

I REFORM AND RESISTANCE

activities, advanced the concept of popular sovereignty, and increased the political consciousness of the people. In a word, such gatherings promoted the democratic revolution. Moreover, as the Essex resolves reveal, Jersey men preferred peaceful community pressure to violence as a means of registering opposition to the Stamp Act.

October 25, 1765

At a general Meeting of the Freemen, Inhabitants of the County of Essex, in New-Jersey, at the free Borough of Elizabeth, on the 25th Day of October, in the Year of our Lord 1765, being the Anniversary of the happy Accession of his present Majesty King George the Third, to the Crown of Great-Britain, &c. upon which Occasion the said Freemen unanimously, and with one Voice declared.

First. That they have at all Times heretofore, and ever would bear true Allegiance to his Majesty King George the Third, and his royal Predecessors, and wished to be governed agreeable to the Laws of the Land and the British Constitution, to which they ever had, and forever most cheerfully would submit.

Secondly. That the Stamp Act, prepared for the British Colonies in America, in their Opinion, is unconstitutional; and should the same take Place, agreeable to the Tenor of it, would be a manifest Destruction and Overthrow of their long-enjoyed, boasted and invaluable Liberties and Privileges.

Thirdly. That they will, by all lawful Ways and Means, endeavour to preserve and transmit to Posterity, their Liberty and Property, in as full and ample Manner as they received the same from their Ancestors.

Fourthly. That they will discountenance and discourage by all lawful Measures, the Execution and Effect of the Stamp-Act.

Fifthly. That they will detest, abhor, and hold in the utmost Contempt, all and every Person or Persons, who shall meanly accept of any Employment or Office, relating to the Stamp Act, or shall take any Shelter or Advantage from the same; and all and every Stamp Pimp, Informer, Favourer, and Encourager of the Execution of the said Act: and that they will have no Communication with any such Person, nor speak to them on any Occasion, unless it be to inform them of their Vileness.

9 “The Effigy of a Wretch” Hanged in New Brunswick

[*New-York Gazette; or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, October 31, 1765.]

The identity of the individual represented by the effigy is uncertain. It may have been, as is commonly thought, William Coxe, who resigned his commission as stamp distributor on September 2. But the language of the account

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

suggests House Speaker Robert Ogden as the target of outrage. The object of popular resentment because of his refusal to sign the resolves of the Stamp Act Congress which had adjourned on October 24, Ogden was, according to Robert R. Livingston of New York, "burnt in Effigy in almost all the Towns of East Jersey" and elsewhere in the province (Livingston to ?, November 2, 1765, Livingston Papers, Bancroft Collection, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations). Cognizant of the hostile climate of opinion, Ogden promptly resigned his seat in the assembly when the legislature met on November 26. Of course the demonstration went beyond condemning one man; it was also intended to serve as a warning to anyone who dared openly support the Stamp Act.

New-Brunswick, October 29, 1765

This morning, on an eminence in this city, was hung the effigy of a wretch, who on a late solemn occasion, subtilly procured himself an employment, and at once shewed the wickedness and dirtiness of his head, and the vileness and rancour of his heart, by basely betraying that important trust. . . .¹ Papers denoting his horrid crime were affixed to his breast, and from his mouth hung labels expressing such words and sentiments, as may well be supposed to come from the lips of such an abandoned miscreant in his last moments. The Figure is to hang all day, and in the evening will be attended by all true sons of freedom, to a funeral pile erected on the common, where it will be reduced to ashes, amidst the acclamations of the beholders.

May such be the fate of every vile traitor, in whatever sphere they move! may they live despised! die unpitied! and if they are remembered, let that remembrance only increase the detestation of posterity.

This signal act of justice, (tho' we own the object almost too low for resentment) will however, we think, evince to the neighbouring colonies, that neither the dirty insinuations of pimps and pandars, nor the frowns of power, have been as yet, able to extinguish the spirit of liberty in the province of New-Jersey.

1. Ellipsis in the original newspaper account.

10 Copy of a Letter from Trenton in New Jersey

[Dartmouth Papers, 100, Staffordshire County Record Office, Stafford, England.]

Neither author nor recipient of the letter has been identified. The writer