**AMERICAN HISTORY IN OUR SCHOOLS – the cause of the American Revolution**

**CHARACTERS:**

History teacher, 7th grade – Mr. Swank

Student, boy, 12 years old, very bright – Arnold

Student, boy, 12 years old, eager - Ernest

Rest of history class, around 12 students, boys and girls

[Teacher stands in front of class who are sitting in typical wooden chairs and desks.]

Mr. Swank: [ordering]

Arnold, come up and tell the class what you learned about the American Revolution

and its cause.

[Arnold gets up from his seat and stands next to Mr. Swank looking out at his classmates. He is excited about being up in front of the class.]

Arnold:

The colonists did not like being taxed by the English Parliament, so they revolted.

[Student Ernest raises his hand. He is sitting in the front row.]

Mr. Swank: [suspicious of Ernest]

Yes, Ernest? You have a thought?

Ernest:

Yes, Mr. Swank.

Mr. Swank: [Rolling his eyes.]

Ok. Ernest. Can you share your thought [with emphasis on ‘thought’ as if teacher

expects too many words.] with our class.

[Ernest jumps up. Goes to front of class. His friend Arnold greets him with a smile.]

Mr. Swank: [looking with intent]

Arnold, thank you [with emphasis] for your help. You may take your [with emphasis]

seat please.

[Arnold goes back to his seat.]

Ernest:

Well, Mr. Swank, I was in the library the other day [looks at Mr. Swank for approval]….

Mr. Swank:

Yes, yes, good boy.

Ernest:

…and I found a book with the words of Mr. Benjamin Franklin in it …

[Ernest pulls out a copy of the pamphlet from his back pocket and displays to class]

And I have read it!

Mr. Swank: [surprised]

Why, Ernest, that’s wonderful. We have talked a lot about Benjamin Franklin and what a great man

he was for our country.

Ernest:

Yes, well Mr. Franklin said the cause of the Revolutionary War was the English Parliament

passing laws so the 13 colonies couldn’t create their own money anymore.

Mr. Swank:

Well, Ernest, it seems to me one doesn’t just create money, so the Parliament was within

its rights. I’m not sure what Benjamin Franklin was talking about.

But we all know, right Arnold, [looking down at Arnold in first row], that taxing

the colonists made them angry.

Ernest: [persisting]

But, Mr. Swank, this book by Benjamin Franklin really made sense to me.

You see, the colonies didn’t have much money to begin with. There was very little

old and silver coins. That’s what they used back then.

Mr. Swank: [irritated]

Yes, yes. The King coined the gold and silver in his mint. We’ve read about that.

Ernest:

So what were the colonists to do? They couldn’t buy food, pay rent, pay working people,

without money.

My Dad is always complaining today that he doesn’t have enough money. So he can’t

buy things we kids want.

Someone’s got to make the money so we can all use it, no?

Class: [CLAP ALL TOGETHER]

Mr. Swank:

Well, of course. Someone makes the money. It comes from our Federal Reserve.

Arnold: [raises his hand and bursts out]

But, Mr. Swank, back then there was no Federal Reserve, right?

Mr. Swank:

Right.

Ernest:

And there were very little gold and silver coins. Mr. Franklin said many of the coins

were returned to England to pay for taxes and tools.

Mr. Swank:

Well, Ernest, I’m not sure how important all of Mr. Franklin’s thoughts are.

Money is always there.

Ernest:

But that’s the thing, Mr. Swank, the money wasn’t there. [he is excited]

So what could the farmers and craftsmen and merchants do? Mr. Franklin

said there was lots of unemployment and even hunger.

Mr. Swank: [uncomfortable]

Well, I’m not sure about all this, Ernest.

Arnold: [raises hand wildly]

But, Mr. Swank, I read it too. It’s true. It’s true. Mr. Franklin wouldn’t lie.

Ernest:

Yes, Ben Franklin said the legislature in each colony decided to create pieces of paper called script

and use it to pay for government expenses. And the government would build a bridge or

a market for the farmers or something else.

Mr. Swank: [trying to swelch the words of Ernest]

Well, this is quite some imagination you boys have. I’m sure Ben Franklin knew a lot.

But what does this have to do with the cause of the American Revolution?

Ernest:

Everything, Mr. Swank.

Class: [CLAP ALL TOGETHER]

Mr. Swank: [sternly]

Ok, ok. Hold it in class. You must wait to be recognized. Not everyone at the same time.

Ernest:

You see, Mr. Swank, what Ben Franklin said was that the colonies’ money went to pay rent,

buy food, make crafts, pay workers, and the colonies were very very prosperous. He said

there wasn’t any poverty!

Mr. Swank:

Yes, but Ernest what does this have to do with the cause of the American Revolution?

Ernest:

Because Parliament passed laws and told the colonies they couldn’t have their money.

And the colonists were really really angry. Without script money, they were poor and

unemployed.

According to Ben Franklin, this was the real cause of the American Revolution.

Arnold: [jumping up to face class]

And maybe we could get rid of poverty too with our own money!

Class: [CLAP ALL TOGETHER]

Mr. Swank:

Well, well, quite an imagination Ben Franklin had. Now class, turn to page 47.

THE END