

The Impact of British Western Policy on the Coming of the American Revolution in Pennsylvania

BRITISH policies for the American West, especially the Proclamation of 1763 and the Quebec Act of 1774, are usually included among the causes of the American Revolution. The degree of alienation may be disputed, but most historians have accepted the proposition that Americans were almost ordained to resent any interference with western expansion. Thus, we are told that the Proclamation of 1763 "became a source of acute discontent"; that "countless Americans, especially land speculators, were dismayed and angered." Both individual settlers and land speculators "resented more or less keenly the restrictive policies of the home government," as they saw "the whole region on which men had fastened such high hopes . . . reserved to the despised Indians." It was "another example of the readiness of the British ministry to subordinate [American] interests to the interests of others." In short, one recent study concludes, "British western policy from the institution of the Proclamation of 1763 to the Quebec Act of 1774 was very unpopular."¹

These generalizations, however, while they may apply to colonies such as Virginia, do not reflect the attitudes of Pennsylvanians. Though British western policies did affect the Pennsylvania frontier, and though Pennsylvanians did participate in Ohio Valley land

¹ The author wishes to thank Richard A. Ryerson, Jack M. Sosin, Harry M. Ward and Nicholas B. Wainwright for their suggestions in the preparation of this article. Bernhard Knollenberg, *Origin of the American Revolution* (New York, 1961), 102; Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Pageant*, 4th ed. (Boston, 1971), 65; Evarts B. Greene, *The Revolutionary Generation 1763-1790* (New York, 1943), 195; Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation* (New York, 1968), 58-59; Page Smith, *A New Age Now Begins: A People's History of the American Revolution* (New York, 1976), I, 167; Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York, 1969), 20. These quotations are typical of interpretations in textbooks and monographs alike.

speculation, the reaction of their colony revealed little animosity. On the contrary, many Pennsylvanians saw these policies at worst as neutral to their interests, and at best as favorable. If British western policies were among the factors leading other colonies toward revolution, then Pennsylvania's reaction to those same policies may help explain that colony's reluctance for independence.

When Great Britain, after the French and Indian War, found herself in undisputed possession of the vast interior region of North America between the Mississippi River and the Appalachian Mountains, her government attempted to provide administration for the area without adding to the country's enormous national debt. The Proclamation of 1763, whose basic principles were worked out before Pontiac's Uprising made them appear even more necessary, attempted to prevent expensive Indian wars by reserving the trans-Appalachian region for the Indians by centralizing the regulation of Indian trade, and by occupying the area with troops.²

There was little adverse reaction in any of the colonies at first to the King's Proclamation of October 1763. Even in Virginia, where land speculators such as George Washington and those associated with the Ohio Company might have seen the attempt to keep white settlers out of the Ohio Valley as a threat to their well-advanced plans to profit from planned settlements in the area, the reaction was mild. Washington viewed the Proclamation as only temporary and could not foresee that the new policy would keep Virginia land companies out of the area for five years, long enough to doom their schemes.³ In Pennsylvania, on the other hand, the Proclamation created opportunities for land speculators despite the more advanced plans of the Ohio Company. Philadelphia merchants such as John Baynton and Samuel Wharton eagerly anticipated the benefits of the previously French-dominated Indian trade.⁴

² The best treatment of the origins of the Proclamation of 1763 is Jack M. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness* (Lincoln, 1961), esp. 27, 29, 39.

³ Eugene M. DelPapa, "The Royal Proclamation of 1763: Its Effect upon Virginia Land Companies," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXIII (1975), 406-411; Francis S. Philbrick, *The Rise of the West, 1754-1830* (New York, 1965), 6, argues that the "temporary quality" of the Proclamation has been overemphasized.

⁴ Baynton and Wharton to Richard Neave, Nov. 27, 1759, Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan Papers, Pennsylvania State Archives, Microfilm Project Sponsored by the National Historical Publications Commission, roll I, frame 164 (hereinafter BWM Papers).

By the time most Pennsylvanians saw the text of the Royal Proclamation in early December, Pontiac's Uprising had been in progress for several months.⁵ Neither the Proclamation nor the Indian rebellion created much excitement in the populated eastern areas of the province. There was little sympathy for the plight of frontier settlers who suffered from the Indian attacks. Indeed, most eastern Pennsylvanians undoubtedly accepted the British contention that a policy like the Proclamation would prevent future rebellions. The frontiersmen themselves were responsible for the conflict, most would have argued, and deserved whatever fate befell them. Colonel Henry Bouquet, commandant at Fort Pitt, referred to the "not much lamented" frontier inhabitants, and suggested that "it was not great matter if a parcel of such wretches were swept away."⁶ Even some western residents, with presumably more positive attitudes toward frontier settlers, regarded the Proclamation's barrier as a satisfactory, if temporary, expedient. Until the war could be carried into the enemy country, wrote the Rev. John Elder of Paxton, the mountain barrier would keep the conflict from growing and prevent fleeing inhabitants from spreading their panic to the interior part of the province.⁷

Meanwhile, Philadelphia traders, such as the firm of Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan, laid plans to recover losses sustained in both Pontiac's Uprising and the French and Indian War. George Croghan, Deputy Superintendent for Northern Indian Affairs, went to London early in 1764, with a request for compensation for the traders from the Crown. This application would later evolve into the claims of the so-called "Suffering Traders" to secure huge tracts in the Ohio Valley for speculation and profit. With Croghan's support, Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan prepared to enter the very lucrative Indian trade on the farthest reaches of the frontier in the Illinois Country.⁸

⁵ The text was printed without comment in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 8, 1763.

