

Document B: From a London Newspaper (Modified)

Will Alfred wrote this public letter to Secretary Henry Seymour Conway. Conway was one of two of Britain's Secretaries of State and was responsible for relations with the American colonies. The letter was first published in a London newspaper and then was published in the Boston Gazette Supplement on January 27, 1766, nearly three months after the Stamp Act went into effect.

From a late London paper.

To Mr. Secretary Conway:

The riotous behavior of the people in Boston is remarkable. I would have been less surprised by their behavior if we had taxed their beer, because everyone drinks beer. But the Stamp Act is a tax on none of the necessities of life. It does not affect the poor. And even a poor person can afford this little amount of money. The tax on newspapers only affects the rich—common people do not purchase newspapers. Isn't it surprising, then, that the mob in Boston has begun to riot against this tax even before it has officially gone into effect? I was expressing my wonder at this, when I was informed, that it was not the burden of the tax to be raised, but the *manner in which it was imposed*, that created the discontent: If this is so, the matter is more serious than it may first appear. . . .

The colonists are our brethren and fellow-subjects. . . . We should ask therefore whether we have behaved to them as brethren. . . . The first birth right privilege of a Briton is, that he cannot be legally tried but by his peers. One of the next is, that he cannot be taxed but by a parliament in which he is represented. . . . Do these who impose taxes on the colonists pay also themselves a share of these taxes? If this is not the case, what have the colonists done that they are to be stripped of one of the most valuable privileges of Britons? Have the parliament of Great Britain a right to take from any, the lowest of the subjects, the smallest privilege, which he inherits by birth-right, unless forfeited by law?

Source: Will Alfred, "To Mr. Secretary Conway," Boston Gazette Supplement, January 27, 1766.