

Evaluate the relative
importance of the
essay



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Evaluate the relative importance of the following as factors prompting Americans to rebel in 1776: Parliamentary taxation Restriction of civil liberties British Military Measures The legacy of colonial religion and political ideas The British colonies in America from the time they were established up until around 1763 had a policy of Salutary Neglect. Salutary Neglect meant that the British would not interfere with the colonies national or even international affairs. This benefitted the colonies, they got to experience some forms of democracy, and they also were able to experience independence in a way though they took it for granted. The British after the Seven Years War, which was fought on American soil, for the Americans protection, decided that the colonies should be required to pay for it in taxes. Britain was in debt, and their economy was in a recession, so the well off colonies tax money would have helped them considerably. The tax would only be the beginning to a long line of British policies further upsetting the colonial people. Parliamentary taxes on the colonial peoples started with the Navigation Acts in 1660, but they were not an issue to the colonial people because they were too difficult to enforce. Then in 1764 the Stamp Act was passed, this was the first direct tax on the colonists.

The Navigations Acts and the Sugar Acts of 1764, which was a tax placed on imported molasses and sugar, had not directly affected colonists, it affected the merchants. The merchants in hand would just raise prices. The stamp act was completely different. It said that any document or printed item would need to have a stamp placed on it purchased from the British government.

The Stamp Act upset the colonists; it would be their real reason for rebellion. The time when the stamp act was passed is when we hear the infamous line “ No taxation without representation” and they were right to make that demand. The mistake of not making simple reforms, like allowing one representative in parliament per colony would lead to revolts, and even groups coming together. Some revolts were peaceful while others, which affected the tax collectors and stamp sellers, were violent resulting in the tarring and feathering of the British officials. The Sons of Liberty, led by Samuel Adams, James Otis, and Patrick Henry, were a very radical and overdramatic group, Patrick Henry would make the fateful statement of “ Give me liberty or give me death. ” On October 7th, 1765 the Stamp act congress would meet there were representatives from 9 of the 13 colonies.

The representatives made a decision to boycott British goods. By March of 1776, the Stamp Acts will have been appealed, but the government in England is not happy. The taxation of the colonists was very important to what would eventually be the American Revolution. The people of the colonies were finally united, though they have not called for an army to be made or haven't talked about independence, they are starting to come together, and make their differences blur. The restriction of civil liberties was also a major part of the original rebellions. One act passed by England's government was the Declaratory Act.

The Declaratory act said that the British government could pass any laws needed in order to hold together Britain and her colonies. That meant that Britain was planning on interfering more though there were not yet any direct effects. In 1767 the Townshend acts, named after Charles Townshend

the British finance minister, placed taxes on imports. These tariffs were imposed on everything. The British thought this would be better suited for the colonies because again it was not direct.

It affected prices in that they went up, but the people themselves did not have to personally pay the government they paid the merchants. Parliament proposed the raised money would pay the colonies officials and judges, and that the taxes in Britain could be lowered. The colonists still object and the rebellions are growing. The people of Boston lead many of the rebellions, and influence all the colonies with their publications. In 1768 the people of Massachusetts condemned the new laws sticking to their slogan of “ no taxation without representation. ” Britain dissolves the legislature in Boston deciding that they are having to large an influence on the rest of the colonies.

This was a breach of their civil liberties. They start boycotts and they spread through out the colonies just as they started the tarring and feathering of tax collectors and that spread. The people of Massachusetts and in all the colonies continue their rebellions, whether they were peaceful or violent depended on who they were led by. There was also the problem of the quartering act in Boston mainly.

Soldiers who were sent to keep order even though the British claimed they were for “ protection from savages” were roaming the cities. They were keeping an eye on everyone, and making sure that no more meetings were held in secret. They also were making sure there was no smuggling of goods. The soldiers had writs of assistance, which were like search warrants; they

said they could go into any ship cargo, home, store and storage area to check for smuggled goods. These military measures just meant that any meetings between colonies could no longer be held in Boston that is why we will see future meetings of the colonies in areas like Albany, which is also more central among the colonies.

The colonists kept up their boycotts and rebellions until in March 1770 all but the tariff on tea and the quartering act were repealed. During that same month the Boston Massacre occurred. This was when a mob formed outside the customs house, they had clubs and bats, and when the British soldiers arrived they threatened each other. When a soldier slipped and fired a shot, the other soldiers opened fire killing a total of five colonists! Now the British military has shot into a crowd of innocent people. They are going to be placed on trial in the colonies so a lawyer John Adams, Samuel Adams brother, represents the men in the trials, and ends up winning the case.

It proved that anyone could get a fair trial in the colonies even though their civil liberties were being taken away slowly by the soldiers. Civil liberties were also limited after one very important night, December 16, 1773, the Boston Tea Party. On this night men dressed up as savages and boarded the monopolized east India Trading Companies Tea ship, and dumped 90, 000 lbs. of tea overboard.

They destroyed private property in doing this but want to prove that even a monopoly over the tea business would not stop them. The British in response to the Tea Party quickly passed what they called the Coercive Acts, or as in America the Intolerable Acts. The Intolerable Acts would close the port of

Boston, this was a horrible, the people in Boston could not really have major farms so they relied on fishing and trading. Their lives were built on their port. The port according to British government was to be closed until all the tea was paid for. The council in Massachusetts would also now be hand selected by the King taking away all democratic rights.

It gave extraterritoriality rights to British officials too, meaning that the officials would be tried in Britain. Officials now had free reign because even if tried it would not be a very fair trial, and there would never be enough witnessed willing to make the journey all the way to England anyway. The Intolerable Acts almost completely limited the colonies civil liberties and when rebellions were attempted they were quickly shut down. The House of Burgesses in Virginia tried to have a day of prayer and fasting in rebellion and instead of letting them do it, the British dissolved the House of Burgesses again cutting out some of their personal freedoms.

The colonies realizing what was going on ended up with what was called the Committee of Correspondence, who would write letters and pass them throughout the colonies to keep all people informed about what was happening. Those in New Hampshire decided to call a meeting, the First Continental Congress, which was held in Philadelphia. This is where every colony besides Georgia had a representative and at the same time all 12 colonies decided to boycott British goods. They knew that was the most productive way to get to Britain and used it against them.

They would end up having a great effect on England by hurting them where it hurt most in the pockets. King George would in response send troops into the

colonies and very soon there was obviously going to be a Revolution. They also agreed to have a Second Continental Congress. The religious beliefs and the legacy of the colonies really did not have real importance in prompting the rebellions.

People of all religions came together, we saw this in the Boston Massacre, the first man killed was Crispus Attucks an African American, a former slave none the less. The people having common enemy of parliamentary taxation was able to unite all faiths to come together as one, and rebel. The religious differences in the colonies did not affect much because there were so many separate minorities of religions. Their political beliefs had more effect than religious but still not much.

Many of the colonies had democratic ideas as shown in the House of Burgesses in Virginia and the legislature in Massachusetts. Those colonies that did not have real democracy had some democratic ideas in them, though they could have been theocracies or anything else. The colonies did not really have to be united through their local governments though, because they wanted to stay colonies to Britain they still had no future plans for independence, the people believed that they would be able to either get representation in parliament or that the taxes on colonists would end. The parliamentary taxes were primarily the main reason for colonial rebellion; the colonies if being taxed very simply wanted representation in parliament. The British military measures and restriction of civil liberties are next because they are really tied together.

Without one there could not be the other, and then last comes the legacy of colonial religion and political ideas. The sudden end to salutary neglect would impact the colonists in ways that the British could not have imagined, and would eventually be a main cause for the American Revolution, and forming of a new independent nation.