

THE EFFECT OF THE TOWNSHEND ACTS IN
PENNSYLVANIA

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Benjamin Franklin, in April, 1767, wrote to a British Lord that force on the part of England would alienate the Americans, and that "a total separation of interests [would] be the final consequence."¹ Franklin was coming pretty close to the truth.

It was about this same time that the colonists began to learn of the proposed Townshend duties.² Three months later Pennsylvania read that the bills were laid before the House. It was also reported that Grenville moved to oblige all Americans to take an oath of obedience to Parliament, but this was defeated by a vote of ninety to some one hundred and eighty.³ In August the colony learned that there would be duties on crown, plate, flint, and white glass, red and white lead, painters' colors, and tea.⁴ And later it was announced that the duty would go into effect on November 20, 1767.⁵

The period between the passage of the acts in the summer of 1767 and their taking effect in November gave the colonists time to study and organize opposition.⁶ But in Pennsylvania there was very little activity—at least until December. In October Franklin and Jackson "were appointed joint Agents, to transact

¹ Franklin to Lord Kames, April 11, 1767. Franklin, *Works* (Philadelphia, 1809-1817), VI. 59-63.

² Lincoln, *Revolutionary Movement in Pennsylvania*, p. 137.

³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 16, 1767.

⁴ *Ibid.*, August 13, 20, 1767.

⁵ *Ibid.*, October 8, 1767.

⁶ Chamberlain in Justin Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America*, VI. 39.

the Affairs of this Province in Great Britain.”⁷ In November, Boston’s reaction to the acts was published: a large meeting of Bostonians was held,⁸ when non-importation agreements were adopted.⁹ And in a short time Boston was boasting of its *home manufactures*.¹⁰

On December 2, 1767, a newspaper agitation was begun in a rather unpretentious manner, but which had far-reaching effects. It was on that day that the first Letter from a Pennsylvania Farmer appeared,¹¹ in a special issue.¹² The letters appeared weekly until the twelfth and last, which was published in February, 1768.¹³

The worth and influence of these letters have been variously valued. Professor Tyler has claimed them to be “as of the highest significance.”¹⁴ Stillé has said that they became a “genuine political text book, . . . received with absolute confidence.”¹⁵ And Charles Francis Adams valued them as more practical, minute, and skilful than the works of Otis, Adams, or Quincy.¹⁶

These letters, with their homely simplicity of form and style, were certain to appeal to a population of which nine out of every ten persons were rural.¹⁷ Dickinson’s aim was to show the danger of allowing any precedent of Parliamentary taxation to be established, for it was impossible to tell how far the precedent may be pushed.¹⁸ He granted that the relationship between

⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 22, 1767.

⁸ *Ibid.*, November 5, 1767.

⁹ *Ibid.*, November 12, 19, 1767.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, November 26, 1767.

¹¹ *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, December 2, 1767. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 3, 1767.

¹² Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 282 (note).

¹³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 18, 1768.

¹⁴ Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, I. 234.

¹⁵ Stillé, *Life of John Dickinson*, p. 89.

¹⁶ Wharton Dickinson, “John Dickinson, LL.D.,” in *Magazine of American History*, X. 226, quoting C. F. Adams.

¹⁷ Van Tyne, *Founding of the American Republic*, I. 252.

¹⁸ Hildreth, *History of the United States* (New York, Harper, 1849), II. 540.

the colonies and the motherland had always been vague and ill-defined, but he urged that this condition should be continued and that England should refrain from pressing the abstract theory of sovereignty to its extreme logical conclusions.¹⁹

The letters reveal Dickinson "not as an angry controversialist but as a judicious councillor and guide."²⁰ This is more evident in contrasting Dickinson's activity of 1767 with Paine's writings a decade later. Flame, passion, and hatred seethe through the works of Paine; calmness, dignity, and sagacity permeate the Farmer's Letters. Dickinson represents the clear, cool head of a lawyer, with his legal training gained years before at Middle Temple.²¹ Though he was trained in England, he shared in the general colonial excitement, but at all times he tried to compose rather than to increase the agitation.²² "He was a man of powerful and cultivated intellect with all his tastes on the side of order, conservatism, and peace, if only with these could be had political safety and honor."²³ He was a statesman,²⁴ and not a radical.

