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Paul Revere, *A prospective view of the town of Boston, the capital of New-England — and the landing of — troops in the year 1768*, woodcut, 1770 (detail)

The Quartering Act of 1765 required colonial authorities to provide housing, supplies, and food & drink for British troops in America, most of whom were stationed in New York.

HOUSING (not in inhabited private homes), to be paid through soldiers' allowances

- “barracks provided by the colonies”; if insufficient, then . . .
- “inns, livery stables, ale houses, victualling-houses, and the houses of sellers of wine by retail . . .”; if insufficient, then . . .
- “uninhabited houses, outhouses, barns, or other buildings”

FOOD & BEVERAGES, to be paid through soldiers' allowances

- “diet [food], and small beer, cyder, or rum mixed with water”

SUPPLIES, to be paid by colonial assemblies, not by the soldiers

- “fire, candles, vinegar, and salt, bedding, utensils for dressing their victuals, and small beer or cyder, not exceeding five pints, or half a pint of rum mixed with a quart of water, to each man, without paying any thing for the same”

“every Act of Oppression will sour their Tempers . . . and hasten their final Revolt”
Benjamin Franklin

COLONISTS RESPOND TO THE QUARTERING ACT OF 1765

AND THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NEW YORK ASSEMBLY

A Selection from Essays, Petitions & Letters

1765

- March 22: STAMP ACT is passed by Parliament to fund the maintenance of British troops in the colonies.
- March 24: QUARTERING ACT is passed by Parliament ordering colonial assemblies to provide funds for the housing, food, and provisions for British troops.
- Dec.: The assembly of New York (where most British troops were stationed at that time) announces it will resist because (1) the Quartering Act supported the unprecedented stationing of troops in peacetime (“standing army”) in the colonies; (2) it was in effect a tax on the colony; and (3) the expense was not shared by all colonies.

1766

- March: Stamp Act is repealed by Parliament, which then passes DECLARATORY ACT to affirm Parliament's authority to “make laws . . . of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America . . . in all cases whatsoever.”
- August: New York assembly, which had provided some but not all required supplies, refuses when ordered by Parliament to comply fully with the Act.

1767

- March: Parliament orders New York assembly to comply fully with the Act by August 1 or be suspended. The assembly agrees in June.

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LEGISLATIVE PETITION OPPOSING THE QUARTERING ACT, 1767

- **NEW YORK GENERAL ASSEMBLY**, Petition to the Royal Governor, Sir Henry Moore, 15 December 1766 (published in the *New-York Mercury*, 24 December 1766). EXCERPTS.

We, His Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects, the General Assembly of the Colony of *New York*, have taken your Excellency's message of the 17th of *November* last, into our most serious Consideration: and beg Leave to assure your Excellency that nothing would give us a greater Pleasure than to find it in our Power to comply with every Requisition tending in any manner to promote His Majesty's Service. It is therefore with great Concern that we find it impossible to comply with what is now demanded, consistent with our Obligations to our Constituents [citizens of the colony]. . . .

In the Provision we made last Session for quartering Two Battalions and one Company of Artillery, we loaded ourselves with a Burden much greater than any of the neighboring Governments lie under for that Service, and imagined that, far from being censured on that Account, it would be accepted as a new Instance of that Loyalty and Affection to His Majesty's Government, of which this Colony has exhibited so many Proofs.

We beg Leave, further, to represent to your Excellency that, by the Act of Parliament, it appears to be the Intention of the Legislature to provide for the quartering Soldiers only on a March; but according to the Construction [interpretation] put on it here, it is required that all the Forces which shall at any Time enter this Colony, shall be quartered during the whole Year, in a very unusual and expensive Manner: That by marching several Regiments into this Colony, this Expense would become ruinous and insupportable; And, therefore, we cannot consistent with our Duty to our Constituents, put it in the Power of any Person . . . to lay such a Burden on them.

- **SIR HENRY MOORE**, governor of New York, Reply to the petition of the New York Assembly, 19 December 1766 (published in the *New-York Mercury*, 24 December 1766).

