

Resource Sheet #8

Do not Tax the Colonies

In 1766, the British government asked Benjamin Franklin to explain the colonists' views on the Stamp Act to a committee.

Q. What was the [attitude] of America toward Great Britain before the year 1763?

A. The best in the world. They submitted willingly to the government of the crown, and paid, in their courts, obedience to the acts of Parliament. Numerous as the people are in the several old provinces, they cost you nothing in forts... or armies, to keep them in subjection. They were governed by this country at the expense only of a little pen, ink, and paper; they were led by a thread.

They had not only a respect, but an affection for Great Britain; for its laws, its customs and manners, and even a fondness for its fashions, that greatly increased the commerce. Natives of Britain were always treated with particular regard...

Q. What is their temper now?

A. O, very much altered.

Q. In what light did the people of America use to consider the Parliament of Great Britain?

A. They considered the Parliament as the great [protection] and security of their liberties and privileges, and always spoke of it with the utmost respect and [admiration].

Q. And have they not still the same respect for Parliament?

A. No, it is greatly lessened.

Q. To what cause is that owing?

A. To a concurrence of causes; the restraints lately laid on their trade by which the bringing of foreign gold and silver into the colonies was prevented; the prohibition of making paper money among themselves, and then demanding a new and heavy tax by stamps, taking away, at the same time, trials by juries, and refusing to receive and hear their humble petitions.

Q. If the Stamp Act should be repealed, would it induce the assemblies of America to acknowledge the rights of Parliament to tax them, and would they erase their resolutions?

A. No, never.

Q. Is there a power on earth that can force them to erase them?

A. No power, how great soever, can force men to change their opinions.

Q. What used to be the pride of the Americans?

A. To indulge in the fashions and manufactures of Great Britain.

Q. What is now their pride?

A. To wear their old clothes over again, till they can make new ones.

Glossary:

submitted – agreed

subjection – obedience

affection – friendship

commerce – trade

concurrence of causes – several causes

petition – request for things to change

repeal – take away

prohibit - forbid

restraints – limits

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