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Franklin’s Failures: How Benjamin Franklin Hindered British-Colonial Relations

Kerrie Holloway

While many Americans look to Benjamin Franklin and his years in London as monumental in the fight for American Independence, Franklin’s work reconciling Britain and the colonies did more harm than good. Prior to the American Revolution, Franklin spent fifteen years in London as a colonial agent advocating the position of the colonies. However, this paper will argue that his many propaganda articles in London newspapers after the implementation of the Stamp Act, particularly those in response to an anonymous Englishman writing under the pseudonym “Vindex Patriae” -- Latin for “avenger of his country” -- as well as his examination before the House of Commons in which he shared the colonists’ viewpoints did nothing to improve British opinion or policy. Furthermore, his erroneous views on the colonists’ interpretation of a British taxation plan that he initially accepted led to even more friction between the colonies and Britain. Instead of helping the British understand the colonies, his distinction between internal and external taxes culminated in a series of acts including the Declaratory Act, the Townshend duties, the Tea Act of 1773, the Coercive Acts, and the Quebec Act that angered the colonists and eventually led to their rebellion.

Benjamin Franklin traveled to Britain as an agent of Pennsylvania in 1757 to argue before the Privy Council the necessity of the colonial proprietors, the Penn family, paying taxes on their land holdings. Franklin’s first stint in London was unsuccessful in replacing
Pennsylvania’s proprietary government with a royal charter, but during these five years, he grew to love London and the British Empire. Decades before the start of the rebellion, Franklin was completely loyal to the crown and Parliament, and he saw America as an integral part of the empire.\(^1\) But an integral part did not mean not autonomous. Franklin argued that while it was up to the colonies to make their own laws, the king could either approve or veto and Parliament existed to protect colonial interests.\(^2\) At the end of Franklin’s first sojourn, he succeeded in forcing the Penns to pay some taxes, but Franklin lost the theoretical argument as the Privy Council ruled that the colonial assembly and the governor were not enough to make a law -- a ruling that effectively stripped the colonies of the autonomy for which Franklin argued.\(^3\) The Privy Council’s decision set the stage for the growing tensions between Britain and the colonies.

After two years in America, Franklin returned to London as a colonial agent just months before the passage of the Stamp Act in March 1765; and he stayed until the eve of the Revolution, not arriving back in the colonies until the first shots had already been fired at Lexington and Concord. During this trip, Franklin attempted to maintain his grasp on the attitudes of a people living 5,000 miles away, and his struggle began immediately. At the Stamp Act’s implementation, Franklin rationalized Parliament’s decision because he was an imperialist first and foremost, knew that empires cost money, and thought other colonists would feel likewise.\(^4\) Franklin showed his acceptance of the Stamp Act in appointing

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3 Ibid., 315.
of his friend, John Hughes, as a stamp officer -- a move that the colonies would later view as collaboration and later biographers would call “one of Franklin’s worst political misjudgments.” Franklin’s oversight led to Hughes’ removal from office by an angry mob before he even sold the first stamp, although his house was spared from being torched like other officers’.

After learning the colonies abhorred the Stamp Act, Franklin relinquished his position and turned to the press to advocate the opinions of his fellow colonists through a series of Stamp Act essays. During the mid-eighteenth century, newspapers could not print what happened in Parliament and did not publish editorials, but otherwise censorship was virtually nonexistent. Printers vied with one another for provocative, controversial, and wildly popular letters to the press, “the most widely read part of each issue -- the mainstay of circulation.” These letters were almost always anonymous or signed with a pseudonym or initials rather than the author’s real name, and Franklin was no exception. While in London writing for the London press, Franklin used forty-two different pseudonyms to write approximately ninety letters to the press.

The Stamp Act essays shed light on Franklin’s complicated, and rather tardy, adjustment of his own ideas about the empire and American rights as he tried to align himself with the prevailing views of the colonists. Six of the essays were written in reply to Vindex Patriae with the first appearing in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* on 28 December 1765. Vindex Patriae’s initial article five days earlier focused on

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7 Cook, 43.
8 Wood, 14.
9 Crane, xxv-xxvi.
the idea of colonial representation in Parliament. Vindex Patriae argued
the colonies were represented virtually in Parliament giving Parliament
the authority to impose taxes such as the Stamp Act. The article went on
to say that even if the colonies did boycott British goods, it would not
make a difference because of the breadth and scope of the British Empire.
Franklin, writing as “N.N.”10 replied,

