

Excerpt from Lawrence Henry Gipson's
*The Coming of the Revolution (1763-1775)*¹

Gipson, a modern writer, starts off by quoting from one who was very much informed about the American revolution—a governor of Massachusetts in the early 1770s. Then, Gipson goes on to state why he feels that Americans were quite happy to be subservient to Britain before 1763, but quite unhappy with that arrangement from 1763 onward. In the third paragraph, Gipson essentially states that had the English and American colonists lost the war, and France issued an order for Americans to stay east of the Appalachians, that the Americans would have been quite happy to retain the protection of the English. As it was, it was the English who issued that order to the Americans, and the rest is history...

Perhaps no single factor was more responsible for this development [the American rebellion from England] than was the acquisition of Canada. As Thomas Hutchinson [governor of Massachusetts from 1771 to 1774] saw it in 1773:

Before the peace I thought nothing so much to be desired as the cession of Canada. I am now convinced that had it remained to the French none of the spirit of opposition to the mother country would have yet appeared and I think the effects of it worse than all we have to fear from French and Indians.

Indeed, who with the facts before him would venture to argue soberly that had the French succeeded in winning the war and enclosing the British colonials within the areas to the east of the Appalachian barriers and south of the waters flowing into the St. Lawrence, there would have arisen any violent and sustained opposition to an act of Parliament that with good reason sought to strengthen the North American defenses of the empire by some method of securing a fund from the colonies as an aid to that end? But the war ended otherwise. The peace therefore ushered in an era in the history of North America utterly unlike any that had preceded it. Indeed, British colonials faced in a sense a new world and inevitably adjusted their ideas to conform to a new set of values.

It is clear that all political communities in a free society—in contrast to a police state—are in the final analysis bound together by self-interest. Therefore, only where this self-interest promotes a sense of solidarity among the members can there be real stability. That the old British Empire up to 1760 exhibited, as a free society, such a remarkable degree of stability can be attributed to the fact that most of those living within it were convinced that the benefits derived from membership far surpassed the disadvantages. That the colonials were fully aware of the disadvantages of having to submit to orders in council, to governor's instructions and to an impressive body of regulations laid down by Parliament between the years 1660 and 1760 cannot be questioned. Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that they appreciated the fact that, in spite of their subordination to the government of Great Britain, they alone among colonial people were permitted to extensive a degree of self-government; and that for more than a century their security had

¹ Pages 215-16. New York: Harper, 1954.

rested largely upon the readiness of the mother country to defend them.

However, the elimination of France from North America and of Spain from Florida radically altered the basis of the relations of the colonies to the mother country. After 1760, revenue and regulatory measures of Parliament that under earlier conditions might have been accepted with some equanimity were no deemed intolerable. The history of the period from 1760 to 1775 is really the history of the transformation of that attitude of the great body of colonials from one of acquiescence in the traditional order of things to a demand for a new order. This undoubtedly came with the growing conviction on their part that the disadvantages of continuing in a subordinate position within the Empire as colonials out-weighed the advantages of that status.