

“The Maturing of American Politics”

The Contest Between Crown and Colonial Assembly 1600-1750

Two categories of colonies:

- (Crown Colony) **A. Trade/Commercial;** run like joint-stock co’s.
B. Proprietary; run by one or more great landed estate owners

both quasi-independent and self-supporting

Colonial governor appointed by King in Crown colony

Colonial governor appointed by proprietors with King’s approval in Proprietary colony

Colonial government was intended to create balance between

Monarch (rule by one)
Royal Gov.

Aristocracy (rule by the few)
Privy Council
(upper house) supported governor
appointed by crown or proprietors

Democracy (rule by many)
i.e. House of Burgesses
(lower house)
elected by colonists

The lower houses copied the House of Commons (in Parliament), they were aware of English rights. While England had no written constitutions, America did, i.e. “Fundamental Orders of Connecticut”. Having a constitution made a colony feel mature, almost sovereign.

1600-1650 period of “**salutary neglect**,” the crown was physically unable to exercise direct control. Nor could they deny the colonists the fruits of their own experiences—Revolution of 1649, Glorious Rev. 1688.

The story of the 1st half of the 18th century 1700-1750 is the story of how the lower house of each assembly took control.

1700-1730’s lower houses in Penn., So. Carolina, N.Y.
Mass. waged constitutional battles with the governor and his council.

Chronological scorecard: R.I. & Conn. — lower house in control by early 1700’s, Penn. — 1730’s, Mass.—1740’s, So. Car., N.Y., No. Car., N.J., Virg. by 1750’s

Result: American mainland colonies are least taxed territories on earth. Gov. is small, limited, cheap.

Closest the world has ever come to a no-tax society. (Remains low until second half of 20th cent.)

How will colonists react to post Seven Years War taxation policies?

However, colonial society is not “democratic” as we define the term today. See notes titled “Southern Society.” Were assemblies crowded with plain illiterate husband men or planters, merchants, lawyers??

other important concepts:

New England Town Meeting: 55

139-140

- “Republican” / Whig Ideology 140-141, concentrated power is the enemy of liberty, power corrupts
- best cure is balanced gov. to check executive (Montesquieu, *Esprit de Loi*)
 - prohibition of standing armies, right to bear arms
 - power of press, freedom of press: Zenger Case
 - gov. is peoples servant