Do they expect to convince the Americans, and reduce them to
submission, by their flimsy arguments of virtual representation,
and of Englishmen by fiction of law only, mixed with insolence,
contempt, and abuse? Can it be supposed that such treatment
will make them rest satisfied with the unlimited claim set up,
of a power of tax them ad libitum, without their consent; while
they are to work only for us, and our profit; restrained in their
foreign trade by our laws, however profitable it might be to them;
forbidden to manufacture their own produce, and obliged to
purchase the work of our artificers at our own prices?11

In his response, Franklin was attacking the very heart of Britain’s
mercantilist economic system that Thomas Whately laid out in his 1765
pamphlet entitled The Regulations Lately Made concerning the Colonies, and
the Taxes Imposed upon Them, considered. In all mercantilist economies, the
mother country sets up colonies to provide raw materials while retaining
most, if not all, manufacturing rights for the entire empire. Whately
explained the role of the colonies saying, “From them we are to expect
the Multiplication of Subjects; the Consumption of our Manufactures; the
Supply of those Commodities which we want; and the encrease [sic] of
our Navigation: To encourage their Population and their Culture; [and]
to regulate their Commerce.”12 Whatley also stated all imperial commerce
should be controlled by the Mother Country in the interests of the empire

10 N.N. stood for non nominates, Latin for “anonymous”.
11 N. N. [Benjamin Franklin], “First Reply to Vindex Patriae,” The Gazetteer and New Daily
Advertiser, 28 December 1765, in The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 12, ed. Leonard W.
12 Thomas Whately, The Regulations Lately Made concerning the Colonies, and the Taxes Imposed
as a whole, but really, the interests of Britain and British merchants and manufacturers drove British interests while the desires of the rest of the empire went ignored. Franklin’s reply addressed these issues by reminding his readers of the value of the colonies to the mother country. Franklin’s first reply to Vindex Patriae continued as he warned Vindex Patriae and the rest of Britain not to push the colonists to their breaking point. Franklin wrote,

These people, however, are not, never were, nor ever will be our slaves. The first settlers of New England particularly, were English gentlemen of fortune, who, being Puritans, left this country with their families and followers, in times of persecution, for the sake of enjoying, though in a wilderness, the blessings of civil and religious liberty; of which they retain to this day, as high a sense as any Briton whatsoever; and possess as much virtue, humanity, civility, and let me add, loyalty to their Prince, as is to be found among the like number of people in any part of the world. By reminding the readers of the colonists’ true backgrounds, Franklin targeted the emerging sense of English nationalism -- a growing sense of “Englishness” and, consequently, arrogance that would not be matched until the European nationalism of the mid-nineteenth century.

In the mid-eighteenth century, English “men and women of all social classes began to express a sentiment that might be described variously as a dramatic surge of national consciousness, a rise of aggressive patriotism, or a greatly heightened articulation of national identity.” With the growth of the British Empire, Britons began to feel dominant in all areas of life. The expanding empire and growing mercantilist economy led to relegation in the status of the colonists as they came to be regarded less as fellow Britons living across the Atlantic and

14 N.N., “First Reply to Vindex Patriae.”
more as another people to rule -- even though the Americans descended from British immigrants whereas natives predominantly populated the rest of the Empire. Most Britons at the time viewed the Americans as separate, distinct, and most importantly, inferior rather than as fellow nationals. The colonies’ distance from London led to their portrayal as “unpolished and lacking refinement.” As early as 1759 Franklin noted, in a letter to Isaac Norris, that appealing directly to Parliament may be tricky as “tho’ there are many Members in both Houses who are Friends to Liberty and of noble Spirits, yet a good deal of Prejudice still prevails against the Colonies.” Franklin spent the next several years striving, and failing, to correct this prejudice while writing essays for papers in London.

Before Vindex Patriae had even replied to N.N.’s criticisms, Franklin replied again less than a week later under another pseudonym, “Homespun.” On 2 January 1766 he responded to Vindex Patriae’s assertion that Americans would not be able to continue the boycott of British tea in aftermath of the Stamp Act because Indian corn was not as easily digestible for breakfast. As Homespun, Franklin wrote,

> But if Indian corn were as disagreeable and indigestible as the Stamp Act, does he imagine we can get nothing else for breakfast?… Let the gentleman do us the honour of a visit in America, and I will engage to breakfast him every day in the month with a fresh variety, without offering him either tea or Indian corn.

