THE PUZZLE OF “PACIFICUS”

By DAVID L. JACOBSON*

WHO was “Pacificus”? In July, 1768, two works appeared on the streets of Philadelphia over the signature of “Pacificus.” Both came from the press of William Goddard, the printer sponsored by Joseph Galloway and Thomas Wharton. Both considered the same general subjects: the Townshend Acts, their effects upon the politics of Pennsylvania, and that colony’s reactions to British taxation. But there the similarity ended. One of the works, the pamphlet of July 16, 1768 (hereafter “Pacificus I”), was a bitterly sardonic account of the recent actions of the Pennsylvania Assembly, an account intended to arouse the citizens of the colony, but so cleverly ironic as probably to confuse contemporaries and certainly to mystify several later historians. The other publication, a broadside of July 25, 1768 (“Pacificus II”), was an earnest plea for caution in resistance to the Townshend Acts, a plea so clear and simple that no one could doubt its moderate intent.

The problem of “Pacificus” only indirectly concerns the broadside, “Pacificus II.” That work was very probably the product of Joseph Galloway, very similar in style and content to his other known or suspected writings of the period. But, unfortunately, since the attribution of a “Pacificus” product to Galloway by Paul

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2 Two other pieces from this period are attributed to Galloway: “A Chester County Farmer,” Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia), June 16, 1768, and “A. B.,” Pennsylvania Chronicle (Philadelphia), July 23, 1768. The arguments there and in “Pacificus II” bear some resemblance to Galloway’s “Americanus” pieces in the Pennsylvania Journal (Philadelphia), August 29, 1765, and January 9, 1766. His stand against non-importation was expressed to Benjamin Franklin in a letter of October 17, 1768, John Bigelow, ed., The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin (New York, 1887), V, 43.
Leicester Ford in 1895, in his *Writings of John Dickinson*, American historians have repeatedly confounded “Pacificus I” with “Pacificus II” and have taken the sarcasm of the former as a literal expression of opinion, a fate to which neither Joseph Galloway nor the anonymous sardonic humorist deserves condemnation.\(^4\) Ernest H. Baldwin, Galloway’s first biographer, simply ignored his subject’s writings of 1767 and 1768.\(^5\) But, in 1927, Raymond C. Werner discovered “Pacificus” and ascribed to Galloway an attack upon the “factious” and “turbulent” colony of Massachusetts and a defense of Hillsborough’s response to the Massachusetts Circular Letter.\(^6\) And after Werner, his lead was followed by Julian P. Boyd, who argued that “Galloway, in his *Pacificus to the Public* defended Hillsborough and attacked the ‘factious’ and ‘turbulent’ colony of Massachusetts.”\(^7\) The “Pacificus” error spread beyond the students of Galloway in particular to infect historians of Pennsylvania more generally. Theodore Thayer, in his generally accurate *Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy 1740-1776*, suggested that Galloway in *Pacificus to the Public* “defended Hillsborough and attacked the Massachusetts radicals.”\(^8\) Thus have the ironies of “Pacificus I” become accepted as the final opinions of Galloway, the Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly and the unfortunate “Pacificus II.”

“Pacificus I” differed widely from “Pacificus II” and both differed greatly from the descriptions of the historians cited above. “Pacificus I” ironically congratulated the people and the Assembly of Pennsylvania for their mild reaction to the Townshend duties, argued that they had entrusted themselves entirely into the hands

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of the British ministry and thereby shown a truly extraordinary trust in human nature. Again, with the heaviest of sarcasm, the pamphlet praised Pennsylvanians for not joining the “turbulent colony to the Northward” and for not incurring the disapproval of Hillsborough, who had denounced the Massachusetts Circular Letter as being of “a most dangerous and factious tendency. . . .” “Pacificus II” appeared only nine days after the pamphlet and was a direct answer to the recent and anonymous publication, A Letter from a Gentleman in Virginia.” The Letter, actually the work of John Dickinson, was an unrestrained attack upon the merchants of Philadelphia for their hesitancy in adopting non-importation agreements. “Pacificus II” defended the merchants. Its author suggested that they would adopt a stronger stand if and when various petitions and remonstrances failed to gain a settlement of colonial grievances. The broadside did use such words as “rash,” “warm,” and “imprudent” to describe measures its writer opposed in Pennsylvania, but it did not refer to “factious” or “turbulent” groups anywhere. Moreover, the author of “Pacificus II” explicitly stated his disapproval of Lord Hillsborough’s interference in American affairs and of that minister’s efforts to prevent other colonies from stating their views as Massachusetts had in its famed Circular Letter.

