The 1769 New Virginia Resolves & New York Punishment

SUGGESTED LESSON OUTLINE

Lesson Objectives:
- Understand the New Virginia Resolves as a response to British policies.
- Examine the punitive measures taken against New York by the British Parliament.
- Analyze how these events escalated tensions between the colonies and Britain.

I. Introduction (10 Minutes)

1. Hook Question:
  - "How would you feel if a distant government made rules about your daily life without your input?"
  - Relate this to British policies affecting American colonies.

2. Historical Context:
  - Briefly review the Stamp Act of 1765 and the Townshend Acts of 1767 to set the stage for growing colonial resistance.

II. The New Virginia Resolves (15 Minutes)

1. What were the New Virginia Resolves?
  - A set of resolutions passed by the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1769, asserting the colonies' right to self-governance.
  - Drafted partly by George Mason and supported by figures like George Washington.
  - Denounced the British practice of taxing the colonies without representation and highlighted the illegality of transporting colonists to England for trial.

2. Key Points of the Resolves:
  - Only the colonial assemblies could tax the colonists.
  - Opposition to British judicial overreach (e.g., transporting colonists for trial).
  - Reassertion of natural rights and self-determination.

3. Impact:
  - Inspired other colonies to adopt similar stances.
  - Strengthened intercolonial unity against British policies.

4. Class Discussion:

III. New York Punishment by Parliament (15 Minutes)

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1. Background:
  - New York's refusal to comply with the Quartering Act (a provision requiring colonies to house and supply British troops).
  - Seen by Britain as a challenge to their authority.

2. The Punishment:
  - In 1767, Parliament suspended New York's colonial assembly until it agreed to the Quartering Act.
  - Symbolized Britain's willingness to use force to enforce its laws.

3. Colonial Reaction:
  - Other colonies viewed this punishment as a dangerous precedent.
  - Feared loss of their own assemblies and liberties.

4. Activity: Role-Play Debate:
  - Split the class into "British Parliament" and "Colonial Assemblies."
  - Debate the legitimacy of Parliament's punishment versus colonial resistance.

IV. Connecting the Dots: Escalating Tensions (10 Minutes)

- Discuss how the New Virginia Resolves and the New York Punishment exemplify:
  - Colonial defiance against British overreach.
  - Britain's inability to reconcile its authority with colonial rights.
- Highlight how these events contributed to the eventual revolutionary movement.

V. Wrap-Up Activity: Reflection (10 Minutes)

Write a short response to the question:
  - "If you lived in 1769, do you think would you have supported the colonial resistance? Why or why not?"

Homework: Research another colonial resistance event (e.g., the Boston Tea Party, Committees of Correspondence) and write a one-paragraph summary on how it connected to these 1769 events.

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The Virginia Resolves of 1769

Four resolutions passed by the House of Burgesses asserting the rights of British citizens in Virginia in response to the imperial government's enforcement of the Townsend duties and their ignoring protests of the duties. The Burgesses avowed their sole right to tax in Virginia and the right to petition the Crown for redress of grievances, as well as the legality of joining other colonies in such petitions, and the illegality of deporting colonists accused of crimes in Virginia to England for trial there. The resolves prompted the governor, Lord Botetourt, to dissolve the Assembly the following day once these resolutions were published.

Resolved, That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that the sole Right of imposing Taxes on the Inhabitants of this his Majesty' s Colony and Dominion of *Virginia*, is now, and ever hath been, legally and constitutionally vested in the House of Burgesses, lawfully convened according to the ancient and established Practice, with the Consent of the Council, and of his Majesty, the King of *Great-Britain*, or his Governor, for the Time being.

Resolved, That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that it is the undoubted Privilege of the Inhabitants of this Colony, to petition their Sovereign for Redress of Grievances; and that it is lawful and expedient to procure the Concurrence of his Majesty's other Colonies, in dutiful Addresses, praying the royal Interposition in Favour of the Violated Rights of *America*.