⁶ Col. Henry Bouquet to Anne Willing, Sept. 17, 1759, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB), III (1878), 136-137.

⁷ The Rev. John Elder to Col. Joseph Shippen, Nov. 5, 1763, *Pennsylvania Archives* (Pa. Arch.), 1st ser., IV, 132-133.

⁸ Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan to David Barclay & Sons, Dec. [26?, 1763], BWM Papers, I, 277; Max Saville, *George Morgan: Colony Builder* (New York, 1932), 18-19; Nicholas B. Wainwright, *George Croghan: Wilderness Diplomat* (Chapel Hill, 1959), 201-205.

Before these plans materialized, however, Pennsylvania was racked by an incident which only confirmed the low opinions that easterners held of frontiersmen. The Paxton Riots of 1764 reflected frontier dismay at the reluctance of the Pennsylvania Assembly to protect frontier regions from Indian attack during Pontiac's Uprising. Even more galling was the sanctuary granted to 120 "savages" who fled to Philadelphia for protection from frontiersmen unwilling to distinguish peaceful from hostile Indians. Many of the grievances of the backcountry inhabitants were real. In a list of complaints to Governor John Penn, they included underrepresentation in the Assembly and the resulting lack of interest in frontier problems. With some exaggeration they blamed the Assembly's actions on Quakers in general and their most prominent leader Israel Pemberton in particular, though by this time Quakers no longer held a majority in the Assembly where the legislators' attitudes reflected eastern as much as Quaker sentiment.⁹

When the Paxton Boys, finding no support in the Assembly, marched on Philadelphia itself, more cautious westerners such as Edward Shippen of Lancaster complained of the pacifist stance of the Friends and predicted that "no Government can possibly subsist upon the principles they hold." He dreaded the consequences of the Assembly's adjourning without passing a military supply bill.¹⁰ Though Philadelphia, with the aid of Benjamin Franklin, persuaded the marchers to return home, the Paxton Riots had a lasting influence on Pennsylvania politics for the next decade. Quaker Party members (many of whom were not actually members of the Society of Friends) saw the march as stemming not from legitimate frontier grievances, but rather from an attempt by their Presbyterian opponents (who the Quakers suspected of inspiring the rioters) to force the Assembly to give more presumably Presbyterian seats to western counties. As a result, the majority Quaker Party resisted all the more suggestions that the Assembly be reapportioned, an

⁹ Remonstrance from Frontier Inhabitants to Gov. John Penn, Feb. 13, 1765, *Pennsylvania Colonial Records* (Philadelphia, 1838-1845), X, 138-142 (hereinafter *Col. Rec.*). The best account of the riots is Brooke Hindle, "The March of the Paxton Boys," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser., III (1946), 461-486; see also Leonard W. Labaree, *et al.*, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven and London, 1959-), IX, *passim*.

¹⁰ Edward Shippen to Joseph Shippen, Apr. 10, 1764, Shippen Papers, American Philosophical Society (APS).

action which did not finally occur until 1776.¹¹ The increased hostility toward frontier settlers may help account for the complete absence of criticism of British western policy by Pennsylvanians increasingly critical of other policies.

The political reasons for the reluctance to support frontier demands were augmented by economic reasons. Philadelphians who planned trade with the West realized that their profits depended upon peace in the area. The best way to assure peace was to keep settlers from moving in and arousing Indian hostility, and that was best done by supporting British policy as enunciated in the Proclamation of 1763 and clarified in a plan the following year to allow trade with the Indians only under the strict supervision and licensing of the Indian agents. The Northern District, which included the Ohio Valley, was under the control of Sir William Johnson, whose deputy George Croghan had already agreed to support the activities of Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan. Thus, within a year of the Proclamation, many influential Pennsylvanians, rather than reacting negatively, supported British policy either out of disdain for frontier inhabitants or because they believed that it served their political or economic interests.¹²

By the spring of 1765, Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan had sent about £3,000 worth of goods to Fort Pitt in anticipation of opening the Illinois trade. But by this time Sir William Johnson had already expressed dismay at frontier inhabitants and traders who continued to move across the mountains in violation of the Proclamation, an action, he predicted, which could lead to renewed hostilities.¹³ Frontier problems, however, were nearly forgotten because of the growing controversy over the Sugar and Stamp Acts. As Pennsylvanians joined other Americans to protest against these threats, they failed to make any mention of western policies when they listed their grievances.¹⁴

¹¹ James H. Hutson, *Pennsylvania Politics 1746-1770: The Movement for Royal Government and its Consequences* (Princeton, 1972), 102-105.

¹² British regulatory policies are set forth in "Plan For the Future Management of Indian Affairs, 1764," *Pa. Arch.*, 1st ser., IV, 182-188. See also Wainwright, *George Croghan*, 208-209.

