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'JUDGEMENT AND EXPERIENCE'?
BRITISH POLITICS, ATLANTIC CONNEXIONS AND
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Andrew David Struan, MA, MPhil

Department of History

Faculty of Arts

University of Glasgow

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ABSTRACT

In one of his publications, the politician and merchant Anthony Bacon asked if ‘some honest Persons, of plain Understanding, and of tolerable Judgement and Experience, could be engaged, at the Government’s Expence, to make the general Tour of *North America*’. This person, he thought, would be able to forge a connexion between the metropolitan centre and the far-flung reaches of America and improve the relationship between mother country and colony by increasing the level of understanding of the other on both sides of the Atlantic. Bacon appreciated that this lack of knowledge of their American brethren meant that British politics and politicians were often working with limited, or biased, information when formulating imperial policy.

This thesis analyses the ways six MPs with significant American connexions operated throughout the imperial crises of the 1760s and 1770s. It establishes that these men operated at the highest levels of British politics at this time and sought to create themselves as the predominant experts on the American colonies. In the debates on the nature of the British Empire throughout the 1760s and 1770s, these men were at the forefront of the political mind and, at least until the hardening of opinions in the 1770s, had an impact on the way in which the colonies were governed. More than that, however, this work has shown that – contrary to much earlier belief – the House of Commons in the later eighteenth century was not working in ignorance of the situation in the Americas: rather, there were a small but significant number of men with real and personal connexions to, and knowledge about, the colonies. As the imperial grounds shifted through the 1770s, however, even the most well-versed of these ‘American MPs’ began to appear to have suffered some disconnection from the colonial viewpoint.

This thesis takes into account the Atlantic and imperial networks under which these MPs worked and formed their political theories and opinions. In addition, it seeks in some way to bring the politics of the American Revolution into the fold of Atlantic History and to assess the ways in which those with the greatest experience of working in the peripheries of empire sought to reshape and reorganise its structure from the metropole after the close of the Seven Years War.

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INTRODUCTION

‘Unhappily England,’ commented a nobleman after the defeat of the British army at Yorktown, ‘bankrupt in genius as well as other resources does not offer one man [...] capable of preserving the Empire. An exuberancy of declamatory eloquence is to be found in either House of Parliament. But an individual where experience, judgement, integrity, sound discretion unite is not the produce of this season’.¹ The members of the House of Commons, certainly, generally had little personal acquaintance with the American colonies, and only five American-born MPs sat between 1763 and 1783.² As the great crises between Great Britain and British America in the 1760s and 1770s erupted into full-scale warfare, leading ministers were forced to try to comprehend both the nature of the American grievances and, perhaps more importantly, how to deal with them.

To what extent, therefore, did MPs during this critical time have connexions with, or knowledge of, the American colonies? Similarly, how did the members that sat in the House come to know America and what were their impressions of this new England across the Atlantic? In addition, did the men with any significant knowledge of the colonies find their political careers aided or hindered by it, and to what extent did this information affect the alliances they made and their general political trajectory? Finally, how did these ‘American MPs’ view the British Empire – to what extent did they, for example, adhere to the idea of an eighteenth century ‘Atlantic World’ in which Britain and her various American colonies (including the West Indies) were connected through bonds of language, culture, sovereignty and liberty?

The main purpose of this thesis, then, will be to examine the above questions. In order to do this, the dissertation will examine several MPs with *significant* American connexions through the 1760s and 1770s. In his book, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, Sir Lewis Namier established a list of sixteen MPs with, as he classed it, ‘acquaintance with the American colonies’.³ These men were the foremost experts on colonial issues and served in the House of Commons during much of the American Revolution; they were active and keen politicians and participated in many of the great Parliamentary debates of the

¹ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Lothian* (London: HMSO, 1905), p. 412. Quoted incorrectly in P. Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), pp. 516-17.

² L. Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1930), p. 230.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 229-33.

period. Their importance as a group, however, has as yet been somewhat ignored by historians. Most of the work on them thus far was conducted by Namier in the 1920s and included in his 'The House of Commons and America' chapter. This chapter's work is decidedly unfinished (Namier himself admits that it is the *zekher lekhuban* of the book)⁴ and is classed as 'interesting but less important' by Bellot and given almost no consideration by Pease in his review.⁵ Almost eighty years on, this unfinished chapter must now occasion some modern attention and study.

The Sixteen

The sixteen MPs are an odd collection of soldiers, merchants, civil servants, and colonial agents and representatives. Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Barré had served extensively in the Americas as a soldier and maintained an active and engaged interest in the colonies throughout his parliamentary career. Richard Jackson (nicknamed 'the omniscient Jackson') was the agent for Connecticut and assistant-agent for Massachusetts and was a friend of Edmund Burke and Benjamin Franklin, with whom he carried on a prolonged and somewhat verbose correspondence, published and annotated by Carl van Doren in 1947.⁶ Charles Garth was the agent for South Carolina. Edmund Burke was the agent for New York as well as a key historical figure and prolific writer. Thomas Pownall had been Lieutenant-Governor of New Jersey and Governor of Massachusetts, and he wrote extensively on the issues raised by the imperial crisis of the 1760s and 1770s and on the idea of 'Empire'. Thomas's elder brother, John Pownall, although serving in Parliament for a very short period of time (from November 1775 to May 1776), is also listed by Namier as one of the leading and influential American 'experts' in the House of Commons due to his position as Secretary to

⁴ 'Pious Jews in Eastern Europe, when building a new house, leave one place unfinished; it is called in Hebrew '*zekher lekhuban*' ('the memorial of destruction'), and commemorates the destruction of the Temple. I [Namier] had concluded my researches for the rest of this book, but not on the complex subject of the Colonial agents, when the Arab attack in Palestine, in August 1929, compelled me to relinquish my historical studies earlier than I had planned, and to take up work in the Jewish Agency for Palestine. After that I could do no more than complete the parts for which the material was ready; this unfinished chapter has to be the *zekher lekhuban* of my book'. *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁵ H.H. Bellot, '[Review of] England in the Age of the American Revolution', p. 678 and T. Pease, '[Review of] England in the Age of the American Revolution', *American Historical Review*, XXXVI No. 3 (April 1931), pp. 583-85.

⁶ C. Doren, *The Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson, 1753-1785* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1947).

the Board of Trade and Plantations. These men, in Namier's view, were the most learned and knowledgeable in Westminster regarding American affairs and American policies.⁷

There was, however, a sub-group of men 'less prominent as experts on America, but not unimportant' listed by Namier.⁸ These men were mainly merchants, traders and soldiers who had served or worked in, or traded extensively with, the American colonies. There were two merchants: Anthony Bacon, who traded extensively with the southern colonies and published several pamphlets on the relations between Britain and the Americas; and John Sargent, who also worked as a 'special agent' for New York. Admiral Sir Charles Hardy served extensively in the Americas with the Royal Navy and was Governor of New York from 1755 to 1757. William Harvey and William Amherst had served in the Americas during the Seven Years War. These 'secondary' MPs in Namier's list are more problematic than his original men, and there seems to be little reason for the inclusion of some of them as distinguished 'American' MPs. Whereas Bacon was a prominent member of the Commons who published work on the American problems and made several recorded speeches in the chamber, other MPs have left no discernable trail or record in the available sources.⁹ It seems unclear, therefore, why certain of these men were listed by Namier among the leading 'American' MPs when others, who were perhaps more prominent and had more influence throughout the period of the American Revolution were mentioned but are effectively ignored in this original list. For example, William Henry Lyttelton or Alexander Mackay, who had both served in the Americas (as Governor of South Carolina and Jamaica, and as a military officer, respectively), served as MPs for much of the 1760s and 1770s and spoke often in the House regarding American affairs and policies.

The final five MPs in the original sixteen are the least controversial. They are simply in the list because they were born in the Americas: John Huske and Paul Wentworth were born in New Hampshire; Barlow Trecothick was probably born at sea, but was raised in Boston; and Henry Cruger and Staats Long Morris in New York. Again, some of these men are more important for this study than others: Trecothick was an influential member of Rockingham's group while Wentworth never actually got to sit in the House – he was brought in by Administration for Saltash in 1780, but the dissolution was announced before he could take

⁷ Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, pp. 229-30.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁹ L. Namier and J. Brooke, *The History of Parliament The House of Commons, 1754-1790* (London: three vols, Secker and Warburg, 1985), II. 35-6: Bacon, Anthony (c. 1717-1786).

his seat and he came bottom of the poll at the following general election.¹⁰ Nevertheless, there seems little reason to argue with Namier's logic in including these American-born MPs (perhaps with the exception of Wentworth, who never truly served in the Commons).

Although Namier lists these sixteen MPs at the start of the chapter as the *most* significant, the rest of the chapter discusses several other MPs with similar qualifications and qualities. There are sections on the West Indians, naval and army officers, merchants and traders, and land speculators. All-in-all, there are well over 60 MPs with noteworthy connexions with the Americas between 1760 and 1780: this figure includes West Indians such as Rose Fuller and all army and naval officers who served in the Americas, as well as notable merchants who had significant interests in, or involvement with, the American colonies. While several of these men were important, some of them had little or nothing to say in the House of Commons about the American crises, or indeed anything else.

Nevertheless, there remains a core few men with significant documentary evidence to support historical analysis. For the purpose of this study, we shall look at six MPs who were listed by Namier as being heavily involved with, and knowledgeable about, the Americas. These MPs are: Anthony Bacon; Isaac Barré; Edmund Burke; Richard Jackson; Thomas Pownall; and Barlow Trecothick. Each of these MPs has been chosen as the main focus of this work for several reasons. They were all active and vocal in the House of Commons and sat for most, if not all, of the period of the American Revolution (c. 1760-1780). More than that, their speeches and correspondence are largely intact (for example, Edmund Burke's correspondence has been published several times in multiple volumes) and available to the historian for analysis. Perhaps of most importance, however, is the fact that each of these men held strong opinions on the nature of Empire and the 'imperial crisis' in the eighteenth century, and several of them shared these opinions, ideas and suggestions through pamphlets and other publications. There also exists for these men some secondary source work on which to begin and base my own research: Pownall, for example, has a biography and several articles written about him and his ideals, while works on Edmund Burke abound.¹¹

¹⁰ D.H. Watson, *Barlow Trecothick and other Associates of Lord Rockingham during the Stamp Act Crisis, 1765-1766* (unpublished MA dissertation: University of Sheffield, 1957) and Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, III. pp. 623-24; Wentworth, Paul (*d.* 1793).

