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Causes and Consequences of the American Revolutionary War

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Introduction

Revolutions are not uncommon in history. One does not have to look far to see many examples that occur all around us and often without much notice. Occasionally something will happen in some corner of the world that heightens awareness and creates concern. Dramatic change can create interest, but the consequences of those changes are what elevates the interest in calculating why change occurred and what happened afterward. Throughout history, the American Revolution one of the most noted social and political uprisings that ever occurred. In order to grasp the reality of it, many have compared it to other revolutions around the world, especially those that occurred in a proximate timeframe, such as the French Revolution. To do so is to miss much of the unique character of the American experience. When one reviews the society of America in the eighteenth century, the ideas that were coming from this social grouping were quite unique. “The remarkable revolutionary character of the American’s idea . . . indicates that something profoundly unsettling was going on in society. The very nature of the colonist’s rhetoric, its obsession with corruption and order, its hostile and conspiratorial outlook, and its millennial vision of a regenerated society reveals as nothing else can the American Revolution as a true revolution with its sources lying deep within the social structure.”¹

The revolution was like a divorce, only on a societal scale rather than an individual one. The initial goals of each side began to change with time. As in any long-term relationship, there is a need to adjust to the shifts or growth of each party or the

¹ Gordon S. Wood, “Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXIII (1966): 31.

relationship fades. A distance can develop that may be initiated from a lack of clarity as to the goals, aspirations, and values of each side. Without mutually agreed upon change and without a mutual desire to see to the best interests of the other, the respect between two people can be adversely compromised. This is not unlike the relationship of the Americans and their sponsors across the sea. The initial relationship changed from dependence to symbiosis to equivalency. That each side had a part in these developments and was incapable of making adjustments to their overall outlook towards each other lead inevitably to conflict.

There was a variance in goals for each side. From the beginning, the colonies had developed based on several need factors. Some came for religious freedom, some for economic opportunity, some for the adventure of a new world, and some because of the political instability of their homeland. The response of the British was haphazard at best. The initial settlers in the new world were largely unregulated. The settlement at Jamestown was an attempt to make as much money as possible. Later the King would get involved. He began to benefit from further adventures and attempted to moderately regulate the process by granting charters in selected areas. The monarchy was also relieved to have religious dissenters leave the country. King James I said of the Puritans, “I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land,”² and by getting some of them to emigrate he achieved that end. The Separatists had begun to leave just prior to this, not quite as despised but bid good riddance none the less. The gap in attitude as to religious control was never resolved. In fact, the colonists had grown so accustomed to religious freedom by the Revolution that one of the moving forces pushing for separation

² Henry William Elson, *History of the United States of America* (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1904), 98.

from the mother country was the fear after the French and Indian War that the British would try to establish the Anglican Church as the only legal religion in the colonies.

Just as a person grows and can decide to embrace growth or resent it, the colonies had grown. It was something that the British never quite understood. There were new goals in Britain, initiated by the conflict between the monarchy and the Parliament for political power. After the Glorious Revolution the shift of control away from the King initiated an ability to look outwards. Increased wealth led to an increasingly larger navy, which had been a British strength since they were ruled by the Danes in the eleventh century.³ The navy allowed Britain to explore and develop commercial interests around the world. There was also the aspect of competition from other European countries as seeking new colonies became public policy for many British rivals. Establishing colonies meant that British influence would be expanded, British pride would grow, and that the British economy would benefit. One of the disagreements that the colonists had as they grew stronger is that the British mercantile attitude toward them did not vary. Britain always looked to a colony as a source of raw materials and a market for manufactured goods, and the Americas were no exception. The rapid growth of the population of the colonies in the eighteenth century was an added benefit to the British as it fit neatly into this model. The colonists saw their growth differently, and grew to resent the fact that the homeland said it was illegal to even import blueprints for new industry into the Americas, as it had the potential to limit the market for manufactured goods there. The Americans became increasingly confused as to the goals of Britain for them. There had been an unstated assumption in the colonies that there was a paternalistic desire from the mother

³ M.K. Lawson, *Cnut: The Dane in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1995), 11.

country to want the best for them. The increasingly overt economic selfishness on the part of Britain was initially confusing and later a violent source of conflict in the colonies. As America developed over a century and a half from Jamestown to the French and Indian War the population grew to nearly two million.⁴ There was a desire to utilize the natural resources for the people that lived in this country, rather than send them on to Britain.

Britain had no other real goal for the colonies other than its overriding concept of mercantilism. There was at best an uneven level of participation in governing the America. Besides the royal charters, which only covered a portion of the colonies, the only real executive office of authority from England was the Board of Trade. However, the Board of Trade divided its control among several ministers and commissioners that failed to act in a timely manner or in unison with each other. Even though this British governing board knew more about what was going on in the colonies than any other branch of government, it did not have the power to make decisions or enforce decrees. Often British officials that were sent to the colonies were only there as a result of buying the position or because they were not competent enough to hold a government office in England. An example of this was Lord North. “North was the kind of politician George had been looking for—a plodding, dogged, industrious man, neither a fool nor a genius, much like the king himself. For the next twelve years, despite the opposition of abler men, he remained the head of the government.”⁵

A marriage relationship is initiated with the expectation of mutual advantage to both parties. This was also the idea behind the way the British and Americans viewed

⁴ Jack P. Greene, “From *The Preconditions of the American Revolution*.” In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 55.

