act of parliament, 13th of Gee. II.

VIII. Resolved, --That those rights do belong to the inhabitants of this province, upon principles of common justice; their ancestors having settled this country at their sole expense, and their posterity having approved themselves most loyal and faithful subjects of Great Britain.

IX. Resolved, --That every individual in the colonies is as advantageous to Great Britain, as if he were in Great Britain, and held to pay his full proportion of taxes there; and as the inhabitants of this province pay their full proportion of taxes for the support of his majesty's government here, it is unreasonable for them to be called upon to pay any part of the charges of the government there.

X. Resolved, --That the inhabitants of this province are not, and never have been, represented in the parliament of Great Britain; and that such a representation there as the subjects in Britain do actually and rightfully enjoy, is impracticable for the subjects in America; —and further, that in the opinion of this house, the several subordinate powers of legislation in America were constituted upon the apprehensions of this impracticability.

XI. Resolved, --That the only method whereby the constitutional rights of the subjects of this province can be secure, consistent with a subordination to the supreme power of Great Britain, is by the continued exercise of such powers of government as are granted in the royal charter, and firm adherence to the privileges of the same.

XII. Resolved, as a just conclusion from some of the foregoing resolves, That all acts made by any power whatever other than the general assembly of this province, imposing taxes on the inhabitants, are infringements of our inherent and unalienable rights, as men and British subjects, and render void the most valuable declarations of our charter.

XIII. Resolved, --That the extension of the powers of the court of admiralty within this province, is a most violent infraction of the right of trials by juries—a right which this house, upon the principles of their British ancestors, hold most dear and sacred; it being the only security of the lives, liberties, and properties of his majesty's subjects here.

XIV. Resolved,--That this house owe the strictest allegiance to his most sacred majesty king George the third; that they have the greatest veneration for the parliament; and that they will, after the example of all their predecessors, from the settlement of this country, exert themselves to their utmost in supporting his majesty's authority in the province, in promoting the true happiness of his subjects, and in enlarging the extent of his dominion.

Ordered, --That all the foregoing resolves be kept in the records of this house, that a just sense of liberty, and the firm sentiments of loyalty, may be transmitted to posterity.
Annotation:

His is one of the most remarkable success stories in American history. The eighteenth child of a Boston candlemaker and soapmaker, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) was apprenticed to his brother, a printer, but ran away. As a publisher in Philadelphia, he was so successful that he was able to retire at the age of 42 and devote the rest of his life to science and politics.

While serving in England as a representative of the colonies of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Georgia, Franklin promoted the idea of American liberties and testified against the Stamp Act. He had been out of touch with sentiment in the colonies, and in his testimony before Parliament, Franklin suggested that the colonists objected only to direct taxes, not to duties placed on imported goods. His testimony helped to secure the repeal of the Stamp Act and greatly enhanced his reputation both in England and America.

Document:

Q. What is your name, and place of abode?

A. Franklin, of Philadelphia.

Q. Do the Americans pay any considerable taxes among themselves?

A. Certainly many, and very heavy taxes.

Q. What are the present taxes in Pennsylvania, laid by the laws of the colonies?

A. There are taxes on all estates, real and personal; a poll tax; a tax on all offices, professions, trades, and businesses, according to their profits; an excise on all wine, rum, and other spirit; and a duty of ten pounds per head on all Negroes imported, with some other duties.

Q. For what purposes are those taxes laid?

A. For the support of the civil and military establishment of the country, and to discharge the heavy debt contracted in the last war [the Seven Years War]....
Q. Are not all the people very able to pay those taxes?

A. No. The frontier counties, all along the continent, having been frequently ravaged by the enemy and greatly impoverished, are able to pay very little tax....

Q. Are not the colonies, from their circumstances, very able to pay the stamp duty?

A. In my opinion there is not gold and silver enough in the colonies to pay the stamp duty for one year.

Q. Don't you know that the money arising from the stamps was all to be laid out in America?

A. I know it is appropriated by the act to the American service; but it will be spent in the conquered colonies, where the soldiers are, not in the colonies that pay it....

