

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Repeal of the Stamp Act: The Merchants' and Manufacturers' Testimonies

AFTER GREAT BRITAIN, AT GREAT COST, defeated France in the Seven Years' War, the government's coffers needed replenishment. Considering the price of defending North America, a colonial tax on stamped paper seemed reasonable to the British leadership. After all, Englishmen were long accustomed to seeing a small red tax symbol stamped onto their weekly newspapers, court documents, and the like. In early 1765, Prime Minister George Grenville pushed through the Stamp Act legislation, much to the chagrin of colonial agents then in London, who had met with Grenville on May 17, 1764, and again on February 2, 1765, and suggested instead that the colonial legislatures raise the needed funds in their own ways.

George III, on March 22, 1765, assented to Parliament's Stamp Act, which would go into effect in November of that year. The law was never enforced. Instead, the Stamp Act proved a watershed event for Britain's North American colonies. For the first time, colonists all along the Atlantic seaboard drew together and acted in unison. In mid-October 1765, a congress of colonial delegates met in New York and drew up the Stamp Act Resolutions, a precursor of the First Continental Congress's petition ten years later. Defiant mobs made their opinions known with riots and effigy burnings. Most significantly, the colonists agreed to a nonimportation pact, an effort to apply economic pressure on British merchants who would, in turn, press Parliament for repeal.

Parliament repealed the Stamp Act on March 18, 1766, four days shy of its first anniversary. Several factors contributed to the law's hasty demise, including Grenville's removal from the prime ministership, news of the Stamp Act riots in North America, and the difficulty of enforcing an unpopular law so far away.

To promote repeal of the Stamp Act, a group of London overseas trading merchants met on December 4, 1765, for a strategic planning session. The merchants' goal was to flood Parliament with petitions from the manufacturing towns where diminished trade was already beginning to have an adverse effect on the local economy. Likewise, they would use their political influence to arrange for merchants and others to testify before Parliament in early 1766.

Benjamin Franklin's justifiably famous testimony before the House of Commons in February 1766 is frequently credited, especially by Americans, with turning the tide of parliamentary opinion against the Stamp Act. While Franklin's examination was the only one published in the official record of the House of Commons, he was but one of many individuals called before Parliament who supported repeal of the Stamp Act. Moreover, Franklin had no representation in Parliament, a feature of colonial life that galled Americans.

The Duke of Newcastle, a member of Parliament and former prime minister himself, kept extensive if unofficial records of parliamentary proceedings, which are now in the British Library and available on microfilm (Additional MSS 33030). Not only did Newcastle's scribes dutifully recorded Franklin's testimony, they also captured the interrogation of twenty-two other individuals who spoke for repeal of the Stamp Act. Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, in *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1953), which reviews the events surrounding Parliament's action and America's reaction, acknowledge Newcastle's papers in a footnote but do not summarize the testimonies.

What is so striking about the many Stamp Act testimonies before Parliament (which stretched over several days) is the discussion of such economic issues as the number of men put out of work by the American nonimportation agreements and the level of unpaid debt owed merchants dealing with North America. On occasion, the MPs interrogated the witnesses about the possibility of an American "independency" or about the colonists' perception of parliamentary prerogatives, but their primary concern was the hardships of their own constituents in Great Britain. Indeed, to prove that they did not yield to far-off mob insurrection, on the very day Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, it first passed the Declaratory Act, asserting Parliament's absolute authority over the North American colonies.

The testimonies presented here are transcribed verbatim from the

microfilm of Newcastle's manuscript, concentrating on the interrogations of merchants and manufacturers, since they best convey the issues concerning the MPs. Unfortunately, scribes writing hurriedly omitted punctuation marks and often abbreviated words in the style of the eighteenth century, using superscript letters for common endings. In this transcription, such abbreviations are retained but superscripts are brought down to the baseline. Likewise, absent terminal punctuation marks are indicated by three spaces at the end of a sentence. Questions are justified left and answers indented. Omitted text is marked by ellipses. Altogether, the manuscript comprises 225 handwritten pages; about one-quarter of the document is presented here. Franklin's testimony is readily available elsewhere in a more complete form, and the interrogations of British Caribbean plantation owners are omitted for the sake of brevity.