In retrospect, the two works differ so much as to lead naturally to the question: why was the same signature employed for both? Joseph Galloway expressed himself elsewhere in terms and style very similar to that of “Pacificus II.” Yet “Pacificus I” was obviously an attempt to undermine his leadership and policy. In July, 1768, Joseph Galloway was in the midst of his running feud with William Goddard. Over Galloway’s objections, Goddard had, week by week, published the Farmer’s Letters in the first part of the year. And the relationships between the two men were


steadily deteriorating. Under such circumstances, the possibility of some mischief by Goddard in the printing of "Pacificus I" seems very great. But neither Goddard's own account of this period, The Partnership, nor the recent work of Ward L. Miner reveals anything concerning "Pacificus." Thus, while it is possible to suspect Goddard of complicity in the preparation of "Pacificus I," it remains impossible to identify him without qualification as its author. But it is quite clear that its author was not Joseph Galloway, and that unfortunate victim of its taunts and unexpected heir to its arguments should no longer have to suffer from the misattributions of historians.

A. "Pacificus I"

TO THE PUBLIC

All lovers of peace and good order must surely observe with great pleasure the prudent behaviour of this province, while the other colonies in general, under pretence of asserting their invaded rights, are shewing a spirit of dissatisfaction, that may perhaps greatly disturb the public tranquility.

An attempt was lately made by a distant colony, to unite all these provinces in a firm resolution not to import any British manufactures, until the late acts of Parliament so universally complained of on this continent should be repealed.

The measure was adopted with great zeal by New York, and some other governments, and undoubtedly would have spread throughout the rest, if it had not been stopt in its career by the cautious inhabitants of this province. No body entertained the least doubt, but that the union of all the colonies in this step, would have procured a more respectful attention to our remonstrances, than any other measure, that human wit could invent: But we in this province judiciously started these strong objections, which the other provinces in their ardent zeal had totally, shall I say, weakly, overlooked. In the first place, we considered, that an union of these colonies in any one measure not dictated by his Majesty's ministers, had always proved disagreeable to them; and that it might imply a disrespect to his Majesty, to do any

thing disagreeable to his Ministers. Secondly, we considered that our quenching the spirit of union throughout these colonies, might leave those hot headed people who first excited it, exposed to all the resentment of the British government, while we should have the merit of weakening them, by preventing others from joining in their warm, or as some folks call them, patriotic proceedings. Thirdly, we kindly and benevolently considered, that if we had joined in the measure proposed, and all the other colonies had followed our example, as it is generally thought they would have done, millions of men, women and children in Great Britain, would have been reduced to the extremest misery, and their cries and insurrections would have compelled the parliament to repeal the present acts, as they did the Stamp Act; though perhaps their generosity will now induce them voluntarily to do it.

Every man of the least understanding who reflects upon this matter a single moment, will perceive, that this was treating the parliament with all the reverence that men could shew. Here is no force put on that august body. No alarm given to them. They are left at perfect liberty of action, and to satisfy them, how entirely we rely on their generosity, we have encouraged them to indulge their own inclinations, by convincing them, that these colonies are a disunited people, and that therefore Great Britain may treat us as she pleases. I question whether history furnishes an instance of such confidence being reposed by one people in another, on so important an occasion.

However, this conduct of the inhabitants of this province is trifling, in comparison to the conduct of our assembly, for preserving the public tranquillity.

Our assembly sat twice, after we had received the acts of parliament, which are so universally detested on this continent; yet so desirous were the worthy members of preserving the public tranquillity, that they would not so much as send over a single petition, or make a single resolve about them, but shewed that they were determined to bear a taxation by parliament of themselves and their constituents, in peace and quietness, rather than that the public tranquillity should be disturbed. Upon their meeting the third time, they found, that their peaceable intentions had been frustrated by some enemies to the public tranquillity, who by certain rash publications had deluded many into a notion, that the
said acts of parliament were very destructive to these colonies. This notion beginning generally to prevail, our worthy representatives thought it would become them to take some notice of those acts of which every body else was now taking notice. But in this measure they did not forget their constant love of peace and good order for four years past; and therefore instead of making inflammatory resolves, or sending over petitions or remonstrances that might disturb the public tranquillity, or disgust our good friends, his Majesty's ministers, they did the slightest thing that could be done on such an occasion, that is, they ordered their agents to join with the other agents “in representations against the acts.” So that if the other assemblies should be as desirous of preserving the public tranquillity as ours is, not a disrespectful word would have been uttered, whereby the people might be induced to disturb peace and good order. Surely I may say with truth, that no assembly ever gave a stronger proof of their respect for the measures of his Majesty's ministers, or of their regard for the public tranquillity.