Q. Do you think it right that America should be protected by this country and pay no part of the expense?

A. That is not the case. The colonies raised, clothed, and paid, during the last war, near 25,000 men, and spent many millions.

Q. Were you not reimbursed by Parliament?

A. We were only reimbursed what, in your opinion, we had advanced beyond our proportion, or beyond what might reasonably be expected from us; and it was a very small part of what we spent. Pennsylvania, in particular, disbursed about 500,000 pounds, and the reimbursements, in the whole, did not exceed 60,000 pounds....

Q. Do not you think the people of America would submit to pay the stamp duty, if it was moderated?

A. No, never, unless compelled by force of arms....

Q. What was the temper of America towards Great Britain before the year 1763?

A. The best in the world. They submitted willingly to the government of the Crown, and paid, in all their courts, obedience to acts of Parliament....

Q. What is your opinion of a future tax, imposed on the same principle with that of the Stamp Act? How would Americans receive it?

A. Just as they do this. They would not pay it.

Q. Have not you heard of the resolutions of this House, and of the House of Lords, asserting the right of Parliament relating to America, including a power to tax the people there?

A. Yes, I have heard of such resolutions.
Q. What will be the opinion of the Americans on those resolutions?
A. They will think them unconstitutional and unjust.

Q. Was it an opinion in America before 1763 that the Parliament had no right to lay taxes and duties there?
A. I have never heard any objection to the right of laying duties to regulate commerce; but a right to lay internal taxes was never supposed to be in Parliament, as we are not represented there....

Q. Did the Americans ever dispute the controlling power of Parliament to regulate the commerce?
A. No.

Q. Can anything less than a military force carry the Stamp Act into execution?
A. I do not see how a military force can be applied for that purpose.

Q. Why may it not?
A. Suppose a military force sent into America; they will find nobody in arms; what are they then to do? They cannot force a man to take stamps who chooses to do without them. They will not find a rebellion; they may indeed make one.

Q. If the act is not repealed, what do you think will be the consequences?
A. A total loss of the respect and affection the people of America bear to this country, and of all the commerce that depends on that respect and affection.

Q. How can the commerce be affected?
A. You will find that, if the act is not repealed, they will take very little of your manufactures in a short time.

Q. Is it in their power to do without them?
A. I think they may very well do without them.

Q. Is it their interest not to take them?
A. The goods they take from Britain are either necessaries, mere conveniences, or superfluities. The first, as cloth, etc., with a little industry they can make at home; the second they can do without till they are able to provide them among themselves; and the last, which are much the greatest part, they can strike off immediately. They are mere articles of fashion, purchased and consumed because the fashion in a respected country; but will now be detested and rejected. The people have already struck off, by general agreement, the use of all goods fashionable in mournings, and many thousand pounds worth are sent back as unsaleable.... Q. If the Stamp Act
should be repealed, would it induce the assemblies of America to acknowledge the right of Parliament to tax them, and would they erase their resolutions [against the Stamp Act]? A. No, never. Q. Is there no means of obliging them to erase those resolutions? A. None that I know of; they will never do it, unless compelled by force of arms. Q. Is there a power on earth that can force them to erase them? A. No power, how great soever, can force men to change their opinions.... Q. What used to be the pride of the Americans? A. To indulge in the fashions and manufactures of Great Britain. Q. What is now their pride? A. To wear their old clothes over again, till they can make new ones.

**Document 5**

**Declaratory Act**

*Digital History ID 4120*

**Date:** 1766

**Annotation:** The Declaratory Act of 1766 stated that the British Parliament's taxing authority was the same in America as in Great Britain.

**Document:** An act for the better securing the dependency of his majesty's dominions in America upon the crown and parliament of Great Britain.