¹¹ J.A. Schutz, *Thomas Pownall: British Defender of American Liberty. A Study of Anglo-American Relations in the Eighteenth Century* (California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1951); J.A. Schutz 'Thomas Pownall's

These MPs have been selected mainly because of the wealth of information available on their political activities, thoughts and opinions. However, they also represent a broad cross-section of the various 'types' of men who interested themselves in the Americas: the list contains former governors (Pownall), merchants (Bacon), soldiers (Barré), American colonials (Trecothick), and representatives of the various American assemblies (Jackson and Burke). Although the major focus will be on these six central MPs, the other MPs also connected with America will not be ignored through this study. Rather, where appropriate, various MPs will be used to support and augment the arguments and conclusions drawn to provide a greater wealth of evidence and a more wide-ranging and satisfying account. The overall hope, therefore, is to provide evidence of the impact these American expects had on British policy towards the colonies across the Atlantic and, in some way, perhaps Namier's unfinished chapter can be brought one step closer to completion.

Historiography of the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World

The debate over the American Revolution has, in the past half-century, shifted dramatically. Moving away from 'Progressive Interpretations' which focused on class conflicts in the Revolution, as championed by Carl L. Becker, into discussions of defending and fighting for democracy (such as that discussed by Robert E. Brown and B. Catherine Brown), and ultimately into issues of clashes of sovereignty, the debate has now largely moved away from legal and constitutional discussions. No modern-day historian regards George III as an absolute or arbitrary monarch trying to establish an English universal monarchy; and no historian now sees, in Lord North, a down-trodden, 'yes-man' first minister serving his monarch loyally and trying to extinguish liberty from the British Isles and American mainland. Likewise, historians – on both sides of the Atlantic – now see that, while the Americans did have grounds for their claims and cause, the British government was in an impossible position, could not understand or comprehend the American claims and demands, and sought only to strengthen *British* liberties throughout the Empire.¹² Recent historiography has therefore shifted its focus to deal largely with issues of nationality and the idea of an 'Atlantic World' in the eighteenth century in light of these new understandings.

Proposed Atlantic Federation', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXVI No. 2 (May, 1946), pp. 263-8; and G.H. Guttridge, 'Thomas Pownall's The Administration of the Colonies: The Six Editions', *William & Mary Quarterly*, XXVI No. 1 (January, 1969), pp. 31-46.

¹²A. Grant, *Our American Brethren: A History of Letters in the British Press During the American Revolution, 1775-1781* (London: McFarland, 1995), p. 1.

Much of the original work that this thesis is based on comes from Namier and those working in the Namierite tradition. This tradition is one which heavily influenced the interpretations of, and appreciation for, Parliamentary history for a number of decades. While not lacking in controversy at the time of publication (for example, Sir Herbert Butterfield attacked Namier for 'taking the ideas' out of history), this interpretation has done much to distance many American historians from the field of British politics and the War for Independence. Indeed, in this vein in 1957, Edmund Morgan wrote that the Namierists had worked to 'discredit, in different ways, the old Whig interpretation. The imperial historians have examined the running of the empire before the Revolution and pronounced it fair. The Navigation Acts, they have shown, were no cause for complaint. The Board of Trade did as good a job as could be expected'. This system of analysis did nothing, Morgan stated, to 'redeem the fallen Revolutionary patriots but rather show[ed] them up as hypocrites pursuing selfish interests while they mouth[ed] platitudes about democracy and freedom'. In this interpretation, the Revolutionaries' 'objections to parliamentary taxation are reduced to mere tax evasion, with the arguments shifting as the character of the taxes shifted. Their insistence on freedom and equality is shown to be insincere, because in setting up their own governments they failed to establish universal suffrage or proportional representation. They were, it would appear, eager to keep one foot on the lower classes while they kicked the British with the other'.¹³

More than that, however, Namier's attack on the Whigs and the Whig tradition left the American's main allies in Parliament – the Whigs, and especially the Rockinghamites – on uncomfortable ground. Namier and his students attacked the Whig tradition and great Whig leaders and spokesmen. 'This deflation of Fox and Burke and the other Rockingham Whigs,' Morgan noted, 'while accomplished with scarcely a glance in the direction of the colonies, nevertheless deprives the American revolutionists of a group of allies whose high-minded sympathy had been relied upon by earlier historians to help demonstrate the justice of the American cause'.¹⁴ Morgan stressed, however, that this change in the perception of British politics was not done to alter American Revolutionary historiography: quite the contrary, the Namierites were working without America at the forefront of their mind and were interested merely in the British political world in the British Isles, while those studying the War for Independence were forced to adapt to these new interpretations. The state of

¹³ E. Morgan, 'The American Revolution: Revisions in Need of Revising', *William and Mary Quarterly*, XIV, No. 1 (January 1957), pp. 4-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

the study of British politics in the eighteenth century at Morgan's time of writing left him to believe that Britain should effectively be removed from the equation. He suggested instead that 'without abandoning what we have gained from the imperial idea and from economic interpretations, we must dissect the local institutions which produced the American Revolution, the institutions from which were distilled the ideas that enabled men of that age to stand as the architects of modern liberty'.¹⁵ In other words, historians interested in the founding of the United States should, Morgan suggested, look principally at the *American* aspect, studying local American politics, society and economy, while effectively side-lining the role played by British politics.

This decision was made in a large part because of the ideas of Namierism. Namier believed that ideas played no role in the politics of the eighteenth century Houses of Parliament. Men were interested only in local concerns and voted along those lines. More than that, they were heavily influenced by the social circles in which they moved, and voted along these lines. The older distinctions of party – and, crucially, party ideology – were washed away by Namier. This transformation of British politics left American historians on difficult ground: if principles, belief, party played no part in eighteenth century British politics, how could the grand ideologies of the American Revolution be compared and discussed meaningfully in a wider imperial framework? As a result of this, those interested in the American Revolution have paid since the 1950s only a passing interest in the role of British politics during the Revolution.

By 1997, however, T.H. Breen was able to revise some of the claims made by Morgan. Breen established that Morgan had summed up Namier as producing 'iconoclastic writings [which] depicted an empire governed by narrow-minded, complacent country gentlemen who defined politics almost solely as a scramble for patronage'.¹⁶ Breen stressed, however, that Morgan's revisions were then in need of further revision. He argued that while Namier's work might have 'soured American historians on the society that produced George III and Lord Bute, the newer literature has had just the opposite effect'. This new work draws attention 'back to Great Britain, to a highly commercial, modernising North Atlantic world, and to a shifting relation between an expansive metropolitan state and a loosely integrated group of American colonies'. Breen argued that this reinterpretation of the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-5.

¹⁶ T. Breen, 'Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising', *Journal of American History* LXXXIV, No.1 (June, 1997), p. 13.

British – or the Atlantic – political world did two things: ‘first, the recent work fundamentally recasts how we think about the origins and development of American nationalism. And second, it provides new insights into the character of popular political ideology on the eve of independence, suggesting why the natural rights liberalism associated with John Locke had broader emotional appeal during this period than did classical republicanism or civic humanism’.¹⁷ These new appreciations for, and understandings of, the nature and shape of the British political, social and economic world meant that historians now saw a ‘newly aggressive English state’ which worked to ‘force the Americans to leap out of history and to defend colonial and human equality on the basis of timeless natural rights’.¹⁸ While this is perhaps a bit grand and self-congratulatory, it has allowed once more for American historians to re-engage with their British brethren and to once more connect their works across the Atlantic.

This thesis aims to use these new interpretations to recast the role played by the House of Commons in the American Revolution once more. It aims not to revive all of what Namier and his school did, but seeks to salvage what was good in their approach (notably, for example, a prosopographical approach to understanding real imperial connexions amongst MPs). It seeks to abandon the interpretative biases inherent in the works of Namier and reinsert concepts such as ‘party’ and ‘ideology’ back into the British political world at this time in order to once again connect ‘patriots’, ‘loyalists’ and others with ‘Administration’, ‘Opposition’ and others on both sides of the Atlantic. In some small way, it hopes to place once again British politics – and British politicians – at the very centre of the American Revolution.

Nationalism and National Identity

The archetypal work on British nationalism, or Britishness, has to be Linda Colley’s *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*.¹⁹ The groundbreaking book places the development of a sense of British nationalism in a political and social context. Colley’s main argument is that it was Protestantism that allowed for the formation of a powerful sense of Britishness to develop in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. ‘Protestantism,’ Colley argues ‘was the foundation that made the invention of Great Britain possible’ and it ‘provided the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁹ L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Yale University Press, 1992).

majority of Britons with a framework for their lives'.²⁰ Of perhaps equal importance to the formation of the Briton, in Colley's opinion, is the constant threat from the French 'Other': 'Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and above all in response to conflict with the Other'.²¹

Colley further explains why Britons chose to be patriotic and support the Hanoverian regime. As she points out, it has been argued before that the Hanoverian dynasty – established after the death of the last Stuart monarch, Queen Anne, in 1714 – relied heavily on military force and a slim political and social base to remain in power. That argument, likewise, suggests that Britons had 'nothing to choose between the "close-knit élite" oppressing them at home, and the "absolutism of Bourbon France"'.²² Colley establishes, however, that this was not necessarily the case: Hanoverian politics and society, although still dominated to a large degree by the landed aristocracy, were heavily influenced by trade and commercialism. This belief, that trade – especially long-distance trade – and commercial pursuits were the basis of English, or British, liberty, wealth and power infiltrated all aspects of society. The logical conclusion, therefore, was that stability in government (particularly after the tumults of the Jacobite uprisings) was paramount to maintaining wealth, property and prosperity. Patriotism, at least in the years of the reigns of George I and George II, was therefore a self-motivated economic concern as much as anything else.²³

Likewise, Tamara L. Hunt's monograph, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England*, analyses how Britons saw themselves through the use of caricature and propaganda during the reign of George III.²⁴ The work, which has surpassed that of Dorothy George's *English Political Caricature* according to one review,²⁵ looks specifically at how the depictions of various national symbols (notably Britannia and John Bull) tells us about the national character and national identity.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²² F.J. McLynn, *France and the Jacobite Rising of 1745*, in *ibid.*, p. 55.

