

10-27-18 Program Notes

Boston Riots

“ By the provisions of the Stamp Act, all written instruments in daily use among a commercial people were to be null and Void, unless executed on stamped paper or parchment, upon which a duty was to be collected by government officers. It was to take effect in the following November, and the Colonists had ample time to discuss its bearings and to frustrate its designs.

The news reached Boston in April, and was received with mingled alarm and indignation. A spirit of resistance was shown in every Colony. In Virginia, the Resolves of the House of Burgesses, drawn up by Patrick Henry in May, gave impulse to the movement and sounded over the continent in trump tones. Everywhere they were read and carried conviction. In Boston the excitement was intense, and the whole Providence was quickly in ablaze of resentment. At the first opportunity the determined hostility to the act broke forth. This was on the 12th of August, the birthday of the Prince of Wales, when the people rent the air with shouts of " Pitt and Liberty " ! and, the enthusiasm rising with the occasion, it was concerted to hang the appointed distributor of stamps in effigy. On the morning of the 14th, the stuffed figure of Oliver was seen dangling from Liberty Tree, together with a large boot, to represent Lord Bute, from the top of which peeped forth a head with horns, intended to personify the Devil. The authorities did not attempt to. remove the effigies, for, in the excited state of the popular mind, it was difficult to say how far the rage of the people, might lead them. The Sons of Liberty, with whom the proceedings, originated, kept the matter in hand, and at evening cut the figures down and carried them in procession through the town, borne on a bier. The multitude moved in perfect order, and their route was lined with people. They passed through the town-house and under the council-chamber, where the Governor and Council were sitting. "Liberty, property, and no stamps " ! were shouted in the ears of the listening dignitaries above. The Sons of Liberty were preceded by some forty or fifty tradesmen, decently dressed and the whole body marched to King Street, where they demolished a frame which they believed the stamp distributor was building for an office. Thence they proceeded to Fort Hill, where Oliver resided, and with fragments of the frame which they brought with them, built a bonfire in which the effigies were consumed. Bernard and Hutchinson fled to the Castle for safety.* Old Boston had rarely witnessed such a commotion. But the popular wrath did not end here. At nightfall on the 26th of August, remembering the agency of Hutchinson in subverting their liberties, a mob collected again at a late hour, burnt the records of the Admiralty, and ravaged the houses of Hallowell, Comptroller of the Customs, and of Hutchinson, whose plate, books, and valuable collection of manuscripts they threw into the street, barely giving the owner time to escape with his family, and utterly destroying the interior of perhaps the finest private residence in the Province.*

These outbreaks of lawless violence, though manifesting the spirit of opposition to the late acts of Parliament, were viewed with horror by most of the popular leaders, and by none more so than Mr. Adams. The period of peaceful remonstrance had not yet terminated with him. It was the policy of the Colonies to avow their sincere loyalty to Great Britain, which they reiterated in every state paper ; and acts of insubordination were only calculated to mar the harmony of these plans. Petitions and dutiful representations were to be the basis of operations for ten years to come, though a few looked beyond

these measures to an eventual appeal to Heaven. In the present instance, Adams agreed with his friend Mayhew that he would rather lose his hand than encourage such outrages, and he personally aided the civil power in preventing them. He saw no impropriety however in the earlier portion of the proceedings of August 14th, when the tradesmen marched in procession and hung the stamp distributor in effigy; believing that when loyal petitions were unavailing, such an orderly and unanimous demonstration was the only legal method to advise the authorities of the popular feeling. A town meeting was summoned early on the following day, at which the last night's proceedings were condemned, and a series of resolutions adopted desiring the Selectmen to suppress the like riots for the future, and pledging the aid of the people to preserve order.* Writing to Richard Jackson, the Colonial agent, a few months later, as one of a committee of the Assembly, Adams referred to this riot particularly, apprehending its evil effects against the efforts which were making in behalf of the Province : "As the Stamp Act had given the greatest uneasiness even to the most judicious men of the Colony," it was not, he thought, " to be wondered at, that among the common people such steps should be taken as could not be justified, it being frequent in populous towns when grievances are felt. This had been the case in Boston, where the people had shown their resentment in such ways as were not uncommon elsewhere." These proceedings he denounced as " high-handed outrages," " of which the inhabitants immediately, at a meeting called for the purpose within a few hours after the perpetration of the act, publicly declared their detestation. All was done the day following that could be expected from an orderly town, by whose influence a spirit was raised to oppose and suppress it. It is possible these matters may be represented to our disadvantage, and therefore we desire you will take all possible opportunities to set them in a proper light."