The proceedings began on January 31, 1766, with the testimony of Dr. Thomas Moffatt, a physician. The colonists considered Moffatt a supporter of the royal prerogative to levee taxes. His testimony—and that of subsequent testifier Mr. Howard—dealt with the Rhode Island Stamp Act riot of August 27, 1765. Major James Thomas gave testimony about the Stamp Act riot in New York on October 31, 1765.

Colonel George Mercer testified next. Mercer had served as aide-de-camp to George Washington during the Seven Years' War. He went to England to represent the interests of the Ohio Company and was appointed stamp-tax collector. When he came back to the colonies to do that job, he became the target of vilification. Mercer turned the stamps over to a British officer and went back to England after only four weeks. His testimony focused on the resignation of the judges in Virginia, all of whom stepped down rather than impose the stamp tax on litigants.

A petition submitted by a group of London merchants was next read into the record. Thereafter began the merchants' testimonies. Barlow Trecothick, who organized the London merchants' meeting that drafted the petition to Parliament, spoke first. He testified that he had lived in America from age seven to twenty-two and that for the past fifteen years had worked in London purchasing goods for sale in North America.

The Testimonies

... Is the Trade in North America now Stopt
almost wholly the most Considerable Exporting Colonies have sent
Orders under such Restrictions as disable us to Comply with them.

all have restricted not to be shipt unless the Stamp Act is Repealed . . .
 If the Stamp Act is Enforced—will you Comply with the Orders
 Certainly not

Why

Because I should Consider it as putting my property into a Country embroiled in Confusion as to make it uncertain In the present state of America there is a Stop of Exportation of British Goods for the greater part—To new England New York Maryland Pennsylvania—7/8th stopt . . .

Suppose the Stamp Acts shd be so Modified as to permit the Colonies to pay in Goods instead of Specie wod it not be more reasonable

Certainly as far as that goes . . .

Is it you opinion the people wod be satisfied with the repeal of one Act
 I think they wod from a Conviction of its being for the good of the Mother Country . . .

If the Stamp Duty is Submitted to, will it fall on the Trading People at Boston

Part of it . . .

Do you think if no force is used from hence will the Colonies Submit

I thought not.

Will the[y] choose to Continue in a state of Confusion

I can't tell how it will end . . .

If the stamp Act is not repealed don't you think the Confusion now reigning there will Compel an Execution of the Act itself

I believe it may in the Event but thro' a Dreadfull Chain of Occurences Believe the Stamp Act Repealed will satisfy America

May it not be so Modified as the Americans will submit to it

I believe no modification will satisfy them

Why

Because the people from one End of the Contt to the other have set their faces ag[ains]t it.

On what principle

They think it oppressive in its Nature and an Infringement on their Right From both.

If the oppression was removed wod they submit

The[y] Consider the whole as oppressive Both Quantity & Quality.

Do you think that if this Stamp Act was repealed with another Internal

tax laid woud not they oppose it equally

I don't know but they might . . .

If the Stamp Act was Inforced woud they submit to it in good humour

In Ill humour

Would that Ill humour have any Effect on their Trade

I believe a very great one. By Quality I meant the mode.

Do you mean by the mode the Authority Imposing

The Mode is the manner of Collecting it.

Woud not an objectn be taken from the Authority Imposing it

From their writings I collect they think the right of Imposing Taxes is confined to the Assemblies . . .

Will not the Stamp Duty Increase the price of Labour

Yes & so prevent the Increase of Manufacts . . .

If the Stamp Act is Modified will you Comply with the Concils Orders

No

If the Spring Orders are not Executed will you give Orders to the Manufacturing Towns

No

What will be the Consequence to the Manufacturing Towns

Very fatal

What will be the Consequence to this City if they are kept longer in Suspence

I believe it will be fatal

Is Chairman of North American Committee Considering of several great Merchants

What are the means or Acts used to procure those Petitions

I will give a candid account—We find America in Confusion, our property in danger, our Remittances uncertain and the Trade in danger of annihilation—We were called only by the Bristol Merchants. This hastened our meeting for all the Merchants trading to North America. they met, chose a Committee. they instructed that Committee to write Circr Letters to the manufacturing Towns requiring their Support in an application to Parliament and to use their Interest with the Members to make the Interest of Great Britain the Basis of their application—I have given copies of that Letter to several Gentlemen. many of the Manufacturing Towns sent for the Form of a petition which were declined particularly at Bristol—we thought it too indecent and desired them to speak

from their own feelings and that none should Complain but what were aggrieved . . .

