

CHAPTER FIVE

Toward Independence: Years of Decision

1763–1775

The Imperial Reform Movement, 1763–1765, and The Dynamics of Rebellion, 1765–1766

In 1763 the British empire, which included almost forty colonies, was magnificent in its scope and potential (see Map 5.2 on text p. 138). However, as the textbook shows, the empire had problems. British statesmen were aware that the established mainland colonies of North America had a history of circumventing British regulation and control. With the mother country deeply in debt, it was evident that imperial reform was required and that Britain's New World colonists would have to pay more of the cost of running the empire. Document 5-1, Jared Ingersoll's report on British attitudes and the debate in Parliament over the passage of the Stamp Act, reveals what British politicians believed about the logic of taxing the colonists and about the issue of their constitutional right to do so.

The other documents in this section illustrate the nature of the colonial response to the Stamp Act. As is demonstrated in the textbook (pp. 138–141), crowd actions played a crucial role in the colonists' attack on the Stamp Act (Document 5-2). Such actions, which occurred throughout the colonies in 1765, effectively blocked the implementation of the Stamp Act—for the moment.

The colonists' ultimate goal was to have Parliament repeal the new revenue laws. To achieve that end, their weapon of choice was the economic boycott (see text pp. 146–150). The agreement signed in New York (Document 5-3) describes how the boycott was organized. The resolutions of the Norfolk, Virginia, Sons of Liberty (Document 5-4) describe some of the measures that were employed to get the Stamp Act repealed. To further their cause, the colonial governments, which were notorious for quarreling with each other, held an intercolonial congress. The "Declarations" of the Stamp Act Congress (Document 5-5) enunciated the colonists' essential position on both the Stamp Act and the issue of imperial reform. The "Declarations" also clearly reflect the roots of the colonists' ideology.

5-1 Report on the Debates in Parliament (1765)

Jared Ingersoll

Jared Ingersoll, a Connecticut lawyer who was in Great Britain on business, accepted a commission from his home colony to do what he could to oppose the Stamp Act, which it appeared Parliament would soon pass. By communicating with Thomas Whately, who

played a central role in the drafting of the bill, Ingersoll obtained a few minor modifications. However, he could not persuade British officials to abandon the idea of passing a Stamp Act for America.

As part of his effort to oppose the Stamp Act, Ingersoll attended the debates on the proposed legislation in Parliament. On February 11, 1765, he sent a lengthy report on those debates to Thomas Fitch, the governor of Connecticut. The sections of that letter reprinted here describe the general British attitude and the attitudes of different segments of Parliament toward the Stamp Act.

Source: New Haven Colonial Historical Society, *Papers* (1918), 9:306–315 passim.

The principal Attention has been to the Stamp bill that has been preparing to Lay before Parliament for taxing America. The Point of the Authority of Parliament to impose such Tax I found on my Arrival here was so fully and Universally yielded, that there was not the least hopes of making any impressions that way. Indeed it has appeared since that the House would not suffer to be brought in, nor would any one Member Undertake to Offer to the House, any Petition from the Colonies that held forth the Contrary of that Doctrine. I own I advised the Agents if possible to get that point Canvassed that so the Americans might at least have the Satisfaction of having the point Decided upon a full Debate, but I found it could not be done, and here before I proceed to acquaint you with the Steps that have been taken, in this Matter, I beg leave to give you a Summary of the Arguments which are made Use of in favour of such Authority.

The House of Commons, say they, is a branch of the supreme legislature of the Nation, and which in its Nature is supposed to represent, or rather to stand in the place of, the Commons, that is, of the great body of the people, who are below the dignity of peers; that this house of Commons Consists of a certain number of Men Chosen by certain people of certain places, which Electors, by the Way, they Insist, are not a tenth part of the people, and that the Laws, rules and Methods by which their number is ascertained have arose by degrees and from various Causes and Occasions, and that this house of Commons, therefore, is now fixt and ascertained and is a part of the Supreme unlimited power of the Nation, as in every State there must be some unlimited Power and Authority; and that when it is said they represent the Commons of England, it cannot mean that they do so because those Commons choose them, for in fact by far the greater part do not, but because by their Constitution they must themselves be Commoners, and not Peers, and so the Equals, or of the same Class of Subjects, with the Commons of the Kingdom. They further urge, that the only reason why America has not been heretofore taxed in the fullest Manner, has been merely on Account of their Infancy and Inability; that there have been, however, not wanting Instances of the Exercise of this Power, in the various regulations of the American trade, the Establishment of the post Office etc., and they deny any Distinction between what is called an internal and external Tax as to the point of