²³ Colley, *Britons*, p. 55.

²⁴ T.L. Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

²⁵ D. George, *English Political Caricature: A Study of Opinion and Propaganda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) and M. Baer, '[Review of] *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England*', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, XXXVI No. 4 (winter, 2004), pp. 717-718.

Hunt's central line of argument is that the replacement of Britannia with John Bull in the late-eighteenth century as the main national symbol shows a transformation in how Britons viewed themselves. Britannia, which had been the national emblem of Britain since Roman times and which had undergone somewhat of a revival under the latter Stuarts (particularly during Charles II's reign), slowly became replaced by the image of John Bull as the representative of the nation.²⁶ Part of the reason for this, Hunt explains, was due to worry over the increasing roles of woman in British politics.²⁷ Perhaps more significantly, however, the shift away from the classical, feminine, vulnerability of Britannia to the respectable, strong-willed, industrious, Francophobe John Bull shows a development in the national character of Britons. That is to say, Britons, as Colley likewise established, began to class themselves as different from the idle, slothful, and – crucially – Catholic Europeans.²⁸

Hunt also deals with how the American War for Independence impacted on the image of John Bull. In *The Bull Roasted; or the Political Cooks Serving their Customers*, we see George III, Lord Bute, America, France and Spain cooking and eating parts of a bull, which is clearly meant to represent the people. Similarly, *John Bull Triumphant* 'depicts a rampaging bull threatening figures representing America and her European allies' and, to disparage the British government, further shows 'Lord North, Bute, and others restraining the bull'.²⁹ Generally, however, most of the attacks in the prints are on America's European partners. Colley also discussed this theme in some detail and likewise comes to the conclusion that Britons found it difficult to 'hate' their American brethren: 'this time the enemy was not Roman Catholic. And while High Church clerics might find it easy to condemn the American colonists as latter-day puritans and vile republicans, large numbers of ordinary [Britons] seem to have felt persistently uncomfortable about going to war with their co-religionists across the Atlantic'.³⁰

T.H. Breen has taken this type of study further: he has looked primarily at how each side of the Atlantic, Britain and America, were connected through trade and shared culture.³¹ Unlike Colley, however, Breen sees an empire attempting to accommodate and adjust to

²⁶ Hunt, *Defining John Bull*, pp. 121-22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-40.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁰ Colley, *Britons*, p. 137.

³¹ See, for example, T.H. Breen, 'An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776', *Journal of British Studies* XXV, No. 4 (October, 1986), pp. 467-99 and T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

English national identity.³² At first, he explains, Americans tried to be more British than Britons, and proclaimed their loyalty to the kingdom and the House of Hanover. Soon, however, Americans realised that they were in fact not British brethren. By the mid-1760s, Americans began to complain of what they viewed to be their second-rate status in an English empire: ‘We won’t be their Negroes [...] I say we are as handsome as old English folks, and so should be as free’.³³ Similarly, James Otis Jr, asked whether the inhabitants of British America were ‘all a parcel of transported thieves, robbers and rebels, or descended from such? Are the colonists blasted lepers,’ he asked, ‘whose company would infect the whole House of Commons?’.³⁴ Breen’s main argument here, then, is that it was *English* nationalism, and the development thereof, that forced Americans to think of themselves as separate and distinct from Britons.

Discussions of nationality have, naturally, been drawn to look at how the members of the Atlantic World compared, likened, and contrasted themselves against both external foes (notably, the French Catholic ‘Other’) and fellow members of the empire (Britons in Britain versus ‘Britons’ in America). The question, then, is how historians have constructed an understanding of the eighteenth century British Empire and what the debate regarding it is.

Atlantic History

At the end of the nineteenth century, John Robert Seeley published perhaps one of the greatest selling books on the issue of the British Empire. *The Expansion of England*, first published in 1883, protested against the separation of British and British Empire history, of domestic and imperial history, and looked to include the white settler colonies (America, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa) into a general imperial history.³⁵ After almost 100 years, and the extinction of the British Empire, the calls for a ‘Greater British history’ were rekindled by J.G.A. Pocock in 1973. Pocock argued in favour of placing British history in its proper terms: he advocated looking at *all* of British history (that is, including England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and the American colonies across the Atlantic), at least until American independence.³⁶

³² T.H. Breen, ‘Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising’, *Journal of American History*, LXXXIV, No. 1 (June, 1997), p. 24.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

³⁵ J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1883).

³⁶ Pocock suggests that ‘the British decision to abandon claims to the Ohio country in 1783 would do as a date [for removing the American colonies – notably, except Canada – from ‘British history’ as at that

It was in this light, for example, that Jack P. Greene tried to place American constitutional problems (both during and after the Revolution) into a wider, Atlantic, context. His work, *Peripheries and Centre: Constitutional Developments in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and United States, 1607-1788*, suggests that the generally-accepted belief that post-Revolutionary American constitutional issues were a clean break from English, or British, constitutional practice is flawed.³⁷ On the contrary, Greene states, that the concerns over, firstly, American liberty in the British Empire and, secondly, American liberty as part of the United States, comes from the disagreement between metropolitan officials anxious to stamp central (or imperial) authority on a group of provincial locals (in Ireland, Scotland, England or North America) who identified themselves as freeborn Britishmen with local autonomy. Disagreements naturally followed, then, over rights of life, liberty, property, and Parliamentary sovereignty.

The major issue of contention, according to Greene, was the separation of colonial and British understandings of the role of the King-in-Parliament. While, in the British Isles, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had permanently stamped the authority of Parliament over the three kingdoms, Americans continued to believe themselves to be subject to the authority of the Crown, and the Crown alone. In their minds, the various American legislatures were miniature examples of Westminster-in-the-wilderness and were not subject to Parliamentary authority.³⁸

More recently, there have been attempts at placing British early modern and colonial American (note the different names to describe effectively the same period on either side of the Atlantic)³⁹ into one category for analysis. As David Armitage points out, however:

The work of Bernard Bailyn, Jack Greene, Ned Landsman, Susan O'Brien, David Cressy, David Hackett Fischer, Stephen Foster, Joyce Chaplin, James Horn, David Hancock, and Eliga Gould, among others, has amply revealed the necessity for historians of British America to attend to the [...] history of Britain and Ireland in their studies of the politics of the northwestern Atlantic basin, especially in the period before 1783. Early modern British history has become indispensable for

time] one has to begin ceasing to regard the history of the United States as "British history", to the extent to which that culture passes out of the archipelagic and Atlantic world and into a continental orbit of its own'. J.G.A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *Journal of Modern History*, XLVII, No. 4 (December, 1975), p. 618.

³⁷ J.P. Greene, *Peripheries and Centre: Constitutional Developments in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and United States, 1607-1788* (London: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, particularly chapter six, pp. 105-28.

³⁹ D. Armitage, 'Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?', *American Historical Review*, CIV, No. 2 (April, 1999), p. 435.

historians of colonial America: why, then, have British historians almost completely failed to join hands across the ocean with colonial Americanists?⁴⁰

The combination of studies of British history and American history, Armitage suggests, would remove the problems of ‘American particularism’ and of ‘Anglo-British self-congratulation’. He further points out, however, that should historians ignore the various island colonies in the Caribbean and the Canadian territories, that ‘Atlantic’ history would turn into ‘the acceptable face of American (for which, read “*United States of American*”) exceptionalism’.⁴¹

Similarly, historians have recently been looking at just how British the Empire actually was. Armitage, again, looks at how increasing involvement of (particularly) Scots in the far-flung reaches of the British world destroyed a predominantly English Empire and replaced it with a truly British one.⁴² Likewise, Stephen Brumwell explains how the forging of a sense of Britishness amongst the redcoats in the American wilderness helped to cement a British national identity that included Scots.⁴³ So important is this fact to Brumwell’s argument, that he devotes an entire chapter to the experience of Highlanders in the American army: he discusses here how it was ‘through these costly campaigns [in the Americas and Caribbean] that the Highlanders established the reputation that was to gain them a permanent place within the structure of the British Army’.⁴⁴ Brumwell is careful to point out, however, that even in the 1760s, English ‘Scottophobia’ and even ‘soldier-phobia’, made particularly potent because of the impact of John Stuart, Earl of Bute, and his supposed illicit dealings with the young George III’s mother, had not entirely vanished.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the full inclusion of Scottish Highland regiments in the Americas meant that the “‘American Army” prefigured notions of “Britishness” that would only reach fruition within society at large during the more protracted struggle against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France’.⁴⁶

Looking more specifically at the ‘Idea of Empire’ in the eighteenth century Atlantic World, Eliga Gould has produced several works discussing the nature of American national identity

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 438. His emphasis.

⁴² D. Armitage, ‘Making the Empire British: Scotland and the Atlantic World, 1542-1707’, *Past and Present*, CLV (May, 1997), pp. 34-63.

⁴³ S. Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and the War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 288. For some more discussion on the position of the armed forces in Britain, see L. Schwoerer, *No Standing Armies! The Anti-army Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1974).

