



Committee of Correspondence

Until late 1772, political control of Massachusetts remained in the hands of the merchants.

As a class they were largely satisfied with the state of relations with the mother country.

Likewise, they were most reluctant to jeopardize peace and prosperity for the sake of an abstract political principle.

As long as the radicals such as Samuel Adams tried to work within the normal political channels, the moderate Whigs were able to restrain them.

Ultimately, the Committee of Correspondence, was formed.

The purpose of the committee, according to the motion which created it, was,

“to state the Rights of the Colonists ...; to communicate and publish the same to the several Towns in this Province and to the World as the sense of this Town, with the Infringements and Violations thereof that have been, or from time to time may be made - Also requesting of each Town a free communication of their Sentiments on this Subject...”

The committee thus had very flexible instructions; it was not restricted to dealing with any particular issue but was a standing committee which could communicate with anyone about practically anything, past, present, or future.

By mid-February, 1773, seventy-eight out of approximately 240 Massachusetts towns, including most of the principal ones, had replied favorably.

Towns, counties, and colonies from Nova Scotia to Georgia had their committees of correspondence.

Men on these committees wrote to each other to express ideas, to confirm mutual assistance, and to debate and coordinate resistance to British imperial policy.

Committees of Correspondence were longstanding institutions that became a key communications system during the early years of the American Revolution (1772-1776).

The Committees were a way for colonial legislatures to communicate with their agents in London. In the 1760s, the Sons of Liberty used committees of correspondence to organize resistance between cities.

The most famous and influential committees of correspondence, however, operated in the 1770s.

In the late summer and autumn of 1774, the colonies became politically active on a very wide scale and at all political levels, from town-meetings and county conventions to a series of provincial and continental congresses.

Simultaneously, and on an equally wide scale, the colonists began active military preparations.

The Continental Congress established the Committee of Secret Correspondence to communicate with sympathetic Britons and other Europeans early in the American Revolution. The committee coordinated diplomatic functions for the Continental Congress and directed transatlantic communication and public relations.

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