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## **America's Revolution (42) – Stamp Act** **Repeal – I**

**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: Though it was proceeded and followed by far more consequential revenue acts originating in the British Parliament, the Stamp Act was perhaps the most significant of these measures because of the**

reaction it provoked in the North American colonies. Beginning with the Patrick Henry-authored *Virginia Resolves* in late spring 1765, resistance and revulsion, sometimes quite violent, particularly in Massachusetts, spread outward from the Commonwealth. This antagonism demonstrated for the first time a unity of common oppositional spirit among the colonies to this obvious violation of one of the premier foundations of the British Constitution, namely, that no one should be taxed unless represented in the taxing body, hence no taxation without representation.

This was not a *need* question. The most energetic opponents of the Stamp Act and its siblings, even in America, understood that Britain needed the money. It was deeply in debt after the millions expended to win the Seven Years', or as it was known in America, the French and Indian War. This was a

constitutional process question. Few denied that Parliament could do just about anything it wanted to do in the English governmental scheme of things. What animated Americans and many Britons was that on the question of taxation, the governing constitutional principle, from dimmest historical memory, dictated that no English subject could be taxed unless he had a share in electing those who taxed him. Despite the rather silly argument that Americans were “virtually” represented in Parliament because of their colonial status, such notions could not and did not survive honest constitutional scrutiny, even in England, even in Parliament, and certainly not in America. The flame of opposition began to spread and Parliament was faced with open revolt in the colonies against its constitutional power to tax. America was quickly falling out of control and soon cries for repeal began to echo through the halls of Westminster and

**eventually becoming irresistible. What made repeal possible was a change in government. Next time: The price of a tax too high.**

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

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