⁴⁶ Brumwell, *Redcoats*, p. 289.

before, and during, the Imperial Crisis of the 1760s and 1770s and at how the British reacted to, and dealt with, the loss of the American colonies. Gould notes that, 'of the Whig regime's various outlying provinces [...] none appear to have been more susceptible to these metrocentric tendencies than the English-speaking colonies on the North American seaboard'. Further, he goes on to say, 'early Americanists generally concede that on the revolution's eve Anglomania was a far more conspicuous feature of colonial society than the separatist sentiments that appeared so suddenly during the controversy over parliamentary taxation'. Moreover, Gould establishes that it was this 'Anglomania' and patriotism that 'helped British authorities gain a far broader voluntary obedience than they possibly could have hoped to secure through more authoritarian forms of government'.⁴⁷

Gould interestingly turns the discussion on its head: Americans, he claimed, rebelled against George III and his ministers not because they had become too 'American' but, rather, because 'they had become so thoroughly "British" that they refused to sacrifice any of the rights of self-government enjoyed by their cousins on the European side of the Atlantic'.⁴⁸ Gould's main argument here is that it was a sense of Britishness throughout both the First and Second British Empires that secured their success. He establishes that, although the British Imperial state could, and did, act unilaterally with force on occasion (for example, over the slave trade), generally the empire remained connected because of a shared nationality and consciousness. It was ultimately, in his opinion, therefore the creation of new nationalities (Australian, Canadian, South African, and so on) which superseded the British one in the colonies which led to the dismemberment of the Empire in the twentieth century.⁴⁹

In his book, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution*, Gould further points out why many Americans chose to rebel in the 1770s. If, as he and others had already suggested, the British Empire in the eighteenth century was made up from Britons in Britain and Britons in the Americas, then rebellion and revolution would seem an odd choice. As Gould points out, however, Britons and colonists were 'armchair patriots': instead of marching off to war, waving the Union Flag, Britons paid taxes.⁵⁰ When the Americans therefore refused to pay taxes, they stopped being patriotic and – to some

⁴⁷ E. Gould, 'A Virtual Nation: Greater Britain and the Imperial Legacy of the American Revolution', *American Historical Review*, CIV, No. 2 (April, 1999), p. 480.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 481.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 485-489.

⁵⁰ E. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 163.

extent – stopped being British. It was this removal of Americans as Britons from national consciousness that, for example, stopped the Forms of Prayer in Anglican services after 1778 as referring to the Americans as rebels; rather, they had now become foreign enemies.⁵¹

Stephen Conway's work on the impact of the War for American Independence on the British Isles must also be considered.⁵² In this monograph, Conway discusses the various aspects to the American Revolution in the British Isles, looking at troop mobilisation, the economy, society, culture, politics (local and national) and identity (again, local and national). Interestingly, Conway's conclusions on nationality are that regional identities (such as Welsh or Irish) cohabited with, and contributed to, an overall sense of Britishness. The Revolution, Conway argues, was the testing ground for the type of Britishness that developed during the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. Moreover, in direct contrasts to Piers Mackesy's statement that 'the struggle which opened at Lexington was the last great war of the *ancien régime*' he suggests that the American Revolution was not the last war of the old order, but the first of the new one due to the levels of troop mobilisation and the deep impact it had on everyday society.⁵³

Finally, as mentioned above, any discussion of the Atlantic World in the eighteenth century *must* contain reference to the West Indies. Not to include discussion on this topic, as has all too often been the case, leaves a wide gap in our understanding of the Anglo-American Empire. In that vein, Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy's recent book, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean*, 'aims to redress the omission of the British West Indies from the scholarship of the American Revolution'.⁵⁴ O'Shaughnessy's book looks at why the West Indies remained loyal to the Crown during the American Revolution and the impact this loyalty had on the islands in the longer term. His main conclusions are that the West Indies remained loyal for self-motivated reasons: they were, in O'Shaughnessy's words, 'sojourners' with no real alternative culture to combat the British

⁵¹ J.L. Bullion, '[Review of] The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, XXXIII, No. 1 (Spring, 2001), pp. 122-25.

⁵² S. Conway, *The British Isles and the War for American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵³ Mackesy, *The War for America*, p. 4; and Conway, *The British Isles and the War for American Independence*, pp. 13-29.

⁵⁴ A.J. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. xii.

metropolitan influence.⁵⁵ Moreover, the large proportion of black slaves – and therefore, fears amongst the white populations of unrest, revolt and rebellion from their slaves – meant that ‘the island colonies [had] created a white garrison mentality whose intensity reflected local racial demographic patterns’. As a result, therefore, the armed forces in the West Indies were not viewed as the tool of an evil oppressing tyrant as they were on the American mainland; instead, the ‘besieged minority’ of whites on the islands relied heavily on, and requested a more obvious presence from, the armed forces to protect them. The West Indians were, therefore, dependent on British imperial might for their own survival.⁵⁶

All of the above research has, ultimately, provided a solid bedrock on which this work can be based. As leading members, and examples, of the ‘Atlantic Community’ and ‘Atlantic Empire’, the ‘American’ MPs provide us with an alternative and interesting account of this idea. Moreover, this thesis aims to fill some of the gap mentioned by Armitage above by looking to include British history into the wider context of the Atlantic Empire. In this vein, British history can hopefully to some small degree begin to ‘join hands across the ocean with colonial Americanists’.⁵⁷ Similarly, by looking at how the men viewed their national identity in the Empire, the dissertation aims to augment our understanding of nationalism and Britishness in the eighteenth century Anglophone world.

Thesis layout

This thesis will be split into four main thematic chapters. The first two chapters deal with the actions of MPs with American connexions in the House of Commons from the close of the Seven Years War in 1763 to the passage of the Coercive Acts and Quebec Act in 1774. These chapters are built from the vast wealth of information on Parliamentary debates recorded (especially from the mid- to late-1760s) by diarists, newspapers, and interested individuals.

The first of these two chapters, titled ‘Governing an Empire: The House of Commons and America’ analyses the reaction of the American MPs to the Stamp Act, the Stamp Act Crisis, the Townshend Duties, and the Townshend Duties Crisis. It stops just before the Boston Tea

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

⁵⁷ Armitage, ‘Greater Britain’, p. 435.

Party. Looking at British politics in the 1760s, the chapter shows and discusses the myriad ways in which the American MPs established themselves as the leading experts on all things colonial, and the impact they had on imperial policies at this time. Unlike during the passing of the Coercive Acts, the MPs here held sway over the House of Commons and were able at times to change and alter the ways in which Britons attempted to govern their empire. More than that, however, this chapter shows that the House of Commons was in fact far more knowledgeable about the colonies than previously thought: while the focus remains on the core MPs here mentioned, the work shows that from the 1750s through to the early 1780s, there were over one-hundred MPs with personal knowledge of, or connexion to, the American colonies.

The second chapter, 'Losing an Empire: the House of Commons and America' focuses on the British political reaction to the Boston Tea Party, through the Coercive Acts and the passing of the Quebec Act. Following on from the first chapter, this section details the ways in which the MPs' opinions on America had changed, developed or become unworkable. This chapter proves, firstly, that the House of Commons was not ignorant as to American affairs or the likelihood of an American rebellion in response to their actions. Rather, it shows that the American MPs tried – and tried hard – to explain to an uninterested House the real nature of American resistance. More than that, however, it shows a lack of connexion between the imperial MPs and the Americas: the expert opinions held so dear throughout the 1760s had, by the mid 1770s, become outdated. The American situation, and the cries of the colonists, was no longer truly in tune with the majority of the MPs here studied. This chapter analyses the reaction of the MPs to the various pieces of legislation passed as part of the Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act, and details the ways in which these connected men viewed the British Empire as it started to come unstuck.

'Truths Which Should Be Known: The Political Texts of Bacon and Pownall', the third chapter, focuses on the political publications and writings of the men. The main focus here is on Pownall and Bacon as these men published several pamphlets and books on the issues of the American colonies and the American Revolution. Major political works by these men, such as Pownall's *Administration of the Colonies* and Bacon's *A Short Address to the Government by a Member of Parliament*, are analysed in turn, along with discussion of their importance to contemporary politics and politicians. As Pownall's works went through several editions from the 1760s to the 1780s, some focus is also on why the changes to each edition were made in order to track Pownall's changing conception of Empire, the American

colonies, and the Atlantic World. Moreover, this chapter will compare the authors' works, and will discuss how contemporaries and historians have viewed and used the publications through time. The major purpose of this chapter is to establish what insight the authors' works give us into their Empire-related thoughts and opinions during the American Revolution.

The final chapter, titled 'An Empire of Liberty? The British Atlantic World' analyses in some depth how the MPs viewed the British Empire. In more detail, this chapter looks at the ideas of Empire and the Atlantic World in the eighteenth century, particularly with regards to the colonies in the Americas (although not limited solely to them). The chapter discusses how the men viewed *their* Empire before the onset of the Revolution, and how the destruction of Anglo-America in the 1770s affected their conceptions of the Grand Marine Dominion forged between Britain and her New World colonies. This chapter makes use of recent advances in our understanding of the eighteenth century British Empire and, further, looks at how the MPs' ideas of sovereignty and imperial relations both affected contemporary politics and how they fit with what is our modern-day understanding of colonisation and metropolitan authority in the eighteenth century.

The Six

Our 'American' MPs formed no cohesive or single group in Parliament: some opposed all of the North Administration's American policies; some opposed a few of the policies; and some worked with the government. The study of the men herein is not an attempt to assign any particular label or group to the men other than that of 'American expert'. The men are interesting in that they were contemporaries of roughly the same age (the eldest being Anthony Bacon, who was baptised in 1717, and the youngest Edmund Burke, who was born in 1729) who shared an interest in, and knowledge of, the American colonies at a time when that expertise was most crucial. Although certain of the men were personally connected (for example, Burke and Jackson were friends, and both were good friends of Benjamin Franklin), they each used their knowledge of the American colonies in separate and distinct manners, and to different ends.