Resolved, That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that all Trials for Treason, Misprison of Treason, or for any Felony or Crime whatsoever, committed and done in this his Majesty's said Colony and Dominion, by any Person or Persons, residing in this Colony, suspected of any Crime whatsoever, committed therein, and sending such Person, or Persons, to Places beyond the Sea, to be tried, is highly derogatory of the Rights of *British* Subjects; as thereby the inestimable Privilege of being tried by a Jury from the Vicinage, as well as the Liberty of summoning and producing Witnesses on such Trial, will be taken away from the Party accused.

Resolved, That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that an humble, dutiful, and loyal Address, be presented to his Majesty, to assure him of our inviolable Attachment to his sacred Person and Government; and to beseech his royal Interposition, as the Father of all his people, however remote from the Seat of his Empire, to quiet the Minds of his loyal Subjects of this Colony, and to avert from them, those Dangers and Miseries which will ensue, from the seizing and carrying beyond Sea, any Person residing in *America*, suspected of any Crime whatsoever, to be tried in any other Manner, than by the ancient and long established Course of Proceeding.

*Vicinage – vicinity, where the person lives

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The Virginia Resolves of 1765

Patrick Henry, who was a new member to the House of Burgesses undertook a radical move against the authority of Parliament. In coalition with George Johnston, a representative from Fairfax county, Henry took the floor in May of 1765. The Burgesses, a very aristocratic company of wealthy plantation owners and gentlemen, had long operated under a relaxed rule that allowed 24 percent of the body to constitute a quorum. That day, only 39 members in attendance, Johnson moved that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole, Henry seconded the motion, and proceeded to offer a shocking series of resolutions. In the absence of the normal, conservative, leadership, all five of the offered resolutions were adopted. The first four were merely strident. The fifth required several hours of heated debate and even then passed by only one vote; ultimately, it would be retracted

Resolved, that the first adventurers and settlers of His Majesty's colony and dominion of Virginia brought with them and transmitted to their posterity, and all other His Majesty's subjects since inhabiting in this His Majesty's said colony, all the liberties, privileges, franchises, and immunities that have at any time been held, enjoyed, and possessed by the people of Great Britain.

Resolved, that by two royal charters, granted by King James I, the colonists aforesaid are declared entitled to all liberties, privileges, and immunities of denizens and natural subjects to all intents and purposes as if they had been abiding and born within the Realm of England.

Resolved, that the taxation of the people by themselves, or by persons chosen by themselves to represent them, who can only know what taxes the people are able to bear, or the easiest method of raising them, and must themselves be affected by every tax laid on the people, is the only security against a burdensome taxation, and the distinguishing characteristic of British freedom, without which the ancient constitution cannot exist.

Resolved, that His Majesty's liege people of this his most ancient and loyal colony have without interruption enjoyed the inestimable right of being governed by such laws, respecting their internal policy and taxation, as are derived from their own consent, with the approbation of their sovereign, or his substitute; and that the same has never been forfeited or yielded up, but has been constantly recognized by the kings and people of Great Britain.

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William Rind and the Virginia Opposition Press
(excerpt from the Library of Virginia)