⁵ John M. Blum, *The National Experience* (Fort Worth: Hartcourt Brace College Publishers, 1992), 104.

their ongoing commitments. Most Americans that returned to Britain for a time said they were “going home.” Americans were viewed and saw themselves as British citizens, and Britain in the eighteenth century was full of pride. They considered themselves, with all their colonies and achievements in science and the arts to be the most accomplished people in the world. The British form of government, with its balance between monarchy and Parliament, was seen as the pinnacle of human design. This opinion, also held in the colonies, began to shift in the West when laws started to be passed that were overtly prejudicial to the colonies. One of the first of this type was the Sugar and Molasses Act of 1733. A very successful part of the New England and Middle Colonies economies was the importation of sugar and molasses, which was made into rum. The primary source of the raw materials for this came from the West Indies. Britain realized that the Americans were buying French molasses because it was cheaper. This Act of Parliament was a tax that only applied to the importation of the French products into the colonies. The tax was not meant to raise revenue—its purpose was to make the British products cheaper than the ones the French had been selling. The tax “threatened New England with ruin, struck a blow at the economic foundations of the Middle Colonies, and at the same time opened the way of the British West Indies—whom the continental colonists regarded as their worst enemies—to wax rich at the expense of their fellow subjects on the mainland.”⁶ This law was impossible for the colonists to understand. How could the mother country do such a thing? This law benefitted Britain slightly, by smoothing out the sales from its holdings in the West Indies. At the same time it would have a devastating effect on the colonists. Americans had structured their laws and designed governing bodies successfully from the start. They were offended that Parliament would begin passing laws

⁶ John C. Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown), 95.

that interfered in their affairs. The view of Britain as benevolent and caring was being fractured. For sometime, the disappointment was centered on Parliament. The colonists came to believe that the King, who was the physical head of the homeland and through whose charters the colonies existed, was still a kind and loving agent. Parliament was seen as superfluous and later as the source of the conflict. Did any of the charters mention Parliament in the formation of the colonies? Did any of the colonies have any representation in Parliament? The only way to avoid economic ruin was to circumvent it by smuggling French sugar and molasses.

Against the Molasses Act, Americans had only their smugglers to depend upon—but these redoubtable gentry proved more than a match for the British. After a brief effort to enforce the act in Massachusetts in the 1740s, the English government tacitly accepted defeat and foreign molasses was smuggled into the Northern colonies in ever-increasing quantity. Thus the New England merchants survived—but only by nullifying an act of Parliament.⁷

This act by Parliament was opposed by the colonists and largely ignored. The smuggling that circumvented this law effectively nullified it. This success caused a realization in the colonies that Britain would back down when pressed about enforcement of laws, especially ones the colonists considered unfair. The view that British administrators in the colonies were corrupt or inefficient merely added to this overall sense of disrespect for British law.

The Great Awakening that began in Europe and continued its powerful changes in the colonies in the 1730s created a lasting change that made it a precursor to the revolutionary spirit that was to come. Many colonies had been established for religious

⁷ Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution*, 99.

freedom. Catholics had found a haven in Maryland, Baptists in Rhode Island and Quakers in Pennsylvania. This religious fervor was dampened by the material success of the colonies. This change was exemplified by the Half-Way Covenant of 1662, which allowed non-church members to seek political office.

The Great Awakening renewed the spirit of religious freedom that had been lost in the colonies. There was an increasing sensitivity to the fact that true religious freedom was concomitant with political freedom. “The Great Awakening unleashed and mobilized widespread discontent with existing religious establishments...from this discontent emerged a militant evangelicalism that rejected many aspects of the traditional social as well as religious order of the colonies.”⁸ The spiritual renewal of the Great Awakening sensitized the population in the colonies to the increasingly onerous demands placed on them by Parliament. This “prepared the colonists intellectually and emotionally for the rejection of British authority after 1763 by calling into question or otherwise undermining confidence in the authority of traditional religious, social and political institutions and leaders.”⁹

As the 1750s approached, war was on the horizon. Conflict between the British and French was nothing new—they had fought three wars against each other since the colonial period began. Each of these had begun on the continent and spilled over to the colonies. This war would start in America, and would eventually lead to a European engagement as well. The French and Indian War, as it was known in the colonies, became a catalyst for change in the Americas. This war expanded the issues that were already fulminating and added others to the mix. The results would lead to revolution.

⁸ Greene, Jack P. "The Social Origins of the American Revolution: An Evaluation and Interpretation." *Political Science Quarterly* 88, no. 1 (1973): 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

The French and Indian War

War between Britain and France was not unusual. There had been three wars between the two countries since the American colonial period prior to 1754. The last of these, King George's War, ended in 1748 with the French in control of a string of forts in the Ohio River valley west of the Allegheny Mountains. The French became comfortable in this region because it suited their economic interests. The Native Americans had traditionally sided with the French for several reasons. The English, who were far more numerous, were largely farmers. This meant that when they came into an area, they stayed and they also cut down trees. The removing of forests meant that the traditional hunting grounds of the Indians were threatened. The French were, like the Natives, largely fur trappers. This created a desire for intimate relations with the Indians by the French, for they would know where the best places to hunt would be. The Natives felt that they were treated more equitably by the French, and there was a much more extensive effort on the part of the French to develop social relations with the Indians, such as learning their languages and in many cases taking brides from the Natives.¹⁰

The increased French presence and the potential barrier this caused to future westward expansion concerned the English enough to send a 22 year-old American named George Washington to transport a message to the French. Washington had received training in the Virginia militia and had a strong desire to become a British officer, so he went willingly. The British note required the French to vacate the area, which they declined to do. However, while on the trip Washington noted, perhaps with the eye of the surveyor that was his principle occupation, that a key site for a potential

¹⁰ William M. Fowler, Jr., *Empires at War: The French and Indian War and the Struggle for North America* (New York: Walker and Co., 2005), 43.

future fort was in this area. The knoll where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers joined to form the beginnings of the Ohio River had a commanding view of the area and would later become Fort Duquesne. A few months after this, Washington returned with a number of troops and defeated the French in an area just north of the now constructed French fort. He built an appropriately named Fort Necessity. That summer the French will attack this fort and win, which caused the war to begin in earnest.

The British strategy, devised by William Pitt, was to win the war in the colonies by taking Canada from the French. France did hold most of the most strategic areas and had the key connection with the Indians. The English began the war with twice as many soldiers as the French and increased that advantage as the conflict progressed. Canada fell to the English in the famous Battle for Quebec in 1759, held outside the city on the Plains of Abraham. The British commander, James Wolfe, died in the battle, but the victory for the English meant that France, as part of the provisions of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, had to surrender all of her territorial ambitions in the colonial area.¹¹

The French and Indian War caused the colonists to view Britain differently and was a catalyst for the revolution that was to come. The British goals in the American colonies also underwent a radical shift, and the actions that came from this philosophical change confused the colonists and exacerbated the schism that was developing.