Anthony Bacon

Baptised in 1717 at St Bees, Cumberland, Anthony Bacon, son of William Bacon and Elizabeth *née* Richardson, was born into a merchant and naval family. His father and

grandfather were ships' captains and made coal runs between Whitehaven and Ireland, although his father also made several voyages to Chesapeake.⁵⁸ By 1738, Bacon was made master of the *York* and became involved in the Maryland tobacco trade working with the leading tobacco merchant in London, John Hanbury. Upon moving to London in the 1740s, Bacon became heavily involved in the Atlantic trade: he traded extensively with Maryland and, by the 1750s, had added a significant number of connexions in Virginia and the Spanish wine trade to his portfolio.⁵⁹

During the Seven Years War, Bacon worked as an important and essential contractor for, initially, the Royal Navy and also the army. He traded extensively with outposts in Africa and the West Indies, provided pay and provisions to the army and navy, and leased slave labour in the Caribbean islands to the army for the building of fortifications. In 1760, he was very briefly appointed as agent for North Carolina's Lower House to provide a petition to the House of Commons: 'to present this address they appointed Anthony Bacon, a merchant of London, as special agent. A few days later the lower house again passed a combined aid and agent bill which substituted Bacon for Abercrombie'. Bacon was caught between the colonial assembly and the colonial governor: the assembly refused to accept that it did not have the power to appoint agents, while the governor refused to accept that it did. After numerous attempts to install Bacon as their agent, and seriously challenging the relationship between governor and assembly, Governor Dobbs dissolved the assembly.⁶⁰ In order to further his government connexions, Bacon attempted to enter the House of Commons. In 1763 he stood for, but was defeated, after an 'expensive and riotous' election in Honiton.⁶¹ He nevertheless achieved election to the borough of Aylesbury (which had previously been represented by John Wilkes) in 1764. Bacon built a strong interest in the 'squalid and venal' seat, survived two contested elections in 1774 and 1780, and ultimately served until 1784.⁶²

Bacon was mostly quiet and unremarkable debater in the House of Commons: he spoke against Grenville's proposal for taxing American imports; introduced a Bill, in 1764, to prohibit paper currency in the American colonies from becoming legal; claimed to have

⁵⁸ J. Price, 'Bacon, Anthony (*bp.* 1717, *d.* 1786)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edition,) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50608>, accessed 2 April 2008].

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ B. Bond, 'The Colonial Agent as a Popular Representative', *Political Science Quarterly*, XXXV, No. 3 (September, 1920), pp. 372-92.

⁶¹ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, II. 35: Bacon, Anthony (c. 1717-86).

⁶² *Ibid.*, I. 214-15: Aylesbury.

opposed the Townshend duties ('a more absurd or insufficient tax was never conceived, both with respect to the Americans or ourselves'); and eventually fell into line and consistently supported the North Administration.⁶³

Of greater importance than his parliamentary activities were Bacon's publications: he wrote three pamphlets on the American crises in the 1760s and 1770s. *The True Interest of Great Britain, with respect to her American colonies, and impartially considered, by a Merchant of London*, published in 1776, argued against the Stamp Act and opposed most forms of British taxation of the American colonies. The pamphlet is exceptionally careful to point out that any criticisms made are not being levied against the government, or any individual ministers, but are instead critiques of the 'system'.⁶⁴ Likewise, *Considerations on the Present State of the North American Colonies*, published in 1769 and *A Short Address to the Government, the Merchants, Manufacturers and the Colonists in America, and the Sugar Islands, on the Present State of Affairs, by a Member of Parliament*, published in 1775, look at Britain's deteriorating relationship with her colonies from a mercantile viewpoint and put a heavy focus on issues of taxation, trade and commerce. The pamphlets, nevertheless, provide an interesting insight into how a merchant member of the Atlantic World viewed the collapse of the imperial system in the 1760s and 1770s.

Bacon has largely been ignored by historians: Namier compiled his entry for the History of Parliament volumes and also wrote an article, in 1929, on him and his business and political activities.⁶⁵ While he seems to be a relatively well-known MP amongst historians, there has been little direct attention on him. Most interest in him is made in a passing or cursory way, or to highlight a certain point (usually the lack of any in-depth studies on merchants and the Empire). For example, in *Citizens of the World* by David Hancock, Bacon is mentioned only in a footnote and in reference to Namier's work mentioned above: 'London's merchants remain largely unstudied, and the influence of London on trans-Atlantic commerce has seldom been explored [...] there are some exceptions [such as] the dozen or so biographical accounts of Augustan London merchants written by Lewis Namier and his followers'.⁶⁶

⁶³ *Ibid.*, II. 35: Bacon, Anthony (c. 1717-86).

⁶⁴ B.L., 104.i.8, [A. Bacon], *The True Interest of Great Britain, with respect to her American colonies, and impartially considered, by a Merchant of London* (London: Printed for G. Kearsley, 1776).

⁶⁵ L. Namier, 'Anthony Bacon, M.P., An Eighteenth-Century Merchant', *Journal of Economic and Business History*, II (November, 1929), pp. 20-70.

⁶⁶ D. Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integrations of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 6. See, similarly, W. Roberts,

Isaac Barré

Born in Dublin in 1726, Barré was the son of two Huguenot refugees, Peter Barré and Marie Madelaine, *née* Raboteau. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, Barré initially was intended to serve at the bar, but chose – against his parents wishes – to focus on a career in the army. His career was a distinguished one: he was commissioned as an ensign in the 32nd foot in 1746; was promoted to lieutenant in 1755 and to captain in 1757. He saw active service at Louisburg in 1758 and at Quebec in 1759, where he lost an eye after being struck by a bullet. On the death of Wolfe, his military patron, he returned to Britain and was made captain in the 28th foot. By 1761, and through the patronage and friendship of Lord Shelburne, Barré was promoted to lieutenant-colonel in the 106th and was brought into the House of Commons on 5 December in that year.⁶⁷ Barré sat, from 1761 until 1774, for the uncontested borough of Chipping Wycombe and from October 1774 to 1790 for Calne in Wiltshire.⁶⁸

Upon entering the House of Commons, Barré immediately made a large impact. He was described by Horace Walpole as follows:

My ear was struck with sounds I had little been accustomed to of late, virulent abuse on the last reign, and from a voice unknown to me. I turned and saw a face equally new; a black robust man, of a military figure, rather hard-favoured than not young, with a particular distortion on one side of his face, which it seems was owing to a bullet lodged loosely in his cheek, and which gave a savage glare to one eye. What I expected less from his appearance, was very classic and eloquent diction, and as determined boldness as if accustomed to harangue in that place. He told the House that in the late King's reign we had been governed solely by Hanoverian measures and councils; and although called to order (in truth unparliamentarily,) he proceeded with the same vociferous spirit to censure all ministers but Lord Bute; and for Mr. Pitt, who was not present, he received the appellation of a profligate minister, who had thrust himself into power on the shoulders of the mob [...] The reader must imagine the astonishment occasioned by this martial censor. He was a Colonel Barré, of French extraction, born at Dublin, and had served for some years in the war in America with reputation, prosecuting his studies with assiduity in the intervals of duty [...] In his younger years he had acted plays with so much applause, that, it was said, Garrick had ordered him a thousand pounds a-year to come upon the stage.⁶⁹

Ironically, later in his career and despite this initial attack, Barré supported the Chathamite policy that Parliament had no right to tax the American colonies. It was in this vein, for example, that he coined the phrase of 'Sons of Liberty': a phrase which described the

⁶⁷ 'Samuel Storke: An Eighteenth-Century London Merchant Trading to the American Colonies', *Business History Review*, XXXIX, No. 2 (Summer, 1965), pp. 147-170.

⁶⁷ P.D.G. Thomas, 'Barré, Isaac (1726–1802)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1509>, accessed 1 April 2008].

⁶⁸ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, I. 216: Chipping Wycombe and I. 408: Calne.

⁶⁹ H. Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of King George the Third* (London: Lea and Blanchard, 1845), pp. 73-5.

American colonists so well, they adopted it themselves.⁷⁰ He consistently used his knowledge and experience of the Americas to forewarn the largely ignorant House of Commons on the dangers of trying to quash American designs through the use of military means. He did, however, follow the Chathamite line in 1774 when he supported the Boston Port Bill and demanded a strong Parliamentary reaction to the 'outrage' of the Boston Tea Party.⁷¹

Being a somewhat more renowned Member of Parliament, Barré has occasioned a much larger volume of work on him than Bacon above. His name and discussion of some of his Parliamentary activities appear in almost every text regarding British politics and the American Revolution,⁷² but there is no real definitive account of his career. Notably, however, in 1848, John Britton wrote a book, titled *The Authorship of the Letters of Junius Elucidated: Including a Biographical Memoir of Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Barré, M.P.*, in which he suggests that it was Barré, along with the help of Lord Shelburne, who was the mysterious author of the Junius letters.⁷³ While his conclusions are almost certainly wrong,⁷⁴ it is nevertheless interesting that Barré was considered a prominent enough politician and political figure to be considered as a possible Junius.

Edmund Burke

Given the vast quantities of work already completed on Burke, any attempts at sketching a biography here would appear to be redundant and unnecessary.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, he stood for Wendover from 1765 to 1774; for Bristol (a seat with properly contested elections) from 1774 to 1780; and for Malton from 1780 to 1794. Furthermore, from 1771 to 1776, Burke was employed by New York provincial assembly as its agent. Burke's Parliamentary career is marked by two main themes: he was an excellent orator, with a keen intellect and great

⁷⁰ 'The Sons of Liberty', *New York Historical Society Quarterly* (1917), p. 338-9.

⁷¹ P.D.G. Thomas, 'Barré, Isaac (1726–1802)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1509>, accessed 1 April 2008].

⁷² See, for example, B. Donoghue, *British Politics and the American Revolution: The Path to War, 1776-75* (London: Macmillan, 1964); P.D.G. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Conway, *The British Isles and the War for American Independence*; and C. Ritcheson, *British Politics and the American Revolution* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954).

⁷³ B.L., 8007.f.13, J. Britton, *The Authorship of the Letters of Junius Elucidated: Including a Biographical Memoir of Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Barré, M.P.*, (London: Printed for the author and sold by J.R. Smith, 1848).