¹³ Sir William Johnson to Gov. John Penn, Mar. 30, 1765, *Pa. Arch.*, 1st ser., IV, 215-216.

¹⁴ See, for example, instructions to a committee to protest British policies, *Pa. Arch.*, 8th ser., VII, 5635; and Edward Shippen to Joseph Shippen, Apr. 26, 1765, Shippen Papers, APS.

Though the Sugar and Stamp Acts attracted most attention in 1765, frontier problems and opportunities were not completely overlooked. Both Governor Penn and George III expressed indignation at the continued migration across the mountains, and the Governor established licensing procedures for traders who wanted to go into that area.¹⁵ Sir William Johnson and George Croghan, meanwhile, extracted from several Indian tribes agreements to cede some of their lands to the traders who had suffered from Indian encroachments in the late wars. Indeed, according to Croghan at least, the Indians were "not only very willing but anxious to make a REPARATION." These grants were subject only to the confirmation of the King.¹⁶

Many schemes depended upon continued peace in the West. Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan waited to open their trade with the Illinois Country; this firm and several other "Suffering Traders" anxiously looked forward to royal confirmation of the ceded Indian lands; Governor Penn attempted to assert his authority over unruly backcountry settlers; and General Thomas Gage, British commander in America, continued the attempt to enforce the Proclamation Line. All these goals were compatible with existing British frontier policy. The only people who resisted the policy—ignored is a better word—were the frontiersmen themselves.

Despite the combined attempts of royal and provincial officials, settlers continued to move into areas legally closed to them. By the spring of 1767, the problem grew increasingly worse. Not only did settlers refuse to leave the area, but their occasional murders of Indians threatened to disrupt the whole frontier. Gage reported to Southern Secretary Lord Shelburne that frontiersmen paid as little regard to the Governor's proclamations as they did to the King's,

¹⁵ Proclamation of Gov. John Penn, June 4, 1765, and George III to Governor Penn, Oct. 24, 1765, *Col. Rec.*, IX, 364-366, 321.

¹⁶ Indian Treaty Between Sir William Johnson and the Delaware Nation, May 8, 1765, copy in Guy Johnson's hand, Huntington Library; Croghan to Franklin, Dec. 12, 1765, and William Franklin to Franklin, Dec. 17, 1765, Labaree, ed., *Papers of BF*, XII, 395-400, 403-406. In March, 1766, William Franklin, George Croghan, Sir William Johnson, John Baynton, Samuel Wharton, George Morgan, Joseph Wharton, Joseph Wharton, Jr., John Hughes, and Joseph Galloway established a joint-stock company to apply to the King for a grant of 1,200,000 acres in the anticipated new colony in Illinois. "Articles of Agreement . . .," Society Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

and though the General had threatened forced removal, he doubted that it would work.¹⁷ Gage's job was all the more difficult because of the inexact boundary established by the Proclamation. He urged that the British government take advantage of Indian offers to establish a firm boundary west of the mountains on the condition that it be strictly enforced.¹⁸

Complicating the efforts of Gage and the colonial governors to enforce British western policy was a growing lack of interest in London. There were rumors that the British government was considering abandoning the Illinois Country as too expensive to maintain. Though George Croghan predicted that such a move would lead to an Indian war, thus increasing expenses, Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend tried to cut funds for frontier defense.¹⁹

The frontier, meanwhile, grew more dangerous. Murderers of Indians went conspicuously unpunished. Gage suggested that such persons might have to be removed to other areas for trial "where the Jurys would be composed of Men more civilized than those of the Frontiers." As settlers moved westward in greater numbers than ever, Gage feared war. And if war did come, the General predicted that those who had caused it would be the first to "call out for help, and bewail their Misfortune." The only apparent way to maintain peace was a new boundary line to reflect the realities of settlement and appease Indian and white settlers alike.²⁰

The following year, Pennsylvania authorities took strong measures in an attempt to prevent war. Insisting that the trouble stemmed mainly from Virginians encroaching on unpurchased Indian lands within the boundaries of Pennsylvania, the Assembly, early in 1768, instituted the death penalty for anyone who refused to move off

¹⁷ Gage to Shelburne, Apr. 7, 1767, in Clarence E. Carter, ed., *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage* (New Haven, 1931-1933), I, 133.

¹⁸ Gage to Shelburne, Apr. 29, and July 13, 1767, *ibid.*, I, 139, 142-143.

¹⁹ Thomas Wharton to Franklin, Jan. 14, 1767, and Croghan to Franklin, Jan. 27, 1767, Labaree, ed., *Papers of BF*, XIV, 3-10, 12-16.

