Shays’s Rebellion as the Ultimate Last Straw of the Articles of Confederation

Inflation and Currency Issues

* Inflated currency leads to worthless paper money
* Economic depression causes severe hardship
* Unemployment skyrockets

States’ Debt

* Rhode Island printed large amounts of paper money
* Creditors (people who loaned the money) won’t accept money
* Massachusetts refuses to print worthless money

Heavy Debt for Farmers

* Each state had their own debt collection
* Massachusetts used taxes on land to collect debt
* Farmers felt the effects of land taxes the most
* Massachusetts began forcing the sale of farmers’ land
* Some sold their labor, some went to prison

Daniel Shays

* Poor farmer
* Revolutionary War Veteran
* Led hundreds of men to shut down Supreme Court in Massachusetts by any means necessary

The Rebellion and Last Straw

* Massachusetts ordered farmers to stop rebelling
* Eventually Shays’s forces were defeated by the state troops
* 14 leaders sentenced to death, but eventually set free
* U.S. Congress knew our weak system of government had to change

Summary

The U.S. was dealing with heavy economic issues after the war and into the years during the times of the Articles of Confederation. Because states were forced to deal with their own debt problems, and many began printing too much paper money, the currency lost value quickly. Farmers in Massachusetts had little alternative to pay their debts since their state wouldn’t print money. After Massachusetts began forcing farmers to sell land to pay off their tax debts, Daniel Shays and his forces rose up against the state and almost caused it to fail. Ultimately however, the state won against his forces and shut the rebellion down. Because of this rebellion, leaders from across the new country knew the current system of government had to be altered. This led to the Constitutional Convention.