the Authority imposing such taxes. And as to the Charters in the few provinces where there are any, they say, in the first place, the King cannot grant any that shall exempt them from the Authority of one of the branches of the great body of Legislation, and in the second place say the King has not done, or attempted to do it. In that of Pensilvania the Authority of Parliament to impose taxes is expressly mentioned and reserved; in ours tis said, our powers are generally such as are *According to the Course of other Corporations in England* (both which Instances by way of Sample were mentioned and referred to by Mr. Grenville in the House); in short they say a Power to tax is a necessary part of every Supreme Legislative Authority, and that if they have not that Power over America, they have none, and then America is at once a Kingdom of itself.

On the other hand those who oppose the bill say, it is true the Parliament have a supreme unlimited Authority over every Part and Branch of the Kings dominions and as well over Ireland as any other place, yet we believe a British parliament will never think it prudent to tax Ireland. Tis true they say, that the Commons of England and of the british Empire are all represented in and by the house of Commons, but this representation is confessedly on all hands by Construction and Virtually only as to those who have no hand in choosing the representatives, and that the Effects of this implied Representation here and in America must be infinitely different in the Article of Taxation. Here in England the Member of Parliament is equally known to the Neighbour who elects and to him who does not; the Friendships, the Connections, the Influences are spread through the whole. If by any Mistake an act of Parliament is made that prove injurious and hard the Member of Parliament here sees with his own Eyes and is moreover very accessible to the people, not only so, but the taxes are laid equally by one Rule and fall as well on the Member himself as on the people. But as to America, from the great distance in point of Situation, from the almost total unacquaintedness, Especially in the more northern Colonies, with the Members of Parliament, and they with them, or with the particular Ability and Circumstances of one another, from the Nature of this very tax laid upon others not Equally and in Common with ourselves, but with express purpose to Ease ourselves, we think, say they, that it will be only to lay a foundation of great Jealousy

truly Loyal as any Subjects the King has, but a people Jealous of their Liberties and who will vindicate them, if ever they should be violated—but the Subject is too delicate and I will say no more.”

These Sentiments were thrown out so intirely without premeditation, so forceably and so firmly, and the breaking off so beautifully abrupt, that the whole house sat awhile as Amazed, intently Looking and without answering a Word.

I own I felt Emotions that I never felt before and went the next Morning and thank'd Col. Barre in behalf of my Country for his noble and spirited Speech.

However, Sir after all that was said, upon a Division of the house upon the Question, there was about 250 to about 50 in favour of the Bill. . . .

The Merchants in London are alarmed at these things; they have had a meeting with the Agents and are about to petition Parliament upon the Acts that respect the trade of North America.

What the Event of these things will be I dont know. . . .
Your Most Obedient Humble Servant.

J. Ingersoll.

Questions

1. On the basis of Ingersoll's observations, how sympathetic were British politicians and the British people to the colonists' view that Parliament did not have the right to tax them?
2. Do the members of Parliament seem well informed about the situation in the mainland colonies of North America? Why or why not?
3. Do the members of Parliament believe that they rather than the colonists are acting to preserve essential British rights? Why or why not?

5-2 The Stamp Act Riot (1765)

Francis Bernard

The colonists organized a variety of responses to protest the Stamp Act. Their formal protests culminated in the declarations of the Stamp Act Congress (Document 5-5), which questioned Parliament's authority to impose a tax. They also posed direct challenges through organized, but unpredictable, crowd actions. Radicals throughout the colonies systematically engaged in activities aimed at intimidating royal officials into not performing their assigned duties. The most likely targets were the commissioned stamp distributors in each of the colonies. In Boston, where the action began, the crowd's anger was directed against Andrew Oliver, who was rumored to be the appointed stamp distributor for Massachusetts. Oliver, a member of a family whose wealth and connections had secured him a place among the colony's social and political elite, was forced to resign his position twice: first in November, when in fact he had no commission to surrender, and then in December, after his commission finally arrived. In the excerpt here, Massachusetts governor Francis Bernard describes the actions of the Boston crowd in a letter to Lord Halifax, the royal secretary in charge of colonial affairs.