²⁰ Gage to Shelburne, Oct. 10, 1767, Carter, ed., *Gage Correspondence*, I, 151-154; Gage to Penn, Dec. 7, 1767, and Penn to Gage, Dec. 15, 1767, *Col. Rec.*, IX, 403-406; Extract From a Report of the Lords of Trade to the Earl of Shelburne, Dec. 23, 1767, *Pa. Arch.*, 1st ser., IV, 281.

such lands after proper notice.²¹ The necessity of removing what Assembly Speaker Joseph Galloway called "The Lower order of people settled about the frontiers" seemed greater than ever when, as the Assembly debated the death penalty, a German settler murdered ten Indians without provocation. When the offending settler was taken to jail in Carlisle, an armed mob of seventy or eighty men forced authorities to release him.²² The growing crisis led Gage to concur in the harsh penalties imposed, since the former tactic "of driving the Settlers off the Lands and destroying a parcel of vile Hutts" had been of little use.²³

Ironically, as frontier tensions increased in 1768, two related events turned the attentions of Britons and Americans alike to other problems. These events were the appointment of Lord Hillsborough to the newly created office of Colonial Secretary, and the growing opposition of Americans to the Townshend revenue program. Hillsborough, a man with little knowledge of American affairs and even less tact, determined to assert British authority over the colonies. Fearing that opposition to the Townshend program would lead to disorders similar to those at the time of the Stamp Act, Hillsborough was extremely sensitive to any American recalcitrance. Unlike his predecessors, particularly Lord Shelburne, Hillsborough de-emphasized the importance of the trans-Appalachian frontier. His primary goal was the preservation of British authority over the colonies, and his plan to accomplish this included bringing troops back from the frontier to the seacoast in order to enforce parliamentary legislation. Indeed, Benjamin Franklin, whose dislike for Hillsborough was returned with equal fervor, suspected that the Colonial Secretary would actually welcome another Indian war, partly to chastise the colonies, and partly to remind them of their dependence on British troops for protection.²⁴

²¹ Penn to Assembly, Jan. 5, 1768, Resolutions on Western Lands, Jan. 8, 1768, Assembly to Penn, Jan. 13, 1768, Assembly to Agents in London, Jan. 19, 1768, *Pa. Arch.*, 8th ser., VII, 6074-6075, 6081, 6085-6089, 6104-6106.

²² Joseph Galloway to Sir William Johnson, Jan. 22, 1768, J. Sullivan, *et al.*, eds., *Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany, 1921-1962), XII, 422; Penn to Gage, Jan. 21, 1768, and John Armstrong to Penn, Jan. 29, 1768, *Col. Rec.*, IX, 422-423, 448-449.

²³ Gage to Shelburne, Jan. 22, 1768, Carter, ed., *Gage Correspondence*, I, 157.

²⁴ Sosin, *Whitehall*, 166; Franklin to William Franklin, Mar. 13, 1786, Labaree, ed., *Papers of BF*, XV, 74-78.

Hillsborough's attempts to assert British sovereignty only served to widen the growing division between colonies and mother country over the Townshend program. And as the issue of taxation once again achieved prominence, British frontier policy received less attention. When Pennsylvanians again cataloged their grievances, they made no mention of the frontier. John Dickinson, in his "Farmer's Letters," made groping attempts to delineate the powers of Parliament over the colonies, but avoided any discussion of the powers of the King. Since western policy as stated in the Proclamation was technically royal rather than parliamentary regulation, it did not present as clear cut a constitutional issue as taxation did.²⁵

When Dickinson did mention the West, he did so not to chastise the British for their restrictive policies, but to suggest that these lands were of little use to Americans. The British excuse for taxation—that money was needed to protect the new territories—was ridiculous since all benefits from the new areas would go to the British, not the Americans. Indeed, the vast new territories would only lower land values in the settled areas and make a scattered, less dense population more difficult to defend.²⁶

Of course, not all Pennsylvanians shared Dickinson's opinions on the value of western lands, but the experiences of Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan may have convinced some that Dickinson was right. That firm, by 1767, lulled into overconfidence by the grandiose promises of George Croghan, had dangerously overextended itself and had failed in the attempt to profit from the Indian trade in the Ohio Valley and Illinois Country. Competition from French traders operating from Spanish Louisiana, and a campaign by the British government to cut costs by eliminating some of the gifts traditionally given to the Indians (and purchased from Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan) contributed to the firm's downfall. Additionally, the lucrative government contract to supply Fort Chartres in the Illinois Country went, not to Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan, but to the rival Philadelphia firm of Franks and Company, which had better connections in London.²⁷

²⁵ "Farmer's Letters," VII, in Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *Life and Writings of John Dickinson* (Philadelphia, 1895), 350.

²⁶ "Farmer's Letters," VIII, *ibid.*, 360-362.

²⁷ Savelle, *George Morgan*, 44-48; Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1967), 142; Wainwright, *George Croghan*, 233-257.

This setback, however, did not reduce the partner's interest in the West. Indeed, Samuel Wharton, the most ambitious and perhaps the most unscrupulous of the three, took the lead in a scheme which joined this firm with William Franklin, William Trent, and George Croghan, to recoup their losses by enlarging the still unachieved goal of securing governmental approval of land claims purchased from the Indians. Trent, the group's attorney, bought up all the claims of the so-called "Suffering Traders" who sustained losses in the previous Indian wars. Wharton and Trent, in possession of most of these claims, prepared to go to London to get the necessary confirmations.²⁸

Meanwhile, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, signed in the fall of 1768, opened vast new territories south and west of the Ohio River to settlement and speculation. Also, in that year, the management of the Indian trade was returned to the individual colonies and most western posts were abandoned as an expense saving measure.²⁹