The British had always seen the Americans as extensions of themselves. But the Puritan work ethic and the moral value it gave labor combined with the greater opportunities for success in the colonies had left many Americans more successful than

¹¹ William B. Willcox and Walter Arnstein, *The Age of Aristocracy, 1688-1830* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1996), 123.

their British counterparts.¹² When the British saw the wealth of the Americans and also realized how much the French and Indian had cost, there was a natural desire to require the Americans to pay the bill. Later, William Hicks of Philadelphia would ask Americans “to remember exactly how Parliament had first reacted to the false reports of wealth. Had that body not immediately imposed new taxes?”¹³

The British were already angry at the Americans for trading with the French during the war. Now they decided to impose some of the tighter controls they had envisioned just before the war but had yet to implement. The British felt that the colonists had performed badly as soldiers during the war, lacking proper discipline. For the colonists’ part, they had noticed the use of guerrilla tactics by the French and the Indians and saw how effective they were against the redcoats.

The British and Americans agreed that “the empire owed its ascendance almost entirely to international commerce, (and) that trade was the indispensable source of national wealth and military power.”¹⁴ Their interpretation of this concept was widely divergent, however. The Americans had seen themselves as an integral part of the British trade machine that made up the Empire. They had begun to chafe under the overt mercantilist goals of the British that had started to become an issue before the war. American merchants did not want to curtail their profits for the sake of the Mother Country. At the end of the war, the colonists believed that they had been essential in the British victory—that the British would have failed without them. They also saw that many of the British soldiers had treated them with a condescending attitude that peeved

¹² Gordon S. Wood, “From *The Revolution Destroyed Monarchy and Paved the Way for Democracy.*” In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

the Americans. The colonists had seen that they could achieve great things. They had grown used to running their own government and doing it very efficiently. These factors contributed to the Americans beginning to view themselves as a separate entity from the British, and “several colonies had become . . . ‘pockets of approximate independence’ within the transatlantic imperial policy.”¹⁵ The post-war view was that the Americans would take a “larger role within the empire, a role that would raise the status of the colonies . . . to . . . a near equivalence with the mother country.”¹⁶ The British saw that they had run up a tremendous debt in fighting a war for an area that belonged to them and was largely ungrateful. The expectation was that they needed to ‘whip the colonists into shape’ and impose taxes and reforms that would return control of the area to the monarchy.

The colonists saw that the war had removed a great impediment for expansion—the French were out of the Ohio River Valley. In fact, the French threat, and to some extent the threat of their Indian allies, had been eliminated. The unbridled expansion of the colonists was just what the British did not want to happen. Growing colonies would be harder to control, and now the British did not need colonial aid to fend off the French. The British saw that the large number of troops remaining in the colonies would be a powerful instrument to enforce their plans for the area. The Americans had grown to resent the British, and had noted their weakness of authority.¹⁷ They saw no need for the British soldiers to stay in the colonies. The British had grown weary of coddling the Americans. Increased authority often leads to a lessening of caution, and the British no

¹⁵ Jack P. Greene, “From *The Preconditions of the American Revolution*.” In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), p.58.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.57.

¹⁷ Jack P. Greene, “From *The Preconditions of the American Revolution*.” In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 57.

doubt felt that they did not have to be as selective with their proclamations now compared to before the war.

Other Causes of the War

As the French and Indian War subsided, other factors that had been created by the war or exacerbated by it were now ready to be acted on. The Navigation Acts had begun as early as 1642 and were designed to protect British shipping and ensure that the American colonies would be as profitable as possible. An act passed in 1660 had prohibited the import or export of a list of goods such as sugar, wool and tobacco from any British colony to anywhere but Britain. Duties were to be paid for the British shipments and these were extended in 1672 to include the enumerated items being shipped from colony to colony. Had the duties actually been collected, the impact on the colonial economy would have been tremendous. However, there was a lack of enforcement by the British. In the few instances where enforcement was attempted, a thriving smuggling operation became evident.¹⁸ The British could not justifiably condemn the Americans for smuggling, as the British economy was dependant on similar activities. It has been estimated that forty thousand people in England claimed smuggling as their principle occupation.¹⁹ Some of the Navigation Act actually benefitted the colonists. An example would be the protection of American tobacco. England had prohibited the raising of this product during the reign of King James I because of his

¹⁸ George Louis Beer, *The Commercial Policy of England toward the American Colonies* (New York: Peter Smith, 1948), 82.

¹⁹ Philip H. Stanhope, *Life of the Right Honourable William Pitt* (London: John Murray, 1862), 215.

aversion to it. Later, duties would be added to tobacco from any area other than the colonies.

In 1761 James Otis, representing Boston merchants, gave a speech against the increased use of writs of assistance, which were a reaction to the increased smuggling. A principle concern was that these writs were non-specific court orders that allowed searches at any time and for anything. The use of these types of writs would be expanded with the introduction of the Townshend Acts in 1767. Otis was a brilliant lawyer, highly capable of the well-turned phrase to make his point. In arguing that the writs were illegal, he coined the term that “a man’s home is his castle” and that Parliament was infringing on a person’s natural rights with this legal action. He was conciliatory at this time, saying “let the parliament lay what burdens they please on us, we must, it is our duty to submit and patiently bear them, till they will be pleased to relieve us . . .”²⁰ Otis would shortly not be so humble, making popular the phrase, “Taxation without representation is tyranny.” A young John Adams, who observed Otis’ speech in Boston Superior Court is said to have commented, “Today American independence is born.”²¹

The Navigation Acts not only showed the lack of moral purpose of the British by their selective enforcement and tacit approval of smuggling, but the overt aims it had of making the colonies profitable. The mercantile vision of Britain was successful—in 1759 the value of the goods sent from Britain to New England was nearly sixteen times the value of the goods traveling in the other direction.²² These actions by the British increasingly caused resentment and forced the Americans to become suspicious of

²⁰ Richard Hildreth, *The History of the United States, Vol. II*, (New York: Harvard College Library, 1877), 522.

