

Document A: B.W.'s Public Letter (Modified, 1765)

This public letter appeared on the front page of The Boston-Gazette and Country Journal, a colonial newspaper, on October 7, 1765. The author's name was printed as "B.W."

To the Inhabitants of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay My Dear Countrymen,

It is a standing maxim of English Liberty "That no man shall be taxed but with his own consent," and you very well know we were not, in any sober sense, represented in parliament, when this tax was imposed.

AWAKE! Awake, my Countrymen and defeat those who want to enslave us. Do not be cowards. You were born in Britain, the Land of Light, and you were raised in America, the Land of Liberty. It is your duty to fight this tax. Future generations will bless your efforts and honor the memory of the saviors of their country.

I urge you to tell your representatives that you do not support this terrible and burdensome law. Let them know what you think. They should act as guardians of the liberty of their country.

I look forward to congratulating you on delivering us from the enemies of truth and liberty.

Source: *B.W. "To the Inhabitants of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay," The Boston-Gazette and Country Journal, October 7, 1765. Vocabulary maxim: a statement expressing a general truth sober: serious*

Document B: From a London Newspaper (Modified, 1766)

Will Alfred wrote this public letter to Secretary Henry Seymour Conway. Conway was one of two of Britain's Secretaries of State and was responsible for relations with the American colonies. The letter was first published in a London newspaper and then was published in the Boston Gazette Supplement on January 27, 1766, nearly three months after the Stamp Act went into effect.

From a late London paper.

To Mr. Secretary Conway:

The riotous behavior of the people in Boston is remarkable. I would have been less surprised by their behavior if we had taxed their beer, because everyone drinks beer. But the Stamp Act is a tax on none of the necessities of life. It does not affect the poor. And even a poor person can afford this little amount of money. The tax on newspapers only affects the rich—common people do not purchase newspapers. Isn't it surprising, then, that the mob in Boston has begun to riot against this tax even before it has officially gone into effect? I was expressing my wonder at this, when I was informed, that it was not the burden of the tax to be raised, but the manner in which it was imposed, that created the discontent: If this is so, the matter is more serious than it may first appear. . . .

The colonists are our brethren and fellow-subjects. . . . We should ask therefore whether we have behaved to them as brethren. . . . The first birth right privilege of a Briton is, that he cannot be legally tried but by his peers. One of the next is, that he cannot be taxed but by a parliament in which he is represented. . . . Do these who impose taxes on the colonists pay also themselves a share of these

taxes? If this is not the case, what have the colonists done that they are to be stripped of one of the most valuable privileges of Britons? Have the parliament of Great Britain a right to take from any, the lowest of the subjects, the smallest privilege, which he inherits by birth-right, unless forfeited by law?

Source: Will Alfred, "To Mr. Secretary Conway," *Boston Gazette Supplement*, January 27, 1766.

Document C: Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress (1765)

Following the passage of the Stamp Act, a Congress of representatives met in New York City to issue a response to the recently passed Stamp Act. The resolutions gained the colonists sympathy with some in the British Government and inspired outrage in others.

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...:

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.

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.

That the people of these colonies are not, and from their local circumstances cannot be, represented in the House of Commons in Great-Britain.

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 legislatures....

Document D: MP George Grenville on Colonial Resistance to the Stamp Act (1766)

Protection and obedience are reciprocal. Great Britain protects America; America is bound to yield obedience. If, not, tell me when the Americans were emancipated? When they want the protection of this kingdom, they are always ready to ask for it. That protection has always been afforded them in the most full and ample manner. The nation has run itself into an immense debt to give them their protection; and now they are called upon to contribute a small share towards the public expence, and expence arising from themselves, they renounce your authority, insult your officers, and break out, I might also say, into open rebellion.

Source: Grenville's defense of the Stamp Act in the Parliamentary debate concerning the bill.

- **Document A**

- How does BW talk about Massachusetts and America in general?
- How does BW talk about England?

- **Document B**

- What is the author's first reaction to the uproar in Boston over the Stamp Act?
- In the second paragraph, he changes his position. How does he feel toward the colonists in Boston? Why?

- **Document C**

- What is the tone of this document toward the king?
- What is the argument for opposing the Stamp Act?

- **Document D**

- What is Grenville's tone toward the colonists resisting the tax?
- Why does Grenville think the tax is justified?