Samuel Wharton hoped that these new policies would create frontier harmony and increase his chances for confirmation of a huge grant of land. Knowing that Lord Hillsborough was hostile to all such schemes and that he threatened to block confirmation of the Fort Stanwix Treaty, Wharton began a campaign to undercut the Secretary's political influence. In the summer of 1769, he formed an organization known as the Walpole Company, which included several American land speculators and some influential British politicians. This group petitioned the King for a grant of 2,400,000 acres in return for £10,460, the cost to the British government of the negotiations at Fort Stanwix.³⁰

Despite the hostility of Hillsborough and some early disappointments, Wharton seemed within sight of his goal by the end of 1769. When the Board of Trade took up the Walpole Company's petition in December, Hillsborough astounded the group by suggesting that

²⁸ Peter Marshall, "Lord Hillsborough, Samuel Wharton and the Ohio Grant, 1769-1775," *English Historical Review*, LXXX (1965), 717; Kenneth P. Bailey, *The Ohio Company Papers, 1753-1817* (Arcata, Calif., 1947), 175-228; Wainwright, *George Croghan*, 253-255.

²⁹ Billington, *Westward Expansion*, 146-149; Penn to Assembly, Jan. 16, 1769, *Pa. Arch.*, 8th ser., VII, 6311-6313; Report to Commissioners for Trade on Indian Affairs, *Pa. Arch.*, 1st ser., IV, 313-331.

³⁰ Marshall, "Lord Hillsborough," 720-721; Petition to the King, [June ?, 1769], Labaree, ed., *Papers of BF*, XVI, 166-168.

they apply for a much larger grant, one which included enough land to establish an entire new colony. At a meeting chaired by Franklin on the 27th, the group, enlarged by other American speculators, reorganized as the Grand Ohio Company. Early in the new year, they petitioned the Commissioners of the Treasury for a grant of twenty million acres in order to establish the proposed colony of Vandalia, named in honor of the Queen, allegedly descended from the Vandals.³¹

Hillsborough's apparent change in attitude, however, was in reality only a change in tactics. His suggestion that the requested grant be enlarged to form a new colony was apparently made in the expectation that such a project would be too grandiose, either for the petitioners to manage or for British authorities to approve. He hoped that the whole scheme would collapse, bringing humiliation and embarrassment to Benjamin Franklin. To what must have been his considerable disappointment, Hillsborough saw the Treasury Lords approve the financial arrangements of the proposal—including exemption of all quitrents for twenty years—and turn the petition over to the Board of Trade in mid-January 1770 for final approval.³²

Without going into the intricacies of the battle between Wharton and Hillsborough, the Colonial Secretary managed to use every excuse for delay. He advised waiting to make sure that there were no overlapping claims to the proposal; he stalled because of the press of other business; he adroitly used the British government's bureaucracy to suit his purposes. And as a result, Wharton's hope for early success turned to despair. The Philadelphian was not without tricks of his own, however. He and Thomas Walpole, wealthy London banker and chief British supporter of the scheme, distributed shares in the company to enough of Hillsborough's rivals to outflank the Colonial Secretary. Although Hillsborough appeared to triumph when the Board of Trade rejected the company's petition in the spring of 1772, Wharton and Walpole circumvented the Board by appealing directly to the Cabinet, where they had several supporters and Hillsborough several enemies. When the

³¹ Sosin, *Whitehall*, 186–190; Billington, *Westward Expansion*, 150–151; Marshall, "Lord Hillsborough," 720–721; Extracts from minutes of a meeting held at Crown and Anchor Tavern, London, Dec. 27, 1769, Etting Collection, Ohio Company Papers, I, 82, HSP.

³² Sosin, *Whitehall*, 187–188; Marshall, "Lord Hillsborough," 721–722.

Cabinet agreed to overturn the Board of Trade's report, Hillsborough resigned as Colonial Secretary and Wharton's success once again seemed imminent.³³

With Lord North's naming of Lord Dartmouth to replace Hillsborough, the last obstacle appeared to be removed. In August, the Privy Council ordered that the new colony be established as soon as the governmental details could be worked out, subject to Dartmouth's final approval.³⁴ Philadelphia speculators had few complaints with British western policy in the summer of 1772.

Events on the frontier, however, once again undermined the effectiveness of that policy. In spite of the concessions made at Fort Stanwix, the opening of new lands for white settlement, and the return of Indian relations to the individual colonies, frontier settlers paid little heed to the law. The Indians complained of abuses and violence committed by traders and settlers alike. Governor Penn hoped that his Assembly would help prevent further grievances, but the real problem, the Assembly claimed, stemmed from the lack of coordination among the various colonies. It was impossible to enforce existing laws because violators could simply escape to another province. And so, by the spring of 1771, with 2,000 families reportedly settled west of the mountains, there was again talk of an Indian war.³⁵

Despite these mounting tensions, Hillsborough, before resigning in 1772, decided to abandon Fort Pitt, an action which worried both speculators and frontier inhabitants. Speculators predicted that without British troops at Fort Pitt the settlement of the proposed new colony would be more difficult since settlers would be reluctant to move west without protection.³⁶ George Croghan suspected that Hillsborough's action stemmed from a desire to chastise the colonists and make them regret anti-British attitudes. But regardless of the

³³ Sosin, *Whitehall*, 188-205; Marshall, "Lord Hillsborough," 729-731.

