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America's Revolution (77) – Paying the Piper, Massachusetts Awakes – II

Lead: In the 1700s the United States broke from England. No colony in history had done that before. This series examines America's Revolution.

Intro: *A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts*

Content: In 1772 the London government changed the way high royal officials in Massachusetts were paid. It sought to wrest power and a form of control from the

colonial legislature by demanding that these officials be paid, not from appropriations by the General Court, but from customs revenues. This reawakened American anger and resistance as the payment of salaries was thought to be one way the colonials could keep the Governor and judges in line.

When Governor Thomas Hutchinson refused to call the legislature into session to discuss this and other matters, Sam Adams organized a Committee of Correspondence to plead the case of colonial liberty both in the Commonwealth and among the other colonies. They hammered out a statement, *Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston*, but known in that era simply as “Boston Pamphlet.” This document described a number of other grievances – a denunciation of various Parliamentary taxation schemes, the extravagant claims of absolute power

inherent in Parliament's Declaratory Act, the imposition on Boston of an unlawful standing army and the attempt by London to strip from the colonials the ability to control royal officials through the tool of compensation. This was a powerful and effective piece of propaganda. It read in part, "Our houses, and even our Bed-chambers, are exposed to be ransacked, our Boxes, Trunks and Chests broke open, ravaged and plundered, by Wretches, whom no prudent man would venture to employ even as menial Servants." And, the pamphlet asserted, the Governor was in the thick of this plot conspiring with judges, also paid with custom's revenues, to abridge the rights of colonials lodged in origin as they were in nature and reason. These rights, accorded to all Englishmen, could not be alienated, taken away or even given up by the people. The result of the Boston Pamphlet was an upsurge of support throughout the colony

for a redress of grievances against the Governor and London and a growing trepidation that Massachusetts liberties were imperiled. Next time: Governor Hutchinson's grand mistake.

At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.

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