²¹ *Ibid*, 523.

²² Beer, *Commercial Policy of England*, 82.

English motives. “The deliberate selfishness of the English commercial legislation was digging a chasm between the mother country and the colonists.”²³

Benjamin Franklin had been in a group that devised the Albany Plan in 1754. This would have planned a coordinated military response to the French by the colonists and Britain.²⁴ It was doomed to failure, as neither side was able to agree on how to proceed. It did provide an early opportunity for various colonists to meet and discuss their concerns.

Once the fighting started, the Americans learned a great deal about the twenty-one thousand British soldiers that were mobilized for the war by 1758.²⁵ The colonists admired the way the British trained and the skill that they exhibited in going about their tasks. The most striking characteristic of the British regulars was their haughtiness.²⁶ They felt that they could not rely on the colonists and resented the colonist being occasionally not as focused as the regulars. In turn, the New Englanders also noted the lack of a moral focus by the Britons. The Americans attitude was “that men ought to be knit together as one in the common pursuit of God’s will.”²⁷ The British showed their lewdness by allowing female camp followers. They also swore with regularity, something that offended the sensibilities of many of the Americans.²⁸

The Proclamation of 1763 had been issued with the purpose of prohibiting settlements that occurred west of an imaginary line that ran down the crest of the Appalachian Mountains. The first goal of the decree was to avoid further conflict with the

²³ William E.H. Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, (New York: Appleton, 1903), 241.

²⁴ Benjamin Franklin, “From *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*.” In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 72.

²⁵ P.J. Marshall, “From *Britain Defined by Its Empire*.” In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 88.

²⁶ Fred Anderson, “From *Friction between Colonial Troops and British Regulars*.” In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 79.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 85.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 81.

Indians. The French and Indian War had still left a considerable Native force, and defending white settlers was beyond the capacity of the British troops that remained. Second, by attempting to concentrate settlements near the seaboard the mercantile goals of the mother country could be maintained. There was room for future expansion both north into Canada and south into Florida, and this would also help Britain establish these areas that had been won in the recent war. From the perspective of the colonists, this was exactly what they did not want to hear. They felt that one of the goals that would be achieved from eliminating French influence in this area was the opening up of the land for further speculation. The colonists felt that preventing this would be a limitation of their basic rights. Taken in perspective, the Proclamation of 1763 probably would have not been a long-term source of irritation. Adjustments to the line set by the Proclamation were made starting the next year, and where colonists felt they could get away with it, the settlement requirements were ignored. However, this law of the Crown, taken in context with other restrictive measures that followed closely, increased the colonists desire to react strongly against it.²⁹

In 1764, Prime Minister George Grenville revisited the Molasses Act of 1733 as a means of raising revenue. The British national debt had doubled during the war with the French and Grenville was adamant about lowering it. The Molasses Act had largely been ignored; the sixpence charge was rather steep and both sides were making money, so it was convenient to tacitly disregard the smuggling that was occurring. Grenville decided to enforce the old law strictly, but cut the tax rate in half.³⁰ The items taxed were expanded, however, to include things like cloth and coffee. American exports were to be

²⁹ Franklin B. Wickwire, "John Pownall and British Colonial Policy," *William and Mary Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1963) : 547.

³⁰ Willcox and Arnstein, *Age of Aristocracy*, 157.

closely monitored as well. The immediate effect was a tremendous financial hardship for the Middle and Northern Colonies. The slowing economy caused a drop in currency circulation and an increased attempt to pay for goods with paper money. This trend would lead to the Currency Act of 1764.

Together with other moves by Parliament, the Sugar Act greatly heightened the rebellious spirit of the colonists. These decisions had affected people where they felt it the most—in their pocket. They also could not understand the reasoning of the Crown and did not subscribe to the self-serving concept of mercantilism. The average American of this time agreed that Parliament had the right to regulate trade for the British Empire, but the Sugar Act was not regulation. It was specifically designed to raise money, and had been conceived in a legislative body that had no colonial representation. Many more people began to agree with James Otis that there should be “no taxation without representation.”³¹

The Currency Act, passed the same year as the Sugar Act, was intended to resolve an issue that the later act had created. Money in the form of coins seldom circulated at this time in the colonies. Most payments for services were through a barter system. With the downturn in the economy there was an increased attempt to use paper money, especially script that had been created in the colonies. This “money” was of questionable value. Grenville, by this act, required that paper money could no longer be used as legal tender in the colonies and that paper money in circulation be removed as soon as possible.³² The Currency Act was a blow to the average working class who had hoped to

³¹ David L. Jacobson, “John Dickinson’s Fight Against Royal Government, 1764,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1962): 68.

³² Jack P. Greene and Richard M. Jellison, “The Currency Act of 1764 in Imperial-Colonial Relations, 1764-1776,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1961), 488.

get through their economic woes by using cheap paper money. The wealthy had already been harmed by the Sugar Act. Now both ends of the economic spectrum were irate with the acts of Parliament.

The next measure designed to raise revenue was the Stamp Act, passed in 1765. The act was promoted by Prime Minister Grenville as a means to pay for the British soldiers—funds collected would be reserved solely for this purpose. At this point the British were not trying to be onerous to the colonies; the act was considered to be a reasonable response to the economic need and was similar to a requirement that was used in England. The Stamp Act required that stamped paper be used for everything from legal documents to playing cards. The stamp was the proof that the tax had been collected.³³

Protests were immediate and fierce. Previous taxes, such as the Sugar Act, had been indirect and external. This tax was direct and internal; every colonist understood how they were applied directly to the work they did. A formal response was the Virginia Stamp Act Resolutions.³⁴ It had been especially irritating that violators of the act would be tried in vice-admiralty courts. The Stamp Act Congress wrote, “That the late Act of Parliament . . . 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.”³⁵ The Stamp Act created a response that underlined the colonist’s view that Parliament had no right to tax them. Taxes had come from seemingly every direction and had affected all ranks of people in America. Reaction escalated to violence. The Stamp Act riots used force to intimidate tax collection agents and boycotts of British goods, called

³³ Willcox and Arnstein, *Age of Aristocracy*, 166.

