



Volume 20

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**America's Revolution (47) – British
Constitutional Debate – 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: As First Minister to King George III, George Grenville was the author of the Stamp Tax passed by the British Parliament in 1765 to secure money to pay for British troops stationed in America. This

tax provoked widespread resistance and even rioting in the colonies because of the conviction that, since Americans were not represented in Parliament, Parliament had no right to tax them. When William Pitt rose in Parliament to agree with the American position and urge repeal of the tax, Grenville responded with vigorous denunciation of the rebellious attitude and lack of appreciation in the colonies for the protection Britain afforded with troops on land and for American commerce on the open seas by the British Navy. “Protection and obedience are reciprocal,” he roared, “Great Britain protects America; America is bound to yield obedience.”

Pitt responded by praising American resistance to the taxes, that if they did not, they would be submitting to slavery and thus opening the way for all Englishmen to be slaves. Parliament has the power to rule over

the colonies, but not so as “contradict the fundamental principles common to both.” America can be crushed, he said, but in falling it will “embrace the pillars of the state, and pull down the constitution along with her.”

The Stamp Act was eventually repealed, but this constitutional debate as articulated by Pitt and Grenville, revealed that in the years prior to the Revolution, America had numerous and powerful friends in Parliament and in Britain. Such support would eventually yield, after the United States had earned its position through blood-letting and sacrifice, a willingness in Britain to just let it go.

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

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