Reflecting on our history:

Britain has just won the most costly war in recorded history against France. A war debt in excess of L140 million exists. Lord George Grenville, the new Prime Minister, is faced with the problem of paying off the war debt. In 1763 the average Englishmen paid 26 shillings a year in tax. To burden Englishmen with an additional tax would be politically unwise.

Taxes in the North American colonies approximate from 5 pence to 1 shilling per year. Of the war debt, at least L30 million has been spent in the colonies. In addition, at the request of the colonists 10,000 British troops are being maintained, at a cost of L220,000 a year, in the colonies for their protection from the native Americans.

In an effort to help balance the British budget in relation to the costs incurred through maintaining the North American colonies a series of Acts have been issued in 1764-65. These include: the Sugar Act which lowers the tax on sugar from 6 pence to 3 pence per pound but requires payment by the colonists in gold or silver coinage; the Quartering Act which requires colonists to house British troops when inadequate space exist in the barracks; and the Stamp Act intended to raise revenue by requiring certain documents to bear official stamps.

To the British Parliament these measures seem quite reasonable. In the original charters granted to the colonists Parliament had the right to tax. The British government has spent large sums defending the colonies from the French and the native Americans. But in the colonies they cause a major controversy. The colonists perceive these Acts as intrusion upon their freedom. For the past 150 years the colonists had not been subjected to direct British taxation. The British monarchy preoccupied with other problems had never developed a tight administration of the colonies. During this period of benign neglect, the colonists had developed their own alternative governments. These governments were broadly based representative forums. These forums were so effective that John Adams wrote ... that the revolution was complete in the minds of the people and the Union of the colonies before the war commenced in the skir-