

New Taxes Create Conflict

Directions: Read the paragraph. In the box, write one sentence summarizing the paragraph.

The Seven Years' War—called the French and Indian War in the colonies—nearly doubled Britain's national debt and greatly expanded its colonial territories. Parliament needed to raise money, both to pay the debt and to protect the colonies. People in Britain paid far more taxes than the colonists did. This imbalance seemed unfair, for the war had been fought largely to protect the colonists. Parliament decided that the colonists could and should pay more to help the Empire.

The Sugar, Quartering, and Stamp Acts Colonial merchants had grown rich from trade, often smuggling or bribing officials to avoid duties, or taxes, on imports. In 1764, the new prime minister, George Grenville, proposed raising money by collecting duties already in effect. The law, known as the Sugar Act when put into effect, actually lowered the duty on foreign molasses. However, it also assigned customs officers and created courts to collect the duties and prosecute smugglers.

Grenville hoped that these measures would encourage colonists to pay the tax.

In early 1765, Parliament passed another unpopular law, the Quartering Act. This act required the colonies to provide housing and supplies for the British troops stationed there after the French and Indian War. Colonists complained, but most went along with the changes because they accepted Parliament's right to regulate trade and provide for defense.

In March 1765, Parliament passed a bill intended to raise money from the colonies. The *Stamp Act* required colonists to pay a tax on almost all printed materials, including newspapers, books, court documents, contracts, and land deeds. This was the first time that Parliament had imposed a direct tax within the colonies.

Taxation Without Representation The colonists angrily protested the Stamp Act, which was to take effect in November. They claimed that it threatened their prosperity and liberty. Colonial leaders questioned Parliament's right to tax the colonies directly.

They argued that the colonies had no representation in Parliament, so Parliament had no right to tax them. Some colonists believed that if they accepted this tax, Parliament would add even more taxes, stripping away their property and political rights. Many colonists thought that the stamp tax revealed a conspiracy by British officials to destroy American liberties.

The colonists' arguments puzzled the members of Parliament. After all, most Britons paid taxes although they could not vote. Many large British cities did not elect representatives to Parliament, which claimed to represent everyone in the Empire. Parliament dismissed the colonial opposition as selfish and narrow-minded. The Empire needed money, and Parliament had the right to levy taxes anywhere in the Empire. Of course, Parliament's argument did not sway the colonists, who were appalled to discover that the British were denying their right to tax themselves.



CHECK UNDERSTANDING: *In 20 words or less, answer the following questions.*

Why did the British feel justified in passing the Sugar and Stamp Acts?

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Why did the colonists feel justified in objecting to these laws?

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