Whereas several of the houses of representatives in his Majesty's colonies and plantations in America, have of late against law, claimed to themselves, or to the general assemblies of the same, the sole and exclusive right of imposing duties and taxes upon his majesty's subjects in the said colonies and plantations; and have in pursuance of such claim, passed certain votes, resolutions, and orders derogatory to the legislative authority of parliament, and inconsistent with the dependency of the said colonies and plantations upon the crown of Great Britain: may it therefore please your most excellent Majesty, that it may be declared; and be it declared by the King's most excellent majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That the said colonies and plantations in America have been, are, and of right ought to be, subordinate unto, and dependent upon the imperial crown and parliament of Great Britain; and that the King's majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in parliament assembled, had. bath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever,

II. And be it further declared and enacted by the authority aforesaid, That all resolutions, votes, orders, and proceedings, in any of the said colonies or plantations, whereby the power and authority of the parliament of Great Britain, to make laws and statutes as aforesaid, is denied, or drawn into question, arc, and are hereby declared to be, utterly null and void to all in purposes whatsoever.
Chancellor of the Exchequer, Charles Townshend, imposed new duties on imports of glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea to the colonies. The Townshend Acts also expanded the customs service. Revenue from the acts paid the salaries of colonial governors and judges and prevented colonial legislatures from exercising the power of the purse over these officials.

An act for granting certain duties in the British colonies and plantations in America; for allowing a drawback of the duties of customs upon the exportation, from this kingdom, of coffee and cocoa nuts of the produce of the said colonies or plantations; for discontinuing the drawbacks payable on china earthen ware exported to America; and for more effectually preventing the clandestine running of goods in the colonies and plantations.

WHEREAS it is expedient that a revenue should be raised in your Majesty’s dominions in America, for making a more certain and adequate provision for defraying the charge of the administration of justice, and the support of civil government, in such provinces where it shall be found necessary; and towards further defraying the expenses of defending, protecting, and securing, the said dominions; we, your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the commons of Great Britain, in parliament assembled, have therefore resolved to give and grant unto your Majesty the several rates and duties herein after mentioned; and do most humbly beseech your Majesty that it may be enacted, and be it enacted by the King’s most excellent majesty, by and with the advice of the lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That from and after the twentieth day of November, one thousand seven hundred and sixty seven, there shall be raised, levied, collected, and paid, unto his Majesty, his heirs, and successors, for and upon the respective goods herein after mentioned, which shall be imported from Great Britain into any colony or plantation in America which now is, or hereafter may be, under the dominion of his Majesty, his heirs, or successors, the several rates and duties following; that is to say,

For every ream of paper called Second Writing Super Royal, six shillings.

For every hundred weight avoirdupois of paste-boards, mill-boards, and scale-boards, not made in Great Britain, three shillings and nine pence.

For every hundred weight avoirdupois of paste-boards, mill-boards, and scale-boards, made in Great Britain, two shillings and three pence.

And for and upon all paper which shall be printed, painted, or stained, in Great Britain, to serve for hangings or other uses, three farthings for every yard square, over and above the duties payable for such paper by this act, if the same had not
been printed, painted, or stained; and after those rates respectively for any greater or less quantity.

II. And it is hereby further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That all other paper (not being particularly rated and charged in this act) shall pay the several and respective duties that are charged by this act, upon such paper as is nearest above in size and goodness to such unrated paper.

III. And it be declared and enacted by the authority aforesaid, That a ream of paper, chargeable by this act, shall be understood to consist of twenty quires, and each quire of twenty four sheets.

