**The Declaration of Independence**

A. Most Americans did not desire independence; proud to be British citizens

B. Reasons for shift of loyalty?

1. England had hired of Hessians (German soldiers) to fight against us

2. England promised freedom to slaves who would fight for Britain which persuaded many southerners to join New England in the war effort.

C. **Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*** (published early 1776)

1. Became an instant best-seller in the colonies; effective propaganda

2. Main ideas:

a. Britain's policies were harsh; independence was the only course

b. Nowhere in the physical universe did a smaller heavenly body control a larger one. Why should tiny England control huge North America?

c. King was nothing more than the "Royal Brute of Great Britain."

d. America had a sacred mission; moral obligation to the world to set up an independent, democratic republic, untainted by association with corrupt monarchical Britain.

3. Persuaded Congress to go all the way for independence

D. June 7, 1776, Philadelphia Congress, **Richard Henry Lee** proposed independence.

1. "These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent

states..."

2. Motion was adopted on July 2, 1776

3. Yet, formal explanation was needed to rally resistance at home and invite

foreign nations to aid the American cause, especially France.

E. Congress appointed Committee on Independence to prepare an Appropriate

statement shortly after Lee's speech.

1. Task given to a committee:

a. Thomas Jefferson

b. Ben Franklin

c. John. Adams

d. Roger Sherman

e. Robert Livingston

2. Some debate and amendment had preceded its adoption especially an anti-

slavery clause which was heavily modified with some portions being removed.

a. Jefferson had blamed England for continuing the slave trade despite colonial wishes (and despite his owning slaves).

b. Southerners still favored slavery and dismissed the clause.

3. Declaration not addressed to England;

U.S. didn't expect a response from the king.

4. Declaration of Independence formally approved on July 4, 1776

F. ***Declaration of Independence*** had three major parts:

1. Preamble (heavily influenced by John Locke)

a. Stated the rights of colonists to break away if natural rights were

violated: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (property)

b. Stated "all men are created equal"

2. List of 27 grievances of the colonies (seen by Congress as most

important part)

a. Underwent the most changes from the original draft (24)

b. Charged King with

imposing taxes without colonials' consent

eliminating trial by jury

military dictatorship

maintaining standing armies in peacetime

cutting off trade

burning towns

hiring mercenaries

inciting Amerindian violence.

3. Formal declaration of independence

a. Officially broke ties with England

b. "United States" officially an independent country