Are not the loyal Subjects discontented with the Act

I bet there is a great proportion of loyal Subjects as loyal as those here but at Present are discontented. If the Stamp Act was repealed this House woud soon have specimens of that Gratitude . . .

Will not that Create a serious Alarm here in the Manufacturing Towns They are concerned to be sure but in a small degree as Manufacturers. A prudent Merchant woud not give above two years Credit . . .

What Effect on the Stocks will the Independency of North America have A very Fatal one . . .

Capel Hanbury was an exporter of British woolens and manufactured iron. He testified first about the tobacco trade with Virginia. He was asked about the effect of the Stamp Act on trade.

. . . If the Act was to Continue in Expectation of the Distresses would you Execute the Orders you have received

Not if any part of it Existed.

What will be the remedy of these evils you have d[educer]d

1st a Repeal of the Act—Anything short of a total repeal will be inadequate a Modification would not Answer.

Why

On Account of the Uneasyness of the Inhabitants so great that if force was used the[y] woud repel force by force . . .

Do they Complain of the Stamp Act Particularly in the authority of Parliamt

They do think in a considerable Degree think they have an Authority to having Taxes within themselves.

May they not use the same objections agt any other Act

I can't Answer

Did you ever hear the same Objections made to any other act as this

I have not—They have not Expressed their dislike in so strong a Degree & never heard of any Opposition to them.

Apprehends they would oppose it if required but 40 shillg from America.

Why

Because they oppose the right of the Legislative Power.
Will America be Quiet while Great Britain insists on the right of
Imposing taxes

I can only say they apprehend they had a legislative Power.

I have been informed the Militia in Virginia is not less than 52 000
Would they act agt the Forces of Great Britain assistg the Civil Officer in
Executn of the Law

In the Stamp Act I bet they would . . .

If the Act was repealed wod it not subside till they were again oppressed

I bet it would

Would they not think any tax imposed by a British Parliament a real
oppression

Accordgly to how the Tax wod be laid.

In order to Establish a solid Governmt for the future it will be
necessary to bring it to a quiet State and that can be done only by
the repeal of the Stamp Act as the Merchants will not venture their
Goods.

If America is made independent of Great Britain will She come here for
her Manufactures

I don't know how the mutual Intercourse can be kept up America
may be supplied Cheaper than from Great Britain from other
Countries

Do you think the Inforcing the Stamp Act preserve the Dependency of
Colonies on Great Britain

That matter depends on the Event

If the Stamp Act should be repealed will the Colonies on a new tax if any
should refuse will they be so unanimous as at present

They never before framed such an union.

Will the Americans Consider the Repeal of the Stamp Act as making
them independant

Thinks not

If it is repealed will they think they have Compelled us to repeal it

There are several things in the Act very hard. apprehends not.

Will not the Repeal be considered as an Act of Grace and Favour and
express their Gratitude

Apprehends they would—Thinks the inability in some degree the
Cause of their Apprehension and besides they looks upon it as agt
their rights.

Before the Stamp Act they thot the Dependency of the Colonies
for the mutual Int[eres]t of both
Withdrew

After very brief testimony from Daniel Mildred, a merchant who traded to Philadelphia and New York, the next testifier was Mr. Balfour, a British-born Virginian who spoke about a number of issues, including tobacco trade, bullion owed to England, and the cost of labor in America. His testimony continues here.

What is the State of the Militia

To the best of my Remembrance last April I saw a List of 52,000
Men and it is imagined it may be 80,000 Several are Exempt:
Clergy Magistrates but if no Exemptions there would be 80,000
From the Temper you saw when you left it, will they, do you think, resist
the Enforcing the Stamp Act

Declines Answering the Question . . .

