

Ad-Hoc Committee of the Secretary General

The Second Continental Congress 1777

The year is 1777. The Second Continental Congress has just relocated from its seat in Philadelphia to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, --- miles away, after the British took the provisional American capital after the battle of Brandywine. America has so far been unable to prove to the French that their revolt has a chance of being successful. The embarrassing loss of their capital certainly isn't helping matters. Benjamin Franklin is well loved by the French nobility, and France is ready to take any opportunity to spit in Britain's eye. All America needs to do is to give them a good excuse. So far it has failed to do so.

Coordinating the forces of 13 distinct colonies poses a challenge. With 13 distinct militias and 13 distinct bodies commanding and supplying them, taking on the might of the British empire proves to be difficult. The army is perpetually short on food, clothing, and munitions. The navy is nonexistent. The Americans don't need a superior fighting force in this war of attrition, but they also need to not lose outright.

Other systemic problems plague the fledgling nation.

The colonial military had to contend with was the ideological divisions between Americans. A group of colonists, known as either Tories or loyalists, favored British rule. The British government offered loyalists incentives to loyalists to serve on the British side of the war, to which the colonial government responded with the Tory Act. The Tory act called to disarm loyalists and arrest those of "particular prominence". As a result of this, many loyalists fled to Canada. Additionally, there wasn't overwhelming support for the war- about half of the colonists wished to avoid the conflict altogether. The Continental Army's habit of raiding local farmers for supplies also does nothing to garner goodwill.

The continental army consists primarily of volunteers with no previous military training. Men don't know how to march or fire in formation. They barely know how to shoot, and don't quite understand the function of a bayonet. They held up well when the British didn't both paying much attention to the colonies and the army could just ambush British troops when the opportunity arose. Now that Britain has dedicated her forces, the level of our success has significantly diminished. The officers consist of those who served in the French and Indian war. None have particularly stellar track records; constant squabbling and infighting mars their leadership.

The Nation also isn't quite a nation yet. With no governing charter, the congress lacks legitimacy in directing the war effort and making treaties with foreign governments. In 1777, there is technically no Federal government in America. A committee was appointed to draft such a document on July 12, 1776. They are yet to be presented to the Congress or voted on.

History of the war up to date:

March-June, 1774:

The Intolerable Acts are passed. The Intolerable or Coercive Acts were a series of four pieces of legislation passed by the British government as a reaction to the Boston Tea Party. The Intolerable Acts acted both as a means to punish colonists for the Tea Party and destruction of British property and to maintain order in the colony of Massachusetts.

September 5th-October 26th, 1774:

The First Continental Congress convened in Carpenter's Hall, Philadelphia. Largely as a reaction to the Coercive (Intolerable) Acts of 1774, the Continental Congress met to discuss a plan of colonial response.

October 20th, 1774:

The Articles of Association (passed by the First Continental Congress) ban all trade between the colonies and Great Britain.

April 19th, 1775:

The Battles of Lexington and Concord, the "shot heard around the world", were the first military engagements of the Revolutionary war.

May 10th, 1775:

The Second Continental Congress meets to decide how to deal with the military threat of the British. Here was agreed upon the creation of a continental army. Additionally, the Congress authorized the printing of money to pay for supplies and appointed a committee to conduct relationships with foreign countries. However, much of the Congress did not support declaring independence from Britain. In July of 1775, the Congress appealed to King George III through the Olive Branch Petition, asking him to accept peaceful resolution. In August, he refused this offer and declared the colonies in a state of rebellion.

July 4th, 1776:

Congress adopts the declaration of independence. It is read publicly on the eighth.

August - November, 1776:

In a series of American defeats, the British take control of New York City while the Americans retain control of New Jersey

December 26th, 1776:

Washington crosses the Delaware and captures Trenton from the Hessians.

September 11th, 1777:

The British defeat the Americans in the battle of Brandywine and took control of Philadelphia, forcing the Continental Congress to flee to Lancaster.

Delegates

Be sure to effectively balance the interests of the nation with the interests of your state. Inadequate support for the former may lead to accusations of treason. Inadequate support for the latter may lead to your replacement.

Procedure

*This committee will function as a Crisis Committee, i.e. there will be **no working papers**. All legislation that your committee decides to enact must be conducted in the form of directives, which are much shorter and easier to pass than working papers.*

*Committee Directives can be authored by a maximum of two members, but require one quarter of the committee to be either authors or signatories before it can be presented to the committee. It is suggested that directives address *one* issue at a time; as many directives may be in progress at any given time, a group of directives can be introduced by motion or at the discretion of the Chair. Once introduced, directives are then voted on and passed by simple majority. Directives *cannot be amended*. Directives that take direct use of another committee member's portfolio powers (e.g. use of a specific colony's forces) must have approval in writing from the concerned member in addition the required signatories (e.g. approved and supported by the Delegate from Virginia).*

The committee will function with normal parliamentary procedure provided that working papers have been replaced with directives. Expect a higher proportion of moderated and unmoderated caucuses. The committee may move at any time to introduce a different set of procedure. Any changes must be passed by a 2/3s supermajority.

In addition, the committee may be interrupted without warning with breaking news of a "crisis". These crises should factor into your debate, and be addressed as soon as possible. After a crisis, the messenger may be briefly questioned to the Chair's discretion, and then the caucus will resume until it expires.

Special Committee Mechanics

Each member of the committee, upon entering the committee, will receive a list of "Portfolio Powers" that can be used unilaterally or semi-unilaterally (with the approval of a few other committee members) and potentially secretly. Delegates are advised to use discretion in disclosing the full nature of your Portfolio Powers to other committee members, but to utilize them to the greatest extent possible. Some Portfolio Powers will be publically known. Others will not. Be mindful of the difference.