Source: Francis Bernard, "Stamp Act Riot, 1765," from *Prologue to Revolution: Sources and Documents on the Stamp Act Crisis, 1764–1766*. Edmund S. Morgan, ed. Copyright © 1959 University of North Carolina Press, renewed 1987 by Edmund S. Morgan. Used by permission of the publisher.

Yesterday Morning at break of day was discovered hanging upon a Tree in a Street of the Town an Effigy, with inscriptions, shewing that it was intended to represent Mr. Oliver, the Secretary, who had lately accepted the Office of Stamp Distributor. Some of the Neighbours offered to take it down, but they were given to know, that would not be permitted. Many Gentlemen, especially some of the Council, treated it

as a boyish sport, that did not deserve the Notice of the Governor and Council. But I did not think so however I contented myself with the Lt. Governor, as Chief Justice, directing the Sheriff to order his Officers to take down the Effigy; and I appointed a Council to meet in the Afternoon to consider what should be done, if the Sheriff's Officers were obstructed in removing the Effigy.

and Continual Uneasiness, and that to no purpose, as we already by the Regulations upon their trade draw from the Americans all that they can spare, at least they say this Step should not take place untill or unless the Americans are allowed to send Members to Parliament; for *who of you*, said Col. Barre Nobly in his Speech in the house upon this Occasion, *who of you reasoning upon this Subject feels warmly from the Heart* (putting his hand to his own breast) *for the Americans as they would for themselves or as you would for the people of your own native Country?* and to this point Mr. Jackson produced Copies of two Acts of Parliament granting the privilege of having Members to the County Palitine of Chester and the Bishoprick of Durham upon Petitions preferred for that purpose in the Reign of King Henry the Eighth and Charles the first, the preamble of which Statutes counts upon the Petitions from those places as setting forth that being in their general Civil Jurisdiction Exempted from the Common Law Courts etc., yet being Subject to the general authority of Parliament, were taxed in Common with the rest of the Kingdom, which taxes by reason of their having no Members in Parliament to represent their Affairs, often proved hard and injurious etc. and upon that ground they had the privilege of sending Members granted them—and if this, say they, could be a reason in the case of Chester and Durham, how much more so in the case of America.

Thus I have given you, I think, the Substance of the Arguments on both sides of that great and important Question of the right and also of the Expediency of taxing America by Authority of Parliament. I cannot, however, Content myself without giving you a Sketch of what the aforementioned Mr. Barre said in Answer to some remarks made by Mr. Ch. Townsend in a Speech of his upon this Subject. I ought here to tell you that the Debate upon the American Stamp bill came on before the house for the first time last Wednesday, when the same was open'd by Mr. Grenville the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in a pretty lengthy Speech, and in a very able and I think in a very candid manner he opened the Nature of the Tax, Urged the Necessity of it, Endeavoured to obviate all Objections to it—and took Occasion to desire the house to give the bill a most Serious and Cool Consideration and not suffer themselves to be influenced by any resentments which might have been kindled from any thing they might have heard out of doors—alluding I suppose to the N. York and Boston Assemblys' Speeches and Votes—that this was a matter of revenue which was of all things the most interesting to the Subject etc. The Argument was taken up by several who opposed the bill (*viz*) by Alderman Beckford, who, and who only, seemed to deny the Authority of Parliament, by Col. Barre, Mr. Jackson, Sir William Meredith and some others. Mr. Barre, who by the way I think, and I find I am not alone in my Opinion, is one of the finest Speakers that the House can boast of, having been some time in America as an Officer in the Army, and having while there, as I had known before, contracted many Friendships with American Gentlemen, and I believe Entertained much more favourable Opinions of them than some of his profession

have done, Delivered a very handsome and moving Speech upon the bill and against the same, Concluding by saying that he was very sure that Most who Should hold up their hands to the Bill must be under a Necessity of acting very much in the dark, but added, perhaps as well in the Dark as any way.