In 1767, just as in 1765, Pennsylvania furnished the theoretical defence of the American position;²⁵ and Dickinson through his Farmer's Letters in 1767, just as through his actions at the Stamp Congress two years before, became the leader and guide in the controversy.²⁶

The letters were instantly recognized as the work of John Dickinson;²⁷ and they were read by all classes throughout the land "as no other work of political kind

¹⁹ Fiske, *The American Revolution*, I. 47.

²⁰ Stillé, *Life of John Dickinson*, p. 82.

²¹ Van Tyne, *Founding of the American Republic*, I. 251.

²² Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, I. 234.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

²⁴ Stillé, *Life of John Dickinson*, p. 82.

²⁵ Lincoln, *Revolutionary Movement in Pennsylvania*, p. 137.

²⁶ Stillé, *Life of John Dickinson*, p. 80.

²⁷ Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, I. 234.

had hitherto been read in America.’’²⁸ All the colonial newspapers—about twenty-five in number—with but four exceptions reprinted the letters.²⁹ By March, 1768, they were in pamphlet form;³⁰ Boston,³¹ Philadelphia,³² and Virginia³³ issuing editions of which there were eight in all.³⁴ By June the Philadelphia publishers announced a second edition.³⁵ Two London editions and one Dublin edition³⁶ appeared, prefaced by Franklin who wanted to enlighten the English public³⁷ and provoke a “full answer.”³⁸ Next the letters were translated into French by Dubourg,³⁹ published at Amsterdam,⁴⁰ and circulated over the Continent.⁴¹ Even Voltaire joined in praising Dickinson⁴² who was likened to Cicero⁴³ and proclaimed “the foremost patriot of America.”⁴⁴ The book sold rapidly in Europe.⁴⁵

Criticism as well as laudation poured in on Dickinson. Hillsborough thought his doctrines “extremely wild;”⁴⁶ Governor Sharpe⁴⁷ of Maryland and Rhoads,⁴⁸ a Pennsylvania Quaker, interpreted the

²⁸ Stillé, *Life of John Dickinson*, p. 80.

²⁹ Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, I. 234.

³⁰ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 283 (note).

³¹ Imprint of the Boston edition.

³² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 14, 1768.

³³ Richards, “Life and Character of John Dickinson,” in *Papers of Historical Society of Delaware*, XXX. 9, 10.

³⁴ Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, I. 237.

³⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 16, 1768.

³⁶ Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, I. 237.

³⁷ Stillé, *Life of John Dickinson*, p. 87.

³⁸ Franklin, Preface to the British edition, p. iii.

³⁹ Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, I. 237.

⁴⁰ French edition, title-page.

⁴¹ Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, I. 237.

⁴² Stillé, *Life of John Dickinson*, p. 92.

⁴³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 8, 1769.

⁴⁴ Richards, “Life and Character of John Dickinson,” in *Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware*, XXX. 9, 10. Tyler, *Literary History of the American Revolution*, I. 237.

⁴⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 8, 1769.

⁴⁶ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 281 (note).

⁴⁷ Edgar, *A Colonial Governor in Maryland*, p. 241.

⁴⁸ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 280 (note).

letters as inflammatory. Opposition to Dickinson was due at least in part to political reasons, and soon "a host of angry scribblers" was pouring forth personal abuse.⁴⁹ But on the other hand "A Farmer" urged Dickinson to continue his writing;⁵⁰ Boston gave him a vote of thanks;⁵¹ the Society of Fort St. David presented him with an elaborate memento;⁵² Newport called him the "American Pitt;"⁵³ two Connecticut towns added their praises;⁵⁴ Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, sent him its appreciation;⁵⁵ and poetic tributes appeared in his honor.⁵⁶ But strange as it may seem Dickinson looked to Massachusetts as the leader in rousing patriotism.⁵⁷

The "spirit of liberty" began to manifest itself in South Carolina through a newspaper plea, and in Rhode Island through the encouragement of home manufactures.⁵⁸ Late in October, 1767, Boston voted to discontinue the use of British products and to encourage the use of American manufactures; the popular party of Philadelphia agreed with Boston, called a meeting, but was able only to return an expression of sympathy.⁵⁹ A few weeks later Rhode Island announced the adoption of a non-importation agreement,⁶⁰ and Boston boasted of the increasing use of American made cloth.⁶¹

⁴⁹ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, pp. 280, 281 (note), 283, 284 (note).