Yet this part of their conduct deserves not to be mentioned, when we observe, that after having so far exceeded others, in their love of public tranquillity, they have since exceeded even themselves.

The assembly of that turbulent distant colony before-mentioned, which gave so much uneasiness to so many sober people, by their furious opposition to the Stamp-Act, tho' luckily they contributed so much to its repeal, by promoting a general congress, and by other measures, undertook on the 11th of February last, to write a circular letter on the present important crisis of affairs, to the several assemblies on this continent, communicating their own sentiments, and the measures taken by them, with design as they say, “that the representations of the several assemblies, on so delicate a point, should harmonize with each other.” We find by the public papers, that the assembly of Maryland have been so rash and weak as to appoint a standing committee to answer this letter, another circular letter from Virginia, and to forward their petition to the king. Besides, in their answer to a late message from their governor, they say, that they “think” that the representatives of the northern colony “have asserted their rights with a decent respect to their sovereign, and a due submission to the authority of parliament.”
With equal rashness and weakness the house of burgesses in Virginia, have not only by a circular letter to the other colonies, endeavoured to promote that harmony just abovementioned, but in their letter dated May 9th last, in answer to the circular letter of the turbulent colony to the northward, they say, "that they applaud them for their attention to American liberty, and that the steps they have taken whereon, will convince them of their opinion of the fatal tendency of the acts of parliament complained of, and of their fixed resolution to concur with the other colonies in their application for redress."

Influenced by a like rashness and weakness, the assembly of New Jersey, by their speaker's letter of the same date thus express themselves.

"The freedom with which your house of representatives have communicated their sentiments upon a matter of so great concern to all the colonies, hath been received by this house, with that candor, which the spirit and design of your letter merits. . . . And at the same time, that they acknowledge themselves obliged to you for communicating your sentiments to them, they have directed me to assure you, that they are desirous to keep up a correspondence with you, and to unite with the colonies, if necessary in further supplications to his Majesty, to relieve his distressed American subjects."

With the same degree of weakness and rashness the speaker of the house of representatives in Connecticut, in their name, and by their order, in a letter, dated the 11th of June last, thus expresses himself.

"The house very kindly accepted your letter, and are persuaded from the importance of the cause, the laudable zeal and the generous exertions of your province, from time to time, in favour of her constitutional freedom, that it proceeded only from a hearty concern for their just rights, the common interest and the welfare of these colonies. This house are desirous ever to cultivate the strictest friendship and harmony with the neighbouring colonies, and with none more than yours, and will be always ready to receive with the utmost candor their opinion in any matters of general concern, and equally willing on all proper occasions to communicate their own sentiments on any subject of our common welfare, in full confidence that they would meet with the same
friendly and candid acceptance. This house have also taken into
their serious consideration the operation of the said acts of parlia-
ment, and are deeply sensible that this, in common with her sister
colonies, must thereby be involved in great difficulties, which are
perhaps a prelude to still greater, and have pursued measures for
obtaining redress similar to those adopted by the house of repre-
sentatives of your province."

Thus we find, that all these colonies have not only returned
respectful answers to the circular letters of the turbulent northern
province, but have applauded her conduct, her zeal for the liberty
of these colonies; and not contented with these things, have
actually "Harmonized" with her in all their proceedings. So very
little did these infatuated colonies consult the preservation of the
public tranquillity.

How different has been the conduct of our assembly? They
remembered how alarming and disgusting to the parliament and
ministry the union of these colonies was, in the time of the ever
memorable stamp act, and what severe epithets were bestowed in
Great Britain, on the conduct of these colonies in that particular.

With a happy foresight therefore our assembly perceived, that
any steps taken by them towards a "Harmony" or union with
the other colonies, for obtaining a repeal of the late acts, must
bring upon them such reproaches from his Majesty's ministers
and our other friends at home, as might tend to disturb the
public tranquillity.