After him Mr. Charles Townsend spoke in favour of the Bill—took Notice of several things Mr. Barre had said, and concluded with the following or like Words:—And now will these Americans, Children planted by our Care, nourished up by our Indulgence untill they are grown to a Degree of Strength and Opulence, and protected by our Arms, will they grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden which we lie under? When he had done, Mr. Barre rose and having explained something which he had before said and which Mr Townsend had been remarking upon, he then took up the beforementioned Concluding words of Mr. Townsend, and in a most spirited and I thought an almost inimitable manner, said—

“They planted by your Care? No! your Oppressions planted em in America. They fled from your Tyranny to a then uncultivated and inhospitable Country—where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human Nature is liable, and among others to the Cruelties of a Savage foe, the most subtle and I take upon me to say the most formidable of any People upon the face of Gods Earth. And yet, actuated by Principles of true english Lyberty, they met all these hardships with pleasure, compared with those they suffered in their own Country, from the hands of those who should have been their Friends.

“They nourished up by *your* indulgence? they grew by your neglect of Em:—as soon as you began to care about Em, that Care was Excercised in sending persons to rule over Em, in one Department and another, who were perhaps the Deputies of Deputies to some Member of this house—sent to Spy out their Lyberty, to misrepresent their Actions and to prey upon Em; men whose behavior on many Occasions has caused the Blood of those Sons of Liberty to recoil within them; men promoted to the highest Seats of Justice, some, who to my knowledge were glad by going to a foreign Country to Escape being brought to the Bar of a Court of Justice in their own.

“They protected by *your* Arms? they have nobly taken up Arms in your defence, have Exerted a Valour amidst their constant and Laborious industry for the defence of a Country, whose frontier, while drench'd in blood, its interior Parts have yielded all its little Savings to your Emolument. And believe me, remember I this Day told you so, that same Spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first, will accompany them still.—But prudence forbids me to explain myself further. God knows I do not at this Time speak from motives of party Heat, what I deliver are the genuine Sentiments of my heart; however superiour to me in general knowledge and Experience the reputable body of this house may be, yet I claim to know more of America than most of you, having seen and been conversant in that Country. The People I believe are as

Before the Council met, the Sheriff reported, that his Officers had endeavoured to take down the Effigy: but could not do it without imminent danger of their lives. The Council met I represented this Transaction to them as the beginning in my Opinion, of much greater Commotions. I desired their Advice, what I should do upon this Occasion. A Majority of the Council spoke in form against doing anything but upon very different Principles: some said, that it was trifling Business, which, if let alone, would subside of itself, but, if taken notice of would become a serious Affair. Others said, that it was a serious Affair already; that it was a preconcerted Business, in which the greatest Part of the Town was engaged; that we had no force to oppose to it, and making an Opposition to it, without a power to support the Opposition, would only inflame the People; and be a means of extending the mischief to persons not at present the Objects of it. Tho' the Council were allmost unanimous in advising, that nothing should be done, they were averse to having such advice entered upon the Council Book. But I insisted upon their giving me an Answer to my Question, and that it should be entered in the Book; when, after a long altercation, it was avoided by their advising me to order the Sheriff to assemble the Peace Officers and preserve the peace which I immediately ordered, being a matter of form rather than of real Significance.

It now grew dark when the Mob, which had been gathering all the Afternoon, came down to the Town House, bringing the Effigy with them, and knowing we were sitting in the Council Chamber, they gave three Huzzas by way of defiance, and passed on. From thence they went to a new Building, lately erected by Mr Oliver to let out for Shops, and not quite finished: this they called the Stamp Office, and pulled it down to the Ground in five minutes. From thence they went to Mr Oliver's House; before which they beheaded the Effigy;

and broke all the Windows next the Street; then they carried the Effigy to Fort hill near Mr Oliver's House, where they burnt the Effigy in a Bonfire made of the Timber they had pulled down from the Building. Mr Oliver had removed his family from his House, and remained himself with a few friends, when the Mob returned to attack the House. Mr Oliver was prevailed upon to retire, and his friends kept Possession of the House. The Mob finding the Doors barricaded, broke down the whole fence of the Garden towards fort hill, and coming on beat in all the doors and Windows of the Garden front, and entered the House, the Gentlemen there retiring. As soon as they had got Possession, they searched about for Mr Oliver, declaring they would kill him; finding that he had left the House, a party set out to search two neighbouring Houses, in one of which Mr Oliver was, but happily they were diverted from this pursuit by a Gentleman telling them, that Mr Oliver was gone with the Governor to the Castle. Otherwise he would certainly have been murdered. After 11 o'clock the Mob seeming to grow quiet, the (Lt. Governor) Chief Justice and the Sheriff ventured to go to Mr Oliver's House to endeavour to perswade them to disperse. As soon as they began to speak, a Ringleader cried out, The Governor and the Sheriff! to your Arms, my boys! Presently after a volley of Stones followed, and the two Gentlemen narrowly escaped thro' favour of the Night, not without some bruises. I should have mentioned before, that I sent a written order to the Colonel of the Regiment of Militia, to beat an Alarm; he answered, that it would signify nothing, for as soon as the drum was heard, the drummer would be knocked down, and the drum broke; he added, that probably all the drummers of the Regiment were in the Mob. Nothing more being to be done, The Mob were left to disperse at their own Time, which they did about 12 o'clock.