⁵⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 17, 1767.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, March 31, April 7, 1768. "This is the *First* Honor of the kind that ever was conferred by a City on any Person in America," is the comment following the announcement of Boston's action.

⁵² Wharton Dickinson, "John Dickinson, LL.D.," in *Magazine of American History*, X. 226.

⁵³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 7, 1768.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, May 19, 1768.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, July 9, 1768.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, April 23, July 9, 1768.

⁵⁷ Van Tyne, *Founding of the American Republic*, I. 250, 251.

⁵⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 31, 1767.

⁵⁹ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 409 (note).

⁶⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 24, 1767.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, February 4, 1768.

Early in 1768, the Pennsylvania Assembly instructed its agents to join with those from the other colonies⁶² to urge repeal of the obnoxious acts.⁶³ Business was evidently too flourishing for the prosperous Quaker merchants of Philadelphia to be willing to take drastic action; and for this lack of spirit the whole colony was soundly berated by "A Freeborn American."⁶⁴ Again, in April a writer, "Monitor," warned the colony of imminent danger from tyranny.⁶⁵

Boston pled with Pennsylvania to fall in line with non-importation, by agreeing to suspend all trade with Britain for a year from December 31, 1768.⁶⁶ The Philadelphia merchants met, debated heatedly, and came to no definite action, only urging that non-importation should extend only to the articles actually taxed. They really suspected Boston of trickery, for New England ports were notorious for smuggling, and this illicit trade would be carried on while other colonies, such as Pennsylvania, would suffer by adhering to the agreements.⁶⁷ Thus in a second trial the colony failed to coöperate.

In March, the newspapers printed the Circular Letter from Massachusetts.⁶⁸ Hillsborough immediately ordered Governor Penn to see that the letter should be treated "with the contempt it deserves" by the Assembly, and that, if this is not done, the governor should dissolve or prorogue the undutiful House.⁶⁹ One historian has remarked that these orders "serve to mark the progress the ministry was making in the

⁶² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 31, 1768.

⁶³ Armor, *Lives of the Governors of Pennsylvania*, p. 174.

⁶⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 18, 1768.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, April 14, 1768.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1768.

⁶⁷ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 409, 410 (note).

⁶⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 31, 1768. *Votes and Proceedings of the Assembly of Pennsylvania*, VI. 59-61; and *Pennsylvania Archives*, series I. IV. 286-289.

⁶⁹ *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, IX. 546, 547.

art of misgovernment.’’⁷⁰ On May 10, the Circular Letter was laid before the Assembly;⁷¹ the next day the House adjourned until September 12.⁷² On September 13, Governor Penn informed the House of his forced absence due to an Indian Treaty, and that he is sending Hillsborough’s letter “which I recommend to your most serious consideration.’’⁷³ The same day there was laid before the House a letter from Virginia,⁷⁴ recommending a union of the colonies to combat the revenue acts.⁷⁵ Beyond registering both letters on its minutes, the House practically ignored them, due to the influence of the Speaker, the powerful Quaker, Galloway.⁷⁶ In fact Lord North praised Pennsylvania for having “behaved with more moderation than the rest of the colonies.’’⁷⁷

Late in April, a meeting of merchants was again called to consider non-importation. Dickinson, now enjoying a brilliant popularity, was solicited to use his influence to sway the hesitant merchants to join an agreement not to import any goods after October 1, 1768.⁷⁸ In his address, Dickinson first outlined the colonial grievances against England,⁷⁹ then developed the theme that suspension of trade was the only way to obtain redress.⁸⁰ No more than a few signatures could

⁷⁰ Fiske, *The American Revolution*, I. 50.

⁷¹ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 409 (note).

⁷² *Votes and Proceedings of the Assembly of Pennsylvania*, VI. 61.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-65.

⁷⁵ Armor, *Lives of the Governors of Pennsylvania*, pp. 174, 175.

⁷⁶ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 409 (note).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 449 (note).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 410 (note).

