

Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress

October 19, 1765

The Stamp Act Congress, held in October 1765 in New York City, was a pivotal gathering of representatives from nine of the American colonies. It was convened to address colonial grievances regarding the Stamp Act. The Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress marked the first unified response by the colonies against British taxation policies, leading to a declaration of rights and grievances and setting a precedent for future collective action against British rule. These resolutions were sent to the British government, including King George III and Parliament, to formally protest the Stamp Act and seek its repeal.

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 legislatures.

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, etc.,

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.

Glossary: (in order of appearance)

inviolably – secure from violation or trespass; in this case, completely loyal to the king

Protestant succession – the Hanoverian dynasty (all of the monarchs were Protestants as opposed to Catholics).

impending – threatening; about to occur

indispensable – absolutely necessary or essential

liege--vassals or subjects under a king

subordination – submissive to authority

august – revered; greatly respected

inherent – part of the basic nature; intrinsic

jurisdiction – power, control, authority

manifest tendency – obvious inclination

subvert – overturn or overthrow

scarcity of specie – lack of hard money in the form of 2003.

gold and silver coins

intercourse - trade

procure – to achieve

Wiersema, G. "Stamp Act Congress." From Revolution to Reconstruction . . . and What Happened Afterwards. 6 March, 2003.

All definitions are either quoted or based upon Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary. Springfield, MA: Merriam- Webster, 1986.

Discussion Questions:

1.	What fundamental rights did the members of the Congress identify as being violated by recent Acts of Parliament? [Resolutions I - VII]	
2.	How did these declarations reflect the colonies' stance on taxation and representation?	
3.	How did the Stamp Act Congress justify their resistance to the Stamp Act and other British legislation? [Resolution IX]	
4.	What actions did they propose to address these grievances? [Resolution XIII]	