

New York merchants sign non-importation agreement, October 31, 1765

On this day in history, October 31, 1765, New York merchants sign a non-importation agreement, agreeing not to import goods from Great Britain in protest of the Stamp Act. The Stamp Act placed a small tax on all paper goods, such as contracts, licenses, newspapers, almanacs, etc. The tax affected nearly everyone since it was placed on such common goods.

Lawyers, businessmen, judges and other affluent people were hit particularly hard by the tax because so much of their work required legal papers and contracts. The New York Non-Importation Agreement was signed by 200 New York City merchants who agreed not to import any more British goods until the Stamp Act was repealed. They were joined by many merchants and common people in the other colonies as well.

The colonists rebelled against the Stamp Act in many ways, including mob actions and riots against British officials, but the non-importation agreement had the most serious effect in London. English merchants suffered terribly because the Americans wouldn't import their goods or pay their bills. Widespread unemployment gripped England as a result. Pressure from these London merchants ultimately caused Parliament to back down and repeal the Stamp Act.