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America's Revolution (8) – Taxation
Without Representation – III

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: Severe financial burdens resulting from British involvement in the French and Indian War caused the government in London to seek revenues from the thirteen North American colonies, essentially to pay for a peaceful frontier and oceans free

for colonial commerce. Surprisingly there were calls by some in Britain proposing colonial representation in Parliament. Adam Smith, Edmund Burke and for a time, Benjamin Franklin, Pennsylvania's representative in London, advocated some form of Colonial seats in the commons, but these proposals went nowhere and were not revived until long after the beginning of open hostilities in the late 1770s. Ironically, American radicals ultimately squelched the idea of colonial representation. They were convinced that if there were Americans seated at Westminster, there would be no restraint on Parliamentary enthusiasm for draining colonial pockets. Better to

argue that Parliament had no right to tax the colonies, period.

Beginning with the Sugar Act in April 1764 which elevated duties on sugar, tea, coffee and other imports, it was followed by the Stamp Act of 1765, which required that official documents be printed on special paper on which there was a governmental stamp. A year later, following riots in many American cities, the Stamp Act was repealed.

At the same time, Parliament passed The Declaratory Act which insisted that Parliament had complete sovereignty over the Colonies. Thereupon, a veritable cascade of statutes followed that attempted to

secure colonial cooperation in revenue enhancement: Quartering Act, 1765, Revenue Acts, 1767, Tea Act, 1773, Coercive Acts 1774. None of these efforts worked very well, in fact, many had to be repealed because of increasing agitation and resistance in the Colonies that made collection impossible. Probably the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back was the Prohibitory Act, December 1775, which placed an embargo on American goods and authorized the seizure of American ships. Within seven months the Second Continental Congress had declared independence, having previously voted to field the Army that would secure colonial independence.

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Resources

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