

The Coercive Acts

Properly known as the Restraining Acts, the Coercive Acts, as they were popularly known in England, were introduced in 1774 by the new government of Lord North, who acted with the direct encouragement of George III. Several voices of caution had been raised in Parliament, particularly those of Edmund Burke and Lord Chatham, who feared that stern measures were charting a course no one really wanted to follow; their advice, however, was not heeded. This legislation's purpose was to restore order in Massachusetts, following the Boston Tea Party and other acts of defiance. The Intolerable Acts, as they were known in America, included the following:

- **Boston Port Act** (June 1, 1774)
- **Quartering Act** (June 2, 1774)
- **Administration of Justice Act** (May 20, 1774)
- **Massachusetts Government Act** (May 20, 1774)

Parliament followed the enactment of these measures with the passage of the Quebec Act, an unrelated piece of legislation, but one that was regarded by the colonists as equally "intolerable." Responses came in several forms. Massachusetts, long viewed with suspicion by the other colonies, now received the sympathy and grudging respect of its neighbors. Also, moderates in both England and America were surprised by the harshness of the measures and many began drifting toward radical views. Perhaps the most important result of the Coercive Acts was the summoning of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, in September 1774.