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Sugar Act [1]

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by Carmen Miner Smith, 2006; Revised November 2022.

The Sugar Act [2], officially titled the American Revenue Act, was passed by British Parliament in April 1764 in cooperation with Prime Minister George Grenville. The act was intended to reduce the large national debt incurred during the Seven Years War (1756-63), to raise money to garrison troops in the colonies to ensure their safety, and to strengthen imperial control over the colonies. The Sugar Act revised the ineffective Molasses Act of 1733 by reducing the duty on foreign molasses by half; increasing the duties on various types of sugar; levying new taxes on coffee, indigo, wine [3], silk [4], and other textiles [5]; and establishing procedures for the more effective collection of taxes. American colonists preferred to deal with foreign planters because foreign molasses was cheaper. Moreover, foreign planters bought colonial goods such as enslaved people, lumber, flour, fish [6], and meat, and they paid in hard currency, which was greatly needed in the colonies.

North Carolina colonists viewed the Sugar Act as taxation without representation as well as an economic threat. They consequently lodged a protest in the North Carolina Assembly.

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Additional Resources:

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"The Sugar Act: British Parliament - 1764." America's HomePage.http://ahp.gatech.edu/sugar_act_bp_1764.html [2] (accessed August 22, 2012).

The John Carter Brown Library, Brown University. "Sugar and the Visual Imagination in the Atlantic World." http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/exhibitions/su... [8]

Sugar in the Atlantic World. University of Michigan.http://clements.umich.edu/exhibits/online/sugarexhibit/sugar05.php [9]

Map of Slave Trade (including sugar routes). University of North Carolina.https://www.unc.edu/wrc/maps/08-Map.png [10]

The Triangular Trade. Map from the BBC Bitesize. https://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/zqv7hyc/revision/3 [11]

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Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.[15]

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