⁷⁹ The grievances which he listed were: 1. Law against making steel or erecting steel furnaces. 2. Law against plating and slitting mills and tilt-hammers. 3. Restraint on hatters. 4. Prohibition of carrying wool and manufactured woollen goods from one colony to another. 5. Americans must send to England all goods for a foreign market. 6. Americans must carry Spanish and Portuguese wines first to England, and there pay a heavy duty on them. 7. Heavy duty on Madeira wines. 8. England’s habit of emptying her jails on America.

⁸⁰ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 411-417.

be obtained; on this result a contemporary observed, "the spirit of liberty is lukewarm in this powerful and important city."⁸¹ A third time the colony failed to cooperate.

The only result was newspaper warfare. In May, the merchants were urged to join New York and Boston,⁸² and a little later another writer was surprised "at the insensibility of your city."⁸³ Under a pseudonym Galloway boasted that the Philadelphia merchants had discovered the trick of the New Englanders; and the controversy was continued by "Martinus Scriblerius," "A. B." and "C."⁸⁴

In July, Dickinson addressed the merchants by letter, warning them of the infinite harm they do the other colonies by their persistence in not entering into the agreements.⁸⁵ But Dickinson had his critics: one wrote that his "political labors would yield a 'plentiful harvest of blood and anarchy.'"⁸⁶ However, Dickinson's ardor broke into verse once and "A Song of American Freedom" was the result.⁸⁷

Late in July Philadelphians were called to the State House to formulate instructions to their agents in London.⁸⁸ The address at the meeting stressed England's tyranny and the lack of representation.⁸⁹ The agents were informed that Pennsylvania sympathized with New York and Boston; and these two men in England were ordered to present a memorial to the Lords and a remonstrance to the Commons.⁹⁰

In September, the New York merchants sent a copy

⁸¹ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, p. 435.

⁸² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 12, 1768.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, June 2, 1768.

⁸⁴ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 435 (note).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 439-444.

⁸⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 4, 1768; letter signed by Satiricus Sarcasticus.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, July 7, 1768. This poem was set to the tune of "Hearts of Oak," and gained considerable popularity.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, July 27, 1768.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, August 4, 1768.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, August 11, 1768.

of their agreements to Philadelphia,⁹¹ but the Quaker element was still powerful enough to stave off non-importation;⁹² they would not suspend trade until all ordinary means of redress had been exhausted. Petition was the strongest weapon they desired to use.⁹³ Now, the Assembly ordered a committee of ten to frame a petition to the King, one to the Lords, and one to the Commons, praying for the relief of the grievances.⁹⁴ Within a week these documents were draughted,⁹⁵ and soon in final form.⁹⁶ On September 22, 1768, a letter was sent to the English agents,⁹⁷ ordering them to present the petitions.⁹⁸ The Townshend Acts are "extremely inconsistent with the Rights of the Freemen of the Province," declared the letter.⁹⁹

Hillsborough's letter was answered by the Assembly in the form of a resolution—that the members of the Assembly "have an undoubted right to sit on their own adjournment" and that the Assembly has the right to correspond with the other colonies.¹⁰⁰ As for the Virginia letter, the Assembly simply ordered its Speaker to return "a suitable answer."¹⁰¹

Learning of the action of Boston and New York, the Philadelphia merchants appointed a committee to obtain like agreements. The committee failed,¹⁰² except in a moment of hope when it tried to gain the support of eight or ten mercantile firms; but these firms would

⁹¹ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, pp. 125, 126.

⁹² Van Tyne, *Founding of the American Republic*, I. 258.

⁹³ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 126.

⁹⁴ *Votes and Proceedings of the Assembly of Pennsylvania*, VI. 65.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 102.

⁹⁶ For full text see *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 2, 1769, or *Votes and Proceedings of the Assembly of Pennsylvania*, VI. 103-106.

⁹⁷ *Votes and Proceedings of the Assembly of Pennsylvania*, VI. 102.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 107.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 93.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁰² Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 436 (note).

not agree to unconditional non-importation.¹⁰³ Since only a quarter of the merchants attended a special meeting, nothing could be accomplished.¹⁰⁴ Pennsylvania failed a fourth time to coöperate.