⁷⁴ See, for example, L. Katritzky, *Johnson and the Letters of Junius: New Perspectives on an Old Enigma* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

⁷⁵ Instead, see F.P. Lock, *Edmund Burke* (Oxford: two vols, Clarendon Press, 1998 and 2006). See also, D. Bryant, 'Edmund Burke: A Generation of Scholarship and Discovery', *Journal of British Studies*, II, No. 1 (November, 1962), pp. 91-114.

abilities; he never, however, developed leadership skills and, as a result, his career as a practical politician never reached the heights perhaps expected from his gifts.⁷⁶ Although different from the rest of the six MPs inasmuch as he never visited the Americas, Burke's extensive correspondence with Americans, and his understanding of colonial issues has meant he cannot be omitted from any list of American experts.

Burke's view on the Empire, and on the American crises, are easily summed in a speech by him in the Commons on 19 April 1774:

The Parliament of Great Britain sits at the head of her extensive empire in two capacities: one as the local legislature of this island, providing for all things at home, immediately, and by no other instrument than the executive power. The other, and I think the nobler capacity, is what I call her *imperial character*, in which, as from the throne of heaven, she superintends all the several inferior legislatures, and guides and controls them all, without annihilating any. As all these provincial legislatures are only co-ordinate with each other, they ought all to be subordinate to her; else they can neither preserve mutual peace nor hope for mutual justice nor effectually afford mutual assistance. It is necessary to coerce the negligent, to restrain the violent, and to aid the weak and deficient by the over-ruling plenitude of her power.⁷⁷

He likewise showed a sense of the connexions between the various parts and members of Greater Britain when talking of his relationships with Rockingham when he stated that 'we know not in what mountain of Scotland, what bog of Ireland, or what wild in America, that genius may now be rising who shall save this country'.⁷⁸ A conservative throughout, Burke nonetheless provides excellent commentary on the nature of the Anglo-American conflict.

Richard Jackson

Richard '*omniscient*' Jackson, born 1721-2 was the son of a dissenting Irish merchant, Richard Jackson and his wife Elizabeth *née* Clark. Educated at Queens' College, Cambridge, he entered Lincoln's Inn in 1739, and was called to the bar in 1744. Jackson's main interests lay in the American colonies: he was agent for Connecticut from 1760 to 1770, for Pennsylvania from 1763 to 1769, and for Massachusetts from 1765 to 1766.⁷⁹ He was a very close friend and associate of Benjamin Franklin, and they worked together on the publications of Jackson's controversial *Historical Review of the Constitution and Government*

⁷⁶ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, II. 145-153: Edmund Burke (1729-97).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-9: Edmund Burke (1729-97).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147: Edmund Burke (1727-97).

⁷⁹ W. P. Courtney, 'Jackson, Richard (1721/2-1787)', rev. J.-M. Alter, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14546, accessed 2 April 2008].

of *Pennsylvania* (published anonymously) in June 1759 and on Franklin's *The Interest of Great Britain with regard to Canada and Guadeloupe* in 1760.⁸⁰

Jackson was elected, quite unexpectedly, for Weymouth and Melcome Regis in 1762 and served for there until 1768. From 1768 to 1784, he sat for the Cinque Port of New Romney. His Parliamentary career focused mainly on American issues: his first and last recorded speeches were regarding the colonies. As the disagreements between Americans and Britons grew stronger in the 1760s, he found his dual position as MP and colonial agent particularly uncomfortable. He supported Parliamentary sovereignty, but increasingly found it difficult to justify his position in the colonies. Ultimately, upon being promoted to the Board of Trade in 1770, Jackson resigned his commissions as colonial agent.

Although generally a supporter of the government, he warned of the dangers of applying the Stamp Act and later claimed to have 'uniformly voted for the repeal of the Stamp Act, against the Boston port bill, and the other bills, which [were] the cause of our misfortunes'.⁸¹ Moreover, he stated that

The commencement of the American war always appeared to me as an impolitic measure, the continuance of it cannot be less than ruin to this empire, and will be an object that I cannot be near without an anxiety that will be too much for me to bear.⁸²

He continued to feel a strong connexion to America and believed Britain and the United States to be forever part of one nation. Even in 1783, he stated that the British nation was one 'whether resident in Europe or America... *a common origin, manners and language make a nation*, though different parts of it may be governed by distinct and independent sovereignties'.⁸³

Much of the historical focus on Jackson has been because of, and through, his friendship with Franklin.⁸⁴ He has occasioned some interest because of their interesting and detailed correspondence and because of their collusion together on the writing of several

⁸⁰ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, II. 669: Richard Jackson (1721/22-87) and I. Hayes, 'On the Authorship of the Anonymous Pamphlet Published in London in 1760 Entitled "The Interest of Great Britain Considered with Regard to Her Colonies and the Acquisition of Canada and Guadeloupe"', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, LXIII, No. 1 (1924), pp. 1-9.

⁸¹ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, II. 671: Richard Jackson (1721/2-87).

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 672: Richard Jackson (1721/2-87). His emphasis.

⁸⁴ See, for example, C.V. Doren, *Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson*.

pamphlets.⁸⁵ Jackson's fame for his knowledge was both a gift and a curse; and although he was gifted, his 'lack of personal [political] ambition, his solitary habits, his nervous, if not neurotic modesty, and the diffusion of his interests over an enormous range of knowledge' meant he was unable to perform any great role in the House of Commons. Moreover, as Doren points out, 'he may never have realised that his concern for America, which was as near as he ever came to a special interest, would give him his chief reason for being remembered in the second [and third] centur[ies] after his death'.⁸⁶

Thomas Pownall

The son of William Pownall and Sarah *née* Burniston, Thomas Pownall was born into a middling and unimpressive family in Lincoln in 1722. Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, he graduated in 1743 with a BA. After failing to try to sort his family's finances in Lincoln, Pownall moved to London and obtained a position – through the influence of his brother, John Pownall – with the Board of Trade. He was quickly promoted and, in 1753, became private secretary to the second Earl of Halifax's brother-in-law, Sir Danvers Osborne (the then governor of New York). Not long after Pownall arrived in New York, however, Osborne committed suicide. This left Pownall free from official duties and allowed him to explore the colonies; he visited all the major seaboard cities, was present at the Albany congress (although as a minor and insignificant figure), and made lasting friendships and connexions with leading Americans (notably, again, Benjamin Franklin).⁸⁷

Largely due to his growing influence in the Americas, and again through his brother's connexions, Pownall was given the post of Lieutenant-Governor of New Jersey in 1755. He was further promoted, after turning down the governorship of Pennsylvania, to 'secretary extraordinary' to the British commander in America, the Earl of Loudon. Pownall used his position here exceptionally well: he worked hard to discredit the Governor of Massachusetts, William Shirley, which ultimately led to his dismissal as governor. Although the whole controversy showed Pownall's darker side ('his vanity, his contempt for the knowledge of others, his hot temper, his over-powering ambition, and his conspiracy against Shirley')⁸⁸ he was nevertheless given the governorship of Massachusetts in Shirley's place. His time as

⁸⁵ A. Aldridge, 'Franklin and Jackson on the French War', *Proceedings on the American Philosophical Society*, XCIV, No. 4 (August, 1950), pp. 396-97; and L. Labaree, 'Benjamin Franklin's British Friendships', *Proceedings on the American Philosophical Society*, CVIII, No. 2 (April, 1965), pp. 244-63.

⁸⁶ C. Doran, *Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson*, p. 2.

⁸⁷ E. Gould, 'Pownall, Thomas (1722–1805)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22676>, accessed 30 March 2008].

⁸⁸ Schutz, *Thomas Pownall*, p. 84.

Governor of Massachusetts was mainly taken up with the issues of warfare, and of trying to get a reluctant colonial assembly to support the imperial forces. After three years in Massachusetts, he was appointed Governor of South Carolina, but chose instead to return to England in hope of better, higher, advances there.⁸⁹

After serving for two years with the army in Germany, and marrying the wealthy Lady Fawkener, Pownall became an active member of London political society. He rented a house in Albemarle Street, where Horace Walpole and Benjamin Franklin were regular guests, and ultimately was elected to Parliament in 1767 as the member for Tregony. He served there until 1774, when he was defeated during the general election but was re-elected in a by-election for Minehead later that same year.⁹⁰ In Parliament, he purposefully sought to establish himself as an expert on the American colonies. As the crisis deepened in the 1760s and 1770s, Pownall also attempted to show himself to be a strong supporter of American liberties. Gould has also suggested that Pownall might have played a role in writing some of the Junius letters;⁹¹ and he proved to be a strong supporter of the American cause after the mid-1770s. He did, however, vote in favour of the Boston Port Bill in 1774. By 1777, he had broken finally with North's Administration and called for a treaty which recognised American independence and liberty.

Like Bacon, Pownall's major contribution can be found in his literary achievements. Although his works seemed designed to give, as one eighteenth-century commentator noted, a 'most excruciating head-ach', he was nevertheless a prolific writer.⁹² His *Administration of the Colonies* went through several reprints and editions throughout the 1760s and 1770s as Pownall, first, attempted to come to terms with the imperial situation and, secondly, tried to keep up with the many changes in the relationships between the mother country and the colonies. He continued to write through the 1770s and 1780s, publishing articles such as *A Memorial, Most Humbly Addressed to the Sovereigns of Europe, on the Present State of Affairs between the Old and New World* (1780) and *Two Memorials, not Originally Intended for Publication, now Published* (1782). These works, which will be covered in some detail in the third chapter, set out the causes of, and proposed cures to,

⁸⁹ E. Gould, 'Pownall, Thomas (1722–1805)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22676, accessed 30 March 2008].

⁹⁰ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, III. 316-318: Thomas Pownall (1722-1805).

⁹¹ E. Gould, 'Pownall, Thomas (1722–1805)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22676, accessed 30 March 2008].

⁹² Schutz, *Thomas Pownall*, p. 177. The list of his works takes up almost four pages in Schutz's bibliography.

the rift between America and Great Britain. In them, Pownall's famous proposal of a 'Grand Marine Dominion' – involving the British Isles, the American colonies, the West Indies and even Spanish America – was laid down and explained.

