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Searching for Democracy



**CALIFORNIA HISTORY-
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TEACHING DEMOCRACY WEBINAR SERIES
No Taxation Without Representation?
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Primary Sources Selected by
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Foner, Eric. *Voices of Freedom: A Documentary History*. New York:
W.W. Norton, 2005. Pages 90, 92.

CHAPTER 5

The American Revolution, 1763-1783

27. Virginia Resolutions on the Stamp Act (1765)

Source: John Pendleton Kennedy, ed., Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia 1761-1765 (Richmond, 1907), pp. lxvi-lxvii, 360.

The passage of the Stamp Act by Parliament in 1765 inspired the first major split between colonists and Great Britain. Pressed for funds because of the enormous expense it had incurred in fighting the Seven Years' War, Parliament for the first time attempted to raise money from direct taxes in the colonies rather than through the regulation of trade. The act required that all sorts of printed material produced in the colonies carry a stamp purchased from authorities.

By imposing the stamp tax without colonial consent, Parliament directly challenged the authority of local elites who, through the assemblies they controlled, had established their power over the raising and spending of money. They were ready to defend this authority in the name of liberty. Virginia's House of Burgesses approved four resolutions offered by the fiery orator Patrick Henry. The Burgesses rejected as too radical the last three resolutions that follow, including one calling for outright resistance to unlawful taxation.

to vest such power in any other person or persons whatever than the General Assembly aforesaid, is illegal, unconstitutional, and unjust, and has a manifest tendency to destroy British as well as American liberty.

Resolved, that his Majesty's liege people, the inhabitants of this colony, are not bound to yield obedience to any law or ordinance whatever, designed to impose any taxation whatsoever upon them, other than the laws or ordinances of the General Assembly aforesaid.

Resolved, that any person who shall, by speaking or writing, assert or maintain that any person or persons other than the General Assembly of this colony, have any right or power to impose or lay any taxation on the people here, shall be deemed an enemy to his Majesty's colony.

Questions

1. Why do you think the Virginia House of Burgesses adopted the first four resolutions but rejected the final three?
2. What would be the difference between resting the resolutions' arguments on "British freedom" and appealing to a more universal concept of liberty?

28. Petition of North Carolina Regulators (1769)

Source: William L. Saunders, ed., The Colonial Records of North Carolina (Raleigh, 1886-90), Vol. 8, pp. 75-78.

Even as the dispute between Britain and America over taxation grew deeper during the 1760s, several colonies experienced internal social divisions. Rural areas had a long tradition of resistance by settlers and small farmers against the claims of land speculators and large proprietors. One