Questions

1. What message was Bernard sending to his superiors in London? Was he asking for assistance? If so, what kind of assistance?
2. Why did the crowd single out Andrew Oliver? He was hung in effigy in August, but he was not officially commissioned as a stamp distributor until December. Why is this significant? What does this suggest about the Boston crowd? What does it suggest about Oliver?
3. How might Oliver's treatment described here have affected the history of the "Rebellion" written by his brother, Peter, in the 1780s (Document 5-8)? Why were men like the Olivers targeted by the radicals?

5-3 New York Merchant Boycott Agreement (1765)

Crowd actions, such as those described in Document 5-2, prevented the Stamp Act from being enforced when it was scheduled to take effect on November 1, 1765. Members of Parliament were outraged by those actions. Thus, it seemed unlikely that crowds could achieve the colonists' ultimate goal: getting the Stamp Act repealed. Realizing that

economic pressure might impel British merchants to lobby for repeal, Patriots in many locations entered into formal agreements to boycott British goods. The article reprinted below, which first appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on November 7, 1765, describes an agreement entered into and signed by more than two hundred of the “principal Merchants” of New York.

Source: *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 7 November 1765.

At a general Meeting of the Merchants of the City of New-York, trading to Great-Britain, at the House of Mr. George Burns, of the said City, Innholder, to consider what was necessary to be done in the present Situation of Affairs, with respect to the STAMP ACT, and the melancholy State of the North-American Commerce, so greatly restricted by the Impositions and Duties established by the late Acts of Trade: They came to the following Resolutions, viz.

FIRST, That in all Orders they send out to Great-Britain, for Goods or Merchandize, of any Nature, Kind or Quality whatsoever, usually imported from Great-Britain, they will direct their Correspondents not to ship them, unless the STAMP ACT be repealed: It is nevertheless agreed, that all such Merchants as are Owners of, and have Vessels already gone, and now cleared out for Great-Britain, shall be at Liberty to bring back in them, on their own Accounts, Crates and Casks of Earthen Ware, Grindstones, Pipes, and such other bulky Articles, as Owners usually fill up their Vessels with.

SECONDLY, It is further unanimously agreed, that all Orders already sent Home, shall be countermanded by the very first Conveyance; and the Goods and Merchandize thereby ordered, not to be sent, unless upon the Condition mentioned in the foregoing Resolution.

THIRDLY, It is further unanimously agreed, that no Merchant will vend any Goods or Merchandize sent upon Commission from Great-Britain, that shall be shipped from thence after the first Day of January next, unless upon the Condition mentioned in the first Resolution.

FOURTHLY, It is further unanimously agreed, that the foregoing Resolutions shall be binding until the same are abrogated at a general Meeting hereafter to be held for that Purpose.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto respectively subscribed our Names. [*This was subscribed by upwards of Two Hundred principal Merchants.*]

Questions

1. How clearly, if at all, do the merchants spell out the basic rights they believe they are defending?
2. Do the merchants seem as concerned about not losing money as about defending basic British constitutional rights? Why or why not?
3. To what extent do the merchants seem to be concerned about creating an effective way to enforce the boycott? Do they recommend fair and effective means for achieving this purpose? Explain.

5-4 Norfolk Sons of Liberty Pronouncement (1766)

Having instituted a boycott movement, the Patriots needed an apparatus to ensure that it would not be violated. Taking their name from the phrase used by Colonel Barre in his speech against the Stamp Act (Document 5-1), Patriots calling themselves Sons of Liberty formed committees and organizations to enforce the boycott against the Stamp Act. While doing this, the Patriots routinely emphasized their loyalty to George III and their commitment to the rule of law. The statement issued by the Norfolk, Virginia, Sons of Liberty, which is reprinted from the *Pennsylvania Journal* of April 17, 1766, describes both the philosophy and the enforcement measures typically espoused by the Sons of Liberty.