William Rind was the focus of a long attempt to bring a second press to the colonial capital, one that was beyond the influence of the colonial governor. That effort began in late 1761 – when Thomas Jefferson was eighteen and still attending the College of William & Mary – following the death of William Hunter Sr. (230), the colony's public printer. Hunter had left Virginia for three years (1756-59) to seek medical care in England during the contentious administration of Lieutenant Governor Robert Dinwiddie; he left his Williamsburg printing office in the hands of his bookbinder, John Stretch (407); during that absence, Stretch opened the pages of the official Virginia Gazette to Dinwiddie's political opponents, so presenting the views of his paymasters in the Assembly rather than those of the imperial government. So after consulting with the retired Dinwiddie in England, Hunter returned home, purging his office of its fickle personnel, with Stretch leaving Williamsburg for Annapolis, and the Gazette returning to its former pro-administration perspective, now in support of Lieutenant Governor Francis Fauquier. Hunter's revamped press office was built around two Scottish journeymen that he had brought with him from England: Joseph Royle (368) and Alexander Purdie (345); thus when Hunter died in August 1761, Royle, now shop foreman and his brother-in-law, succeeded him as public printer. Royle continued to support Fauquier with his Gazette to the point of allowing the governor veto power over its content. The most notorious example of that control came with Royle's refusal in 1765 to publish the Assembly's Stamp Act Resolves, and so the inaccurate dating of attempts to bring a "free press" to Virginia to that year. But the pages of the Gazette had been closed to the dissidents in the Assembly since Hunter's return in July 1759, triggering plans to bring Stretch back to Virginia to publish an oppositional voice to the Fauquier-controlled Gazette. Led by the noted Northern Neck politicians Landon Carter and Richard Bland, the dissidents initially tried to buy a new and still unused press for Stretch's use from Hunter's estate, but Royle and his financier, the Williamsburg merchant William Holt (also a brother-in-law to Hunter), stymied the purchase by having the press sold to John Holt (222), William's brother and the town's former mayor, who was then setting up a printing office in New York City. Before the dissidents could locate and procure another press, Stretch died in Maryland, requiring them to find a replacement printer as well. Rind became that substitute.

During the Stamp Act controversies, Carter, among others, employed the Annapolis press of Jonas Green, an ardent opponent of the act, as an alternative to Royle's to publish his fiery political tracts, both out of his concern over possible suppressions ordered by Fauquier and out of his unwillingness to allow Royle to profit from his pamphlets. In doing so, he became acquainted with Rind, then Green's shop foreman and his partner in the Maryland Gazette. When publication of all American papers was suspended on November 1, 1765 – in protest of each paper having to use tax stamps under the provisions of the Stamp Act – Green was persuaded to allow Rind to leave Annapolis for Williamsburg, with the suspension period providing ample time for Green to find new hands for his press. For Rind, the daily presence of Green's three young sons (William, Frederick, and Samuel) as

the probable heirs to his master's business likely piqued his interest in the dissidents' offer; and the promise of his future election as Virginia's public printer probably sealed the deal. Born in 1733, Rind was "the first native-born Marylander to practice the typographical art in the Province." He was the son of a Scottish immigrant, Alexander Rind (also spelled Rhind) and his second wife, Anne, of Anne Arundel County. Rind apprenticed to the print trade with Green in the 1740s and remained with him once he attained his majority. In October 1758, Green took the twenty-five year-old Rind into partnership in his Maryland Gazette, founded in April 1745, making the paper an essential part of his training and of the interest that dissident Virginians had in bringing him south. Rind also conducted a bookstore and circulating library in Annapolis that was separate from the Green press, leading to repeated suggestions that he brought that existing concern to Virginia with him; however, notices for such an important element of his business never appear in his ensuing Williamsburg paper, where they should have been prominent. Rather, it appears that Rind liquidated all of his Maryland assets to finance his young family's relocation to Virginia.

Independence and Dependence

In Williamsburg, Rind was now his own man for the first time; yet the newly independent tradesman was quickly beset by financial troubles, even as he easily filled the role which had been offered him. Those troubles evidently began even before he set up shop in the town. A planned start for his new office for February or March 1766, when publication of unstamped American newspapers resumed, was delayed by an inability to obtain the press and type needed for the venture. When such materials finally arrived from England, and he could finally begin publishing his rival Virginia Gazette, Rind faced a new competitor who had also distanced himself from the government of Francis Fauquier.