Was it a cause of the Complaint that these small Debts and Bonds
required a Stamp.

They Complained the Act itself destroyed their Liberties . . .

Will, in your opinion, the Virginians Resist the Stamp Act

Declines Answering . . .

Is it an Advantage to the Virginians to Manufacture their own goods

Neither their Advantage nor Inclination.

Will the Repeal of the Stamp Act have any influence on that

I believe they would immediately return as loyal Subjects gladly.

If it is not Repealed will they Continue to Act Contrary to their own
Interest

I am afraid they would

Will not the Repealing of the Stamp Act direct them to have recourse to
have the same Opinion to any other Revenue Act

I believe not on the Principle of this Act

What is the Principle of the Act

I speak from what they say—I can't answer any otherwise

Is not an internal Prohibition as Contrary to their Principle as an internal
Tax

I can't distinguish . . .

Will any Sense of Distress bring the Virginians to submit to the Stamp

Act

I believe it will make them Unite . . .

If there are no Courts of Jurisdiction how woud you recover a Debt in Virginia

I don't know, its a Mystery

Would they Lend & Borrow then in Virgina on good faith only

I cant tell . . .

Do you think if the Stamp Act was refused would the rebellious Colonies return to their Allegiance and Jurisdiction of Parliamt

I believe they wod with pleasure

Would they erase their Resolutions

I do not think I am entitled to give my Opinion on that Subject . . .

Colonel Mercer was called in again to testify about the strength of the local militia. He was also asked about the likely reaction to a tax on cards and dice if the Stamp Act were repealed.

Would there be any Opposition if the Tax were only on Cards and Dice

I believe from the humour of the people they would not submit to anything with a Stamp. I have heard the Complaints of Right Oppression blended together—But the thinking people don't speak to plainly on the right as others. they complain of the oppression . . .

Do you think yourself safe if you should go back to Virginia and have given Evidence in favour of the Stamp Act

I should never think myself in danger in any part of the World from

Speaking the Truth—then I should never be afraid to go anywhere

Question repeated and objected to—Witness Withdrew—Called in again

Would you be Liable to Danger on your Return to Virginia if you gave Evidence in favour of the Stamp Act there—In favour of the Continuance of any part of the Stamp Act

I think I know the people there too well that they would not hurt anyone for speaking the truth—Certainly not liable for damage for speaking the Truth

Did you think yourself liable for Obeying an Act of Parliament when you Accepted your office of Stamp Deliverer

I did not then but I find myself mistaken

would you give Evidence to a matter of fact here be equal to the same

objection as Acting as a Stamp Officer

Certainly

Were any Officers insulted for Carrying an Act into Execution

Never

Do you think any modification of the Stamp Act will quiet the minds of the people

From the humour I found and left them, I think no modification will do

What will be the consequence of Enforcing the Stamp Act

God knows

What will be the consequence of Repealing it

I should Imagine they will be totally satisfied and well pleased

Do you think the repeal would reduce them to their Allegiance

Indeed I think so

If the Stamp Act is repealed will they submit to any Tax

I never heard any objection to any other Act than this but I can't look to far forward as to speak to what may happen . . .

If the Stamp Act was to be repealed, would not the Americans thinks their Riots & Tumults stop to the Trade had been the Occasion of it

That might be. I am of opinion but I shod scarce think they could imagine themselves able to frighten to the people of Great Britain.

I shod scarce Imagine they shod think that to be the Cause . . .

Has not the Idea of Oppression awakened the Idea of Right

I bet so.

The sooner that oppression is removed will not the Idea of Right be Quietted

The sooner the Cause is removed to be sure the Effect will Cease . . .

Next to appear before Commons was British merchant William Kelly, who had lived in New York for more than twenty years.

Can British Goods be Manufactd in New York

Most Undoubtedly—Cabinet Ware they may make in New York— They have not gone so far in Iron Ware Thinks they have the means for Iron Ware for they can make Steel There is great plenty of Wood and Streams of Water so proper for making Forges that many are Erected . . .