Source: *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 17 April 1766.

At a meeting of a considerable number of inhabitants of the town and county of Norfolk, and others, SONS OF LIBERTY, at the Court House of the said county, in the colony of Virginia, on Monday the 31st of March, 1766.

Having taken into consideration the evil tendency of that oppressive and unconstitutional act of parliament commonly called the Stamp Act, and being desirous that our sentiments should be known to posterity, and recollecting that we are a part of the colony, who first, in General Assembly, openly expressed their detestation to the said act, which is pregnant with ruin, and productive of the most pernicious consequences; and unwilling to rivet the shackles of slavery and oppression on ourselves, and millions yet unborn, have unanimously come to the following resolutions:

I. Resolved, That we acknowledge our sovereign Lord King George III to be our rightful and lawful King, and that we will at all times, to the utmost of our power and ability, support and defend his most sacred person, crown, and dignity; and will be always ready, when constitutionally called upon, to assist his Majesty with our lives and fortunes, and defend all his just rights and prerogatives.

II. Resolved, That we will by all lawful ways and means, which divine providence hath put into our hands, defend ourselves in the full enjoyment of, and preserve inviolate to

posterity, those inestimable privileges of all free-born British subjects, of being taxed by none but representatives of their own choosing, and of being tried only by a jury of their own Peers; for, if we quietly submit to the execution of the said Stamp Act, all our claims to civil liberty will be lost, and we and our posterity become absolute slaves.

III. Resolved, That we will, on any future occasion, sacrifice our lives and fortunes, in concurrence with the other Sons of Liberty in the American provinces, to defend and preserve those invaluable blessings transmitted us by our ancestors.

IV. Resolved, That whoever is concerned, directly or indirectly, in using, or causing to be used, in any way or manner whatever, within this colony, unless authorized by the General Assembly thereof, those detestable papers called the Stamps, shall be deemed, to all intents and purposes, an enemy to his country, and by the Sons of Liberty treated accordingly.

V. Resolved, That a committee be appointed to present the thanks of the Sons of Liberty to Colonel Richard Bland, for his treatise entitled "An Inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies."

VI. Resolved, That a committee be appointed, who shall make public the above resolutions, and correspond as they shall see occasion, with the associated Sons and Friends of Liberty in the other British colonies in America.

Questions

1. How clearly, if at all, do the Sons of Liberty spell out the basic rights they believe they are defending?
 2. What measures do the Sons of Liberty propose to take to defend their rights?
 3. At this stage of the conflict between Great Britain and the colonies, how do these colonists view their relationship to the mother country?
-

5-5 Declarations of the Stamp Act Congress (1765)

Boston was the scene of the first major crowd actions against the Stamp Act. Those actions and others effectively blocked the implementation of the act. Also, it was Massachusetts that suggested that each colony send delegates to a special intercolonial congress that would formulate a unified response to the detested British legislation. The colonies of Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia could not attend because their governors refused to convene their assemblies; New Hampshire chose not to send delegates. However, twenty-seven delegates representing the other colonies met in New York on October 7, 1765. During twelve days of deliberations the members of the Stamp Act Congress prepared a petition to the king, a memorial to the House of Lords, a petition to the House of Commons, and a series of "Declarations . . . respecting the most Essential Rights and Liberties of the Colonists." The "Declarations" of the Stamp Act Congress provide the clearest statement of the pragmatic and philosophical positions of the colonists on the Stamp Act and the efforts of the British government to institute general imperial reform.

Source: Proceedings of the Congress at New-York (1766), 15–16.

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 entitled 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 Legislature.

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 Enjoyment 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.

Questions

1. Does it appear that the members of the Stamp Act Congress are determined to demonstrate that they are not rebels but loyal British subjects? Why or why not?
2. According to the Congress, what basic constitutional rights do the colonists have?
3. In what ways does the Congress emphasize pragmatic as well as philosophical arguments against British imperial reforms?
4. Considering the British ideas about the mother country's rights explained in Document 5-1, how convincing is the case the Congress makes against the Stamp Act?

Questions for Further Thought

1. What principal rights did the colonists claim they were defending in opposing the Stamp Act?