Franklin’s second reply was much more of a light-hearted satire than his first reply as N.N., but he continued to attack British opinion of the

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16 Wood, 113.
18 Ibid., 69.
colonies as unrefined and backward. For years British political cartoons portrayed the colonists as Native Americans as they had yet to take on any recognizable physical identity of their own; but the Indian carried a savage, uncultured connotation with its limited clothing and dark skin.21 While the British resorted to the Native American as an easy identifier for the colonies, the image only perpetuated the myth of the colonists as foreigners; and it was this myth that Franklin challenged by referring to colonial breakfast habits.

The controversy with Vindex Patriae continued as Franklin returned to the pseudonym N.N. for his third response in an article entitled “On the Tenure of the Manor of East Greenwich” in The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser on 11 January 1766. Since Homespun’s second reply, Vindex Patriae had written again, devoting most of his letter to the idea of virtual representation of colonial charters and the absurd idea of New England being part of the county seat of Kent. On 6 January, Franklin wrote,

I still doubt the argument of your correspondent, proving, or attempting to prove, “that they are represented in parliament, because the manor of East Greenwich in Kent is represented there, and they all live in that manor;” will hardly appear so intelligible, so clear, so satisfactory, and so convincing to the Americans, as it seems it does to himself...

In considering these questions, perhaps, it may be of use to recollect; that the colonies were planted in times when the powers of parliament were not supposed so extensive...That, excepting the yet infant colonies of Georgia and Nova Scotia, none of them were settled at the expense of any money granted by parliament.22

Using Vindex Patriae’s erroneous interpretation of virtual representation,  

Franklin again reminded the readers that the colonists were Britons who immigrated to America under the pretense of much different living conditions than the rest of the empire that was conquered and then ruled by the British. The first colonists migrated because of disagreements with Parliament, and therefore, they were unlikely to approve of Parliamentary intervention any more than they had when they lived in Britain. Since the majority of colonies were set up through royal charters rather than Parliamentary acts, these colonies depended on the crown alone.

At the time, however, Britons did not understand the colonists’ separation between the king and Parliament. By the 1760s, kings had long since ceased to function without Parliamentary approval. George III was not the king but the king-in-parliament. The behavior of British politicians during the years leading up to the American Revolution relied on the belief in Parliamentary sovereignty over the colonies. Furthermore, “it was beyond British upper-class comprehension how colonials could claim the same rights as Englishmen or could declare that the English Parliament had no right to impose taxes on them from London.” Perhaps it was this incomprehension that led Vindex Patriae to fabricate the idea of virtual representation.

Homespun’s second reply, and Franklin’s fourth overall, appeared in The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser on 15 January 1766 under the title “Further Defense of Indian Corn.” In this letter, Franklin refuted the prevailing portrayal of Americans as Native Americans by again lashing out at those who used the idea of “Indian Corn” versus traditional English food as a distinction between the English and the colonists. Franklin wrote,

23 Colley, 136.
24 Derry, 45.
25 Cook, 6.
If I should not dare to say, that we do prefer it to a place at our tables, then you demonstrate, that we must come to England for tea, or go without our breakfasts: and if I do dare to say it, you fix upon me and my countrymen for ever, the indelible disgrace of being Indian corn-eaters.

I am afraid, Mr. Printer, that you will think this too trifling a dispute to deserve a place in your paper: but pray, good Sir, consider, as you are yourself an Englishman, that we Americans, who are allowed even by Mr. Vindex to have some English blood in our veins, may think it a very serious thing to have the honour of our eating impeached in any particular whatsoever.26

Franklin’s articles, including this reply by Homespun, showed the increasing acceptance of the colonists to use the term American. Britons began using the word “American” to describe the colonists several years earlier, a term often invoking “images of unrefined, if not barbarous, persons, degenerate and racially debased, who lived in close proximity to African slaves and Indian savages thousands of miles from civilization.”27 By the mid-1770s, the term “American” conjured up positive notions of independent men proud to fight for their freedoms and defend their rights. In the mid-1760s, however, colonists were more interested in asserting their Britishness than their independence or crafting a separate identity.28 The British, not the colonists, began using the term in a humiliating and debasing context consistently after 1763, a full decade before the colonists began use the label themselves.29 Only in response to this attitude in the late 1760s did the colonists reluctantly embrace their new identity as Americans, after they were refused all of the rights of Britons.30