IV. And it is hereby further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the said rates and duties, charged by this act upon goods imported into any British American colony or plantation, shall be deemed, and are hereby declared to be, sterling money of Great Britain; and shall be collected, recovered, and paid to the amount of the value which such nominal sums bear in Great Britain; and that such monies may be received and taken, according to the proportion and value of five shillings and six pence the ounce in silver; and shall be raised, levied, collected, paid, and recovered, in the same manner and form, and by such rules, ways, and means, and under such penalties and forfeitures, as any other duties, now payable to his Majesty upon goods imported into the said colonies or plantations, may be raised, levied, collected, paid, and recovered, by any act or acts of parliament now in force, as fully and effectually, to all intents and purposes, as if the several clauses, powers, directions, penalties, and forfeitures, relating thereto, were particularly repeated, and again enacted, in the body of this present act: and that all the monies that shall arise by the said duties (except the necessary charges of raising, collecting, levying, recovering, answering, paying, and accounting for the same) shall be applied, in the first place, in such manner as is herein after mentioned, in making a more certain and adequate provision for the charge of the administration of justice, and the support of civil government, in such of the said colonies and plantations where it shall be found necessary; and that the residue of such duties shall be paid into the receipt of his Majesty's exchequer, and shall be entered separate and apart from all other monies paid or payable to his Majesty, his heirs, or successors; and shall be there reserved, to be from time to time disposed of by parliament towards defraying the necessary expenses of defending, protecting, and securing, the British colonies and plantations in America.

V. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That his Majesty and his successors shall be, and are hereby, impowered, from time to time, by any warrant or warrants under his or their royal sign manual or sign manuals, countersigned by the high treasurer, or any three or more of the commissioners of the treasury for the time being, to cause such monies to be applied, out of the produce of the duties granted by this act, as his Majesty, or his successors, shall think proper or necessary, for defraying the charges of the administration of justice, and the support of the civil government, within all or any of the said colonies or plantations.

VI. And whereas the allowing a drawback of all the duties of customs upon the exportation, from this kingdom, of coffee and cocoa nuts, the growth of the British dominions in America, may be a means of encouraging the growth of coffee and cocoa in the said dominions; be it therefore enacted by the authority aforesaid, That from and after the said twentieth day of November, one thousand seven hundred
and sixty seven, upon the exportation of any coffee or cocoa nuts, of the growth or produce of any British colony or plantation in America, from this kingdom as merchandize, the whole duties of customs, payable upon the importation of such coffee or cocoa nuts, shall be drawn back and repaid; in such manner, and under such rules, regulations, penalties, and forfeitures, as any drawback or allowance, payable out of the duties of customs upon the exportation of such coffee or cocoa nuts, was, could, or might be paid, before the passing of this act; any law, custom, or usage, to the contrary notwithstanding.

VII. And it is hereby further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no drawback shall be allowed for any china earthen ware sold, after the passing of this act, at the sale of the united company of merchants of England trading to the East Indies, which shall be entered for exportation from Great Britain to any part of America; any law, custom, or usage, to the contrary notwithstanding.

VIII. And it is hereby further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if any china earthen ware sold, after the passing of this act, at the sale of the said united company, shall be entered for exportation to any part of America as china earthen ware that had been sold at the sale of the said company before that time; or, if any china earthen ware shall be entered for exportation to any parts beyond the seas, other than to some part of America, in order to obtain any drawback thereon, and the said china earthen ware shall nevertheless be carried to any part of America, and landed there contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act; that then, in each and every such case, the drawback shall be forfeited; and the merchant or other person making such entry, and the master or person taking the charge of the ship or vessel on board which the said goods shall be laden for exportation, shall forfeit double the amount of the drawback paid, or to be paid, for the same, and also treble the value of the said goods; one moiety to and for the use of his Majesty, his heirs, and successors; and the other moiety to such officer of the customs as shall sue for the same; to be prosecuted, sued for, and recovered, in such manner and form, and by the same rules and regulations, as other penalties inflicted for offences against any laws relating to the customs may be prosecuted, sued for, and recovered, by any act or acts of parliament now in force.

