

# Immediate Causes of the War



The Proclamation of 1763 was not the first British law that placed restrictions on the colonists. Laws dealing with business and trade had been in effect for years. Such laws stated that the colonies could not sell products to any country except England or buy products from any country except England. These laws, however, had never been strictly enforced.

The situation changed after 1763. With England in desperate need of money, Parliament looked for a way to make the colonists pay for the British troops stationed in America. Three acts (laws) particularly irritated the colonists. One was the Stamp Act of 1765. It required the colonists to buy stamps and put them on such legal documents as wills, deeds, and marriage licenses. Stamps also had to be placed on newspapers, playing cards, diplomas, and other items. In all, 54 different items required stamps. Although the stamps were inexpensive, the colonists objected to the tax. They felt that only their own legislatures had the right to pass tax laws. In their opinion, being taxed by a legislative body in which they had no elected members was a clear case of "taxation without representation."

Colonists quickly reacted to the Stamp Act. Some formed secret clubs called the Sons of Liberty. Led by such Patriots as Samuel Adams and Paul Revere, members of the Sons of Liberty broke into the homes of stamp distributors and burned stamps. Sometimes they made dummies of the distributors and hung the dummies from a tree or burned them. A few distributors were even forced out of town. At the same time, colonists started to boycott English goods. (A boycott is the refusal to buy or use a certain product.) The boycott caused merchants everywhere to lose a great deal of money, and they soon began to put pressure on Parliament to repeal (cancel) the Stamp Act. Parliament did repeal the act in 1766, but then it immediately passed the Declaratory Act. This act stated that King George III and Parliament had the authority to make laws for the colonists on any matter.

Another act passed in 1765 that angered colonists was the Quartering Act. It required that colonists provide lodging for British soldiers in places where there were no barracks, or soldiers' quarters. Colonists also had to furnish the soldiers with transportation, fuel, candles, beer, and cider. They even had to wash the soldiers' clothes!

Two years after passing the Stamp Act and Quartering Act, Parliament passed the Townshend Act. The Townshend Act placed taxes on tea, glass, paper, and paint. Its purpose was to pay England's costs of governing the colonies. In addition to taxing products, the law gave the king's officers power to enter a home and search for taxable goods. As with the Stamp Act, colonists reacted to the law by boycotting English goods. Soon imports from England dropped by almost half, and Parliament was forced to repeal the taxes on every item except tea. They kept the tax on tea to show the colonies that Parliament still had the right to tax them.

These and other laws and restrictions all demonstrated the attitude of the king and Parliament that it was colonists' duty to obey England and the laws it created. This attitude eventually led to the Revolutionary War (which is also called the American Revolution).