Joseph Royle died after a lengthy illness in January 1766 with his Gazette still in suspension; like Hunter had before him, he left his printing office in the hands of his foreman, Alexander Purdie, who was thus thought to be simply another tool of Fauquier's, essentially guilt by association. However, Purdie clearly understood the situation better than the dissidents allowed. On Royle's death, he forged an alliance with the majority faction of the Assembly, then largely the elite planters of the old tidewater led by Robert Carter Nicholas. So when his Virginia Gazette reappeared in March 1766, it was the voice of that faction and not that of the governor, so undermining the dissidents' claims that Rind's new Gazette was the sole oppositional paper in the colony. Moreover, Purdie benefitted from issuing his weekly for two months without competition from Rind, a period which saw both news of the repeal of the Stamp Act arrive in Virginia and the death of John Robinson, the long-time Speaker of the House of Burgesses and Treasurer of the colony whose bankrupt estate threatened to do the same to the colonial government, Purdie's published accounts of the events gave him a new reputation as a reliable, independent source of public information.

Still, Rind was now in a position to be elected as Royle's successor. Hoping that the repeal of the Stamp Act had cooled political passions, Fauquier called an election for a new Assembly that summer, and representatives favoring the dissidents' partisan agenda were

elected to a majority. Throughout that summer the two competing Gazettes presented a lively debate between the old elite and the dissidents, unfettered by Fauquier's hand. Still, very few items unfavorable to the dissidents' agenda found a place in Rind's newspaper. Purdie, however, took a more moderate course, trying to present all sides; that approach led to the defeat of Richard Henry Lee in the election of a new Speaker when the Assembly met that fall; Purdie had published an article revealing that Lee had sought the appointment as Virginia's stamp-agent in 1765, even as Rind published Lee's continuing rebukes of the man who had been granted that plum job – George Mercer, a well-respected Fredericksburg attorney – for his dishonorable acceptance of such a despotic role. While Purdie's chances for succeeding Royle as public printer were slim, his part in the Lee-Mercer conflict likely guaranteed Rind's election to that post that November.

Rind soon found that the prized government contract, however valuable, was not sufficient to keep his press office afloat for long. By 1766, a colonial printing office's survival was tied to the diversity of its offerings, and if the office's press was monopolized by the demands of such a contract, as Rind's often was, other publications and services could not be pursued, a limitation that quickly produced problems for Rind. The records of his estate show that his principal (and oft-times his only) recompense came from a quarterly draft against his annual public salary. His office was more dependent on government support than any of the three previous public printers (Parks, Hunter, and Royle) had been. The difficulty was that Rind was not well capitalized when he began work in Virginia, even after having liquidating his Annapolis holdings, so his cash flow was severely constricted. Yet, he dove immediately into publishing a weekly paper – the most extensive and intensive drain on a colonial printing office's resources possible – at the insistence of the dissidents a full six months before they could give him the promised public printing concession. And once his Gazette appeared, it found fewer subscribers than did Purdie's established one, which was issued in numbers three or four times that of Rind's each week, making his Gazette financially problematic.

That inferiority was reinforced by the sad fact that Rind could not control the system that distributed his papers at a distance from Williamsburg. The colonial postal system was directed in the southern colonies by John Foxcroft, formerly Fauquier's private secretary; on Royle's death, he assigned management of Virginia's post routes to John Dixon Sr. (140), a respected merchant in the capital; in turn, Dixon formed a partnership with Purdie to acquire the Williamsburg printing office and the original Virginia Gazette from Royle's estate shortly before Rind's arrival there, while also taking on the administration of both Royle's and Hunter's estates and the guardianship of Hunter's illegitimate son, William Hunter Jr. (231). Dixon thus had a vested interest in limiting the distribution of Rind's paper, and apparently did so as a heated exchange in print between the journal proprietors in late 1766 indicates; Rind achieved no relief through his complaints, though, and was forced into building a private distribution network that ate further into his dicey finances. Lacking other income sources, such as job-printing and bookselling, Rind's office was overly dependent upon newspaper revenues to support his office's operation, when his government salary only covered his public work. Consequently, a dearth of subscribers

forced him to juggle suppliers and payments with disastrous effects for his family's fortunes.