In his response to Franklin on 17 January, Vindex Patriae blamed

27 Wood, 114.
28 Breen, 30.
29 Ibid., 30-31.
30 Conway, 65.
all the colonists for the Stamp Act riots because they either participated or did not prevent; and he denied that manufacturing in America was restrained by British laws. Franklin’s final reply to Vindex Patriae, again writing as N.N., appeared in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* on 29 January 1766. Franklin disputed the claims by saying,

> I would only remark another instance of his unacquaintedness with facts. He denies, that the people of New England are restrained (as I heard they were) in “working their own beaver into hats, their wool into cloth, or their iron into steel:” Let him but consult the statutes under the several heads, and he will see how much those operations are fettered in America, and perhaps be sensible of his mistake.31

Vindex Patriae, and most likely many other Britons, would not have been aware of the technicalities of the laws affecting colonial manufacturing; and Franklin, as N.N., wrote to explain the difficulties already faced by the colonists. In a mercantilist economic system, colonies were seen as the source of raw materials while the mother country manufactured the raw materials into consumer goods. Mercantilism was typically much more beneficial for the mother country than the colonies, and under these constraints, the colonists could not make enough money to pay for both consumer goods and the high rate of taxes imposed by Britain.

Although Britain had been taxing the colonies for decades through duties regulating trade, Parliament implemented the Stamp Act, unlike the previous year’s Sugar Act, for the sole purpose of raising revenue.32 Based on European standards, the Stamp Act was a mild piece of legislation because it came on the heels of the large and expensive Seven Years’ War, and Britons saw the tax as the least the colonies could do since the war

32 Cook, 53.
was for their protection. The colonists, however, could only see the heavy burden placed on them by Parliament.

After the papers printed Franklin’s Stamp Act essays replying to Vindex Patriae, Parliament called Franklin before the House of Commons on 13 February 1766 to give an account of the Stamp Act and its reception in the colonies. Adhering to the colonists’ sentiment rather than his original feelings, Franklin’s main argument rested on the difference between external taxes that regulated trade and would be tolerated by the colonists and internal taxes that raised revenue and would not be tolerated unless implemented by the colonies’ own legislative assemblies. Richard Jackson, a Member of Parliament for Weymouth and secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, first made the distinction between internal and external taxes as early as 26 January 1764. In his letter to Franklin, Jackson wrote, “I am most averse to an Internal Tax, God knows how far such a precedent may be extended, and I have frequently asked, what internal Tax they will not lay.” Franklin used this distinction in his examination before the House of Commons, explaining,

An external tax is a duty laid on commodities imported; that duty is added to the first cost, and other charges on the commodity, and when it is offered to sale, makes a part of the price. If the people do not like it at that price, they refuse it; they are not obliged to pay it. But an internal tax is forced from people without their consent, if not laid by their own representatives. The stamp-act says, we shall have no commerce, make no exchange of property with each other, neither purchase nor grant, nor recover debts; we shall neither marry nor make our wills, unless we pay such and such sums, and thus it is intended to exhort money from us, or ruin us by the consequences of refusing to pay it.

Franklin believed the colonists would pay their share of the empire’s expenses if asked rather than forced.36 However, later in the testimony Franklin admitted, “It is hard to answer questions of what people at such a distance will think,” although that was exactly what he was attempting to do.37

While Vindex Patriae never refuted Franklin’s last reply in January 1766, that is not to say that Franklin had successfully swayed opinion. In fact, British opinion remained the same right up to the start of the American Revolution. Furthermore, British economic policy and the system of mercantilism continued along the same lines of increasing rather than lessening taxes to reduce the burden on the colonists. When Parliament repealed taxes, as it did the Stamp Act in March 1766, it was strictly due to the detrimental effects on Britain’s mercantilist system and the outcry of British merchants rather than American colonists. In fact, at this point, the British view of colonists as foreigners was so cemented that even a Member of Parliament in 1766 complained about the repeal of the Stamp Act in order “please these foreigners.”38 Franklin himself commented on this attitude the next year when he wrote in a letter to Lord Kames, “Every Man in England seems to consider himself as a Piece of a Sovereign over America; seems to jostle himself into the Throne with the King, and talks of OUR Subjects in the Colonies.”39 Subsequent legislation passed by Parliament would only further increase tensions between Britain and the colonies.

