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Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress, 19 October 1765

With the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, Great Britain took possession of Canada from France and East and West Florida from Spain. With these acquisitions, British authorities felt that more revenue from the colonies would be needed to administer this new territory. Thus, when Charles Townshend became first lord of trade in February 1763, he announced that the acts of trade and navigation acts would be more strictly enforced and that a program of Parliamentary taxes would replace the requisitions previously placed on the colonies. This change in imperial policy would create one crisis after another that eventually led to Americans declaring their independence.

The Stamp Act of 22 March 1765 was probably the single act most despised by American colonists. To go into effect in November, it mandated that a stamp duty be placed on all legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, almanacs, college degrees, liquor licenses, playing cards, dice, etc. Prosecutions under the Stamp Act were to be heard not by local courts, but by admiralty courts in which there were no jury trials.

Over the spring and summer of 1765 colonial legislatures responded by advocating for a representative body to “consider of a general and united, dutiful, loyal, and humble representation of their condition to his majesty and to the parliament, and to implore relief. Nine colonies sent delegates to New York City. The Convention approved fourteen resolutions on 19 October, after which petitions were prepared to be submitted to the king and each house of Parliament calling for the repeal of the act.

Because of the widespread opposition in America that took the form of violence, intimidation, and embargos on imports and exports, Parliament, now under the administration of Lord Rockingham, repealed the Stamp Act on 18 March 1766. On the same day, however, Parliament passed the Declaratory Act, which provided that Parliament had the power to bind America in all cases whatsoever and that all American petitions, resolutions, and acts protesting Parliament’s actions were null and void.

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, &c.* 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.