Name: Date:

Ms. Centonze Period:

***Why Did England and Its Colonies Disagree Over Colonial Affairs?***

*Colonies England*



 Although English colonists had rights and some voice in their government, they were subject to control by the homeland. In fact, English officials had very definite ideas about colonies and how they should be run. What were these ideas and how did the colonists feel about them?

**ENGLAND SAYS THAT COLONIES EXIST FOR THE GOOD OF ENGLAND**

People in England believed that the colonies existed for the benefit of the English homeland. After all, they reasoned that the colonies had been started by England. The colonist enjoyed certain rights, including some self-government, only because England allowed it. Also, England provided armies and ships to help protect the colonies from the Indians and the French. The feeling in England, therefore, was that the colonies owed much to the homeland and should be willing to obey laws and regulations that would benefit England.

**TRADE MEANS WEALTH FOR ENGLAND**

What did England want of the colonies? England expected them to add to its wealth. To be sure, no gold or silver mines, such as those that enriched Spain, had been discovered. There was another way, however, by which the colonies could bring riches to England. This was through trade. For example, the colonies produced plentiful supplies of certain goods that England wanted. Among them were tobacco, indigo, rice, and materials for building ships. On the other hand, the colonists needed many articles, manufactured in England – clothes, hats, kettles, weapons, dishes and tools.

 For a number of reasons, England wanted its American colonies to sell most of their raw materials to the homeland and in turn buy from England most of the manufactured products the colonists needed. Manufacturing articles for the colonies would bring employment to many people in England as well as profits to manufacturers. There would also be good profits for shipbuilders, shipowners, and merchants if goods passing to and from the colonies were carried in English vessels or in vessels built in the English colonies. But how, thought the people of England, can we keep so profitable a trade for ourselves along?

**ENGLAND PASSES LAWS TO CONTROL COLONIAL TRADE**

 In order to protect England’s trade with its colonies, Parliament had from time to time passed laws known as Navigation Acts. Two of the most important of these were passed by Parliament in the 1660s. The Navigation Acts included the following regulations:

1. The colonists were required to export certain of their products only to England or to other English colonies. At first only a few products—such as sugar, tobacco, and indigo—had to be sold to England. As time went on, however, more articles produced by the colonists were added to the list.



I can only go to England!

 

1. All goods coming to the colonies from other countries had first to pass through England. For example, if a cargo of tea were sent from China to Philadelphia, it had to be taken to England first. There it could be taxed by the government and then shipped on to Philadelphia.



1. All goods going to or coming from the colonies were to be carried by ships built in England or in the colonies. Three fourths of the crews of these vessels, said the Navigation Acts, had to be English.

**ENGLAND CONTROLS COLONIAL MANUFACTURING**

 In early days the settlers had little time or opportunity to manufacture goods. As the colonies became larger and more settled, some manufacturing began. Goods were not made in factories, as they would be today, but by people in their homes. In time, colonial manufacturing grew until it threatened to hurt the sale of goods made in England. So Parliament passed other acts to make sure that articles made in the colonies would not interfere with the sale of English goods. Colonies might make their own clothes or hats for example, but they could not manufacture clothes or hats to sell in other colonies or in other countries. Colonists might also manufacture iron, but were not allowed to make it into finished products.

 The colonists did not suffer as much from these laws controlling trade and manufacturing as you might expect. Because certain products had to be sold to England, the colonists were sure of a good market for these goods. Colonial shipbuilding and shipping increased because goods were supposed to be carried in English or colonial vessels. It is true, too, that England’s colonial regulations were far less strict than those of Spain. Nevertheless, England felt free to regulate colonial trade and manufacturing with little thought for the wishes of the colonists.

**THE COLONISTS SAY THAT THE COLONIES EXIST FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT**

 The settlers in America did not agree that the purpose of the colonies was to make England wealthy. In fact, they did not believe they owed the homeland anything. The colonists remembered that in crossing the ocean to settle in America, they had faced hardships and dangers. They had worked hard to build new homes in the wilderness. Even though England had furnished help in the wars against France, they themselves had also contributed money and troops. Indeed, the colonists felt they had done most of the work of building the new empire in America. For this reason they believed their trade should not be regulated.



Trade ships in the Charleston Harbor. (South Carolina)

**THE COLONISTS IGNORE MANY OF THE TRADE LAWS**

 For many years no serious trouble developed over the laws regulating colonial trade. The British were too busy with affairs at home and with efforts to defeat France to both very much about enforcing these laws. Although some officers were appointed to enforce the Navigation Acts, many of them never crossed the Atlantic to carry out their duties in the colonies.

 The officers who were stationed at the colonial seaports did not try hard to keep the settlers from trading with other countries. So smuggling (shipping goods secretly against the law) was common and very profitable. For instance, colonial merchants smuggled tea from Holland instead of buying it from English merchants whose prices were higher. When colonial merchants and planters gathered in public places or talked by their firesides, they often grumbled about the British regulations. But they did not go beyond the point of grumbling.

**THE COLONISTS DISAGREE WITH BRITAIN ABOUT COLONIAL GOVERNMENT**

 Britain and its American colonies had some differences of opinion, also, about how the colonies should be governed. Although the colonists were loyal to the Crown, they believed it was only right that they should be allowed to manage their own affairs. The spirit of freedom was strong in America; and England, after all, was far away. The colonists felt that people in Britain, including the king and his advisers, knew little about conditions in America. The king and Parliament, on the other hand, thought otherwise. They believed that Great Britain possessed wide power of government over it settlements in America. One government officer spoke of the colonies as “these American children, planted by our care, nourished up by our indulgence [kindness] to a degree of strength … and protected by our arms.”

 Before 1763, however, Great Britain did not often insist upon using its powers of government. To be sure, from time to time a charter was taken away from a colony or proprietor. And the British government continued to claim the right to tax the colonists and to set aside laws passed in the colonies. But these powers were not often used.

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 To sum it up, the colonists in 1763 did not entirely accept Britain’s right to control their government and their trade, but there had been no open conflict. It is easy to see, however, that any move by Britain to enforce the trade laws or govern more strictly in the colonies was likely to lead to trouble.

Questions:

1. (a)Why did people in England believe that the colonies existed for the benefit of England? (b) Why did the English colonists feel that they owed England nothing?
2. (a)What were the provisions of the Navigation Acts? (b) What was the attitude of the colonists toward the laws regulating colonial trade?
3. How did the British colonists and the British leaders disagree on the way the colonies should be governed?