The society known as the " Sons of Liberty" seems to have originated either immediately after the arrival of the news from England that the Stamp Act had become a law, or about the time of the August riot, as the name was probably adopted from a similar term applied to the Bostonians by Colonel Barr in his late speech. "

- **Life and Public Service of Samuel Adams Volume I Pages 98 to 101**

Utopianism (socialism)

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF MASSACHUSETTS TO DENNIS DE BERDT. JANUARY 12, 1768

The bow, the arrow, and the tomahawk ; the hunting and the fishing ground, are species of property, as important to an American savage, as pearls, rubies, and diamonds are to the Mogul, or a Nabob in the East, or the lands, tenements, hereditaments, mesuages, gold and silver of the Europeans. And if property is necessary for the support of savage life, it is by no means less so in civil society. The **Utopian schemes of levelling**, and a community of goods, are as visionary and impracticable, as those which vest all property in the Crown, **are arbitrary, despotic, and in our government unconstitutional**. Now, what property can the colonists be conceived to have, if their money may be granted away by others, without their consent ? **Sam Adam 1768 -**

A personal letter regarding financing:

James Warren to Harrison Gray1 Plymo., Jany. 20Th, 1775

The Connection in our Family makes it very painful to me to Address you in this manner, had you Confined yourself to the proper subject of your Letter, without Unnecessarily and even wantonly Insulting both me and my Friends, I should have Addressed you in a very different Stile. I am very sensible that I owe you money, and that every Man has a right to Call for his Debts; but then I think every man should give a little warning, and not (by a sudden Transition from a full satisfaction of the security already had and without any reason to doubt the Goodness of it more now than at any former time) make (as you say) an unexpected demand either of the money Immediately, or a Mortgage. Security of any kind I never was asked for before. My Credit has always been good. My Circumstances are at least as good now as ever, had you suggested to me last Summer any uneasiness, I would have found a way before this to have discharged the Debt. I will Endeavour to do it when my Vessels return in the Spring. I cannot pay this Sum of Money at present. I am not willing to give a Mortgage, nor will I ever Injure you or your Children. What you mean by your Insinuation of my Conduct being such as Exposes me to ruin I know not. Surely you can charge me neither with Drunkenness, Idleness, or Extravagance, the Common Sources of ruin, if you have in Contemplation the Idea of Gibbets and Confiscations, let me tell you it is **the most Utopian and Contemptible one** that ever Entered the Head of a Man. Few Hearts have been wicked enough to wish for them and much fewer Heads weak enough to Expect them. I will not at present suppose yours among them. I will therefore presume that I have traced this Conduct of yours to its true Sources.

I am, Sir, Your Obedt. Humble Servt.

Jas: Warren

Congressional record regarding the Statue of Sam Adams in the Capital

With unerring wisdom, earlier than any other person in his own State, he saw the principles on which the American cause was based, and the means by which public opinion should be convinced, combined, and made effective in their support. **He saw the power of the news- paper when it was almost unused as a political force.** He was the author of the most important state papers, the instructions of the town of Boston to its representatives, of the assembly to its agents in England, its answers to the royal governors, wherein the natural rights of men, the chartered privileges of the people, and the limits of executive and legislative power were established on foundations from which they have never been removed. ...