³⁴ Marshall, "Lord Hillsborough," 732; Bailey, ed., *Ohio Company Papers*, 257-262.

³⁵ George Morgan to Samuel Wharton, Nov. 2, 1772, BWM Letter Book A, BWM Papers, I, 334; Hillsborough to Penn, Nov. 15, 1770, *Col. Rec.*, IX, 706; Penn to Assembly, Jan. 28, 1771, and Assembly to Penn, Feb. 1, 1771, *Pa. Arch.*, 8th ser., VIII, 6612-6613, 6621-6622; Robert Callender to Penn, Apr. 21, 1771, *Pa. Arch.*, 1st ser., IV, 411-412; Gage to Hillsborough, Dec. 4, 1771, Carter, ed., *Gage Correspondence*, I, 314.

³⁶ Richard Bache to Franklin, [Nov. 3, 1772], Labaree, ed., *Papers of BF*, XIX, 363.

intention, Croghan optimistically reported that the abandonment calmed the Indians, who had resented the presence of the troops, and might increase the chance of peace.³⁷

Residents of the small settlement of Pittsburgh, however, saw neither Croghan's optimism nor trading hopes. Fearing Indian hostilities and the adverse economic impact of the removal of the troops, they protested vigorously. Pennsylvania frontiersmen wanted to continue the happy arrangement whereby they ignored unpopular points of British policy, such as the restriction of settlement, while they fully supported the presence of British troops to protect them from Indians upset by unauthorized settlements.³⁸

The whole Vandalia scheme, meanwhile, again bogged down in bureaucratic delays. By 1773, several events conspired to bring down the enterprise. British western policy was about to undergo another transformation. The continued encroachments of frontier settlers on Indian lands, despite threats and proclamations of Governor Penn, showed the ineffectiveness of individual colonial control over Indian affairs.³⁹ More ominously, Virginians, such as George Washington, began to survey lands claimed by both Pennsylvania and Vandalia.⁴⁰ These private surveys were only a prelude to a much more serious threat from the government of Virginia, which decided in 1774 to press its claims to Pennsylvania and Vandalia territory. Finally, the renewed Anglo-American controversy triggered by the Tea Act would spell Vandalia's doom.

The land speculators did not at first perceive the implications of these events. The very ship that brought tea to Philadelphia carried a letter from Thomas Walpole to Thomas Wharton from which the Philadelphian received enough encouragement to reply that Van-

³⁷ Croghan to Thomas Wharton, Dec. 23, 1772, *PMHB*, XIV (1890), 433; John W. Huston, "British Evacuation of Fort Pitt, 1772," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, XLVIII (1965), 317-329.

³⁸ Petition from Pittsburgh to Assembly, Jan. 13, 1773, *Pa. Arch.*, 8th ser., VIII, 6914; Penn to Assembly, Jan. 29, and Feb. 5, 1773, *ibid.*, 6931, 6941; Assembly to Penn, Feb. 19, 1773, *ibid.*, 6956-6957.

³⁹ Proclamation of Gov. Penn, Sept. 20, 1773, *Col. Rec.*, X, 95-96; Croghan to Thomas Wharton, Oct. 15, 1773, *PMHB*, XV (1890), 435.

⁴⁰ Thomas Wharton to Samuel Wharton, Nov. 30, 1773, Thomas Wharton Letter Book, HSP; Extract of a letter from George Washington to Lord Botetourt, Oct. 5, 1770, Etting Collection, Ohio Company Papers, I, 90, HSP.

dalia would still prove a profitable investment.⁴¹ The threats to the project early in 1774 seemed to come more from America than from Britain. Early in the year, Pennsylvanians worried about reports from Fort Pitt and the surrounding area that one Dr. John Connolly, claiming to act on the authority of Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia, asserted that colony's jurisdiction to the area. Philadelphia speculators worried about the implications of these first steps in what would become "Dunmore's War." George Morgan and Thomas Wharton both feared that Dunmore's attempts to establish Virginia counties in what they considered western Pennsylvania and along the Ohio River would damage Vandalia.⁴²

The frontier chaos, which resulted from Dunmore's attempt to press Virginia's claim, reflected another failure of British western policy, but it did not create anti-British feeling in Pennsylvania. Uncertain boundaries and overlapping jurisdictions produced a volatile situation which, if anything, tended to divide the colonies of Virginia and Pennsylvania at the very time that other British policies tended to unite them.

While Governor Penn sent emissaries to Williamsburg in an attempt to head off the growing crisis, Governor Dunmore, through his agent Connolly, tried to stir up the Indians and start a frontier war. Dunmore's motives became increasingly obvious in the spring and summer of 1774. He was less concerned with Virginia's boundaries than he was with his own financial future. He hoped to drive the Indians further into the interior and force them to grant away huge tracts of land on the Ohio River.⁴³

The Pennsylvania government, Philadelphia speculators, and frontier settlers were all potential sufferers from the greed of Virginia's royal governor. Letter after letter describing the distressed situation of the area around Pittsburgh poured in to Governor Penn. Some settlers blamed the British for withdrawing their garrison from Fort Pitt. According to one report as many as 200 families, fled their homes as the Indians began to react to "Barbarous mur-

⁴¹ Thomas Wharton to Thomas Walpole, Dec. 27, 1773, Wharton Letter Book, HSP.