Debt and Limitations

As a result of these issues, Rind fell heavily into debt rather quickly. By April of 1768, just two years after his arrival in the colony, he had already lost a debt suit in the York County Court brought by one of his merchant-suppliers; two dozen more judgments would follow before his death in August 1773. Most telling was a suit brought by William Baine, his type supplier, in May 1770 – fully four years after he had purchased his office's type (that fall, Rind was ordered to pay Baine £57.8.7 plus costs). Once such a problem became known among the small community of British type-founders, his ability to obtain more type would have been jeopardized. However, this was not his only supply problem. That same summer, John Norton & Sons of Yorktown, one of his paper and ink importers, also sued Rind successfully for monies he owed to them. As these financial embarrassments mounted, he developed a new supply-buying pattern, spreading his purchases among sympathetic Virginians so that no one merchant sold or imported very much for his office. This way Rind maximized his ability to obtain production materials and household provisions with the fewest cash expenditures and legal entanglements possible; these small transactions were completed on credit and left hanging because of their meager import to his creditors' businesses. Still, Rind did have to pay some of his creditors, especially those judgments entered against him in court. So his Gazette carried pleas, with increasing frequency, for payment of all arrearages in customer accounts in an effort to generate cash, although such obligations made up the bulk of the claims that were settled with the sheriff's sale of his property after his death – sixty-three in all, totaling more than five times the value of his inventoried estate.

Rind's indebtedness also impinged on his ability to undertake any government printing that was not a part of his regular annual production. In the fall of 1767, barely a year into Rind's tenure, a committee appointed by the General Assembly completed a rare "revisal" of the colony's laws. Rather than altering the laws, this was a compilation of all laws in force in Virginia at the time. All those passed since the previous revisal were added to the existing corpus, and all those that had expired or had been vetoed in London in that same period were deleted. When the revisal committee finished their compilation, it was published and distributed to the county courts for their use in administering the law in the colony. Such a compilation was what prompted the Assembly to bring William Parks to Williamsburg in 1730, and both Parks and William Hunter produced revisals during their tenures as public printer. With this revisal, however, the Assembly had a choice of local printers for the first time. Either they could assign the task to the public printer as they had in the past – in this case Rind – or they could hire the larger, better capitalized firm of Purdie & Dixon for the job. Apparently Rind's financial difficulties left the Burgesses with the impression that their official printer was not up to this considerable undertaking, and the task fell to his cross-town competitors, despite advertising the project as a joint venture.

Legacy

The financial problems that Rind faced were left unresolved when he unexpectedly died in August 1773, not yet forty. He was survived by a wife, Clementina Grierson Rind, and as many as six minor children, the youngest of who was born within weeks of his death. As the Assembly would not meet again until May 1774, Clementina Rind – now head of their household – became the de facto public printer in his stead; at that ensuing Assembly, she was confirmed de jure in that role by an essentially unanimous vote, although one-third of the Burgesses voted that she should hold the position in conjunction with either Alexander Purdie or John Dixon. Their advised condition reflects the fact that she was not a trained printer, and so needed one to conduct the public business. The remaining two-thirds seem to have believed that her continued employment of John Pinkney as shop foreman after her husband's death was sufficient guarantee that the public work could be conducted without her active participation, being the mother of an infant daughter. That circumstance also allowed Clementina to argue that her continuation in office would provide needed support for the impoverished family that William Rind left behind. Moreover, her appointment meant that Rind's Virginia Gazette could also continue to serve as the voice of the majority faction in the Assembly.

Thus Rind's legacy is tied to the introduction of a competitive press into Virginia where one had not existed before. Prior to his arrival in Williamsburg, the capital's printing office was understood to be the official voice of the imperial government; thereafter, each press seen in the Old Dominion would have a particular secular or sectarian patron, even as each one regularly proclaimed themselves to be "open to all, but influenced by none" as Rind did in the masthead of his Virginia Gazette. His press office was an archetype, exemplifying the unspoken reality that a "free press" was actually one accessible to those who could pay for its use, despite Jefferson's oft-repeated opinion of Rind's contribution to press freedom.