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challenge to any



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

- 'The Intolerable Acts (Coercive Acts) transformed the argument between the colonies and Great Britain from a dispute over the right to taxation into a challenge to any parliamentary authority' (Bailyn).

Do you agree with this statement? The Intolerable Acts brought the disagreement between the colonies and Great Britain from an argument over taxes to a much higher level, in which the entire parliamentary authority was confronted. The colonists were originally upset with the taxes Britain was imposing on them such as the Trade and Navigation Acts, the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act and the Townshend Revenue Act. But as its name suggests, the Intolerable Acts were those that pushed the Americans to their limit. Their impact encouraged all colonies to unite, to become more aware of their political circumstances, to fight for their country, and, ultimately, to gain independence from the British Empire. The original function of the colonies in America was to provide Britain with raw materials, to use Britain's manufacturers, and to create employment for Britain's shipping industry. The Trade and Navigation Acts 1651-1750 gave England complete control by enabling them to put the theory of mercantilism into practice.

This meant that the colonies paid Britain for being in the empire, by paying import duties on foreign goods. In 1763, George Grenville became Prime Minister in Britain. National debt in Britain was astronomical at the time after the war with France. Grenville was concerned about the colonies and decided to place 15,000 British troops in America. Grenville desperately needed to find a way to raise funds to pay for the upkeep of this army and to clear the National Debt.

He felt that it was only fair that the Americans should pay for the army, who were protecting them, as the English were already being substantially taxed. The Sugar Act in 1764 was a tax on molasses. The money from this tax was to be used to maintain British troops. Nine colonies protested against this Act. Not only was their trade being hit, but this money was going to be used to pay for soldiers that they did not want there in the first place.

They said that parliament in Britain was abusing their authority. Grenville introduced the Stamp Act in 1765. This was an internal tax that affected every Americans life. The colonists had to buy a special stamped paper for legal forms, newspapers and cards. It forced the Americans to pay revenue to the crown. Marrin's view is that, ' the Stamp Act was the biggest mistake in Grenville's career.

People vowed to resist the Stamp Act before it did any harm' . The Americans were outraged with the Stamp Act and argued ' no taxation without representation'; they did not want to pay taxes, when they had no voice in Britain. Grenville reacted by saying they had ' virtual representation' making them part of the British Empire, but the Americans deplored this idea. In retaliation, Americans boycotted British goods such as tea, beer and wool; British exports fell by 14%. In 1766, the British government repealed the Stamp Act, once they did, the boycott stopped. The shock of the Stamp Act united the colonies in common protest for the first time.

This shows the beginning of an interest in politics and activity in America. In 1766, Charles Townshend replaced William Pitt and established the American Board of Public Commissioners, who would enforce all Navigation Acts in

order to limit smuggling and attain more revenue for the crown. Townshend introduced his Revenue Act in 1767, which consisted of new external taxes on products such as paint, paper and tea. The money from these taxes would be used to pay salaries of governors and judges in colonies, so now these men were being paid by Britain. John Dickinson, writing letters from ' a farmer' in Pennsylvania, urged the colonists to reject all kinds of parliamentary taxation for money that would be used in Britain: '.

.. that duties laid for the sole purpose of raising money, are taxes – that attempts to lay such duties should be instantly and firmly opposed (through the) united effort of these provinces...

' The impact of this was to be seen in 1768 when 40% of British imports were kept out of America. Female colonists played a highly public role at this time and became known as the Daughters of Liberty. Women spun wool to make clothes for their husbands and decided not to drink British tea. The consequence of these actions by the colonists saw Britain repeal all duties except for the tea duty. This was to prove that parliament had the right to tax the colonies.

Money from the taxes raised in the 1773 Tea Act would be used by parliament to pay royal governors salaries so they would be independent to the colonies. In America, Samuel Adams urged the colonists to send the tea back to Britain. A group of Bostonians, disguised as Indians, boarded a ship at night and dumped ? 10, 000 worth of British tea. This became known as the Boston Tea Party. It was an act of revolutionary defiance.

John Adams described it as 'the most magnificent movement in history'. In response to the events of the Boston Tea Party, the British parliament passed a series of laws called the Intolerable (Coercive) Acts in 1774. These Acts were: the 'Boston Port Act', closing down all trade of Massachusetts; the 'Massachusetts Government Act', Massachusetts was no longer allowed to govern themselves; the 'Administration of Justice Act', any person charged with murder while trying to enforce the law would be tried in England; and the 'Quartering Act', allowing British troops to be housed in any empty building. Marrin describes these acts as 'an alarm bell for all Americans.

What was happening in Boston might happen in any town. Boston was suffering for American rights and deserved American support' The Intolerable Acts were harsh, designed to cut Massachusetts off, and to make an example of them to the rest of the colonies. But this idea backfired on Britain. The eventual repeal of the Intolerable Acts is central to the Declaration of Independence. The Acts transformed the argument from tax problems to all authority problems. The colonists decided that they needed to support Massachusetts against Britain.

They needed to politically mobilise people against Britain. By 1774, all colonies were having mass meetings. A threat to one colony was a threat to all. Old leadership was pushed aside for leaders who were opposed to Britain. These new politicians consisted of a wide cultural, religious and working elite. The first Continental Congress met in September 1774.

Committees sent 55 delegates from all colonies, except Georgia, who tried to find a way of negotiating with Britain without going to war. The Suffolk Resolves declared that the colonies should boycott British imports; ignore measures taken against Massachusetts; set up a provisional government; and take up defensive measures. These agreements were enforced by the Committees of Safety. Essentially, Americans were taking charge of their own affairs. They summarised their demands in the Declaration of Rights which they sent to King George III.

During 1774-1775, all British exports to America fell by 90% and by the spring of 1775 a whole new government was created in America. At the second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, they decided to send an olive branch petition to George III. It pledged loyalty to George III and its demands included a ceasefire at Boston, the repeal of the Intolerable Acts and negotiations to establish guarantees of American rights. Events started moving rapidly after this with the country on the brink of war. A major battle was fought at Concord and another at Bunker Hill. America was becoming more independent and Franklin described its colonists as a 'new rising people with self-confidence in their ability to manage their own affairs'.

Americans felt it was their responsibility to defend their freedom from British corruptness. America was no longer simply challenging duties that were being imposed on them by the British Empire. Events had forced the colonies to unite and become politically involved in the fate of their entire country. The Intolerable Acts mark the critical turning point in highlighting what the Americans were actually fighting for. They now had the confidence and

competence to challenge political authority and ‘dismiss and defeat’ the old world.

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