³⁴ “*Virginia Stamp Act Resolutions*,” From *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 99.

³⁵ “*The Declarations of the Stamp Act Congress, 1765*,” From *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 102.

nonimportation agreements,³⁶ were organized. A firebrand group called the Sons of Liberty intimidated merchants who failed to support the boycott. Colonial representatives of the Grenville government reported that “because of their client’s declarations the battle was being transformed into a test of Parliament’s authority. The main issue was no longer raising revenue, but putting the Americans in their place.”³⁷

Grenville resigned in June of 1765; the failure of the Stamp Act had caused an economic recession in Britain. After much debate, the Stamp Acts were repealed. “One of the principle arguments which the opposition had used against the repeal of the Stamp Act was that the colonies would interpret it as a sign of weakness, that whatever reason Parliament assigned for repeal, the Americans would believe that their own resistance had been the real cause.”³⁸ In order to save face, Parliament passed the Declaratory Act in the same month of the Stamp Act repeal. A portion of it said:

Parliament assembled, had, hath, and of a right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and the people of America, subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, *in all cases whatsoever*.³⁹ (emphasis added)

This statement was generally ignored by those who were busy celebrating the victory of having the Stamp Act repealed.

The Quartering Act had been imposed on the colonists in March of 1765. It was a cost saving measure by the Crown, requiring colonists to house British soldiers in their

³⁶ James F. Shepard and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 22.

³⁷ Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan, “From *The Assertions of Parliamentary Control and Its Significance*.” in *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 122.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 124.

³⁹ “*Parliament Repeals the Stamp Act but Declares Its Authority, 1766*,” From *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 112.

homes and feed them. The thinking from the homeland was that the soldiers were in the colonies for the colonist's benefit; therefore, the colonists should share in the cost of boarding them. The colonists had by this time already felt put upon by Britain and were less than happy about taking on a financial burden placed on them by the Crown, when Parliament had been instrumental in the economic downturn that was being experienced. It did not help that some of the British soldiers were former convicts, and many resented being stationed in an area that was not only far way from home, but resentful of their presence.

In August of 1766, just five months after the Stamp Act had been repealed, violence broke out in New York between British regulars and armed colonists which included members of the Sons of Liberty. The fighting began as a result of non-compliance with the Quartering Act in the New York area. That winter the Crown suspended the New York legislature because it continued to refuse to comply with this Act.⁴⁰

Charles Townshend had become Chancellor of the Exchequer in Britain after the repeal of the Stamp Act. There were pressures coming at Townshend from several directions. The British national debt remained at an historically high level. Taxes had risen in England to the point that there was sporadic rioting occurring. Townshend believed, as did most in Britain, that the recent French and Indian War had been largely fought in the colonies and for the colonies benefit. It was reasonable, then, to expect the colonies to help pay for the war. Townshend's predecessor had dealt with the ire of the colonists over the Stamp Act. Townshend felt that he understood the issue: the reason the colonists were so against previous tax policy was because it was an internal tax. He did

⁴⁰ Morgan and Morgan, *The Assertion of Parliamentary Control*, 125.

not understand why this distinction should trouble the Americans, but he felt that he could resolve all of these issues if he would create a clearly external tax.⁴¹

The legislation that appeared in 1767 was later called the Townshend Acts and was immediately unpopular. The dismissal of the New York legislature was part of these acts, but also included a tightening of customs laws, with a headquarters in Boston, which had been the largest hotbed of resistance to previous laws. Another aspect of these laws was an increased use of writs of assistance and new admiralty courts located in the colonies rather than in Britain. New taxes of an external nature were levied on many products that had to be imported, such as paint, lead, glass, and tea. It was clearly stated that these taxes were to pay for royal officials in the colonies, which was upsetting to colonists who resented the British soldiers and other enforcers of Crown authority, and because it was felt that Britain was clearly abrogating a role that had been handled by the local colonial assemblies.⁴²

The resistance to the Townshend Acts was similar to the Stamp Act and returned certain agitators to the public eye, such as Samuel Adams. However, “colonial resistance moved beyond the model of 1765-6 toward a more serious threat to British authority as nonimportation associations increasingly assumed the functions of government.”⁴³

Townshend was succeeded by Lord North, who had the unwanted job of quelling the growing unrest. The reaction in the colonies was largely as a result, not of physical violence, but a measured response based on several writings, including the circular letter Samuel Adams wrote and the *Letter From a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, by John

⁴¹ Robert J. Chaffin, “The Townshend Acts of 1767,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 27, no.1 (1970): 97.

⁴² *Ibid*, 102.

⁴³ Pauline Maier, “From *The Townshend Acts and the Consolidation of Colonial Resistance*.” In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 128.

Dickinson.⁴⁴ Dickinson expressed an attachment to King George, “an excellent prince . . . (in whose) good dispositions they could confide.”⁴⁵ Dickinson implied that it was Parliament that was to blame for the conflict and appealed to the Sovereign to resolve these issues. There was still a lack of clarity about King George’s position in all of the disagreement that existed between Britain and the colonies.

There would be some violence, culminating with the Boston Massacre in March of 1770. Unrest in Boston had sent General Thomas Gage and his troops there two years earlier. British soldiers were posted in front of an official building and were hit with snowballs by the crowd. The troops fired on the crowd, killing five. The labeling of this a “massacre” by Samuel Adams and the engraving of the event by Paul Revere would galvanize opposition to the British. The next month the Townshend Acts were repealed, except the tax on tea. This was an effort to save face that was similar to the Declaratory Act four years earlier.

For the radical movement to become revolutionary, more extreme conclusions were necessary. The Americans must become convinced, as John Dickinson put it, that “mistake or passion” could not explain Britain’s wrongheaded actions. It had to appear “UNDOUBTED that an inveterate resolution is formed to annihilate the liberties of the governed,” one that involved the King, Parliament, and ministry as centrally as their servants in the colonies. And to arrive at such a conclusion, colonists had to turn their eyes from their own continent to London, to examine the actions of King, Parliament and ministry. In that fact lay the truth of a statement continually repeated by colonists during the frenetic days of the

⁴⁴ “John Dickinson Exhorts the Colonists to Opposition, 1767-1768,” From *Major problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 113.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 113.