It is with no small Concern that I find the Sentiments of this House differing so much from mine in Regard to the Subject Matter of the Address now presented to me, which shall, by the first Opportunity, be transmitted to the [British] Secretary of State in Order to be laid before his Majesty.

- **"A LETTER FROM LONDON TO A GENTLEMAN IN THIS CITY,"** (New York City), dated 12 February 1767 (published in the *New-York Mercury*, 27 April 1767). EXCERPT.

The Address of the New York Assembly to their Governor has made a great Noise and Disturbance throughout this Kingdom, in all Companies and Conversations, insomuch that is generally said they are in a State of Rebellion and are endeavoring to throw off their Dependence, &c. I hear the Ministry are in great and deep Concern about it. — Most People are of Opinion they will certainly enforce the Execution of the Act of Parliament and, to that End, will send over Troops, Ships, &c., the Consequences of which I most sincerely dread in every Light in which they can be viewed, either as an Infringement of the Liberties of the People, or, in the Case of Resistance, for the Miseries such a Conduct must necessarily be productive of.



■ **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**, London, Letter to Henry Home, Lord Kames, 25 February 1767, excerpts on the Quartering Act and the resurgent “Contest between the two Countries.”

I have mentioned that the Contest [between Britain and America] is like to be revived. It is on this Occasion [cause]. In the same Session with the Stamp Act, an Act was pass'd to regulate the Quartering of Soldiers in America. When the Bill was first brought in, it contain'd a Clause empowering the Officers to quarter their Soldiers in private Houses. This we warmly oppos'd and got it omitted. The Bill pass'd however with a Clause that empty Houses, Barns, &c. should be hired for them, and that the respective Provinces, where they were, should pay the Expense and furnish Firing, Bedding, Drink, and some other Articles to the Soldiers, gratis [free]. There is no way for any Province to do this but by the Assembly's making a Law to raise the Money. Pennsylvania Assembly has made such a Law. New York Assembly has refus'd to do it. And now all the Talk here is to send a Force to compel them.



The Reasons given by the Assembly to the Governor for their Refusal are:

–That they understand the Act to mean the furnishing such things to Soldiers only while on their March thro' the Country and not to great Bodies of Soldiers; to be fixt as at present in the Province, the Burden in the latter Case being greater than the Inhabitants can bear;

–That it would put it in the Power of the Captain General to oppress the Province at pleasure, &c.

But there is suppos'd to be another Reason, at bottom, which they intimate tho' they do not plainly express it, to wit, that it is of the nature of an *internal Tax* laid on them by Parliament, which has no Right so to do. Their Refusal is here [Britain] called Rebellion, and Punishment is thought of. . . .

. . . The present Ministry [king's cabinet] are perplexed, and the Measures they will finally take on the Occasion are unknown. But sure I am that if Force is us'd, great Mischief will ensue, the Affections of the People of America to this Country will be alienated, your Commerce will be diminished, and a total Separation of Interests be the final Consequence. . . .

Upon the whole, I have lived so great a Part of my Life in Britain, and have formed so many Friendships in it, that I love it and wish its Prosperity, and therefore wish to see that Union on which alone I think it can be secur'd and establish'd. As to America, the Advantages of such an Union to her are not so apparent. She may suffer at present under the arbitrary Power of this Country; she may suffer for a while in a Separation from it; but these are temporary Evils that she will outgrow. Scotland and Ireland are differently circumstanc'd. Confin'd by the Sea, they can scarcely increase in Numbers, Wealth and Strength so as to overbalance England. But America, an immense Territory, favor'd by Nature with all Advantages of Climate, Soil, great navigable Rivers and Lakes, &c. must become a great Country, populous and mighty; and will in a less time than is generally conceiv'd be able to shake off any Shackles that may be impos'd on her, and perhaps place them on the Imposers.

