

I REFORM AND RESISTANCE

the Stamp Act was received with delight and relief in America. Communities held celebrations throughout New Jersey (Doc. 15). But whatever the public posture of Jerseymen, privately their joy must have been tempered by the magnitude of the Stamp Act crisis. What had begun as opposition to a specific tax bill had turned into concerted resistance to British authority—resistance that had taken the form of peaceful protest and economic coercion, violence and extralegal activities. Repeal of the Stamp Act, while it resolved the immediate imperial imbroglio, did not answer the larger issue of the constitutional relationship between Parliament and America that had risen to the fore during the preceding year.

1 Daniel Coxe to Joseph Reed

[Joseph Reed Papers, 1:16, New-York Historical Society.]

An Anglican by confession and a lawyer by profession, Daniel Coxe V (1741-1826) was a descendant of one of the oldest and most prominent families of colonial New Jersey. He was admitted to the bar in 1761; by 1772 he had built one of the most lucrative law practices in the province. A member of the Board of Proprietors of West Jersey, the private land company that owned extensive tracts of land in the western division of the colony, he also owned in excess of 1000 acres of land in New York and New Jersey. He served on the provincial council from 1771 to the Revolution, when his Loyalism forced him to flee, first to New York City and then to England, where he spent the rest of his life. Presbyterian Joseph Reed (1741-1785), like Coxe, was a resident of Trenton and an attorney. Upon graduating from the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University) in 1757, he studied law with Richard Stockton in Princeton and was admitted to the bar in 1763. From 1763 to 1765 he pursued legal studies at the Middle Temple in London. After his marriage in 1770 to Esther De Berdt, daughter of London mercantile magnate Denny De Berdt, Reed removed to Philadelphia, where he later emerged as a leader of the Revolution in Pennsylvania. Because of their involvement in commercial enterprises, Coxe and Reed were especially aware of and concerned with the economic implications of imperial measures.

Trenton April 12th 1764

Dear Sir,

... What in the name of Sense has possess'd the English Nation or rather its parliament, for I find a paragraph in the last papers that a Scheme is on foot for Obliging Us to furnish 500,000 Proc[lamation]¹ among the Colonies. My God! What

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Madness this is; think they that We are in any Ways able to raise that Sum or half of it? How are We to do it? Our Trade is confin'd & limited, the only Channel by which Wealth can flow into us. Money We have not in Specie, that is all gone to England in remittances to pay for our dry Goods &c. What also have We to supply its place; they will not take our produce instead, neither will they admitt Us any Manufacturies, or give any kind of encouragem[en]t to it, but on the other hand check all such Schemes. I sincerely believe half the Sum in Gold & Silver could not be found in the Country, take it all together, and unless We are allow'd a paper Currency without severe restrictions, they need not sent Tax gatherers, for they can gather nothing. Never was Money so very Scarce as now hardly so much so that You may venture almost at 20% in the pound without success. It is time that We may aford more considerable than We have yet paid in Taxes, but to effect that let our Luxuries & Superfluities pay for it and strike at a [notor]ious Evil at once; so far may work for our Good. But at the same time We should not be debarr'd from inlarging our Commerce & Trade, in favor to the West Indies Whose Members (or rather those Who enjoy great Estates there & are Members in parliament) would Sacrifice every other part of North America to aggrandize their own Estates. A Young Child seeks from its parents that Assistance it wants and which from them it has a right to expect as its natural Guardian. America is but in its Infant State, unable of itself to bear any heavy Burdens, tho' it may [illegible] more than We have already, provided We were free from the Debts the late Warr has Occasion'd, and which lay heavy on Us. Our Settlements here are generally upon the Coast; A large Country is at our Back, which if once Inhabited might be a Mine of power to England; what can bring this about but the encouragement of Trade & as many Manufactures as possible that would least interfere with those of our Mother Country. This would introduce vast numbers of people & consequently extend our settlements Westward. England now expends immense Sums of Money to Norway & Sweden for their Iron, Masts, &c. Why cannot She be supply'd with those Articles from hence, for it's well known we are able to do it nearly. A Vast Inland Trade might be open'd towards the Lakes, that would not only Consume Quantitys of English Manufacturies, as Dry Goods &c., but very probably inlarge our West India Trade too. Since Canada has been in our Hands, What prodigious increase has been made in the furr Trade. These seem to be Considerations that ought rather to induce [them?] to be very tender & carefull of Us for some time to come, and not to send over Among Us a Sett of Rascalls for Duty Officers, who will knaw upon our Vitals, by depriving Us of our Substance, add to this the numberless Offices that will be created—but they seem somehow to be afraid We may grow too Strong for Infancy, & apprehend our Indepen'cy, or perhaps more truly they seem to understand little of Us, our Interest, or their own, respecting Us, and what will become of Us I cannot tell if such be their present temper. . . .

I am Dr. Sir,
Yr. Obt. Hble. Servt.²
DANL. COXE

1. Beginning in 1704 distinction was made between the value of colonial currency (pound proclamation) and the basic British monetary unit (pound

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sterling); the former circulated on the authority of the provincial government, while the latter was backed by a specified amount of gold or silver coinage prescribed by law. The exchange rate between the two currencies fluctuated throughout the eighteenth century, but sterling always had a higher valuation. In 1704 the differential (the proclamation rate) was £100 sterling to £133 proclamation.

2. The customary complimentary close was "I am, Dear Sir, Your Most Humble and Obedient Servant" or some variation thereof.

2 The New Jersey Committee of Correspondents to Joseph Sherwood

[Jacob Spicer Letter Book, Spicer Papers, New Jersey Historical Society.]

A Quaker lawyer of Austin-Freyers, London, Sherwood held the post of colonial agent for New Jersey from 1760 to 1766. (The colonial agency was an unofficial albeit important element in imperial administration. Since the colonies were not directly represented in Parliament, the legislature of each colony hired a lobbyist, usually a prominent English merchant or lawyer, to promote the interests of the province within the British government.) Sherwood owed his appointment in part to the experience gained as the assistant to his predecessor, Richard Partridge, and in part to his influence with Samuel Smith and the "Quaker faction" in New Jersey (a loose coalition of West Jersey Friends led by Quaker assemblymen). As members of the legislature, the "Committee of Correspondents" was understandably disturbed about what appeared to be parliamentary encroachments upon the wide latitude enjoyed by the assembly in matters pertaining to local government—especially the crucial power of taxation.

September 10th 1764

If any thing comes on the Stage next Session of Parliament either for repealing the Duties laid on the Trade of the Northern Colonies and prohibiting a paper Currency at last Session, or for adding any thing new by way of Tax on this Colony, the Committee of Correspondents direct that you will humbly & Dutifully Set forth In the name and on Behalf of this Colony¹ that we look upon all Taxes laid upon us without our Consent as a fundamental infringement of the Rights and priveleges Secured to us as English Subjects and by Charter;² and that our paper Currency hath always kept its [value]³ and being prohibited from having any more but upon Terms of not being a Legal tender let the Necessity be ever so pressing we esteem a very great provincial hardship, for these among other Important Reasons that it will not