Stamp Act crisis—that only Great Britain could force America toward independence.⁴⁶

The repeal of the Townshend Acts began a period of uneasy quiet. There were isolated incidents, but the *Gaspee* Affair in 1772 renewed the propensity towards violence by the colonists in order to achieve their ends. The British cutter *Gaspee* had been commissioned to halt smuggling along the New England coast. The commander, John Dudingston, had irritated locals by often taking his job to extremes and in publically verbalizing his antipathy for the Americans. On a June night the *Gaspee* was lured into a chase of a suspected smuggling craft that left the British ship stranded on sand bar. The *Gaspee* was set on fire and Dudingston was shot in the arm. A commission that looked into the matter had trouble getting anyone to testify and the names of the Americans that participated were never shared with the commission. The newspaper articles of the time ignored the fact that the British had attempted to avoid controversy and used the incident to recall all recent British abuses.⁴⁷

The Tea Act took effect in May of 1773. It was designed to aid the East India Tea Company, which had fallen on hard economic times, by giving it a monopoly in the tea trade to the New World. It also tried to provide a tax on Americans that would be less objectionable than those tried previously. The tax was smaller than before (three pence per pound) and was an indirect tax, in that it would be applied on tax delivered to the colonial dock.⁴⁸ The British idea was that because the tax was low it would not be noticed, as the British tea would cost less, even with the tax, than tea provided by other

⁴⁶ Pauline Maier, From *The Townshend Acts*, 136.

⁴⁷ William R. Leslie, "The Gaspee Affair: A Study of Its Constitutional Significance," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39, no. 2 (1952): 239.

⁴⁸ Max Farrand, "The Taxation of Tea, 1767-1773," *American Historical Review* 3, no. 2 (1898): 266-7.

countries. Tea merchants in America were immediately vocal in their opposition. The tax was primarily born by them, and only selected merchants could sell it. American ships, which previously had carried most of the tea from India, were frozen out in favor of the ships from the East India Company. Many tea agents resigned their commissions in the colonies before the first loads of tea could arrive. Some ships turned back to England rather than face angry citizens in the colonies. In Annapolis a ship owner was forced by picketers to set fire to his ship and cargo of tea. The key area of response, however, was Boston. Boston was the principle port of the colonies and from the beginning had been the center of radical activity. This is where Samuel Adams lived; this is where the “massacre” had happened. Later that year, Adams headed a group of radicals that were determined that tea would not be unloaded in Boston. The Governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson, who had family in the tea business, vowed that he would not yield to British demands, as had happened in other areas of the colonies.⁴⁹

The Tea Tax required that the tax be collected within twenty days of a ship’s arrival. Three ships were in Boston, loaded with tea that the locals refused to unload and the time limit was nearly expired. One of the captains assented to sail out of Boston but was stopped by British officials that threatened to seize it for not paying the tax on its cargo. On December 16, fifty men dressed as Mohawk Indians, allies to the British in the recent war, boarded one of the tea ships and split open three hundred forty-two chests of tea and dumped them in the harbor. This was not done in secret—a crowd on shore cheered as the “tea party” created this “saltwater tea.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Arthur Schlesinger, “The Uprising Against the East India Company,” *Political Science Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1917): 66.

⁵⁰ Schlesinger, “The Uprising,” 73.

John Adams said of the event, “This is the most magnificent Movement of all. There is a Dignity, a Majesty, and a Sublimity, in this last Effort of the Patriots, that I greatly admire.”⁵¹ The Parliament did not see it that way, deciding in their debates⁵² that the colonies needed to be punished for their impertinence, especially the port of Boston.

In spite of the warnings of some members of Parliament, such as Edmund Burke and Lord Chatham, the Coercive Acts were passed by Lord North’s government in May and June of 1774, along with a bill the colonists found equally distasteful, the Quebec Act. Boston had already been put under military rule and the port shut down until the taxes on the dumped tea were paid. Fence sitters in other colonies and even in England were surprised at the harshness of the Coercive Acts, called the Intolerable Acts in the colonies, which reinstated the Quartering Act and shut down all self-rule by the colonists as part of its provisions. Some had been skeptical of happenings in Massachusetts—now many viewed the colony with sympathy. Boston would be especially at risk, as its economy was to almost completely interrupted.⁵³

It is not too strong a statement to say the Quebec Act dashed hopes and raised new fears. One aspect of the Act was to extend the administrative boundaries of Quebec south to the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. This effectively shut off the opportunity for new settlement and future land speculation, which had been part of colonial culture for the last one hundred and fifty years. The government that was extended to this area did not contain any hope of representation, which underlined this growing concern. Perhaps

⁵¹ “From *John Adams Reflects on the Boston Tea Party*,” in *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 140.

⁵² “From *Parliament Debates the Coercive Acts, 1774*,” in *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 140-143.

⁵³ “From *The Coercive Acts, 1774*,” in *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 143-144.

the most significant aspect of the Act was recognition of the Roman Catholic Church by the British, who had had their own struggle with Protestants and Catholics for some time. This action on the part of the British renewed fears of the French Empire, which had subsided with the end of the French and Indian War. There was also fear that religious freedom would be mitigated by the additional rights given to the Catholics. This resurgent fear was a driving force to actions that lead to the war for independence. It is notable that early in the coming war, the Americans would invade Quebec to eliminate the perceived threat there.

Thomas Jefferson would expound on the natural rights of the colonists in 1774, saying that the colonists were free men and that “Kings are the servants, not the proprietors of the people . . . (they should) no longer persevere in sacrificing the rights of one part of the empire to the inordinate desires of another; but deal out to all equal and impartial rights.”⁵⁴ This statement represented that at this point many colonists were aware that it was the King, as well as Parliament, that was the source of their woes. It also expressed the social contract views expounded by John Locke, a viewpoint that was diametrically opposed to what King George viewed as his rights and responsibilities.