Pownall, like Barré, is a well-known figure in the eighteenth century British Empire. Again, like Barré, he receives mention in most books on the American Revolution's British dimensions.⁹³ More specifically, however, there has been a significant focus on Pownall by John Schutz. Schutz published, in 1947, a biography of Pownall and also published two articles on Pownall's imperial proposals in 1945 and 1946.⁹⁴ Similarly, in the 1960s, G.H. Guttridge published an article detailing the development of Pownall's *Administration of the Colonies* with some details of how, and why, Pownall made alterations and changes as time went on.⁹⁵ Undoubtedly an influential and interesting politician, if perhaps somewhat of a difficult-to-like character, Pownall provides a fascinating insight into a peculiar and distinct view of the eighteenth century Empire.

Barlow Trecothick

Trecothick can properly be classed as one of the 'true' American men in our list: born either at sea, or in Stepney, in 1718 to Captain Mark Trecothick and his wife Hannah *née* Greenleaf, he spent the first portion of his life in the colonies.⁹⁶ He is quoted as having said that he lived 'at Boston from 7 years old to 22, then lived 7 years in Jamaica. Returned to New England for about 3 years, and after that came and settled in London'. He further stated that he 'has been concerned in the N. American trade there and here about 23 years on his own account. Has been a merchant in London for 15 years past, and has been employed in purchasing goods for the merchants in N. America'.⁹⁷

After being turned down as a possible candidate for the City because he was not a freeman, he likewise refused to be sent 'by the Treasury to a venal and expensive borough and repaid by contracts – the type unpopular with the City electorate' and therefore turned down

⁹³ See, for example, P.D.G. Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution, 1773-1776* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

⁹⁴ J. Schutz, *Thomas Pownall*; J Schutz, 'Thomas Pownall and his Negro Commonwealth', *Journal of Negro History*, XXX, No. 4 (October, 1945), pp. 400-4; and J. Schutz, 'Thomas Pownall's Proposed Atlantic Federation', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXVI, No. 2 (May, 1946), pp. 263-8.

⁹⁵ G.H. Guttridge, 'Thomas Pownall's The Administration of the Colonies: The Six Editions', *William & Mary Quarterly*, XXVI, No. 1 (January, 1969), pp. 31-46.

⁹⁶ D. Hancock, 'Trecothick, Barlow (1718?-1775)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50005>, accessed 29 March 2008].

⁹⁷ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, III. 557-560: Barlow Trecothick (?1718-75).

offers of standing for New Shoreham under the Duke of Newcastle.⁹⁸ He nevertheless worked to support Newcastle and Rockingham throughout the Stamp Act Crisis, became colonial agent for New Hampshire from 1766 to 1774, and was London's sheriff in 1766 and its mayor in 1770. Much of his important political work was therefore carried out *before* he entered the House of Commons.

Nevertheless, Trecothick was returned as one of the members for London in 1768. Initially, while 'scarcely within the doors of this House', he sought to remove himself from his supposed American connexions: 'I look upon America as deluded,' he stated, 'There may be a few factious individuals. We have factions here. The town of Boston does not contain a thirtieth part of the inhabitants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay'. Moreover, he 'desired to be thought an Englishman and act the part of one' and expressed 'his concern at the present state of America'.⁹⁹ His time in the House proved to Trecothick that America was being governed by 'misguided despotism' and he constantly sided with the Opposition. During the debate on the 'Boston Massacre', in an indignant tone, Trecothick announced that 'we have shown the Americans that we are not incapable of ideas, and even systems, of despotism... We choose to govern by will, rather than by reason... We have acted the parts of bullies to America'.¹⁰⁰ Suffering from increasingly poor health after 1771, Trecothick stepped down from the Commons in 1774 and died in 1775.

The major works thus far on Trecothick are unpublished MA dissertations.¹⁰¹ He has also received a few passing comments in some articles. We are told, for instance, that he 'usually opposed the government' and 'argued both that the colonists were "deluded" victims of factious men and that they naturally resisted acts of Parliament because they feared new taxes' and that he 'made essentially this point [that Parliament had no right to lay internal taxes on the American colonies] when he observed that "the Americans think the imposition of internal taxes ought to be confined to their own assembly"'.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, III. 559: Barlow Trecothick (?1718-75).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, III. 560: Barlow Trecothick (?1718-75).

¹⁰¹ D.H. Watson, *Barlow Trecothick and other Associates of Lord Rockingham during the Stamp Act Crisis, 1765-1766* (unpublished MA dissertation: University of Sheffield, 1957) and B. Withrow, *A biographical study of Barlow Trecothick, 1720-1775* (unpublished MA dissertation: Emporia State University, 1979).

¹⁰² I. Gruber, 'The American Revolution as a Conspiracy: The British View', *William & Mary Quarterly*, XXVI, No. 3 (July, 1969), p. 365 and T.P. Slaughter, 'The Tax Man Cometh: Ideological Opposition to Internal Taxes, 1760-1790', *William & Mary Quarterly*, XLI, No. 4 (October, 1984), p. 571.

Our attention must now turn, in some detail, to the Parliamentary, political, literary and personal actions of these men: in the following chapters, as described above, each of these themes will be taken and analysed in turn. With the understanding provided by current historiography, and basing the work on extensive primary sources, the rest of the thesis aims to answer the question of how these American experts influenced British politics, and the British Empire, from the 1760s to the 1770s.

CHAPTER I

GOVERNING AN EMPIRE: THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND AMERICA

‘The legislative authority claimed by parliament,’ wrote John Dickinson in 1774, ‘over these colonies consists of two heads- first, a general power of internal legislation; and secondly a power of regulating our trade; both she contends are unlimited’.¹ This parliament was one ‘ignorant of the wants and resources of America, and interested to lay on it the heaviest share of burden’ according to some of its harshest critics,² and was at best vaguely aware of the true nature of the American colonies. As Christie established in the 1970s, older views of the nature of the relationship between the Houses of Parliament and the American colonies were tainted by a moralistic approach and by a willingness of historians to see the American Revolution as a battle for liberty and the limitation of state powers: ‘the British were [seen to be] either very ignorant, or very corrupt, or very sinful, or all three, to fail to grasp the rectitude of the colonists’ position’.³ The extent to which the House of Commons was actually aware of the American situation is the focus of this chapter. Its aim is to show that, contrary to popular belief, there was a significant number of MPs with significant American connexions, and that a core group of MPs – including, but not limited to, Bacon, Barré, Burke, Jackson, Pownall and Trecothick – were especially well versed in all things American, and sought to promote their own view of empire on the colonies.

The role of Parliament, and particularly of the House of Commons, during the last decades of the First British Empire has undergone quite a transformation over the past century. Where once historians looked through revolutionary-tinted glasses and saw a spiteful, dangerous, corrupt Parliament intent on destroying American liberties, what we now see is a very different picture. The first pioneering historians of the part played by Parliament in the American Revolution attacked what they saw as a sinister force in the disintegration of

¹ J. Dickinson, *An Essay on the Constitutional Powers of Great Britain over the American Colonies; with the Resolves of the Committee for the Province of Pennsylvania, and their Instructions to their Representatives in Assembly* (Philadelphia: 1774), pp. 356-7.

² J. Adams, ‘Novanglus and Massachusettensis; or Political Essays, published in the years 1774 and 1775, on the principal points of controversy between Great Britain and her Colonies. The former by John Adams, late President of the United States; the latter by Jonathan Sewall, then King's Attorney General of the Province of Massachusetts Bay. To which are added a number of letters, lately written by President Adams to the Hon. William Tudor’, *The North American Review and Miscellaneous Journal* (Boston: Hews & Goss, 1819), p. 408.

³ I. Christie, ‘British Politics and the American Revolution’, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, IX No. 3. (Autumn, 1977), p. 206.

imperial connexions. Unsurprisingly, the first works on the imperial crisis – works completed by those who had lived through and experienced the War for Independence – were highly critical of Parliament and parliamentarians. It was in this vein, for example, that Macaulay wrote in 1844 that Parliamentary ‘oppression provoked resistance; resistance was made the pretext for free oppression. The warnings of the greatest statesmen of the age were lost on an imperious Court and a deluded nation [...] At length the commonwealth was torn asunder’.⁴ Similarly, but almost one hundred years later in 1926, historians were still claiming that ‘If my diagnosis is correct of the British state of mind in the eighteenth century, and the evidence in its favour seems overwhelming, then the colonists were as justified in their movement of revolt as were Englishmen themselves in their movement for reform in the next century’.⁵

Not content with only changing our understanding of the British Atlantic World, Seeley sought also to recast our appreciation of Parliament’s role in the empire.⁶ Unlike those before him, Seeley saw not a corrupt or venal parliamentary system but one of the ‘great’ eras in British history, made possible by what he termed the ‘second Hundred Years War’ and the competition with France. Seeley also ‘viewed American colonial development as part and parcel of mainstream British history in which the Westminster Parliament did all in its power to make the whole *imperium* work effectively and “avert schism”’.⁷ The reasons for the split in the Anglo-American world were fairly simple: British politicians failed to grasp the true nature of the argument, the shifting economic, social and political situation, and the constitutional crisis of which they were a part; and, as a result, the British system failed to adapt in time. Seeley, however, did not view the loss of the American colonies as a catastrophic failure: as a result of the loss of the thirteen colonies, ‘Britain changed and adapted its government in other parts of the expanding *imperium*, while an independent America remained a favoured trading partner and destination of emigrants from the British Isles’.⁸ Seeley’s view, while attractive in some regards to current historians, failed to take into consideration the issues of ideology, identity, economy and society surrounding the American Revolution; he saw, rather, ‘a great homogenous people, one in blood, language,

⁴ T.B. (Lord) Macaulay, ‘The Earl of Chatham, 11 October 1844’, *Essays on English History*, p. 245; quoted in P. Lawson, ‘Sources, Schools and Separation: The Many Faces of Parliament’s Role in Anglo-American History to 1783’, *Parliament and the Atlantic Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 10.