⁴² Penn to Arthur St. Clair, Jan. 20, 1774, *Col. Rec.*, X, 145-146; George Morgan to Richard Neave, Jan. 25, 1774, Morgan Letter Book, BWM Papers, I, 554.

⁴³ Sosin, *Whitehall*, 229, 259-267; Thomas Wharton to Thomas Walpole, May 2, 1774, and Sept. 23, 1774, Wharton Letter Book, HSP.

ders" committed by Dunmore's men.⁴⁴ As the crisis mounted, Governor Penn called the Assembly into session, even though he feared that they would use the occasion to join other colonies in protesting the British Coercive Acts directed against Boston.⁴⁵ But the Pennsylvania Assembly, usually unconcerned with frontier matters, now appropriated money to pay and equip troops raised to protect frontier settlers from Indian attack.⁴⁶

In the midst of this crisis, Pennsylvanians learned of the Quebec Act, Britain's final attempt to establish a western policy.⁴⁷ The first reaction was quite moderate. Redrawing the boundaries of the former French colony to include the Ohio Valley did not produce hostility in Pennsylvania. At the very least this action might stop Dunmore in his land-grabbing scheme. Since Pennsylvania did not have extensive western land claims, that colony could only benefit from a policy that took away the claims of other provinces, particularly Virginia. Thomas Wharton saw no threat to the still pending Vandalia claim. The colony of Quebec would be much less likely than Virginia to protest a grant to Vandalia. Within a month of learning of the Quebec Act, Wharton confidently predicted that word of the grant's confirmation would arrive any day.⁴⁸

Other aspects of the Quebec Act were troublesome, however. The well-known provisions granting power and privileges to the Catholic hierarchy and instituting French laws, while not providing for an elected assembly, produced an adverse reaction throughout the colonies. Thomas Wharton regarded these provisions as "the greatest departure from the English Constitution of any ever yet attempted." But his objections specifically were to the nature of the government rather than to the boundaries, since in the same letter he still expected a speedy completion of the Vandalia project.⁴⁹

Christopher Marshall was another Philadelphian horrified by the Quebec Act's concessions to the Catholic Church. The pious Quaker

⁴⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 19, 1774; Thomas Wharton to Samuel Wharton, July 5, 1774, Wharton Letter Book, HSP.

⁴⁵ Thomas Wharton to Samuel Wharton, July 5, 1774, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Assembly to Gov. Penn, July 23, 1774, *Pa. Arch.*, 8th ser., VIII, 7101-7102; Arthur St. Clair to Joseph Shippen, Jr., July 8, 1774, *Pa. Arch.*, 1st ser., IV, 546-547.

⁴⁷ Thomas Wharton to Samuel Wharton, Sept. 23, 1774, Wharton Letter Book, HSP.

⁴⁸ Thomas Wharton to Anthony Todd, Aug. 7, 1774, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Thomas Wharton to Thomas Walpole, Aug. 20, 1774, *ibid.*

(or former Quaker) filled his letter book almost exclusively with religious subjects until the Quebec Act suddenly turned his attention to politics. In his frenzied attacks on the act, Marshall charged that the King had violated his coronation oath by signing it. He predicted that "a large body of popish Canadians" would be established "in order to march and oppose our Protestant Brethren . . . who . . . oppose . . . tyrannical Ministerial Schemes." Some people, Marshall reported, believed that the bill had been planned in the courts of France and Spain and predicted that America, like Poland, would be divided up among the three powers. While Marshall himself apparently rejected that view, he did believe that the ministry was trying "to Dstroy [*sic*] the libertys and freedom of this new world," and that the timing of the act resulted from a desire by God Himself to warn Americans of British tyranny.⁵⁰

Marshall, Wharton, and other Pennsylvanians who objected to the Quebec Act did so not because they regarded it as British *western* policy, but rather because they feared it revealed British *American* policy. The unfortunate (or fortunate, as Marshall believed) timing of the Quebec Act, coming on the heels of the Coercive Acts, led many Americans to see further evidence of a conspiracy to destroy their liberties.

Yet despite objections to the Quebec Act, Franklin was confidently predicting confirmation of the Vandalia grant as late as the fall of 1774.⁵¹ When Lord Dartmouth rebuked Governor Dunmore for his western schemes, confidence in Vandalia increased even more. On learning that final approval from the Attorney General of England was withheld, Thomas Wharton suggested that "Solid Yellow metal" might remove all doubts.⁵² Though Lord Dunmore, despite the rebuke, continued to threaten Pennsylvania frontier interests, he was unable to achieve his goal of obtaining a land grant from the Indians.⁵³ Yet he still tried to bring Pittsburgh under

⁵⁰ Christopher Marshall to H. R., Sept. 1, 1774, and to T. P., Sept. 22, 1774, Marshall Letter Book, HSP.

⁵¹ Franklin to William Franklin, Sept. 7, 1774, A. H. Smyth, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1906-1907), VI, 229-242.

⁵² Thomas Wharton to Samuel Wharton, Dec. 6, 1774, Wharton Letter Book, HSP.