A Call to War

The First Continental Congress met in October, 1774. They stated that as English subjects, colonists were “entitled to the common law of England” and that part of English law was the “right to participate in legislative council.”⁵⁵ The Congress resolved that the Intolerable Acts “are infringements and violations of the rights of the colonists; and that

⁵⁴ “From *Thomas Jefferson Asserts American Rights, 1774*”, In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 151.

⁵⁵ “From *Declarations and Resolves of the First Continental Congress, 1774*”, In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 153.

the repeal of them is essentially necessary, in order to restore the harmony between Great Britain and the American colonies.”⁵⁶ This effort of reaching out fell on deaf ears.

The next April, British troops moved on Lexington and Concord to confiscate a supply of gunpowder that was they had been informed was cached there. There was also a possibility of arresting the radical leader John Hancock. The British were confronted by American militiamen and in the ensuing skirmish the “shot heard round the world” was fired. The British retreated to Boston, but not before seventy-three of their ranks were killed and one hundred seventy-four wounded.

The Second Continental Congress met the next month to deal with the crisis. Some, led by John Adams, felt that war was inevitable. The majority wanted to attempt to reconcile with the King, and a letter, the Olive Branch Petition, was drafted by John Dickinson. Dickinson’s letter suggested a middle ground, and the hope was the news from Lexington would force the King to negotiate. King George’s response was clear and firm—he said that the colonists had been “. . . misled by dangerous and designing men” and that they had “proceeded to open and avowed rebellion.”⁵⁷

That the Olive Branch Petition had been so dramatically rejected removed the possibility of compromise. There was only two options—surrender or fight. The news of the King’s response arrived about the time a pamphlet was widely distributed. Called *Common Sense*, it clearly spelled out the options for the colonists and reviewed why they found themselves in the position they did. It was optimistic in its views of colonial success against the Crown, and said that it offered “nothing more than simple facts, plain

⁵⁶ Ibid, 154.

⁵⁷ “From *King George Proclaims America in Rebellion, 1775*”, In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 154-155.

arguments, and common sense.”⁵⁸ This document suggested that when there was “a long habit of not thinking a thing *wrong*, gives it a superficial appearance of being *right*” and that “no *one* by *birth* could have a right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others for ever.”⁵⁹ *Common Sense* helped put into words what many Americans were feeling, and crystallized their resolve to fight for their freedom.

The Continental Congress drafted a resolution on May 15, 1776 that clearly placed the blame for the conflict at the feet of King George:

This was highly significant. . . . Accusations were extended to the King only when Grievances had become so general, and evidence of his complicity so unmistakable, that the authority of his government had come into dispute. To Attack the King was, in short, a constitutional form. It was a way Englishmen announced revolution.⁶⁰

Later that month, King George would make comments to the City of London that indicated that there was no resolution to the conflict and that the problems the colonists faced had been “brought on themselves by an unjustifiable resistance to the constitutional authority of this Kingdom.”⁶¹ There was nothing else for the colonists to do but draft a formal declaration of their claim of independence.⁶²

Consequences of the Revolution

Thomas Paine said of the Revolution that it “contributed more to enlighten the world and diffuse a spirit of liberality among men, than any human event . . . that

⁵⁸ “From *Thomas Paine Calls for Common Sense, 1776*”, In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 155.

⁵⁹ *Thomas Paine Calls for Common Sense, 1776*, 155-159.

⁶⁰ Pauline Maier, “From *Declaring Independence*,” In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 184.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 185.

⁶² *The Declaration of Independence, 1776*. In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 170.

preceded it.”⁶³ It was such a seminal occurrence that a large number of consequences can be traced back to it. The world would not be that same because of those eight years of battle.

There were several changes to the political landscape after the Revolution. This new country could take the best of its British heritage, the love for political and religious freedom, and the basis of system of law that began with the Magna Carta, and build from there. The end of British control must have been hard thing to conceive. Rather than a dominant monarchical system that had gone on for generations there was no one to answer to but the people of the United States. In contrast, these thirteen colonies were protected only by their relative isolation, no longer being part of the largest and most powerful Empire in the world.

By the time the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Revolution had been going on for over a year. It is telling that the men whose hearts yearned to be free took time out to not only send the Olive Branch Petition, seeking to make absolutely sure the King would not compromise, but to write the Declaration.

As the British began to bring the greatest fleet and the largest army in North America into action against the Americans, Congress devoted the better part of two days to revising the draft declaration of Independence. Wars, it understood, were not won by ships and sailors and arms alone. Words, too, had power to serve the cause of victory.⁶⁴

Jefferson had noted from the opening lines of this address that he needed to “declare the causes that impel them to separation.”⁶⁵ The rationale was that all men were

⁶³ Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, (New York: The Library of America, 1995), 349.

⁶⁴ Maier, *Declaring Independence, 187-188*.

created equal, and had rights that came, not as a gift of the state, but as a gift from “the Creator.”⁶⁶ This concept of natural rights was largely derived from the writings of John Locke, but there was a tremendous difference, and it would affect all the social classes of people in the new nation. According to Locke, consent to a form of government was a contract in which an individual gave up certain rights in exchange for the government’s protection and security.⁶⁷ Jefferson had emphasized the aspect of an individual’s rights. He would later be opposed by the Federalists, who sought to contain those rights in order to expand on the role of government.⁶⁸

As these issues were working themselves out, the back story was how the concept of the equality of mankind would play out among the various segments of society, especially the more socially disadvantaged. The consequences for groups such as women, slaves, and Native Americans would be telling as to how deep the application of the philosophy espoused by the Founders would be permitted.

Abigail Adams had reminded her husband John to “remember the ladies.”⁶⁹ In the eighteenth century, the idea of rights for women was not generally considered a subject for serious consideration. That it was discussed at the founding of the United States was significant. In the end, there were concessions made. Women were not given the status of men, but they were not considered to be chattel either. The natural rights assigned to women were limited by a “gender hierarchy.”⁷⁰ There was also a trickle-down effect for women: as the franchise expanded and freedoms were spread to various social classes of

⁶⁵ *The Declaration of Independence, 1776*. 171.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ Rosemarie Zaggari, “From *The Revolution Advanced Men’s and Women’s Rights*. In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown (New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 488.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 489.

