A King’s Proclamation: 1763

How did King George respond to problems on the western frontier?

The Proclamation of 1763

When the French and Indian War ended, King George III was caught in a dilemma. How should he handle the colonists’ demands to move westward into Native American territories? Granting the colonists the right to move would make them happy, but it could also stir up conflicts with Native Americans. Providing the colonists with protection was expensive and would require the presence of British soldiers. What would you have done if you were in the king’s position?

The British monarch decided that the best way to resolve the conflict was to limit settlement. To this end, he issued the Proclamation of 1763. This order established a line beyond which American colonists could not settle. The lands beyond the line were reserved for Native Americans.

As with the Navigation Acts, enforcement of King George’s proclamation was nearly impossible, since the American frontier was very far away from London. In addition, the French and Indian War had weakened the British military and left the country badly in debt.

Independent Thinking

Back in North America, many colonists resented the King’s proclamation. Some simply disobeyed or ignored it. They had fought in the war for Britain, and they felt they had earned the opportunity to settle on the frontier. American colonists continued to push west of the Appalachian Mountains, hunting and trapping, clearing land, and building new homesteads.

American resistance to the Proclamation of 1763 was a sign of change in the colonies’ relationship with Great Britain. Over time the colonies had developed a distinct set of interests and their own American culture. What was good for Great Britain was no longer seen as necessarily good for the colonists. Many colonists even began to see themselves as Americans rather than British subjects.

The Proclamation of 1763 would not be the last act of the British government to anger the American colonists. Over the next several years, the quarrel would intensify.