In the meantime, every Act of Oppression will sour their Tempers, lessen greatly if not annihilate the Profits of your Commerce with them, and hasten their final Revolt: For the Seeds of Liberty are universally sown there, and nothing can eradicate them. And yet there remains among that People so much Respect, Veneration and Affection for Britain that, if cultivated prudently, with kind Usage and Tenderness for their Privileges, they might be easily govern'd still for Ages without Force or any considerable Expense. But I do not see here a sufficient Quantity of the Wisdom that is necessary to produce such a Conduct, and I lament the Want of it.

ESSAYS ON THE SUSPENSION OF THE NEW YORK ASSEMBLY, 1767, #1

- “A. F.,” *The New York Journal; or the General Advertiser*, 10 September 1767; reprint of letter printed in *The Boston Gazette* after news arrived of the threatened suspension of the New York assembly.

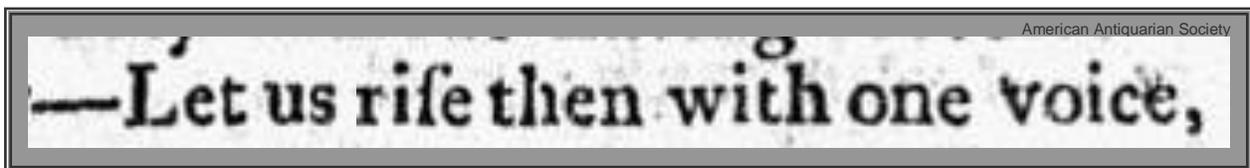
By the past Post [mail] from New York, we learn the H. of C——s have passed a B—l¹ for suspending the legislative authority of that province until they comply with the billeting act [Quartering Act]: or in other words, because N. Y. would not give it [funds] up themselves and, by complying with that act acknowledge the P——t² had a right to legislate for them. What the event of this step will be, I know not, but this I am sure of — nothing can more affect the Liberty of the Colonies than such a step, but a compliance with the a—t itself. If our legislative authority can be suspended whenever we refuse obedience to laws we never consent to, we may as well send home our representatives and acknowledge ourselves slaves; for a Parliament can be of no use to a people who are subject to laws they do not make. . . .

“nothing is more certain than as free colonies we must rise & fall together”

The people in this province [Massachusetts] will, I doubt not, look on this measure in the same light they would were they the object of it, for nothing is more certain than as free colonies we must rise & fall together. In the late troubles, for want [lack] of experience, many faults and some gross errors were committed, from which I hope we have gained knowledge. Tumult and disorder should be carefully avoided, especially as we have lawful and laudable means in our hands of obtaining redress, which must speedily and effectually relieve us if we will but act as becomes Americans, with one voice and one mind — Let us unanimously agree to confine our imports from E—d & S—d to such articles as are absolutely necessary to carry on our fisheries and provide us against the inclemency of the seasons, and we have nothing to fear. . . . By this measure we shall avoid everything blameworthy, introduce a spirit of frugality, enrich ourselves, convince our enemies of our resolution and wisdom — and in the end certainly bring about that redress we all desire, and which every good subject [citizen] ultimately aims at.

I cannot think so hardly of Americans as to imagine there can be any difficulty in effecting such a measure; but should there be found among us some who are so lost to all sense of liberty, and so depraved as to suffer their private interest to come in competition with the public, I am persuaded the number will be so small that shame & contempt may bring them to a just sense of their duty without having recourse to the passion of fear.³

Let us rise then with one voice and declare like true Englishmen, we abhor slavery and such as would enslave; we love Liberty and her friends; and that we will encourage the one and depress the other by all justifiable means in our power. — Let us call upon our sister colonies to join with us in so glorious a work. Let no man think his influence too small to assist in it, but let everyone use his best endeavors to render it universal. Then shall we obtain our wishes and put to shame our enemies, who would gladly see us run into mad disorder and wild confusion at this critical juncture. — Let us pursue steadily this point without giving heed to their promises or threats, which are designed to lead us into error, and in the end destroy us. Tho’ the Press, that sure and grand support of Liberty and Right, should be *threatened with the summary proceedings of the Star Chamber*,⁴ and our righteous opposition to slavery be called rebellion, yet will a true Englishman pursue his duty with firmness, and leave the event to Heaven.