⁶⁹ “From *The Letters of Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776*

⁷⁰ Rosemarie Zaggari, *The Revolution Advanced Rights*, 494.

men, the rights of the women in those social classes were gradually expanded as well. It was also significant that the rights of women would be a subject of discussion. This began a process that would lead to the nineteenth amendment and the women's rights movement.

After the revolution, slaves were still in bondage. However, during the war they had been offered their freedom from the British if they fought on the side of the redcoats. Many fought for the patriot side as well or used the turmoil of the war as an opportunity to run away. Consequently, by 1810 there were "27,000 slaves in the North compared to 50,000 free blacks."⁷¹ There were laws passed in the north that made it easier to free slaves, and no slaves were allowed to be imported after 1806. However, in the south the Revolution did not change slavery. In fact, it was noted that "if the Revolution marked a new birth of freedom, it also launched a great expansion of slavery."⁷² Independence meant that there was an expanded right and protection of property. Property was still considered an important measure of a man's wealth, and slaves were still property.

For the Native Americans, the Revolution was a disaster. During the war, many Natives, such as Joseph Brant, had fought on the side of the British. Once the war was over, "the range of accommodation with native Americans was limited by an ethnocentrism that made the most well-meaning Anglo-Americans incapable of coexisting with Indians as they were."⁷³ The removal of the impediment of the Proclamation of 1763 meant that there was a tremendous surge of settlers moving into the Northeast after the war. The increased military presence to the Colonial Army was

⁷¹ Alfred F. Young, "From *The Revolution was Radical in Some ways, Not in Others*," In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard D. Brown, (Houghton and Mifflin, 2000), 506.

⁷² Ibid, 507.

⁷³ Young, "The Revolution was Radical," 508.

devastating enough that the Iroquois word for President of the United States was “Destroyer of Villages.”⁷⁴

Natives were looked down on by eighteenth century colonists because they did not add any value to the land. Only by working the soil could a person become “civilized.” There was some effort made to educate the red man by teaching him farming techniques, but largely the Natives were constantly pushed west. At the conclusion of the war, there were one hundred-fifty thousand Indians east of the Mississippi; by 1844, less than a quarter of those remained.⁷⁵

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit

The key phrase of the Declaration offered that God granted certain rights to all of His creation.⁷⁶ The Revolution had a dramatic consequence for all three. As to life: Life changed dramatically after the war, with social, political and economic differences. The end of British rule meant that there were no British laws to circumvent. The smuggling to avoid the taxes on the importation of various needed goods could cease. Eventually, the colonists would develop a deep friendship with the British that was mutually advantageous, enough so that the Monroe Doctrine, largely backed by the power of the British military, became the undisputed standard of conduct for European nations in their dealings with the West.

More specifically, the end of the war brought the end to the charters of the King, and gave each colony the opportunity to write their own constitutions. There was an increase in social equality, as the Tories, who had often been part of the upper economic class, were displaced since many left during the conflict. Slavery was dying out in the

⁷⁴ Ibid, 508.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 509.

⁷⁶ *The Declaration of Independence, 1776.* 171.

Northern colonies and the franchise was extended to a larger percentage of the population than any country in Europe.

The removal of the Proclamation of 1763 and the on-going subjugation of the Natives began to open new areas for settlers. The westward migration of immigrants and those with wanderlust would form the backdrop to the development of the United States for the next two hundred years.

The end of mercantilism and the halting of unfair laws and taxes would encourage trade and the concert of freedom and justice in the new land. Because of this, there was an upsurge in American nationalism as the new nation reflected on what it had accomplished and realized that its possible accomplishments were endless.

As to liberty: The people were now free to pass laws that would encourage self-determination throughout the land. There were also events, such as Shay's Rebellion, that would focus on the limits of that liberty. The Federalists would be a growing force, as the new nation struggled with a Confederation that lacked the power to tax, and therefore the power to govern effectively at the national level. There was no Sovereign to which the people were subject—"by defining themselves as sovereign, the American people were also claiming the power to exclude others or to define others as their subjects, just as they had been subject to the sovereign king."⁷⁷

As to the pursuit of happiness: This is a concept that is difficult for those of the twenty-first century to understand. Today, happiness is transitory and is achieved by having something or someone. It is expressed by such as a bumper sticker that notes, "He who dies with the most toys wins." Happiness in our modern world is defined as a feeling that is achieved, a fleeting emotional construct. This is tremendously diverse from what

⁷⁷ Alfred F. Young, *The Revolution was Radical*, 517.

Jefferson meant by happiness, and therefore what he stated was a right that came from God.

Referring back to Aristotle, Jefferson felt that happiness was virtue. It was “the quality of a whole human life—what makes it good as a whole, in spite of the fact that we are not having fun or having a good time every minute of it.”⁷⁸ Government’s role was to make sure that man was not interfered with, or even helped along the way to pursuing this good life.⁷⁹ The pursuit of happiness was not a terminal end, but a normative one. In order for it to be a right, it had to be achievable, and it had to be a reflection of what one had accomplished along the way. Government’s part in this is to not restrict the possibility of the citizen achieving this type of life. The reaction of the Democrat-Republicans at the end of the Federalist Period by the election of Thomas Jefferson may be seen as a clinging to this concept. The Federalists had been bent on restructuring the country to perform better than it had under the Articles of Confederation. The swinging of the pendulum back to Jefferson was a reaction of the country to too many restrictions on its right to pursue happiness. The energy that is embodied in the democratic spirit of America was born at this time, and it remains a clarion call for all present and future versions of this experiment we call the United States to be willing to come back to this spirit, the vision that created it.

⁷⁸ Mortimer J. Adler, *We Hold These Truths: Understanding the Ideas and Ideals of the Constitution*, (New York: MacMillian Co.), 56.

⁷⁹ Mortimer J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 594.

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