

Ned Landsman

British Union and American Revolution: Union, Empire, and Enlightenment

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Acts of Union were widely lauded in British North America, which raises the question of why the an incorporating union received so little serious consideration during the American crisis. One of the motives for union was giving Scotland access to the American trade, but little thought has been given to the North American implications. What difference did it make that the crisis took place in a British rather than an English empire? The colonies, once part of a centralized English state, became part of a multinational United Kingdom; one result was that by the time of the crisis there was less need to negotiate over churches and institutions and a more intensive focus on representation. Parliamentary sovereignty clashed with the provincial focus on political economy and enlightenment, which meant that any trans-Atlantic union would have had to be more radical and thorough than anything envisioned in 1707.

Ned Landsman is Professor and former chair of the Department of History at Stony Brook University, where he has taught since 1979. He is the author of numerous books and articles on early American history, Scottish history, and the American and transatlantic Enlightenments. He is currently working on a book project on the British Union and the North American Colonies and is writing the *Edinburgh History of Eighteenth-Century Scotland*.