Is there plenty of Wool

Not sufficient for Cloathing but they will soon have but its more their Interest to go into Husbandry

Is the Country proper for Sheep

I believe great Quantities may be Raised. Believes the Wool in the Country is Manufactured, some has lain by in carelessness owing to their having Manufactures Cheaper from this Country . . .

Do they object to the Authority of Parliament in any other act

Never heard since I have been in England but that the Authority of Parliament has been disputed only in internal Taxes The received Doctrine I have heard is that acts before they had Legisl[ature]s were in force that mentioned the Colonies

I believe the King has not more loyal Subjects in his Dominions except some Roman Catholics . . .

Additional testimony about the price of molasses and rum as well as duties on these commodities followed. Thomas Morris from Nottingham, the first stocking manufacturer to testify, was questioned next.

Is that Manufacture carried on to its usual Extent as it was a year ago & the same Number of Hands

Not by a thousand. It usually consd he cant tell

Have you dismissed any

A hundred within six Months. I shall turn more if there is no likelihood of Encouragement. value of S[tockin]g Frames have fallen at an Auction in Decr last one Sold for 8£..5s that was bot for 22£.

Is not Concerned in Exporting his own Goods.

Withdrew

Robert Crafton, a London-based stocking exporter, testified about the decrease in North American trade since the Stamp Act.

Do you imagine the Stamp Act the Cause

Yes.

Why

Because my Orders have come with a Restriction not to be Executed unless the Stamp Act is Repealed

Proportion of Trade decreased last year two thirds . . .
 Withdrew

Josh Burny of Leicester, another stocking maker, testified about the decrease in North American trade.

What is the decrease

That part of America at least 2/3ds since my Correspondents have tenr of the Stamp Act. As to the Manufacturers discharged, I should speak within a Compass if I said 1000.

I Deal with some Merchants at Philadelphia and Correspondents there send me Word that I must not Comply with my Orders unless the Stamp Act Repealed. Correspondents in England say they can give me no Orders. Stocking Frames have been falling ever since the peace but 10 p ct within a Twelve month

What reasons did your Correspondents Assign for no further Orders of Stockings

Those in Philadelphia Restricted their Orders to the Stamp Act being repealed . . .

Robert Dawson of Leeds testified. He manufactured worsted and woolen stockings. Dawson spoke to the unemployment problem in the woolen industry in Leeds, then the center of British wool manufacturing. He reported that there were three thousand master-clothiers in Leeds, some manufacturers with "from 5 to 200 & 1000 Men."

What proportion of Goods there for the American Market

I cant speak Exactly Half I sell go to America

Does that go directly to North America

I can't speak with Certainty as to the General Trade . . .

How many Hands are there now out of Work

Great Numbers have now dismissed, near a thousand, and I have not Experienced any sudden decline in the European Trade since Augt last I have not Experienced a single Order from America.

To what do you attribute it?

My Friends write from America they are determined to send no orders till the Stamp Act is repealed

What Credit have you given the Americans

From 9 to 12 Months. They generally Pay in that time—I doubt it now for the write the Stamp Act will Involve them in great Difficulties.

Have they made these Excuses before

They seem to be willing now.

What Remittances have You lately

About one third less than Expected.

They write they won't order any Goods till the Stamp Act is Repealed.

What is the Motive at the Bottom for those Orders Is it that they can't Pay

I can't speak to their Motives.

What is your Motive for discharging your workmen

I have no Orders . . .

How many Men did you Employ before

About 12 or 14000

Did not you say half your Trade was to America

Yes.

How than did you part with so many Men

I can buy Goods Cheaper than I can Manufacture them.

Why do you keep any Men then, the 200 remaining

I have as many Goods by me as will last some Months, and if that Trade to America is not opened I shall turn away the Remainder.

Is your reason for turning away your Men the Stoppage of Trade or your being Able to buy them

Both.

Will your Trade increase if the North Americans shod get the better of the Legislature of Great Britain

Question Objected to—Withdrew—Called in Again—Question repeated.

I would not Chuse to Trust the Americans if they differed with the Legislative Power . . .