Governed by these prudent considerations, when the letter from
the northern colony was laid before them, after being once read,
it was ordered to lie on the table, and with such deliberate neglect
and contempt did they, of themselves, treat it, that it was not even
necessary for our governor to "exert his influence to defeat this
flagitious attempt to disturb the public peace, by prevailing on the
assembly to take no notice of it."

How happily our worthy representatives co-operated with his
Majesty's worthy ministers in their views and wishes upon this
occasion will clearly appear by considering Lord Hillsborough's
letter to the continental governors, dated Whitehall, April 24, 1768.

In that letter, speaking of the circular letter from the northward,
his Lordship uses these words—"As his Majesty considers this
measure to be of a most dangerous and factious tendency, cal-
culated to inflame the minds of his good subjects in the colonies; to promote an unwarrantable combination, (to wit; in "humble representations" and "dutiful supplications") and to excite and encourage an open opposition to and denial of the authority of parliament, and to subvert the true principles of the constitution, (to wit, in taxing the colonies without their consent.) It is his Majesty's pleasure, that you should, immediately upon the receipt hereof, exert your utmost influence to defeat this flagitious attempt to disturb the public peace, by prevailing upon the assembly of your province to take no notice of it, which will be treating it with the contempt it deserves."

Thus, we perceive, that his Majesty's ministers had no idea, that any higher degree of "contempt" could be shewn by any assembly, than "not to take notice" of the circular letter; and we have been so far fortunate as voluntarily to treat it with that very degree of "contempt" with which they desire we should.

Thus substantially and literally have we, of our own mere motion before it was requested of us, complied with and fully satisfied the utmost desire of his Majesty's ministers, by stopping as much as we could, this "factious and flagitious attempt to disturb the public peace" by uniting the colonies in their measures.

It is true, that the assembly of Maryland has had the audaciousness, to call the strong and elegant terms used by Lord Hillsborough in his letter, "a few sounding expressions," by which they "will not be intimidated from doing what they think is right." And it is also true, that the province of Maryland has always acted with great prudence and deliberation, so that one cannot but suppose, that such a message as they have lately sent, must proceed from some very dreadful apprehensions they entertain at present; and therefore on this account, perhaps, we who are so anxious to preserve "the public peace," may excuse this sarcasm on my good Lord Hillsborough. How beautiful does this prudent, peaceable, dutiful and submissive behaviour of this province appear, when put in contrast with such hot headed proceedings. What applause do we not deserve, and shall we not receive—From his Majesty's ministers? And what rewards will those worthy men be entitled to, whose loyalty to their sovereign, and duty to Great-Britain, have lulled and composed us into so deep a love of public tranquillity? With what ease might all public
affairs be carried on, if all the other colonies could be persuaded
to pursue the same pacific plan: The ministry and parliament
would do their business, and our business too, in peace and quiet.

It is evident, that they are so kind and generous, as to be
desirous of taking the whole load of government from off our
shoulders, and relieving us from the trouble not only of the
executive, but also, totally of the legislative authority; and then,
we should have no public cares to employ ourselves in, but to
preserve the public tranquillity by submitting to the laws which
our dear mother country should be so affectionate as to take the
fatigue of making for us—and by getting money enough to pay
taxes she lays upon us for our own defence.

I know, some people have objected, that this conduct of our
province may encourage the parliament and ministry to pursue
the most violent measures, by inducing them to believe, that the
colonies are disunited, and therefore, say these objectors, this
province may be justly charged with all the bloodshed and
 calamities, that may follow in consequence of the encouragement
they gave to the parliament and ministry.

But I answer to these objectors, that the good men who have
promoted the pacific measures of this province, have no doubt
duly considered this objection, and as it appears to have no weight
with them, we may fairly conclude from the great proofs they have
given of their wisdom in this affair, that it did not deserve the
least regard.

