

## Ch. 5 - Section 2 - Turmoil over Taxation

### Secondary Source --Historical Background Reading

The American Revolution began in 1763 with a British victory in the French & Indian War and ended with the Treaty of Paris (this time between the British and the Americans) signed in 1783. As John Adams said, "The revolution was effected before the war commenced. The revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people." Following the French and Indian War, the colonists began feeling the confidence that victory brings. They increasingly saw themselves as a separate entity, one that could defend itself against any opposing threat. Of course, King George III and Parliament were viewing the situation quite differently. They were affirming their need for the colonies in order to remain a world power and to generate revenue through taxes and trade. Prompted by this perception, the British government increased control over the colonies and levied taxes, which in turn led to the rebellion known as the American Revolution.

One tax imposed upon the colonists was the Sugar Act in 1764. This tax was suggested to Parliament by Prime Minister George Grenville, who felt the colonists should help pay the debt accrued by the French and Indian War. This act placed duties on molasses and sugar. It was not only that Parliament passed this tax that grieved the colonists so, but that the British took great strides in enforcing this law. The British would stop and search colonial ships for smuggled goods. As a reaction to this tax, the rallying cry "taxation without representation" was born through the ideas of Samuel Adams and James Otis and noised throughout the colonies.

In 1765, the Stamp Act was proposed. Under this act, the colonists were required to pay for a stamp or seal to be placed on all paper goods they bought. These goods included legal documents, licenses, newspapers, pamphlets and playing cards. Refusal to buy these stamps could mean jail time or a fine for a colonist. Reaction to the Stamp Act was loud and demonstrative. The colonists boycotted those goods or simply refused to buy the stamp. This caused British merchants to appeal to Parliament to repeal the law and they did in 1766.

Only one year later, Parliament came up with another tax, the Townsend Acts. This law placed duties on imported glass, lead, paint, paper and tea. The monies collected from this tax paid for military costs in the colonies and the salaries of colonial governors. Women began taking an active role in the resistance to increased British control. They formed the Daughters of Liberty who promoted a boycott of all British goods. "The tighter the cord of unconstitutional power is drawn round this bundle of arrows, the firmer it will be," boasted Sam Adams as he observed the colonies unify in the boycott. Not all their actions were peaceful. We often don't hear about the gangs who tormented Loyalists, causing them to sleep with pistols by their bedside or the young boys who pelted would be customers with dung, dirt or snowballs spiked with seashells. It is not so surprising that the "Boston Massacre" occurred. In March 1770, a soldier was injured in a fight with a dock man. The Redcoats retaliated by placing notices throughout Boston warning of an attack on the townspeople, if this raucous behavior continues. An outraged crowd of Patriots gathered at the Custom House, taunting and jeering at the nine-man guard. The crowd threw snowballs laced with rocks and oyster shells. The guards being outnumbered by the angry mob, fired in self defense. When the air cleared, five colonists lay dead or dying. One month later, the Townshend Act was repealed.