Why can you buy Cheaper than Manufacture

Goods were never so Cheap as now

To what owning

A Stagnation of Trade to America I believe owing to the Qualified Orders

At other times was it your Advantage to buy

I thought it better to Manufacture
Withdrew

Emanuel Elam [incorrectly spelled Esland] was a Quaker wool merchant whose family traded the cheaper quality woolens and worsted to America. He lived in the colonies from 1760 to 1762 and again from 1764 to 1765, in all provinces from Virginia to Boston.

Will the Americans be Obligated to take our Manufactures whether the [Stamp] Act is repealed or not

I believe they will take much less than they use [to]. They take some superfluous, some necessary. They will Stint themselves in the necessary more than they have done It will put to some inconvenience to Manufacture their own Goods at first, but they go on very fast breeding sheep and working wool in their own Families I have seen a great deal of Course Cloathings made for Servants and some lately brought to a tolerable degree of perfection

Can it be made so Cheap

They work in their own Families and grow the wool themselves I have been told by some Manufacturers they can Work it on equal terms with ours. 5£ p.cent at Leeds, 5£ more to the exporter, Ins. 2 p.c., Merchant 2 £ Commission. Merchant in America at least 12 £ p. cent besides the Carriage up the Country which would be 15 p. cent more

The Burthen on English Manufacture would be 32 p. Cent Exclusive of the Carriage there. The turn of the Country seems to be to Manufactures

What is the quality of the Wool

Of Equal quality with ours and the Sheep of Equal. Returned from New York on 1 April last. At that time, saw clothes made; went then twice thro' the colonies.

Did it appear to you that the objections were to the Stamp Act only, or to the Right of internal Tax from the Legislature

I heard of little but some late Acts of Parliament, the Repeal of the Stamp Act being likely to pass affected them—Heard of Embarassments laid on their Trade and that made them turn to Manufactures . . .

If the Stamp Act was Modified, would they Rest with that

By the temper I saw them in, I think they would not be Satisfied without a Repeal
 Would they not have the same objection to another internal Tax
 I can't tell. [I] saw some fulling mills; can't say how many. Has seen Linen Goods Manufactured in North American and Woolen Goods Manufactured there and brought to Market. And a great stocking Manufactory in Philadelphia
 Was not this before the Stamp Act
 The Stocking Manufactory was—They are striving to wear there own Manufacture . . .

Benjamin Farren, another manufacturer from the Leeds area, testified next.

What is the General State of the Manufacture in Leeds about . . .
 The State of the trade is too much on the Decline that 3 in 10 of the Manufacturers are discharged . . .
 Will they not soon be Obligated to Discharge more
 Unless Orders are Sent.
 Withdrew.

The testimony of Tuesday, February 13, began with the reading of a petition to Parliament from Liverpool. The first of the Liverpool merchants to testify was William Halliday, who shipped goods directly to America.

. . . What is the average Tonnage
 200 ton Almost all the Spring Orders are withdrawn
 Why
 The General Resolution not to import anything unless Stamp Act is repealed . . .
 Shall you carry on your Trade to North America during the Continuance of the Act
 We cannot, shall if the Act is repealed.
 How do you know the Quantity of Bullion Imported?
 From the Accounts delivered in from Pensylvania & New York, Carolina Very little from Boston
 Is there any of your Sewing Orders thought will be Obeyed
 Believes there are to Ma[rylan]d and Virginia

Are there not Sloops waiting for it
Several
Will any manufactures be Exported Except in those Ships
Believes there will . . .

Goldsmith George Masterman was not directly involved in the trade to North America but instead handled the merchants' bullion. He testified about the reduction of bullion passing through his establishment, with year-by-year statistics covering 1761 through 1765. William Reeve, a Bristol merchant, had been involved with the American trade for thirty years. He testified that during the past year trade was down from five hundred thousand pounds sterling to something less than one hundred thousand pounds per year.