When, because they failed to fall in line with New York, the Philadelphia traders were stigmatized as "selfish, dastardly merchants," a few were stung to action;¹⁰⁵ but the only result was a memorial sent November 1, by the Philadelphia merchants to the London merchants: it threatened suspension of trade if the English merchants could not use their influence to effect repeal.¹⁰⁶ And so, until the first few months of 1769, the Quakers headed by Galloway used no stronger measures than petition, but at the same time they felt secure in their mastery of the situation in Pennsylvania.¹⁰⁷

But a decision had to be made. Merchants were planning to order their goods for Autumn by a February vessel, and Parliament had yet shown no signs of remedy. News from England was discouraging: the London merchants told Philadelphia that the time was unpropitious to press their case;¹⁰⁸ the petition to the Commons was objected to because it denied the authority of Parliament,¹⁰⁹ and after four weeks it was

¹⁰³ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, pp. 126, 127.

¹⁰⁴ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 436 (note).

¹⁰⁵ Van Tyne, *Founding of the American Republic*, I. 258, 259.

¹⁰⁶ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, pp. 127, 128.

¹⁰⁷ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 435-437 (note). At this time Galloway wrote to Franklin: "Great pains have been taken in this city by some hotheaded, indiscreet men to raise a spirit of violence against the act of Parliament, but the design was crushed in its beginning by our friends so effectively, that I think we shall not have it renewed."

¹⁰⁸ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, pp. 128, 129.

¹⁰⁹ W. S. Johnson to W. Pitkin, *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* (Trumbull Papers), series V. IX. 310, 311.

yet not offered a second time.¹¹⁰ After still another month this same petition was not pushed on the ground that Lord North thought it inconsistent with Parliamentary dignity.¹¹¹

The agents for Pennsylvania were doing their utmost. Franklin was indefatigable in his efforts to prove the loyalty of his colony.¹¹² In a letter to Pennsylvania a London writer observed about Franklin, "It is better for you that he is where he is."¹¹³ In October, he and Jackson were reappointed to their posts.¹¹⁴ In the following February Franklin observed: "Things daily wear a worse aspect, and tend more and more to a breach and final separation."¹¹⁵

In February there was the beginning of a feeble movement to foster home manufactures. The freeholders of Philadelphia agreed not to consume any lamb during the ensuing year,¹¹⁶ and four fire companies agreed to do the same;¹¹⁷ the purpose being to increase the woollen manufactures of the province.¹¹⁸ A number of people even agreed to disregard English fashion by wearing leather jackets thereafter.¹¹⁹

At last, on March 10, 1769, Philadelphia merchants agreed to suspend trade with England after April 1, on all goods except twenty-two very necessary articles; the agreement was to continue until the repeal of the acts or until a general meeting of the subscribers de-

¹¹⁰ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* (Trumbull Papers), Series V. IX., p. 319.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

¹¹² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 24, 1768.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, February 2, 1769.

¹¹⁴ *Votes and Proceedings of the Assembly of Pennsylvania*, VI. 111.

¹¹⁵ Franklin to Lord Kames, February 21, 1769. Franklin, *Works* (Philadelphia, 1809-1817), VI. 66.

¹¹⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 2, 1769.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, February 16, March 16, April 13, 1769.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, February 16, 1769. See resolutions of the Heart-in-Hand Fire Company.

¹¹⁹ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 128.

terminated otherwise.¹²⁰ The merchants were driven to suspension of trade by boycotts and threat of mob violence.¹²¹ Any violator of the agreement was to be stigmatized "an enemy of the Liberties of America" and to have his name published.¹²² By the end of March Baltimore accepted Philadelphia's agreement.¹²³ Pennsylvania was beginning to act—but about a half year late.¹²⁴

As early as April stories of violation of the agreement appeared.¹²⁵ Though liberty and loyalty were proclaimed¹²⁶ at a patriotic dinner at Burn's Tavern,¹²⁷ there was a riot the first day of the month, arising out of an attempt at smuggling.¹²⁸ The collector of the port was badly beaten, and the people's hatred of the customs collectors was most evident.¹²⁹ Members of the crowd were tried and convicted because of their attempts to aid the smuggler and to thwart the efforts of the collector.¹³⁰

Maryland, undoubtedly influenced by Pennsylvania's action, passed non-importation agreements on June 20, 1769.¹³¹

In July, the Committee of Merchants in Philadelphia had to deal with the first violator of the agreement. The *Charming Polly* with a cargo of malt arrived in port on July 17¹³² from Yarmouth; the cargo was con-

¹²⁰ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, pp. 129, 130.

