

The crisis of 1798: sedition

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number Introduction In 1798 during the tenure of president John Adams of United States sedition and alien Act were enacted and backed up by the federalist-controlled congress. These acts were enacted because the federalist feared for the impending war of France, having tolerated shays's and whiskey rebellion they couldn't take any chance. The press continued to condemn the administration of President John Adams thus posing a threat to the government. John Quincy son to the president had cautioned the president of the impending France attack (Manz & William 58).

2. Act of Sedition crisis and effects

The act of Sedition altered the law of naturalization, thus increasing the number of years for an immigrant to be an American citizen from five to fourteen years. According to (Kohn & Stephen 103) the alteration favored the federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton who viewed immigrants as threat to the government. This served their interest but in reality infringed the rights for immigrants who had lived in America for five years and were on the course of applying United States citizenship. The idea behind that act victimized even the innocent immigrant.

Freedom of the press was compromised by the sedition act. Members of the press during that time were treated harshly by the government for publishing articles which were against the act. Benjamin Franklin an editor of Aurora was on the receiving end for his printing against the state. He was served with death threats and his house vandalized by a mob of drunk youth whom had been sent by the federalists (Nelson & William 28). Judah Spooner, a printer at chronicle was arrested for publishing a letter wrote by Vermont representative Matthew Lyon. The letter was termed as defamatory to the government. From the above evidence it is crystal clear that the

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media was not free at all, sedition act played a major role in trying to silence the media. Members of the press being threaten and arrested is uncalled for since this deters them from reporting to the public the rottenness in the society.

The act infringed the freedom of expression and speech. For instance John Baldwin was arrested for airing his thought on the state of his country and president John Adams. Rev. John Ogden too was arrested for expressing his grievances to the president. He presented his petition to the president requesting him to pardon Matthew Lyon, but instead he was jailed for four months (Kohn & Stephen 132). Fundamental rights of American citizens were infringed by the act which aimed to silence members of the public, just to be seen and not be heard.

3. Conclusion

Though the act served the interest of the government in securing its citizen from the warring attack by France, it did cause a lot of harm to the citizens of United State. The act resulted to crisis in the media and intensified animosity between Federalists and Democratic-republicans. Therefore sedition act was not supposed to be passed in its state.

References

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States," Generally Called the Sedition Bill, Is Unconstitutional or Not.

Richmond: Printed by S. Pleasants, Jun., 1798.