The Trade have Suffered Diminution lately
To what extent
At present it is totally stagnated
Owning to what
To the Confusion they are in on Account of the Stamp Act
Have you any particular Evidence of that
I have many Letters that mention the Cause of it
Reads a Letter from Boston of the 4th November last
Has 500 Letters to the same purpose, that the American will not
send Orders unless the Act is Repealed . . .
What part of the Stamp Act is Ruinous
I Can't Define the particular parts
Is not the Opposition to the Act the Cause of the Stagnation
I Submit to the Judgment of this House. I know the Stamp Act is
the Grievance
If the Stamp Act has been Submitted to, would yours ships have
Remained there
I know they do remain there
Have you heard that any ships were sent over
Nothing but from the News papers
Do you know there was a Riot
I have no immediate account of it
When did you leave of Exportation to North America
None this four Months

How many Nail Makers Dismissed since that
 Since my Orders Countermanded for nails from 16 to 20,000 £,
 300 men turned off in one Day
Have any been Discharged since
 I have been attending here for 5 weeks and Can't speak but my
 Correspondents at Manchester say they shall be obliged to turn off
 several but said they would employ the men out of Compassion for
 2 or 3 Days in a week . . .
In your Letters have they said there are no Stamps
 They say nothing about it but thought some are burnt.
Why were they burnt
 I can't say the reason
If the Act should be Repealed, would you ship Goods immediately or
wait for their Orders
 I would ship immediately without waiting . . .
Would you if your Correspondent says he would Comply with the Act
 No. one swallow does not make summer
Would you if the Americans Generally submitted to the Act
 No
Why
 Because my affairs are in my own hands and if the Stamp Act is not
 Repealed I will never ship off Goods for America, That is Explicit
Withdrew.

*Merchant Robert Hamilton of Manchester had been involved in the
exportation of Manchester goods to America for twelve years, but trade
to America was "now at a stand[still]."*

To what do you attribute it
 To the Stamp Act The orders are Countermanded unless the
 Stamp Act is Repealed. And the late Orders are . . .
Is the Particular to your House
 I believe it to be General
Are there any persons out of Employ
 Yes I have Dismissed 400 Weavers . . .
Has any other Dismissed as many
 Yes. I take that to be a Necessary. To keeps 400 Looms Employed,
 2400 persons are Necessary, so in Consequence of my Dismissing

the Weavers I Calculate the rest are put out of Employment.
 If the Act is not Repealed must you Dismiss more Weavers
 Yes. I Cannot Comply with the Orders and so must find out a New
 Channel of Trade . . .
 What is the present Situation of the men dismissed
 They must be in great distress shortly and if not relieved they must
 be taken in the Service Has been in New England, Pennsylvania,
 New York, Virginia
 In Case the Act is repealed should take a great Number If the Trade
 revived
 I should take all . . .
 Do you know of any other Number of Men Dismissed
 I heard before I left Manchester of 1000 Looms out of Employ.
 These my servants found in two Days . . .

*John Glasford from Glasgow testified that he dealt with Virginia and
 Maryland and was having difficulty collecting his debts because the
 judges would not sit in court.*

To what Extent
 To a considerable Extent
 On order or your own Account
 Principally on my own Account
 What debt due
 To a consid[era]ble Extent . . .
 Are the Debts cond in large or small sums
 Some in large, but many in small, from 30 upwards. There are the
 Supreme Court in the Colony and County Courts these small
 Debts recoverable in the County Courts. The Goods I send are to
 the Agents and Factors who Compose of County Courts. I am told
 in Virginia the Judges are made by the Govr from the Freeholders.
 Have they any Salaries
 I am told they are not Compellable by Law to Act.
 Will they sit while there is any thing disagreeable from the Stamp Law
 according our Information, No Courts are held since 1st Novr
 The Sums above 5£ currency are by Juries—
 If the Stamp Act was repealed do you hear the Judges would Act
 I hope and bet so . . .

Benjamin Franklin testified on Thursday, February 13, 1766. He was followed by John Hose, a shoemaker in Cheapside who had been involved for thirty-seven years in the North American market. Hose testified that he had sold to Allen Trecothick, the New York merchant, £2200 worth of shoes annually for several years. Hose had employed upwards of three hundred men, but since the nonimportation agreement he employed only forty-five.

To what is this owing

To the Stamp Act for no Body never made better Shoes. Hopes and
bets he shod Employ his Men if the Stamp Act was Repealed . . .

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