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**Shay's Rebellion - Part I**

**Lead: Faced with foreclosures and shrinking credit, farmers in backcountry New England began to shut the government down.**

**Intro.: "A Moment in Time" with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In the years following the American Revolution, the vast majority of New Englanders lived on subsistence farms. They grew crops for survival plus a little bit extra to exchange for manufactured goods, tools, gunpowder, medicine and so forth. One Massachusetts farmer spent**

**about \$10.00 a year for salt, nails and the like.**

**On the coast life was more commercial. Merchants, shopkeepers, sailors, and fishermen were in business to manufacture and transport goods. Profits made in this type of enterprise were plowed back into expansion and new money making projects in the time honored capitalist tradition. Gradually, over the years, the commercial culture on the coast began to penetrate inland in search of markets. Bridging the gap were inland merchants who persuaded farmers to buy manufactured goods on credit. If there was a bad crop, the merchants would extend more credit to the farmers for the next year. Slowly**

**subsistence farmers were drawn into the market economy and many of them resented it. During hard times merchants would demand the cash repayment of loans. If the farmers didn't have it they lost their farms.**

**In the mid-1780s bad time struck. After the Revolution New England merchants bought large amounts of British goods but partly out of spite at her former colonies for having the nerve to rebel, the English cut off American trade with the West Indies. Coastal merchants were now stuck with goods they had bought from England but had no place to sell the lumber, fish, hemp and other farm goods they had previously sold to the West Indies. When they couldn't pay**

**their debts London called in their loans. The New England merchants in turn called in their loans and often the rider on the last horse on the credit merry-go-round was a farmer out on the western frontier of Massachusetts with nothing to pay save his land.**

**In 1786 the farmers exploded. Next time Shay's Rebellion.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

### **Resources**

**Minot, George Richards. *History of the Insurrections in Massachusetts in 1786 and of the Rebellion Consequent thereon.* New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1971.**

**Szatmary, David P. *Shay's Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection.* Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980.**

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