¹²¹ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 435, 436 (note).

¹²² Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 130.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹²⁵ Ford, editor, *Writings of John Dickinson*, I. 435-437 (note).

¹²⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 13, 1769.

¹²⁷ Donehoo, editor, *Pennsylvania: A History*, (II.) 1038, who spells the name "Byrne's".

¹²⁸ *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* (Aspinwall Papers), series IV. X. 611-617.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Donehoo, editor, *Pennsylvania: A History*, (II.) 1038.

¹³¹ Lincoln, *Revolutionary Movement in Pennsylvania*, p. 149, footnote.

¹³² Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in American Revolution*, p. 192.

signed to Amos Strettell who denied any knowledge of the goods. The Committee of Merchants assembled the next day at the State House; and after investigation it appeared that "the Cargoe was principally consigned to the Captain who had orders to value himself on Mr. Strettell."¹³³ The brewers pledged not to buy any of the malt and resolved that any one who did so "had not a just sense of liberty, and is an enemy of his country."¹³⁴ The next week the *Charming Polly* with its tricky Captain Eaton sailed from Philadelphia with the cargo intact.¹³⁵ When this incident revealed that the populace might be called on to use force in executing the agreement, the monthly meeting of Quakers advised Friends to have nothing to do with non-importation measures. Many prominent Quakers were concerned in the agreement.¹³⁶

Early in August the brig *Speedwell* arrived from Liverpool; it was reported to have on board dry goods for several merchants. Though the cargo was unimportant, it had been sent contrary to the agreement; the committee decided to place the goods in public store, "there to lie till the Acts against America are repealed."¹³⁷ Pledges were exacted not to withdraw the goods for sale. However, a man was caught trying to buy cheese from a person on the *Speedwell*. "The Committee of Merchants waited upon him at once and remonstrated with him so effectually that he felt constrained to give the cheese to the poor debtors in jail, adding two dollars to enable them to buy bread to eat with it. Two or three more caught in the same way added beer to the bread and cheese, so that the prisoners had quite a feast of it."¹³⁸

¹³³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 20, 1769.

¹³⁴ Donehoo, editor, *Pennsylvania: A History*, (II.) 1038.

¹³⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 27, 1769.

¹³⁶ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, pp. 191, 192.

¹³⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 3, 1769.

¹³⁸ Donehoo, editor, *Pennsylvania: A History*, (II.) 1038, 1039.

However, the plan of storing goods did not commend itself, for it was feared that "some monied people" in England planned "to buy up quantities of manufactures on easy terms and lodge them in the principal towns in America to be ready for the first opening of the market after the repeal."¹³⁹ So, on August 2, the merchants and traders met at the Coffee House and resolved no longer to store any goods;¹⁴⁰ which plan was followed thereafter.¹⁴¹

In September, 1769, New England proposed to Philadelphia to enter into an agreement comprehending *all* revenue acts, including molasses and wine duties. Philadelphia would not accede to this proposal, feeling that the restriction would simply divert the trade to laxer ports.¹⁴²

Late in the same month the *Friend's Good Will* arrived from Hull with a large amount of merchandise sent by Britons on a speculative enterprise.¹⁴³ It was said that the goods were shipped to eighty-four merchants in vain.¹⁴⁴ However, the committee at Philadelphia ordered the return of the goods, and "it would have been dangerous to attempt to resist or disobey such an order;"¹⁴⁵ so the brig returned with cargo intact.¹⁴⁶

In their distress the British merchants resorted to trickery, such as antedating invoices and letters from America; it was the work of the committee of inspection to detect such practices.¹⁴⁷ In Pennsylvania, the populace sometimes took affairs into their own hands:

¹³⁹ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 192, quoted.

¹⁴⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 3, 1769.

¹⁴¹ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 193.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 131-133.

¹⁴³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 5, 1769.

¹⁴⁴ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 193.

¹⁴⁵ Donehoo, editor, *Pennsylvania: A History*, (II.) 1039.

