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Vignette II

Characters: Narrator, King George III, Members of Parliament (4), Patrick Henry, Representatives from Virginia (2)

Narrator: In December of 1773, the Sons of Liberty dumped chests full of tea in Boston Harbor. Listen to discover how King George III reacted when he received word of the Boston Tea Party. In this scene, the king discusses the event with members of the British Parliament.

British Parliament, Great Britain 1774

King George III: This is an outrage! Dumping 340 chests of tea into Boston Harbor is just foolishness! They thought the taxes were bad? Now they will have to repay Great Britain for the tea they dumped.

Member of Parliament 1: We can send British ships and keep the harbor closed until the colonists pay for the cost of the tea they threw away. No ships will be able to enter or leave the harbor.

King George III: Yes. And closing the harbor will not be all. Boston must be reminded that they are British subjects. They live with protection and privileges provided by Great Britain, and they will live with the laws of their king.

Member of Parliament 2: What other laws do you propose, Your Majesty?

King George III: The colonists are taking too many liberties. I want stricter control of their meetings and how they elect officials. I or my ministers will decide who holds important government positions in Massachusetts.

Member of Parliament 3: I quite agree. There should also be new rules for trials. Bostonians should be tried by the king's judges outside of Boston.

Member of Parliament 4: It would also relieve the burden and expense on Great Britain if the colonists provided food and shelter for British soldiers.

King George III: Agreed. Make it so, and send more soldiers to Boston. I have a feeling we may need them there.

Narrator: Parliament passes a series of acts, known as the Intolerable Acts, during 1774. Word spreads, raising debates throughout the colonies. Should the colonists obey the laws of a far-away government or break away from Great Britain altogether? Listen as Patrick Henry declares his views before a group of representatives in Virginia.

Richmond, Virginia 1775

Patrick Henry: Gentlemen, I attended the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia last year, as did some of you. We agreed that Parliament's new laws are indeed intolerable. These laws show that King George is not going to allow any colonists the independence we desire and have had in the past.

Virginia Representative 1: But Mr. Henry, King George knows he must repeal the Intolerable Acts or we will stop exporting goods to Great Britain.

Patrick Henry: The king shows no sign of hearing our complaints and grievances. Mere words are not enough. We need to take action.

Virginia Representative 2: What are you suggesting, Mr. Henry? Do you believe that war is unavoidable?

Patrick Henry: Gentlemen may cry, "Peace! Peace!" But there is no peace. The war is actually begun! . . . I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!