

civil or Military under this Constitution, the Governor of the Provinces in which such Vacancy happens may appoint till the Pleasure of the President General and Grand Council be known.—That the particular Military as well as civil Establishments in each Colony remain in their present State, this General Constitution notwithstanding; and that on Sudden Emergencies any Colony may defend itself, and lay the Accounts of Expence Thence arisen before the President General and Grand Council, who may allow and order payment of the same as far as they judge such Accounts just and reasonable.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was to be the imperial government's relationship with the newly formed General Government? What would define the relationship between this government and those of the individual colonies?
2. How did the delegates propose to organize this government?
3. What were to be the main duties of the General Government?
4. What power would enable this government to carry out these duties?

STAMP ACT CONGRESS

FROM Declaration of Rights and Grievances of the Colonies (1765)

The king's chief minister in 1765, George Grenville, was determined to have the colonies help defray the costs of the vast empire of which they were a part. Among the various solutions he proposed that were enacted by Parliament was a stamp duty. Starting in November of that year, the colonists were to buy and affix stamps to all sorts of printed matter. These stamps did not represent postage fees, nor were they to help regulate trade; they were to be used simply as a way to raise money for the government from within the colonies. Although the Stamp Act was easily passed in Parliament, its implementation in the colonies was another matter altogether. In the midst of riots and other mob actions, the representative bodies of various colonial governments, such as the House of Burgesses in Virginia, met and drew up resolutions that not only denounced the act but established the constitutional argument for denying Parliament's right to tax the colonies. To send a stronger message across the Atlantic, nine of the colonies also acted in concert: their representatives met that October in New York City in what became known as the Stamp Act Congress. These delegates issued resolutions and petitions to both the king and the two houses of Parliament establishing the colonial position. The combination of both economic and ideological interests can be seen in the resolutions passed by the Stamp Act Congress in October 1765.

From Journal of the First Congress of the American Colonies in Opposition to the Tyrannical Acts of the British Parliament, 1775 (New York, 1845), pp. 27–29.

The members of this Congress, sincerely devoted with the warmest sentiments of affection and duty to His Majesty's person and Government, inviolably attached to the present happy establishment of the Protestant succession, and with minds deeply impressed by a sense of the present and impending misfortunes of the British colonies on this continent; having considered as maturely as time will permit the circumstances of the said colonies, esteem it our indispensable duty to make the following declarations of our humble opinion respecting the most essential rights and liberties of the colonists, and of the grievances under which they labour, by reason of several late Acts of Parliament.

I. That His Majesty's subjects in these colonies owe the same allegiance to the Crown of Great Britain that is owing from his subjects born within the realm, and all due subordination to that august body the Parliament of Great Britain.

II. That His Majesty's liege subjects in these colonies are intitled to all the inherent rights and liberties of his natural born subjects within the kingdom of Great Britain.

III. That it is inseparably essential to the freedom of a people, and the undoubted right of Englishmen, that no taxes be imposed on them but with their own consent, given personally or by their representatives.

IV. That the people of these colonies are not, and from their local circumstances cannot be, represented in the House of Commons in Great Britain.

V. That the only representatives of the people of these colonies are persons chosen therein by themselves, and that no taxes ever have been, or can be constitutionally imposed on them, but by their respective legislatures.

VI. That all supplies to the Crown being free gifts of the people, it is unreasonable and inconsistent with the principles and spirit of the British Constitution, for the people of Great Britain to grant to His Majesty the property of the colonists.

VII. That trial by jury is the inherent and invaluable right of every British subject in these colonies.

VIII. That the late Act of Parliament, entitled *An Act for granting and applying certain stamp duties, and other duties, in the British colonies and plantations in America, etc.*, by imposing taxes on the inhabitants of these colonies; and the said Act, and several other Acts, by extending the jurisdiction of the courts of Admiralty beyond its ancient limits, have a manifest tendency to subvert the rights and liberties of the colonists.

IX. That the duties imposed by several late Acts of Parliament, from the peculiar circumstances of these colonies, will be extremely burthensome and grievous; and from the scarcity of specie, the payment of them absolutely impracticable.

X. That as the profits of the trade of these colonies ultimately center in Great Britain, to pay for the manufactures which they are obliged to take from thence, they eventually contribute very largely to all supplies granted there to the Crown.

XI. That the restrictions imposed by several late Acts of Parliament on the trade of these colonies will render them unable to purchase the manufactures of Great Britain.

XII. That the increase, prosperity, and happiness of these colonies depend on the full and free enjoyments of their rights and liberties, and an intercourse with Great Britain mutually affectionate and advantageous.

XIII. That it is the right of the British subjects in these colonies to petition the King or either House of Parliament.

Lastly, That it is the indispensable duty of these colonies to the best of sovereigns, to the mother country, and to themselves, to endeavour by a loyal and dutiful address to His Majesty, and humble applications to both Houses of Parliament, to procure the repeal of the Act for granting and applying certain stamp duties, of all clauses of any other Acts of Parliament, whereby the jurisdiction of the Admiralty is extended as aforesaid, and of the other late Acts for the restriction of American commerce.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Did the members of the congress deny the authority of Parliament over the colonies?
2. What did they deem to be at issue here: their duties to the government or their rights as English subjects?
3. What were their grievances?
4. Did they appear more concerned about the constitutional issues raised by this act or the possible economic repercussions? Why?

JOHN DICKINSON

FROM *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (1767–68)

In 1767 John Dickinson, a well-educated and wealthy lawyer in his thirties, began writing the popular essays that in the following year were collected and published together as Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania. Dickinson was no radical (as a member of the Second Continental Congress he abstained in the vote for independence), but he was determined to protect his fellow colonists' rights to life, liberty, and property. In a moderate, reasonable tone, Dickinson articulated the American position against the Townshend Acts. Before he died, Charles Townshend, chancellor of the Exchequer, had pushed the acts through in his determination to raise money in America that could be used not only to help defray the costs of the troops in the colonies but also to pay the royal officials there so that they would be independent of popular control. Dickinson outlined a reasonable program of protest but, unfortunately for the moderates in the colonies, it was doomed when expectations on both sides of the Atlantic were not met.

From *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania, to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies* (Philadelphia: David Hall and William Sellers, 1768), pp. 7–17. Reprinted in *Empire and Nation: Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania, John Dickinson, Letters from the Federal Farmer, Richard Henry Lee*, intro. Forrest McDonald (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 7–20. [Editorial insertions appear in square brackets—Ed.]

Letter II

My dear Countrymen,

There is another late act of parliament, which appears to me to be unconstitutional, and as destructive to the liberty of these colonies, as that mentioned in my last letter; that is, the act for granting the duties on paper, glass, etc.

The parliament unquestionably possesses a legal authority to regulate the trade of Great Britain, and all her colonies. Such an authority is essential to the relation between a mother country and her colonies; and necessary for the common good of all. He who considers these provinces as states distinct from the *British Empire*, has very slender notions of justice, or of their interests. We