

### Student Handout Number 3

Writing on “Sectional and Class Divisions, 1760-1775” in **“The Growth of the American Republic”** Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager said:

“Fully as important was the question of who should rule in the colonies. Some colonies, such as North Carolina, were relatively democratic; and others, like New York, fully aristocratic in their social structure. In some, such as Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the franchise was fairly broad; in others, such as South Carolina, it was very narrowly restricted. But no one of the 13 was really democratic in political or social structures, much less ‘dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.’ Class distinctions had been brought from England by the colonists, and since maintained; and class distinctions, in the 17th and 18th centuries, implied political privilege.

“In all the colonies in 1760, the franchise was limited by property qualifications, which were much higher for office-holding; and the newly settled regions were under-represented in colonial legislatures, and in many other ways treated unfairly by colonial politicians and men of wealth. There was nothing new in this, but the majority were beginning to resent it, and the political controversy with the mother country enabled them to make this resentment felt. An internal quarrel, partly class and partly sectional, cut athwart the larger contest between colonies and mother country. There were really two American revolutions at the same time: the sectional revolt of 13 colonies against imperial centralization; and a class upheaval against vested interests and local governing classes.”