PACIFICUS

Philadelphia, July 16, 1768

B. "PACIFICUS II"

TO THE PUBLIC

An anonymous letter having been published and thrown about
the town, highly reflecting on a very respectable body of men in
this city, it concerns the Public, at this time, that some notice
should be taken of the notorious abuse and ungentlemanly aspersions
it contains, and the mischievous tendency of it in some
measure set in a fair view—that the inhabitants of this province,
and the neighbouring colonies, may not be imposed on by the
speciousness and asperity of the performance.
The author, who appears to be one of those warm spirits who have been for some time past inflaming the city into an ill-timed rash resolution, that he calls similar to one we formerly came into, to suspend the importation of dry goods, till some oppressive acts, imposing duties on several commodities, are repealed, has set out with boldly calling the merchants of Philadelphia a spiritless set of people, who treat the other colonies with contempt. This charge is of a high nature, on men who are free and tender of their reputations, and certainly flows from a temper no ways fit to direct a people, eminent for their caution, prudence and good sense, and who, on every occasion where it was necessary, have shewn themselves as well attached to the interests of America as any men in it. The author, on pretence of having found out some of the causes of the conduct of the merchants, and, with an apparent fondness for his own sagacity, charges them roundly with bending the knee to an act as oppressive as the stamp-act, because they will not follow his opinion implicitly, in coming into a measure which appears to many to be premature and highly imprudent, till the petitions of the colonies to the King and Parliament shall have been presented, and the effects of them known, which we all know was the mode shewn in the case of the stamp-act; but our author would mislead us into this step, because others have adopted it, when the only cause of our going into that mode, in the former instance, to obtain the repeal of the stamp-act, was because our petitions to the King and Parliament (which we conceived to be legal and decent) were rejected with a contempt that made every bosom glow with grief and resentment, and the suspension of importing dry goods absolutely necessary for our safety, as may be the case again, if the petitions of the colonies, now at home, should be treated with the same disregard.

The author has, indeed, been so abundantly liberal of abuse, that to answer those parts of his letter, would be treating him more like a reasoner and a man of candour than I think him intitled to: But I believe no man among us disputes, that the acts, at present complained of, have the like tendency with the stamp-act, to deprive us of the right of raising money on ourselves by our own legislatures, which he dwells much upon, and it has never been denied among us, that I have heard. But what can induce the author to intimate that the merchants of Philadel-
phia can be no longer esteemed among the virtuous sons of
America, I cannot conceive, except he imagines that all men must
implicitly yield to his judgment, which I must beg leave to think,
cannot with any degree of modesty or reason be expected by any
man but one who has a large share of vanity in his composition,
and a very mean opinion of the spirit and understanding of our
merchants, who, on every proper occasion, have evinced to the
world as much firmness and public-spirit as those in the other
colonies, or they hardly would have led the way in the first
resolution of importing no goods till the stamp-act was repealed,
as they certainly did, when their petitions were rejected at home.
and I doubt not will readily repeat it, if the present petitions
should prove ineffectual; which, however, is not yet to be pre-
sumed, from the people of Boston's having intimated to their
governor, that he has used foul play to prevent their petitions
being received; for what is the fate of those of the other colonies
is not yet known.

It seems to me, the author of the pretended letter from Vir-
ginia, takes particular pains to fix an opinion in the world, that
the merchants of Philadelphia have lost all reputation, because
they have not come into his dangerous and inconsiderate measures,
urged with such indecency in his favourite performance. But let
the author be assured, that rash and premature steps, in the
present critical situation of America, would be more dangerous
than the cool, 'inexplicably spiritless conduct' he is pleased to
impute to the merchants, and that is not because it 'directly
affects their private interest' that they do not adopt the measure,
but from an unbiased judgment, and firm opinion, that the step
is improper, till the fate of the petitions are determined; for
should they be rejected, the merchants own sense of their danger,
and their native love of liberty, and public spirit, will lead them
to the measure, if it is thought the next best method to be pursued.

I would by no means have it thought, that in offering my
sentiments for moderation, I am either of opinion, that his
Majesty's American subjects ought to acquiesce in the acts for
raising an American revenue by the parliament of Great-Britain,
or that the people of the colonies should submit to ministerial
mandates, such as my Lord H---------'s letter to the Massachusetts
colony. I think them too contradictory to all notions of freedom
ever to be tamely received—but from a real conviction, that the present measure recommended by my author, is premature, till the colony petitions are heard or rejected, I have offered my own sentiments, with those of many of the merchants, and respectable inhabitants of this province, relative to the Virginia letter, and its object, and sincerely wish no measure may be pursued of this sort, till advices are received of the fate of the colony petitions, which may soon be expected from home. PACIFICUS.

July 25, 1768

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