He was among the earliest of American advocates, I think in nearly every case the earliest, of doctrines which, when he first uttered them, **were deemed paradoxes or Utopian dreams**, but to-day are the accepted maxims of constitutional liberty. Among these he maintained that the right to life, liberty, and property are essential and inalienable rights of human nature That Magna Charta is irrevocable by Parliament, (citing in support of this view the curse pronounced by the church in presence of King Henry III and the estates of the realm upon all who should make statutes or observe them contrary to it ;

1782: Life and Service of Samuel Adams volume III, Page 177

There will doubtless be many ready to assert that Adams held an impracticable idea of public virtue ; but it was very nearly realized before the Revolution ; had it not been, that contest never could have been conceived and successfully accomplished. The terrible ordeal through which our country has just passed has been traced by acute reasoners to the decline of the public morality essential to freedom ; and the historian in future generations may find his theory of the great Rebellion upon the extravagance, irreligion, and universal depravity of the age. That frugality and economy which Samuel Adams endeavored to inculcate was defeated by the conspicuous examples of the Governor and some of the wealthy families, by whom the efforts of Adams and those of his friends who still adhered to the old code of morality and **frugal habits were derided as Utopian**. Though the disturbances which succeeded cannot be entirely traced to these examples, it is certain that they were in no small degree attributable to such causes. Returned Revolutionary soldiers, and others who had suffered in the public cause, contrasted their poverty with the extravagance and dissipation of those who were profiting by the war. The results were such as to threaten the destruction of all that had been attained in the preceding twenty years struggle.

1783: Life and Service of Samuel Adams volume III, Page 198 - 199

If the want of railroads, steamboats, and swift mail-coaches compelled a resort to horseback-riding or walking, the exercise found its reward in a better condition of physical health than now generally exists among both sexes. If the absence (until the scenes of the war) of exciting news left the community in a somewhat primitive quiet as to the events of the great world, the contented tranquillity of a provincial situation prolonged life, and fostered a positiveness and stability of character which stood the country in need in the hour of her extreme trial. And so comparisons might be made favorable to our ancestors in all that related to frugality, simplicity of life, and the honorable thrift which led to the most exact observance of obligations now so frequently ignored both in public and private station. **It may yet be conceded that Samuel Adams entertained no Utopian, impracticable idea of public morality**, when inculcating the great truth, that the liberties as well as the virtue and physical condition of a people decrease in proportion as they become effeminate and luxurious.

DR. STILES S ELECTION SERMON, 1783.

Our degree of population is such as to give us reason to expect that this will become a great people. It is probable that within a century from our independence the sun will shine on fifty millions of inhabitants in the United States.¹ This will be a great, a very great nation, nearly equal to half Europe. Already has our colonization extended down the Ohio, and to Koskaseah on the Mississippi. And if the present ratio of increase should be rather diminished in some of the other settlements, yet an accelerated multiplication will attend our general propagation, and overspread the whole territory westward for ages. So that before the millennium the English settlements in America may become

more numerous millions than that greatest dominion on earth, the Chinese Empire. Should this prove a future fact, how applicable would be the text, when the Lord shall have made his American Israel high above all nations which he has made, in numbers, and in praise, and in name, and in honor !

I am sensible some will consider these as visionary, **Utopian ideas** ; and so they would have judged had they lived in the apostolic age, and been told that by the time of Constantino the Empire would have become Christian. As visionary that the twenty thousand souls which first settled New England should be multiplied to near a million in a century and a half.² As visionary that the Ottoman Empire must fall by the Russian.

Additional Reading:

1. [The Collected Works of Frédéric Bastiat](#)

Jacques de Guenin, General Editor

The Man and the Statesman: The Correspondence and Articles on Politics

"The Law," "The State," and Other Political Writings, 1843–1850

Economic Sophisms and "What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen"

Miscellaneous Works on Economics: From "Jacques-Bonhomme" to Le Journal des Économistes

Economic Harmonies

The Struggle Against Protectionism: The English and French Free-Trade Movements

2.