37 Franklin, Benjamin, “Examination before the Committee of the Whole of the House of Commons,” 148.
On the same day Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, they passed the Declaratory Act. The colonies seemingly overlooked this act in their delight in the Stamp Act’s repeal and the Declaratory Act’s passive nature. This act, however, exerted Parliamentary authority over all colonies in all instances to safeguard to British colonial interests worldwide and Parliament’s answer to the colonies’ constitutional argument against the Stamp Act. It made Franklin and Vindex Patriae’s argument over virtual representation null and void as it championed the mercantilist economic system and firmly placed colonial interests under those of Britain. Franklin’s further articles satirizing the Declaratory Act went apparently unnoticed as this act was never repealed.

The next year, the Declaratory Act, as well as Franklin’s interpretation of internal versus external taxes as expression before the House of Commons, was put to test by the Townshend Duties, years after the colonies had dropped the internal versus external tax distinction from their official statements. After Charles Townshend was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, he proposed a new revenue-raising program in early 1767. Townshend based his program on Franklin’s definition of external taxes -- duties on goods considered luxuries that could be avoided by those who did not want to pay the tax such as glass, paper, paint, and tea. Rather than out of spite, the view commonly held in the colonies, “perhaps Townshend, like many in London believed that Franklin represented American opinion.” Regardless, while Townshend said these external taxes would be imposed to regulate trade, he also made it clear that his taxation program would raise revenue within

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41 Crane, xli.
42 Wood, 130.
the colonies.\textsuperscript{43} Like internal versus external tax, the difference between regulating trade and raising revenue became the new, important distinction in the colonies well before Franklin noticed.

As with the Stamp Act, Franklin originally accepted Parliamentary authority to levy the Townshend duties because he still viewed them as external taxes.\textsuperscript{44} Unfortunately for Franklin, “the Townshend duties -- which were just the kind of external taxes he said the Americans preferred -- were immediately rejected in America as illegitimate.”\textsuperscript{45} Once rejected, Franklin aimed first to quiet the colonists and appease the English rather than argue the constitutionality of the taxes.\textsuperscript{46} His strategy did not go over well with the colonists, and Franklin finally turned on Parliament while still remaining loyal to the crown and the idea of the empire. As an officer employed by the crown, “Franklin seemed to think the king could do no wrong...Franklin could not help being an enthusiast for the monarch against the tyrannical Parliament that had passed the Stamp Act, and he assumed his fellow Americans were with him.”\textsuperscript{47} By the next year, 1768, Franklin began to question the right of Parliament to pass any legislation regardless of the purpose, but “he still considered the colonies firmly attached to Britain through the Crown.”\textsuperscript{48} Several more years and several more bad decisions elapsed before Franklin turned on the king and supported American independence completely.

After the Townshend duties passed, “the British government was once more taken aback by the vehemence of American opposition” that manifested itself through boycotts and nonimportation agreements.\textsuperscript{49}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Lloyd, 47.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Wood, 130.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} Brands, 398.
  \item \textsuperscript{46} Wood, 130.
  \item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 122.
  \item \textsuperscript{48} Morgan, 149.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} Derry, 56.
\end{itemize}
Three years later Parliament repealed the Townshend duties with the exception of the tax on tea, again because of the economic impact the duties were having on English merchants rather than due to the grumblings of the colonists. Parliament kept the tax on tea because it raised the most revenue but also so as not to surrender completely to the demands of the colonies. While Franklin had hoped for a complete repeal of all the Townshend duties, the colonists relinquished nonimportation after the partial repeal; and he did not press the issue. Even if Franklin had returned to the press or the House of Commons, the tea tax was likely to remain as George III supported keeping one duty imposed on the colonies in order to keep them in their place.

From 1770 to 1773, a deceptive feeling of calm prevailed throughout the British Empire as Parliament lay low and the colonists waited suspiciously for the next colonial policy. They did not have to wait long. Parliament, “with the clumsiness that had become characteristic of its American policy,” passed another Tea Act in 1773 that left the Townshend duty on tea unchanged but created a monopoly for the East India Company through a system of duty rebates and by removing the middlemen. The clumsiness was evident in Lord North’s refusal to repeal the Townshend tea duty even though he was advised that it would be “the best means of assisting the company and conciliating the Americans.” By refusing to repeal the last duty and creating the tea monopoly, Parliament again showed their apathy for Franklin’s previous arguments against mercantilism. Colonial merchants acting as

50 Dickinson, 83.
51 Brands, 464-465.
52 Dickinson, 83.
53 Derry, 57.
54 Brands, 464-465.
55 Derry, 58.
the middlemen would be hurt the most by this new legislation while the company set to profit was the well-connected East India Company.