¹ I.e., we learn the House of Commons [in Parliament] have passed a Bill . . .

² Parliament.

³ Passion of fear," i.e., colonists opposed to resisting British authority will be harassed and their persons and property threatened if not harmed.

⁴ Star Chamber: secret English court in the 1600s that prosecuted crimes without regard to the constitutional rights of Englishmen.

ESSAYS ON THE SUSPENSION OF THE NEW YORK ASSEMBLY, 1767, #2

- JOHN DICKINSON, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies*, Letter One, on the colonists' response to the threatened suspension of the New York Assembly, *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, 2 December 1767. EXCERPTS.

My dear COUNTRYMEN, . . .

WITH a good deal of surprise I have observed that little notice has been taken of an act of Parliament as injurious in its principle to the liberties of these colonies as the *Stamp Act* was: I mean the act for suspending the legislation of *New York*.

THE assembly of that government complied with a former act of Parliament requiring certain provisions to be made for the troops in *America* in every particular, I think, except the articles of salt, *pepper* and vinegar. In my opinion they acted imprudently, considering all circumstances, in not complying so far as would have given satisfaction, as several colonies did. But my dislike of their conduct in that instance has not blinded me so much that I cannot plainly perceive that they have been punished in a manner pernicious to *American* freedom and justly alarming to all the colonies.

IF the *British* Parliament has a legal authority to issue an order that we shall furnish a single article for the troops here, and to compel obedience to *that* order, they have the same right to issue an order for us supply those troops with arms, clothes, and every necessary, and to compel obedience to *that* order also; in short, to lay *any burdens* they please upon us. What is this but *taxing* us at a *certain sum* and leaving us only the *manner* of raising it? How is this mode more tolerable than the *Stamp Act*? Would that act have appeared more pleasing to *Americans* if, being ordered thereby to raise the sum total of the taxes, the mighty privilege had been left to them of saying how much should be paid for an instrument of writing on paper, and how much for another on parchment?

AN act of Parliament commanding us to do a certain thing, if it has any validity, is a *tax* upon us for the expense that accrues in complying with it, and for this reason, I believe, every colony on the continent that chose to give a mark of their respect for *Great Britain*, in complying with the act relating to the troops, cautiously avoided the mention of that act, lest their conduct should be attributed to its supposed obligation.

THE matter being thus stated, the assembly of *New York* either had or had not a right to refuse submission to that act. If they had, and I imagine no *American* will say they had not, then the Parliament had *no right* to compel them to execute it. If they had not *this right*, they had *no right* to punish them for not executing it, and therefore *no right* to suspend their legislation, which is a punishment. In fact, if the people of *New York* cannot be legally taxed but by their own representatives, they cannot be legally deprived of the privilege of legislation, only for insisting on that exclusive privilege of taxation. If they may be legally deprived in such a case of the privilege of legislation, why may they not, with equal reason, be deprived of every other privilege? Or why may not every colony be treated in the same manner, when any of them shall dare to deny their assent to any impositions that shall be directed? Or what signifies the repeal of the *Stamp Act* if these colonies are to lose their *other* privileges by not tamely surrendering *that* of taxation?

WITH concern I have observed that *two* assemblies of this province have sat and adjourned without taking any notice of this act. It may perhaps be asked: what would have been proper for them to do? I am by no means fond of inflammatory measures; I detest them. I should be sorry that anything should be done which might justly displease our sovereign or our mother country: But a firm, modest exertion of a free spirit should never be wanting [lacking] on public occasions. It appears to me that it would have been sufficient for the assembly to have ordered our agents to represent to the King's ministers [cabinet] their sense of the suspending act [dissolving the New York assembly] and to pray [petition] for its repeal. Thus we should have borne our testimony against it, and might therefore reasonably expect that, on a like occasion, we might receive the same assistance from the other colonies. . . .

A FARMER