¹⁴⁶ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 193.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 193, footnote.

an informer who lodged the charge of smuggling against some individuals was caught, pilloried, tarred and feathered, and paraded through the streets for two hours.¹⁴⁸

Philadelphia informed Newport, Rhode Island, that unless she united in the measures of the other colonies, the Quaker City would boycott the Newport merchants. The Rhode Island traders met and agreed to import no British manufactures after January 1, 1770. But Philadelphia would not accept this agreement for it contained two flaws: (1) Newport could still import European commodities through England; and (2) until the first of January large amounts of goods could be ordered and imported. Under threat of boycott Newport made a new agreement more acceptable to Philadelphia.¹⁴⁹

In December, Drinker wrote to his commercial partner in London: "Interest, all-powerful Interest will bear down Patriotism. This, I think, will be verified in the Colonies ere long, should the Parliament be obstinate."¹⁵⁰ The radical class in the population was beginning to dominate the situation.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the export trade to Great Britain, in 1769, fell to less than half of that trade in 1768.¹⁵² The import trade of Pennsylvania from Britain fell from four hundred and forty-one thousand pounds, in 1768, to two hundred and four thousand pounds in 1769.¹⁵³

With the beginning of the year 1770, signs of discontent began to appear. The drygoods importers felt

¹⁴⁸ Donehoo, editor, *Pennsylvania: A History*, (II.) 1039.

¹⁴⁹ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 154.

¹⁵⁰ Drinker's Letters, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV. 41, letter of December 9, 1769.

¹⁵¹ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 212.

¹⁵² Johnson, Van Meter, Huebner and Hanchett, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce in the United States*, p. 121.

¹⁵³ Jennings, *History of Economic Progress in the United States*, p. 105. Bogart, *Economic History of the United States*, p. 99.

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that the agreement unjustly discriminated against their trade.¹⁵⁴ Maryland and New York imported coarse woolens and hence were able to capture the Indian trade formerly enjoyed by Pennsylvania.¹⁵⁵ The traders attempted to get the unfair provisions repealed or modified rather than violate them.¹⁵⁶

Scarcity of products brought a rise in prices. Some persons complained that Bohea tea reached five shillings a pound in face of the agreement to keep it at three shillings nine pence. The *Pennsylvania Chronicle* cut down the size of its issues because of the rise in the price of paper.¹⁵⁷ In February, Drinker wrote: "Already we do see those making breeches in the Agreement who were the first in promoting it. I expect ere long to write thee of some important changes in our measures here. . . ."¹⁵⁸ These conditions brought about efforts to foster home manufactures. Lancaster, Pennsylvania, boasted an enviable record: for one year prior to May, 1770, fifty looms and seven hundred spinning wheels were in constant use,¹⁵⁹ producing over thirty thousand yards of home-spun linens and woolens.¹⁶⁰ Philadelphia tried hard to produce silk: in 1769, fifty families raised silk worms, but the people were inexperienced in reeling silk. After expending two hundred and fifty pounds on a filature, the city was able to export one hundred and fifty-five pounds of raw silk in 1771.¹⁶¹ In the same year Lancaster

¹⁵⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, January 25, 1770.

¹⁵⁵ Drinker's Letters, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV. 42-44, letter of April 29, 1770.

¹⁵⁶ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 191.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹⁵⁸ Drinker's Letters, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV. 41, 42, letter of February 12, 1770.

¹⁵⁹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 14, 1770, letter from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, containing full report.

¹⁶⁰ *Gentleman's Magazine*, LXX. 348.

¹⁶¹ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, pp. 130, 131.

erected a flint glass manufactory, and Philadelphia built a china factory.¹⁶²

As is usual in such crises the merchants with little capital were in danger of failing. The month of May was filled with meetings of traders desiring some modification of the agreement. About the middle of the month a general meeting was called, but the drygoods importers, feeling that they were most vitally concerned, met at Davenport's the evening before. However, at the general meeting the next day the one hundred importers present postponed action until the fifteenth of May, for "they had an eye on our ship Chalkey's conveying their orders and determinations, and therefore regulated the General Meeting to be within a day or two of the time she may probably sail."¹⁶³

A meeting was called for the middle of May. Since many of the subscribers were not in the importing business and would vote to continue the agreement, the importers held several preparatory sessions and agreed that each would bring a friend to the meeting. The scheme was detected and exposed in a broadside. When the meeting was held, action was postponed until New York and Boston could be consulted.¹⁶⁴ On May 23, a group of artificers, manufacturers, tradesmen, and others assembled, resolving to do their utmost to promote American manufactures, to boycott violators of the agreement, and to order Whitman and his boat back to Rhode Island, which colony had broken faith.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1870), II. 272.

