

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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MISSION 1: "For Crown or Colony?"

Letter by Theophilus Lillie Opposing the Non-Importation Agreement, 1770

In this letter, published in the pro-Crown Boston Chronicle, Theophilus Lillie describes his "punishment" at the hands of Patriotic merchants who organized the non-importation movement. Lillie points out that he never consented to the boycott, and is the victim of blatant hypocrisy by those who claim to be defenders of "liberty."

Upon the whole, I cannot help saying—although I have never entered far into the mysteries of government, having applied myself to my shop and my business—that it always seemed strange to me that people who contend so much for civil and religious liberty should be so ready to deprive others of their natural liberty; that men who are guarding against being subject to laws which they never gave their consent in person or by their representative should at the same time make laws...[to which] I am sure I never gave my consent either in person or by my representative.

But what is still more hard, they are laws made to punish me after I have committed the offence; for when I sent for my goods, I was told nobody would be compelled to subscribe; after they came I was required to store them. This is no degree answered the end of the subscription, which was to distress the manufacturers in England. Now, my storing my goods could never do this; the mischief was done when the goods were bought in England; and it was too late to help it...

If one set of private subjects may at any time take upon themselves to punish another set of private subjects just when they please, it's such a sort of government as I never heard of before; and according to my poor notion of government, this is one of the principal things which government is designed to prevent; and I own I had rather be a slave under one master (for I know who he is I may perhaps be able to please him) than a slave to a hundred or more whom I don't know where to find, nor what they will expect of me.

Source: *Boston Chronicle*, January 15, 1770