Characteristically, the colonists reacted badly to the new colonial economic policy. The Tea Act of 1773 led to the colonists’ dumping of £10,000 of British tea into Boston harbor and led to the British Coercive Acts, known as the Intolerable Acts in the colonies. Parliament passed the Coercive Acts to isolate the radical element in Massachusetts before it spread throughout the colonies. North felt a severe punishment would force other colonies to remain loyal to the crown rather than Massachusetts. Unfortunately for North, instead of “dividing the colonists from each other the Intolerable Acts drove them more closely together, united by a common sense of outrage at what the British had done.” After the Boston Tea party, Franklin “lobbied desperately against the passage in 1774 of the Coercive Acts, which closed the port of Boston and altered the Massachusetts charter, and he sought by a variety of avenues to convey the American position to the British government.” Unfortunately for Franklin, just as with the Declaratory Act, his efforts went either unnoticed or ineffective as the Coercive Acts were never repealed.

Along with the Coercive Acts, in 1774 Britain passed the Quebec Act that made concessions to French Canadians in terms of their Catholic faith and politics. Religiously, the Act reworded the oath of allegiance to omit the Protestant faith and guaranteed the free practice of Catholicism. Politically, the Canadians were given the right of French civil law though English common law remained. In light of the circumstances, the colonists saw the act “as part of a plan for giving the British government arbitrary

56 Ibid., 59.
57 Ibid., 60.
58 Wood, 148.
power in North America.”

They viewed the concessions as British liberality toward Canadian Catholics while personally experiencing British restraint as New England Protestants. The Quebec Act, like the Stamp Act, reminded them of their inferior position in the empire, and possibly even more so this time since they now felt even more insignificant than the French Canadians.

By the next year, 1775, the colonists’ status as foreigners had been cemented. The ninety or so articles Franklin had written in the London papers failed to change British opinion or sway British policy. On 26 October of that year, King George III gave a speech in which he involved the high “Spirit of the British Nation” -- a British nation that almost certainly did not include the Americans. The Prohibitory Act that accompanied the King’s speech declared “American ships and trade were ‘the Ships and Effects of open Enemies’ [and] put the colonies out of the nation beyond any conceivable doubt.” Soon afterward, the colonists, now Britain’s “enemies,” wrote the Declaration and fired the first shots.

While Franklin did not succeed in changing British opinion, it is important to remember that neither British opinion nor colonial opinion was unanimous during any point in the run up to the American Revolution. The Revolution was above all a civil war – a war fought within one country with split attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic. Civil wars are inherently fraught with shades of grey, and any effort to color the Revolution in black and white leads to “assumptions that the British were either very ignorant, or very corrupt, or very sinful, or all three, to fail to grasp the rectitude of the colonists’ position” rather than

59 Lloyd, 50.
60 Derry, 60.
61 Marshall, 13.
62 Ibid., 13.
63 Colley, 137.
seeing the complexities on both sides of the story.\textsuperscript{64} Another disconnect existed between what the British meant through their policies and how the colonies perceived those policies. The British were not guilty of a “premeditated conspiracy against American liberties,” but they failed to understand that the colonies would view their taxation policies and later restrictive acts on the city of Boston as tyranny and a repression of their rights.\textsuperscript{65} Similarly, while Franklin bumbled his way through his stint as colonial agent and did not succeed in changing opinions on either side of the Atlantic, in such a explosive situation even the most eloquent and perceptive mediator would have most likely failed to resolve matters completely.

Franklin’s sojourn in London, particularly his second sojourn that began in 1764, failed because reconciliation between the British and the colonies failed. The Pennsylvania Assembly sent Franklin to London twice, in 1757 and 1764, without knowing that “its decision to send the creator of ‘Poor Richard’ to London would play a part in launching the American Revolution.”\textsuperscript{66} Franklin’s biggest mistakes lay in poor timing. His miscalculations during the Stamp Act “very nearly ruined him politically throughout America.”\textsuperscript{67} At that point, he lagged behind colonial opinion in terms of revolutionary thought. Years later, he jumped ahead of the colonists and his “concept was too farsighted for King George III and his government.”\textsuperscript{68} These untimely disparities between Franklin’s advocacy and colonial opinion ultimately resulted in a failed mission of reconciling colonial-British relations.

\textsuperscript{64} Christie, 206.
\textsuperscript{65} Derry, 62.
\textsuperscript{66} Morgan, 1.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{68} Cook, 159.