Document 7

Bostonians Protest the Townshend Acts
*Digital History ID 137*

Author: John Hancock
Date: 1768

Annotation:

Based in part on Benjamin Franklin's arguments before Parliament, Charles Townshend (1725-1767), the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, believed that the colonists would find a duty on imported goods more acceptable than the Stamp Act, which taxed them more directly. In 1767, Parliament passed the Townshend Acts, which placed duties on such imported items as glass, tea, lead, paint, and paper. Colonists not only objected to the new duties, but also to the way they were to be
spent--and to the new bureaucracy that was to collect them. The new revenues were to be used to pay the expenses of governors and judges. Because colonial assemblies were traditionally responsible for paying colonial officials, the Townshend Acts appeared to be an attack on their legislative authority.

The Townshend Acts also set up a board of customs commissioners, which was supposed to be a more efficient way of organizing the customs system. But many merchants saw it as an attempt to introduce a new bureaucracy and official corruption into the colonies.

Merchants from Boston adopted a non-importation agreement in 1768, vowing not to import certain articles rather than pay the duties. By 1769, after merchants in other cities had joined the boycott, imports of British goods had fallen by 40 percent. Women played an active role in the protests against the Townshend Acts. Daughters of Liberty led campaigns against consumption of British tea and clothing.

Meanwhile, to cut costs, the ministry closed many western forts and redeployed British forces in coastal cities. Under the Quartering Act of 1765, the colonists would be responsible for housing and providing for the troops. When New York refused to provide supplies for the soldiers Townshend responded by threatening to nullify all laws passed by the New York assembly until the Quartering Act was obeyed. The other colonies rallied to New York’s support by threatening to resist all taxes imposed by the Crown.

In the face of this united opposition, Townshend modified the Quartering Act. Instead of requiring colonists to open their homes to soldiers, he allowed them to house them in barracks, unoccupied buildings, and barns. But even this weakened act stirred resistance.

Many colonists also objected to the unscrupulous actions of British customs officials, some of whom began to enrich themselves by accusing shipowners and merchants of smuggling and then confiscating ships and cargoes. In June 1768, a crowd attacked local customs collectors who had seized a sloop owned by John Hancock (1737-1793), one of the colonies' richest merchants. The commissioners fled to an island in Boston for safety, and pleaded for military protection. The British government sent two regiments of troops to Boston in September 1768.

In this letter, John Hancock and four other Boston Selectmen protest the Townshend Acts and the impending arrival of British troops.

**Document:**

You are already too well acquainted with the melancholy and very alarming Circumstances to which this Province, as well as America in general, is now reduced. Taxes equally detrimental to the commercial interests of the Parent country and the colonies are imposed upon the People, without their consent; Taxes designed for the Support of the Civil Government in the Colonies, in a Manner clearly unconstitutional, and contrary to that, in which 'till of late, Government has been supported, by the free Gift of the People in the American Assemblies or Parliaments; as also for the Maintenance of a large Standing Army; not for the Defence of the newly acquired Territories, but for the old Colonies, and in a Time of Peace. The decent, humble and
truly loyal Applications and Petitions from the Representatives of this Province for the Redress of these heavy and very threatening Grievances, have hitherto been ineffectual, being assured from authentick Intelligence that they have not yet reach'd the Royal Ear: The only Effect of transmitting these Applications...has been a Mandate from one of his Majesty's Secretaries of State to the Governor of this Province, to Dissolve the General Assembly, merely because the late House of Representatives refused to Rescind a Resolution of a former House, which imply'd nothing more than a Right in the American Subjects to unite in humble and dutiful Petitions to their gracious Sovereign, when they found themselves aggrieved: This is a Right naturally inherent in every Man, and expressly recognized by the glorious Revolution as the Birthright of an Englishman....

The Concern and Perplexity in which these Things have thrown the People, have been greatly aggravated by a late Declaration of his Excellency Governor [Francis] Bernard, that one or more Regiments may soon be expected in this Province.

The Design of these Troops is in every one's Apprehension nothing short of Enforcing by military Power the Execution of Acts of Parliament in the forming of which the Colonies have not, and cannot have any constitutional Influence. This is one of the greatest Distresses to which a free People can be reduced...