¹⁶³ Drinker's Letters, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV. 42-44, letter of April 9, 1770.

¹⁶⁴ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 219.

¹⁶⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 24, 1770. Drinker's Letters, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV. 44, 45, letter of May 26, 1770.

Not until June did the committee of inspection find it necessary to proscribe offenders by name.¹⁶⁶

On June 5, 1770, the subscribers of the agreement "met by themselves" at the State House and "almost unanimously (four votes dissenting),¹⁶⁷ agreed not to alter the agreement.¹⁶⁸ Philadelphia was determined not to trade with "the little dirty colony of Rhode Island;"¹⁶⁹ and in the middle of June, Captain Smith from Providence "was refused trade, as the other vessels from that Colony have lately been."¹⁷⁰ Two Pennsylvanians were caught buying English goods from Baltimore merchants; the Philadelphia committee "induced" the two guilty persons to return the goods.¹⁷¹

In July, New York decided to import everything except dutied articles;¹⁷² Philadelphia warned her northern neighbor that she was weakening the union of colonies by her act, and that she would have to answer to posterity for her action.¹⁷³ Henceforth, Pennsylvania looked on New York as "a faction unfriendly to redress of grievances."¹⁷⁴

The agitation came to a head on September 20, 1770. One hundred and thirty-five subscribers met at Daventport's Tavern on that date and voted on several questions.¹⁷⁵ (1) Should the agreement be altered?—voted affirmatively by a large majority. (2) If the agreement is to be altered should Pennsylvania import

¹⁶⁶ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 193.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

¹⁶⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 7, 1770.

¹⁶⁹ Drinker's Letters, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV. 44, 45, letter of May 26, 1770.

¹⁷⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 21, 1770.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, June 28, 1770.

¹⁷² *Gentleman's Magazine*, LXX. 348.

¹⁷³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 12, 1770.

¹⁷⁴ Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1870), II. 272, quoted.

¹⁷⁵ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 232.

goods from Britain and Europe except tea and other dutied articles?—also voted affirmatively by a great majority. (3) Should Philadelphia consult the other colonies before it alters the agreement?—voted negatively. (4) Is the agreement thus broken or altered?—voted that it is altered only. (5) Should any goods be landed which left Britain before January next?—voted negatively.¹⁷⁶ This practical breakdown of the agreement was carried by a vote of eighty-nine to forty-five; and thereupon eleven members of the committee of merchants resigned.¹⁷⁷ The non-mercantile classes mostly resented the change.¹⁷⁸ But the merchants elected a new committee to enforce the altered agreement, and nine days later the *London Packet* sailed carrying orders for English merchandise.¹⁷⁹

Handbills and broadsides were scattered abroad favoring and opposing the action at Davenport's Tavern.¹⁸⁰ Persons alarmed by this recent action called a meeting at the State House on September 27, "to vindicate the honor of this City."¹⁸¹ There it was agreed that non-importation was necessary,¹⁸² and the recent action of Davenport's Tavern should stand censured.¹⁸³ But for all intents and purposes the agreement was broken, the Quaker merchants had once again become masters of the situation and were determined not to have their interests and business again jeopardized by a radical mob of wildly enthusiastic patriots who had little to lose through suspension of trade.

¹⁷⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 20, 1770.

¹⁷⁷ Lincoln, *Revolutionary Movement in Pennsylvania*, pp. 152, 153.

¹⁷⁸ Donehoo, editor, *Pennsylvania: A History* (II.) 1042.

¹⁷⁹ Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants in the American Revolution*, p. 232.

¹⁸⁰ Donehoo, editor, *Pennsylvania: A History*, (II.) 1043.

¹⁸¹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 27, 1770.

¹⁸² Hiltzheimer, *Diary*, p. 22.

¹⁸³ Donehoo, editor, *Pennsylvania: A History*, (II.) 1043.