

## The Stamp Act: *Printable Documents*

**Important:** *You do not need to print these documents if you are working online.*

### London Merchants Urge Repeal (January 17, 1766)

... That the Petitioners have been long concerned in carrying on the Trade between this Country and the British Colonies on the Continent of North America; and that they have annually exported very large Quantities of British Manufactures, consisting of Woollen Goods of all Kinds, Cottons, Linens, Hardware, Shoes, Household Furniture, and almost without Exception of every other Species of Goods manufactured in these Kingdoms ... and that, from the Nature of this Trade, consisting of British Manufactures exported, and of the Import of raw Materials from America, many of them used in our Manufactures, and all of them tending to lessen our Dependence on neighbouring States, it must be deemed of the highest Importance in the Commercial System of this Nation; and that this Commerce, so beneficial to the State, and so necessary for the Support of the Multitudes, now lies under such Difficulties and Discouragement, that nothing less than its utter Ruin is apprehended, without the immediate Interposition of Parliament ...

### Parliament Member Argues Against Repeal (January 23, 1766)

The only shadow of an argument, that can be brought to support the repeal of the Stamp Act, is that our trade with that country will suffer, if we enforce the tax with spirit and rigour. I grant it will—but what then? It will suffer only for a time; and this necessary severity will support and secure it for the future. Whereas if the tax is repealed, it will give a blow to our trade, that will be felt for ages—it will open a channel to the Americans for a free commerce with all the world: The manufactures of this country will be rejected, in proportion as other nations underwork, and undersell us: In short, America will be no longer British, but German, French, Spanish, Russian—and what not? Forbid it Heaven, that I should live to see the day, when a country, which has cost us so much blood and treasure to defend, will be made the bubble of popularity, or the plaything of power; liable to be blown away by vanity on one hand, or lost, by childish weakness and timidity, on the other.

...

The Americans imbibe notions of independence and liberty with their very milk, and will some time or other shake off all subjection. If we yield to them in this particular, by repealing the Stamp-Act, it is all over; they will from that moment assert their freedom. Whereas if we enforce the Act, we may keep them in dependence for some years longer: they are not yet in a condition to resist us—they cannot live without our manufactories ...

### Grenville Defends Britain's Right to Tax (1766)

I cannot understand the difference between external and internal taxes. They are the same in effect, and only differ in name. That this kingdom has the sovereign, the supreme legislative power over America, is granted. It cannot be denied; and taxation is a part of that sovereign power. It is one branch of the legislation. It is, it has been exercised, over those who are not, who were never represented. It is exercised over the India Company, the merchants of London, the proprietors of the stocks, and over many great manufacturing towns ... Protection and obedience are reciprocal. Great Britain protects America; America is bound to yield obedience ... When they want the protection of this kingdom, they are always very ready to ask 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, an expence arising from themselves, they renounce your authority, insult your officers, and break out, I might almost say, into open rebellion.

### **Franklin Testifies About Colonial Loyalty ( 1766)**

Parliament Member: What is your name, and place of abode?

Franklin: Franklin, of Philadelphia ...

Parliament Member: What was the temper of America towards Great-Britain before the year 1763?

Franklin: The best in the world. They submitted willingly to the government of the Crown, and paid, in all their courts, obedience to acts of parliament ...

Parliament Member: And what is their temper now?

Franklin: O, very much altered.

Parliament Member: Did you ever hear the authority of parliament to make laws for America questioned till lately?

Franklin: The authority of parliament was allowed to be valid in all laws, except such as should lay internal taxes. It was never disputed in laying duties to regulate commerce ...

Parliament Member: What is your opinion of a future tax, imposed on the same principle with that of the stamp-act; how would the Americans receive it?

Franklin: Just as they do this. They would not pay it.

Parliament Member: Have not you heard of the resolutions of this House, and of the House of Lords, asserting the right of parliament relating to America, including a power to tax the people there?

Franklin: Yes, I have heard of such resolutions.

Parliament Member: What will be the opinion of the Americans on those resolutions?

Franklin: They will think them unconstitutional and unjust.

Parliament Member: Was it an opinion in America before 1763, that the parliament had no right to lay taxes and duties there?

Franklin: I never heard any objection to the right of laying duties to regulate commerce; but a right to lay internal taxes was never supposed to be in parliament, as we are not represented there.

...

Parliament Member: If the act is not repealed, what do you think will be the consequences?

Franklin: A total loss of the respect and affection the people of America bear to this country, and of all the commerce that depends on that respect and affection.

Parliament Member: How can the commerce be affected?

Franklin: You will find, that if the act is not repealed, they will take very little of your manufactures in a short time.