

# Causes of the American Revolution

# The End of Salutary Neglect

- The period in the Colonies leading up till the end of the French and Indian War (1763) was known as the Era of Salutary Neglect
  - This was the time when England, for the most part, left the colonies to run themselves
  - After the French and Indian War the British would begin playing a much more direct role in colonial affairs → this would lead to a great amount of resentment and ultimately the Revolution

# Postwar (French and Indian) Problems

- The French and Indian War led to a number of conflicts between England and the American colonies
  - The English began to play a much more direct role in the administrative affairs of the colonies
  - The English believed that the colonies should have to pay for the burden of debt resulting from the war

# Postwar (French and Indian) Problems

- Distrust and contempt grew between the Colonists and the British
  - The Colonists felt that the conventional battle tactics would never work in North American conflicts
    - They could therefore take care of themselves and did not need British military aid
  - The British believed that the colonial militias were useless and cowardly on the battlefield
    - The colonies could not take care of themselves and therefore required the protection of the British Redcoats

# Pontiac's Rebellion

- Chief Pontiac formed an alliance of Native American tribes and began attacking frontier colonists in 1763
  - The natives were angry about 1) the number of colonists moving west onto their lands and 2) the lack of gifts being offered by the British (the French had given many gifts to the natives)
- The British did not trust the colonial militias to defend themselves so Redcoats were sent to deal with the Pontiac's Rebellion

# Proclamation Line of 1763

- In order to resecure the western frontier areas the British issued the Proclamation Line of 1763 prohibiting colonists from settling west of the Appalachian Mountains
  - Colonists felt that they had earned the right to gain the lands formerly held by the French in the Ohio River Valley
    - After all, they had fought in the French and Indian War too!
  - The angry colonists defied the order and moved west by the thousands

# Moving Towards Revolution...

- In 1763 Lord George Grenville, Prime Minister of England and treasurer of King James III, began passing a series of three acts that were meant to begin the process of the American colonies paying for 'their' war, the French and Indian
  - The colonists saw these acts as a defiance of their personal liberties
    - i.e. just as the Proclamation Line had restricted the colonists right to move into newly acquired lands

# The Sugar Act of 1764

- a.k.a. the Revenue Act of 1764
- Placed duties on foreign sugar and certain other luxury goods
- Stated that those caught smuggling would now be tried in admiralty courts under British officials, not colonial courts

# Effects of the Sugar Act

- Colonists felt that they were being taxed without their consent
  - They had had no say in the passage of this act
    - No Taxation Without Representation!
- Colonists also felt that their right to a fair trial was being suspended
- There was no organized resistance to the act, and most colonists were indifferent to protest

# Quartering Act of 1765

- Required that colonists be responsible for the housing and provisioning of Redcoats stationed in the colonies
  - No longer would the British government pay for the supply of the Redcoats

# The Stamp Act of 1765

- Required that a direct tax be placed on most paper goods in the colonies
- Included all legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, and advertisements
- This was a common tax in for English citizens

# Effects of the Stamp Act

- Response was immediate and swift
- Immediately the Stamp Act Congress was formed when nine colonies sent delegates to meet in New York
  - The Stamp Act Congress decided that only the elected representatives of the colonies had the right to tax the colonies

# Effects of the Stamp Act

- The situation became more dire and violent when the Sons and Daughters of Liberty were formed
  - These secret societies were more militant in their actions as they commonly employed violence to intimidate English tax agents
  - Tarring and feathering were common practices
  - They destroyed tax offices and the stamps themselves

# Effects of the Stamp Act

- The most effective method of protests employed by the colonies were the widespread agreements to boycott all British goods
  - When British merchants experienced a sharp drop in profits they turned on the Parliament in support of the colonies and demanded the repeal of the Stamp Act

# Repeal of the Stamp Act

- Parliament repealed the Stamp Act in 1766
- Grenville was replaced by Charles Townshend as Treasurer of England
- Parliament passed the Declaratory Act
  - This statement declared that Parliament had the authority to pass any laws and any taxes on the colonies for any case and for any cause “whatsoever”

# No Taxation Without Representation

- The right to representative government was considered a basic right of man, and by the 1760's this was a right of an English citizen (as reflected by the growing power of the English Parliament
  - The English believed that the best interests of the American colonists (and all of their colonists) were represented 'virtually' in Parliament by the existing members
  - The colonists wanted 'actual' representation through their own elected representatives

# The Townshend Acts of 1767

- Townshend had a new idea for raising revenue in the colonies, and his plan became known as the Townshend Acts
- New duties were placed on tea, glass, paper, and lead that were imported into the colonies
- Granted writs of assistance to British officials in the colonies
  - These were general search warrants that allowed British officials to search any business or residence suspected of containing smuggled goods
- Suspended the New York assembly for defying the Quartering Act

# Protesting the Townshend Acts

- Most colonists did not mind the Townshend duties because they were an indirect tax that the merchants paid to import goods, not a direct tax on the colonists themselves
- However, many colonial leaders argued that any tax whatsoever was a direct violation of the colonists' right to consent to being taxed through the election of representatives
  - No taxation without representation!

