

Lesson #25 U.S. History

Declaration of Independence

The American Declaration Of Independence

What had started as a rebellion in the thirteen colonies turned into a full revolution by the year 1776. Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet that was published in January 1776 asking the question should an island rule a continent. The Second Continental Congress in May of 1776 had met to find a solution to the current dispute with the mother country. Richard Henry Lee stood and proposed a resolution to declare independence from England and King. That resolution was set aside for further study while a committee of five members was assigned to write a declaration if the Congress later voted for independence.

Thomas Jefferson was given the task of writing the declaration and he drew on the past to make his case against the King. Two of the most notable were George Mason and John Locke and their ideas of government. When Jefferson completed his draft of the declaration it was reviewed and changes were made. These did not always set well with the original writer. The final document is 1,310 words long and has had a greater impact on history than other documents. One purpose for the writing was to win other European nations to the Colonist cause.

John Dickinson said that no declaration would bring any nation into the colonist side and only a show of military would provide might that. He was right for after the Battle of Saratoga in 1777 did France join the American cause in 1778 followed by Dutch (Netherlands) and Spain. Then in 1783 the English Parliament in the Treaty of Paris recognized the independence of the United States. The Declaration of Independence has no force of law and yet it is a concept that has changed and is changing the world today. Some 100 nations around the world have Declarations that are copies of or are model after our Declaration.

By 1821 many Latin American new nations wrote their declarations pattern after our Declaration of Independence. New nations after the Great War also used the American Declaration as a model for their new governments. Nations that won independence after World War II used the language of the Declaration of Independence when writing theirs. That same impact can be seen with the collapse of the Soviet Union and new nations.

Yet, the original document has become more than what its author intended. Jefferson used the word people to identify Americans and English as groups of people. Those that have read this word in the passage have interpreted the word people to refer to individuals. This set off other declarations and claims to these rights. In 1829 Robert Owens wrote a Utopian Declaration for metal independence, Nat Turner set July 4, as his date for a slave rebellion, The Declaration of Women's Rights in 1848, Frederick Douglass in 1852 referred to the Declaration and July 4, in a speech on slavery, and MLK speech "I Have a Dream" is about the ideas in the Declaration of Independence.

However, it is with Abraham Lincoln that the Declaration is set in the American idea of liberty. He noted that the Battle at Gettysburg was fought on July 4, in his Address at Gettysburg. The words "Four score and seven years ago" refer back to the Declaration not the date of the U.S. Constitution. Lincoln combined the process of the American Revolution as a continuous process.

As Thomas Jefferson said in a letter in 1824 to an individual about the Declaration it is "An instrument pregnant ... the faith of the World".

Started August 2, 1777 to get all 56 signatures

Propaganda Print in London used against Scots in government.
 It was about the Scottish and their connection with the political parties in England.



None of the events or individuals happen

- Earl of Bute John Stuart 3rd Treasury – was an influence during the 1760's power struggle
- Chief Justice Earl of Mansfield William Murray
- Earl of Rosslyn Alexander Wedderburn
- Colonel Simon Fraser of Lovat commanded the 71st Highland Foot of Scotland – he was a relative of the last public beheading in England 1740's

The ship in the Boston bay in the print is commanded by a Scot Captain and bombarded city

None of the Individuals in the print were in Boston at the time.

In 1650's 400 Scottish Prisoners of Rebellion were sent to Boston as servants (slaves)

1715 Scotland was denied a Scottish militia to defend Scotland.

The Scot's had been a thorn in British political life with rebellions (three terrible rebellion and two attempted revolts) between 1708 and 1740. Then the British Union had just been formed and Scots were placed in important position in government.

Reminder of St. Georges Field Massacre and John Wilkes in 1768. Whigs saw the Scots (Tories) as driving a wedge into government challenging traditional English. Tory leader was John Stuart Lord of Treasury (Earl of Bute) and later Prime Minister.

1773 Whigs saw Legislative rule over Executive order and the Scottish Presbyterian destabilized the colonies. Scots were seen as having very little political principles and challenging Britishness.

When Jefferson mentioned foreign mercenaries he was referring to the Scots and not the Hessians. Scotland is small with only 12% of the British population but played a larger part in government and the military -1/3 of the command at the Battle of Brandywine were Scots. Most of the Scottish peasants were without written lease to land and could be evicted in 30 day notice. Landlords were able to use tenant farmers for troop replacements. Out of a population of 2,500 there were 230 men raised in 30 days. Between April 1775 and 1776 Ireland with a much larger population raised 2,900 men while at the same time Scotland placed 4,5000 men in the field. By 1779 the young population of Scotland was depleted.

Glasgow – commercial and Tobacco trade with colonies

East India Company increased military

Highland troops use as light infantry by 1745 (fast moving) Jacobean influence. Light infantry were small men and most Scots at the time were small men because of diet and living conditions – this used was overused by the time of the Battle of Cowpens

Benefits of Lost war after Revolution there was no longer British troops in Scotland. Scot veterans were promised sections of land in Canada by government and then given 19,800 acres in Canada ¼ to Highland troops.

1784 after the American Revolution Scottish nobles had their Land and Title restored.

The Document:

Political Development and Foundation of Western Law

John Locke

“But if a long train...”

Jefferson

“But when a long train...”

George Mason

“All men are create...”

Jefferson

“When in the course...”

Declaration’s 1st paragraph (one sentence)

Necessary – laws of nature are absolute (Newton Clock Maker)

Declaration’s 2nd Paragraph (one sentence)

“We hold these truths to be self-evident...”

He is used 27 times

12 for executive abuse of power

10 for conspiracy

5 for cruelty

Verbs become more harsh in their indictment

Equal all men?

Jefferson there is a natural aristocracy – talent and virtue

Qualitative sameness – reason and free will equal right to self-government

Rights – is a moral principle for human society and freedom – reject force – sovereign – property to keep and use physical and mental labor

Pursuit (not have) of happiness

Real happiness highest value

Short-term happiness physical pleasure

Revolution – destructive and constructive / Revolution is not unlimited

Black Cottage by Robert Frost – debate on the principles of the Declaration / equality and rights

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary ...”

What is the meaning of the word *course*? Is it symbolic if so what?

River – flow moving forward (Necessary) pulled by gravity

What is the meaning of the word *impel*?

Propelled NOT Pushed, but pulled

What is the meaning of *One People*?

Collective Group United separated from another group by the Atlantic

What is *Virtue*?

Neither wealth nor military power is the source of self-organization

When Jefferson used the issue of slavery what was he referring too?

“...has waged cruel war against...” = African slavery interpreted as men, women and kids not just White Men with property

Jefferson a complex individual on slavery and believed in the “Great Chain of Being”

King George III said after the Revolution that George Washington the Greatest man of the Age!

Why do you think he said this?

Washington gave up power twice

Editing of Declaration: Story - John Thomas wanted a sign for his business which read:

John Thomas

Hatter

Makes and sells hats for ready money

He showed the sign to friends:

One said that was redundant – take one ‘Hat’ out

Another said ‘Makes’ nobody want to see a hat made – makes out

Another said it is a store ‘selling’ is its purpose - selling out

Then another point out that everyone must pay – ‘ready money’ – out

Final sign said:

John Thomas

Hat