

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

the Inhabitants of the British Colonies," contesting the Townshend program, appeared in twelve successive installments in the *Chronicle* from December 2, 1767, to February 15, 1768.

5. Allinson is referring to a proposal to issue provincial currency without the stipulation that it circulate as legal tender, thus complying with the Currency Act of 1764.

6. Samuel Smith of Burlington, Quaker merchant and member of the provincial council.

4 The Petition of the New Jersey Assembly to George III

[*Votes and Proceedings, April 15-May 10, 1768* (Woodbridge, 1768), pp. 36-39.]

Although official news of the Townshend duties reached North America in September 1767, it was not until early the following year that organized, inter-colonial protest began. Once again Massachusetts took the lead, petitioning the king to repeal the legislation on January 20 and inviting the other assemblies to follow suit on February 11. Eventually every colony protested the measure, but only the Virginia House of Burgesses, which adopted a moderate remonstrance on April 14, acted upon the Bay Colony's proposal before the Jersey assembly. Because they were acting in advance of their counterparts elsewhere, the Jersey legislators deliberately modeled their petition after the form and content suggested by the Massachusetts circular letter of February 11. Moreover, not wishing to arouse interference from Governor William Franklin, the solons took great pains to conceal both their consideration of the Massachusetts missive and the formulation of the petition; in fact, Franklin did not learn of the assembly's action until the official journals of the session were printed. In addressing their protest to the king instead of Parliament and in forwarding the petition to London agent Henry Wilmot instead of the governor, the legislators circumvented the normal channels of imperial administration. And in acting promptly and forthrightly on the Massachusetts proposal, the assemblymen demonstrated greater commitment to intercolonial unity than during the Stamp Act crisis. Nonetheless, although the legislators were resolute in stating their grievances, they were equally firm in professing loyalty to the crown. New Jersey was opposed to specific laws, not to the British imperial system.

II TAXES AND TROOPS

House of Assembly of New Jersey May 6th 1768

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We your Majesty's loyal Subjects, the Representatives of your Colony of New Jersey, confiding in your Majesty's paternal Affection for your People, humbly implore Permission to approach the Throne, and to present our Supplications in Behalf of ourselves and our Constituents, your Majesty's faithful and afflicted Subjects.

Before that happy Period, in which the Empire of the British Dominions, was, by the favour of divine Providence, for the Felicity of those Dominions, and of Europe in general, established in your illustrious House; our Ancestors, with the Consent of the Crown, removed from their native Land, then abounding in all Blessings, but that perfect Security of Liberty, and that merciful Spirit of Administration, which render your royal Family so justly dear to your remotest Subjects; ventured with their helpless Relatives, through a vast Ocean, and trusted themselves with their tender Companions to the inhospitable and unknown Wilderness of this new World; the Horrors of which no Consideration could render tolerable, but the Prospect of enjoying here that compleat Freedom, which Britons never thought could be purchased at too great a Price.

The Subjects thus emigrating, brought with them, as inherent in their Persons, all the Rights and Liberties of natural-born Subjects within the Parent State: In Consequence of these, a Government was formed, under which they have been as constantly exercised and enjoyed by the Inhabitants, and repeatedly and solemnly recognized and confirmed by your royal Predecessors, and the Legislature of Great-Britain.

One of these Rights and Liberties, vested in the People of this Colony, is the Privilege of being exempt from any Taxation, but such as is imposed on them by themselves, or by their Representatives; and this they esteem so invaluable, that they are fully persuaded, no other can exist without it.

Your Majesty's signal Distinction is, that you reign over freemen, and your peculiar Glory, that you reign in such a Manner, that your Subjects, the disposers of their own property, are ready and willing whenever your Service calls upon them, with their Lives and Fortunes, to assert your Cause.

Your People of this Colony, who share in the Blessings flowing from your Wisdom and Virtue, most gratefully sensible of their Obligation to so excellent a Prince, humbly hope they never have been deficient in duly acknowledging them. Whenever it has been necessary that Supplies should be levied within this Colony; Requisitions by your Majesty, or by your royal Predecessors, conformable to the Rights and Liberties of this your People have been made, and by them loyally and liberally complied with.

We beseech your Majesty to do them the Justice to believe, that they can never fail on any future Occasion, to demonstrate their Devotion to your Majesty; nor can they resign without unutterable shame and Grief, the Honour and Satisfaction of voluntarily and cheerfully expressing, in the strongest Manner their Circumstances will admit, their unfeigned affection for your Majesty's Person, their distinguished Duty to your Government, and their inflexible Resolution to maintain your Authority, and defend your Dominions.

Penetrated with these Sentiments, this your People, with the utmost Concern and Anxiety, observe, that Duties have been lately imposed on them by Parliament,

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for the sole and express Purpose of raising a Revenue: This is a Taxation upon them, from which they conceive they ought to be protected, by that acknowledged Principles of the Constitution, that Freemen cannot be legally taxed but by themselves, or by their Representatives; and that they are represented in Parliament, they not only cannot allow, but are convinced, that from their local Circumstances they never can be.

Very far is it from our Intention, to deny our Subordination to that august Body, or our Dependance on the Kingdom of Great-Britain; in these Connections, and in the Settlement of our Liberties, under the auspicious Influence of your royal House, we know that our Happiness consists; and therefore, to confine those Connections, and to strengthen this Settlement, is at once our Interest, Duty, and Delight: Nor do we apprehend, that it lies within our Power, by any Means more effectually to promote these great Purposes, than by zealously striving to preserve in perfect Vigour, those sacred Rights and Liberties, under the inspiriting Sanction of which, inconceivable Difficulties and Dangers opposing, this Colony has been rescued from the rudest State of Nature, converted into a populous, flourishing and valuable Territory; and has contributed in a very considerable Degree, to the Welfare of Great-Britain.

Most Gracious Sovereign,

The incessant Exertion of your truly royal cares, to procure your People a Prosperity equal to your Love of them, encourages us with all Humility to pray, that your Majesty's Clemency will be graciously pleased to take into Consideration our unhappy Circumstances; and to afford us such Relief, as your Majesty's Wisdom shall judge to be most proper.

By order of the House

CORTLANDT SKINNER Speaker

5 Governor William Franklin to Lord Hillsborough

[*NJA*, 10:69-70.]

William Franklin (1730-1813), natural son of the famous Benjamin Franklin, served as governor of New Jersey from 1763 to 1776. Wills Hill, the Earl of Hillsborough, became the first secretary of the newly created American Department charged with superintending the affairs of the colonies early in 1768. Franklin is writing in response to Hillsborough's charge that he had flagrantly disobeyed orders in not preventing (by dissolution if necessary) the assembly from considering the Massachusetts circular letter of February 11 that called for united protest against the Townshend duties. The governor pointed out in the course of a lengthy rebuttal, of which this text is an excerpt, that he did not