# Leaders of Protest

- John Dickinson

- Wrote *Letters From a Farmer in Pennsylvania*

- Parliament had the right to regulate commerce, but since duties were a tax they could not be passed without the consent of the elected representative assemblies of the colonies
    - No taxation without representation! ← an essential right of all English citizens, and the colonists were citizens!

# Leaders of Protest

- In 1768 Samuel Adams and James Otis wrote the Massachusetts Circular Letter
  - Copies were sent to all colonial legislatures
  - Urged all colonies to send protests to Parliament and urges to repeal the Townshend Acts
  - Also urged the colonists to pick up their efforts in boycotting English goods
- British responded by increasing the number of troops in Boston and seizing the Circular Letters

# Repealing the Townshend Acts

- Lord North became the king's new Prime Minister in 1770 and he promptly advised the king and Parliament to repeal the Townshend Acts
  - Said that the Acts did nothing but hurt commerce while they only created small amounts of revenue
  - He did advise that a small tax on tea be left in place just to remind the colonists that England did have the right to tax the colonies

# The Boston Massacre

- British troops were stationed in Boston to protect customs officials (tax agents) from the attacks of the Sons of Liberty
- In March 1770 a group of colonists were harassing a small group of guards stationed at the customs house
- Though it is not known what exactly took place, the soldiers did fire into the group of protesters killing five of the colonists
- John Adams defended the soldiers at their trial and was able to have them acquitted of murder charges
- This event would be a rallying cry throughout the Revolution

# A Short Time of Peace

- The period from 1770 – 1773 following the Boston Massacre was a relative time of peace
- Though some groups such as the Sons of Liberty continued to seethe over the Boston Massacre and the small tea tax, relations between the colonies and England were relatively amicable

# The *Gaspee*

- The *Gaspee* was a British customs ship that had captured many colonial smugglers
- It ran aground off the coast of Rhode Island in 1772
- A group of colonists disguised themselves as Indians and boarded the ship and burned it
- Parliament was furious over the incident and ordered intensive investigations

# The Committees of Correspondence

- The Committees were organized by Samuel Adams in 1772
  - He believed that the British were secretly working to undermine the rights of the colonists
  - The Committees were the primary form of communication between the colonies
  - Letters were passed that spoke of British injustices, whether real or just suspicions, against the colonies

# The Tea Act of 1773

- Because of continued colonial boycotting of British tea (since the repeal of the Townshend Acts) the British East India Company was on the verge of bankruptcy
- Parliament passed the Tea Act in 1773 in hopes of bailing the British East India Company out of its financial woes
  - It made the price of their tea, even with the taxes, cheaper than that of the smuggled Dutch tea

# Boycotting the Tea

- Thought the British tea was cheaper than that of the Dutch, the colonists continued to boycott the tea because to buy it would have acknowledged the right of the British to tax the colonists without their consent
- The tea was left unpurchased and sitting in the harbors of all the colonies

# The Boston Tea Party

- The royal governor of Massachusetts threatened to have the tea unloaded from the ships and brought into Boston
- A group of colonists disguised themselves as Indians and boarded the British ships and dumped the tea into Boston Harbor
  - 45 tons (90,000 lbs) of tea was destroyed

# The Intolerable Acts

- English reactions to the Boston Tea Party were fierce
- A series of acts were passed that severely punished the colonies, most notably Massachusetts
- Together these acts were known as the Intolerable Acts
  - The Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act

# The Coercive Acts

- The Coercive Acts were a group of four separate acts passed in 1774 that were all meant to punish the colonies
- The first two were aimed at either Boston or Massachusetts
- The Port Act closed Boston Harbor to all trade until the destroyed tea was paid for in full
- The Massachusetts Government Act drastically reduced the power of MA's representative assembly and increased the powers of the royal governor

# The Coercive Acts

- The Administration of Justice Act prohibited English officials from being tried in the colonies
  - Instead the officials would be tried in English courts, regardless of charges
- The Quartering Act was expanded to include the private homes of colonists for the housing of British soldiers

# The Quebec Act

- Though the Quebec Act was meant to oversee the territories of Canada it proved to be very controversial in the colonies
  - It organized the Canadian territories into provinces → many colonists saw this territory as theirs
  - It made Roman Catholicism the official religion of Canada → the Calvinist Protestants wanted no touch of Catholicism near their colonies
  - It established a government with no representative assembly → colonists feared that they too would be stripped of their assemblies
  - It extended Quebec's boundaries to the Ohio River → this was contested colonial territory