⁵³ Thomas Wharton to Samuel Wharton, Nov. 1, 1774, *ibid.*

Virginia control and the Crown's inability to stop him provoked Thomas Wharton much more than did the Quebec Act.⁵⁴

There is little evidence that Pennsylvanians connected Dunmore's actions with British policy, or that they were persuaded to join the opposition to Britain as a result of the Virginia governor's activities. Indeed, the attitudes of Pennsylvanians of many different backgrounds toward the frontier actions of Virginians in general and Dunmore in particular may have increased traditional colonial disunity and suspicion at the very time that Revolutionary leaders were trying to present a united front against Great Britain.⁵⁵

By the spring of 1775, the growing imperial crisis had again turned attention away from the frontier. The shock of Lexington and Concord, one Pennsylvanian hoped, would bring Lord North and the British to their senses.⁵⁶ Governor Dunmore's seizure of his colony's gunpowder to keep it out of rebel hands and his threat to emancipate and arm slaves, in contrast to his western activities, brought sympathy for Virginia rebels from Pennsylvanians.⁵⁷ These far more serious actions by the Virginia governor convinced Pennsylvania leaders that Dunmore would soon be forced to back down in his frontier policy. As Dunmore himself relinquished his interest in the frontier, western Pennsylvania officials arrested and imprisoned Dr. Connolly.⁵⁸

With the British turning their attention to the rebellion, the Vandalaria scheme bogged down once more. Samuel Wharton, perennial optimist, remained in London and continued to press his claim for four more years, but William Trent returned to Philadelphia in the summer of 1775 to ask the Continental Congress to confirm the charter for the new colony. The speculators played both

⁵⁴ Thomas Wharton to Samuel Wharton, Jan. 18, 1775, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Russell J. Ferguson, in *Early Western Pennsylvania Politics* (Pittsburgh, 1939), argues that westerners blamed the British for Dunmore's actions and therefore were more likely to support the Revolution. Most of the protests sent to Pennsylvania authorities, however, made no such connection between Dunmore and British policy.

⁵⁶ Edward Shippen to Joseph Shippen, May 13, 1775, Shippen Papers, APS.

⁵⁷ Thomas Wharton to Samuel Wharton, May 13, 1775, Wharton Letter Book, HSP.

⁵⁸ Arthur St. Clair to Gov. Penn, May 25, 1775, *Pa. Arch.*, 1st ser., IV, 628-629; St. Clair to Joseph Shippen, Jr., July 12, 1775, *ibid.*, 637; John Connolly to Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, Jan. 26, 1776, *ibid.*, 770-771.

sides, but without success. As long as there was hope, realistic or not, that Vandalia would receive approval from Britain, Wharton and other Pennsylvania speculators were reluctant to break with the mother country. Wharton hoped that an attempt to repeal the Quebec Act coupled with a determined economic boycott of British goods would bring about the downfall of "the present set of Ministers," and restore good relations within the empire.⁵⁹

Wharton's optimism was not shared in America, however. George Croghan, George Morgan, William Trent and others reorganized the old Indiana Company—out of whose Fort Stanwix grant the Vandalia project had grown—and advertised land for sale in the Ohio Valley. The advertisement brought immediate protests from Virginia delegates in Congress who claimed that the land in question had been deeded by the Indians to their colony more than twenty years before Fort Stanwix. Thus, Virginia's Revolutionary government threatened to be as harmful to Pennsylvania speculators as Virginia's colonial government had been, and perhaps even more harmful than the British government had been.⁶⁰ The struggle between Pennsylvania and Virginia over western lands would continue well into the War for Independence. Both sides tried to persuade Congress to confirm their claims, but that story is beyond the scope of this paper.⁶¹

It is difficult to maintain that British western policy in the decade before independence had much influence on Pennsylvanians associated with the frontier in determining their attitudes toward the Revolution. The land speculators as a group did not rush to the rebel cause out of frustration with British failure to confirm their requested grants. Some of the men involved in speculation did, of course, join the rebellion. George Morgan and Benjamin Franklin are obvious examples. But a large number became Tories. Joseph Galloway, William Franklin, David Franks and Samuel Wharton

⁵⁹ Samuel Wharton to Franklin, Apr. 17, 1775, *PMHB*, XXVIII (1903), 151.

⁶⁰ Thomas Wharton to Samuel Wharton, Nov. 30, 1775, and to William Trent, Apr. 17, 1776, Wharton Letter Book, HSP; Savelle, *George Morgan*, 81-82; Wainwright, *George Croghan*, 298. For the attempts to sell Ohio lands, see Etting Collection, Ohio Company Papers, II, 10-14, HSP. Interestingly, one of the notices to the public is dated Pittsburgh, *Virginia*, Sept. 22, 1775.

⁶¹ Thomas Walpole to Franklin, Feb. 10, 1777, facsimile, Huntington Library.

either advocated Tory views or were at least late and reluctant Whigs. Still others, notably Thomas Wharton, tried to take a neutral position.

Frontiersmen themselves also split on the question of independence, and though we need to know more about the position and motives of westerners, it would appear that, like the speculators, frontiersmen supported or rejected British rule for reasons that had little to do with western policies. If indeed, as would seem to be the case, British western policy had such little influence in Pennsylvania, it may mean that scholars will have to study each colony before making generalizations about the West and the American Revolution.

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