⁵ C.M. Andrews, ‘The American Revolution: An Interpretation’, *American Historical Review*, XXXI (January 1926), p. 231; quoted in Lawson, ‘Sources, Schools and Separation’, p. 11.

⁶ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*.

⁷ Lawson, ‘Sources, Schools and Separation’, p. 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*

religion and laws, but dispersed over a boundless space'. His focus remained on celebrating the ability of the British people(s) to spread around the globe, as opposed to establishing any real basis of discussion on the true nature of the Atlantic Community.⁹

In 1930, Namier published his seminal work *England in the Age of the American Revolution*. While not exactly covering the period of the American Revolution itself, the work set the scene for future appreciation of the role of Parliament – particularly the House of Commons – in the descent to war. Of greatest relevance to the present work is his unfinished chapter, 'The House of Commons and America', in which he asks many of the same questions being proposed here, the primary one being: 'what acquaintance with the American Colonies had the House [...] How many of its Members had been to the American colonies, had connexions with them, or had an intimate knowledge of American affairs?'.¹⁰ This central and crucial question is the one with which this work attempts to grapple in order to better understand the true nature of the House of Commons' relationship with the American colonists. Namier's chapter failed to provide any real or coherent answer to the question of the extent to which MPs were connected to, or truly aware of, the Americas and provides no real discussion on the wider implications of the topic.

Those working in the Namierite tradition have since produced massive amounts of work and information on Hanoverian politics. They have kept the field alive and interesting, and have contributed an excellent array of articles, books and points of discussion on the matter. The leading works are by historians such as P.D.G. Thomas, Iain Christie, Paul Langford, Bernard Donoghue, Dame Lucy Sutherland, and John Brooke; and they provide a fascinating account of the relationship between the political elite in the United Kingdom and the various American colonies.¹¹ They have, however, as yet failed to answer the problems faced by Namier in his unfinished chapter.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, p. 229.

¹¹ See, for example, P.D.G. Thomas *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); P.D.G. Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis: The Second Phase of the American Revolution, 1767-1773* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); P.D.G. Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); I. Christie, *Crisis of Empire: Great Britain and the American Colonies, 1754-1783* (London: Norton, 1966); P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); B. Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); B. Bailyn, *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); J. Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession*

This chapter has two main purposes: the first is to establish the numbers and details of *all* MPs during this period who had connexions of note with the American colonies. This will provide us with a clearer understanding of the extent to which the House of Commons relied on the opinions and knowledge of men with true experience of the colonial world. While Namier attempted this in *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, he missed a significant number of those involved in the colonies and focused heavily on those with mercantile connexions. The intention here, therefore, is to use the extensive lists of MPs in Namier and Brooke's *The House of Commons* to build a clearer idea of the scope and nature of the bond between MPs and the Americas.¹²

The second aim of this chapter will be to discuss in some detail the Parliamentary activities of the MPs studied in this work. Using a number of primary sources to build a picture of the involvement of the six men in Parliament, the main focus will be to establish the extent to which the men influenced British imperial and American policy, the political ties and associations they made in Parliament, and to place them in a wider Atlantic World context. Although the six chosen MPs will be the major focus of this section of the chapter, various other 'American MPs' will be consulted and discussed, where relevant, in order to provide a more coherent and a fuller discussion of the House of Commons and America.

The House of Commons and America

If Namier asked the question 'what acquaintance with the American colonies had the House?', the answer he provided should give some illumination as to the nature of the colonial make-up of Parliament. Namier split his discussion of the colonial MPs into several categories: primary candidates; secondary candidates;¹³ American-born MPs; West Indian MPs; West Indian 'outer ring'; merchants; army officers; naval officers; and land speculators. Members can be in more than one group (for example, Isaac Barré is a primary candidate but also an army officer, while Anthony Bacon is a secondary candidate and also a merchant, and Barlow Trecothick is classed by Namier as 'American-born' but can also be found under the merchant heading) and are included from the general election of 1761 with no regard for their levels of activity or involvement in the House. Barré, Burke, Jackson and Pownall

of George III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); J. Brooke, *King George III* (London: Constable & Company, 1972).

¹² L. Namier and J. Brooke, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1754-1790*.

¹³ Namier provides no real account of the differences between the primary and secondary candidates, other than to say that they were less involved in American and British politics.

can all be found in Namier's 'primary candidate' category; Bacon is in the 'secondary candidate' category. Moving away from simply a discussion of the six, or the sixteen, most connected MPs as listed by Namier, what can we find in a study of the remaining MPs? These MPs had perhaps less tangible relations with, or ties to, the American colonies and as a result their contribution to any Parliamentary debates is perhaps less meaningful than those from the primary or secondary candidate lists. Nevertheless, this in no way disqualifies them from having made significant, educated or erudite contribution to the discussion on Anglo-American relations and, while an analysis of the activities of all of these men (and there are 79 of them in *England in the Age of the Revolution*, and 128 of them according to the findings in this thesis) is outside the scope of this study - or, indeed, any work of this size – a brief discussion of their numbers, ties and make-up will be of significant benefit.

Namier's categorisation is, at times, perhaps a little odd. There appears to be, for example, no reason for the inclusion of William Harvey and William Amherst as Members in the 'secondary candidate' category. Namier states that 'William Harvey and William Amherst, who had served in America during the Seven Years War, [were brought into the house] on 24 February 1763, and 17 November 1766 [respectively]'.¹⁴ What these men did to occasion a higher status than the rest of the 'army officers' rank is somewhat baffling: William Amherst's 'only recorded speech was on the fortification of Newfoundland, 10 Dec. 1770'.¹⁵ William Harvey should actually be William Hervey. The two records for a William Harvey in *The House of Commons* do not match here: William Harvey Senior was elected for Essex in 1747, never served in the armed forces and died in June 1763; and William Harvey Junior was born only in 1754 and would have been only a child during the Seven Years War, was elected for Essex on 28 November 1775, and left 'no record of his having spoken in the House'.¹⁶ William Hervey, however, was elected for Bury St. Edmunds but is said to have been 'indifferent about Parliament and not sorry to find a way of getting out' and there is no record of his having ever spoke in the House.¹⁷ The mystery here would seem to be why Namier decided to list them as 'less prominent as experts on America, but not unimportant' when there are a number of other, more influential and well-documented, examples of

¹⁴ Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, p. 230.

¹⁵ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, II. 20: Amherst, William (1732-81).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 596: Harvey, William (1714-63) and Harvey, William (1754-79).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II. 620: Hervey, William (1732-1815).

American MPs from which to choose, and ones which actively engaged with the House and their roles and duties as MPs.¹⁸

The category of 'American-born' is probably the least contentious of all the lists: these men are here simply because of the circumstances of their birth. It is interesting to note, however, as Namier does, that all of the truly American MPs were Northerners and that only one Southerner, a Virginian called William Lee, tried unsuccessfully in 1774 to enter the House by contesting the Southwark election.¹⁹ Namier establishes here that the Southerners' refusal to 'entertain the idea of a "British Union" was not due to differences in outlook [...] but probably the very fact that they were squires rooted in their own land, made them averse to entering the territorial assembly of another country' and that while merchants from the northern colonies traded extensively with Great Britain and therefore had business to carry out in the mother country, southern planters had nothing to do 'and without that, their fortunes were not sufficient to support permanent residence in England, still less to finance British Parliamentary elections'.²⁰ This factor is perhaps one which has been somewhat overlooked in recent years with the discussion of a grand Atlantic World, connecting Britain and *all* the American colonies. It may perhaps be of note to look again with fresh eyes at the differing ways in which the colonies participated in the Empire from a practical, as opposed to an ideological, standpoint.²¹

Looking again at the nature of the House of Commons during this period, and on the connexions with America, this work finds that – contrary to Namier's suggestion of 79 'American MPs', there were in actual fact 128.²² The vast majority of these Americanist MPs were involved with the colonies either through the army or by being connected with trade. There is no discernable pattern to the election of these MPs, aside from noting that Scots in particular contributed to the North American empire. The many different ways in which these MPs were connected to the Americas proves that the nature of Atlantic connexions at this time were various, complex and formed under a number of different circumstances.

¹⁸ Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, p. 229.

¹⁹ Lee came third in the election with a total of 741 votes; the winner was Nathaniel Polhill with 1195 votes. Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*, I. 387: Southwark.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-2.

²¹ See, for example, O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*

²² See Appendix I for a full list. Information gathered from biographies of each of the MPs sitting in the House of Commons as described by Namier and Brooke in *The House of Commons* II and III.

'Errors in American Politicks in 100 Places': MPs and Colonial Issues

When the great decisions regarding the future of the empire in America were being made during the early 1760s, the House of Commons contained no real experts on the colonial world. Out of the six MPs chosen for this study, the earliest to enter the House was Isaac Barré in 1761. Barré was soon followed by Richard Jackson in December 1762, Anthony Bacon in January 1764, and Edmund Burke in December 1765. Thomas Pownall entered the House in February 1767 and Barlow Trecothick in 1768. It is perhaps worthy of note that only Trecothick entered during a general election; all the others were returned at by-elections. Although both Barré and Bacon were elected before the end of the Seven Years War, neither man made any significant impact on the House of Commons before 1765. Both men have only two recorded speeches in the House on American affairs before the end of 1764: Bacon's involvement was purely financial and dealt with the issue of colonial taxation on 27 March 1764 and the regulation of colonial currency on 4 April 1764; Barré spoke briefly on the war in December 1762 and again on military affairs, though at greater length, on 5 December 1763.²³

It is again interesting to note that, even this early on in their respective political careers, both Barré and Bacon were casting themselves as experts on America: Barré in particular appears to have established himself as knowledgeable about the conditions in the colonies:

Colonel *Barré* rose, and showed how in Canada stoppages could not be made, that the severity of the climate made several extraordinary preparations requisite against it, not to be purchased there, being European commodities, but at a great expense. This was not denied, but answered by producing the discretionary power given by the Treasury to General Amherst. Colonel *Barré* praised him, but said if he had any fault, it was too great an attention to economy.²⁴

Bacon's wide mercantile interests, however, meant that he became quite heavily involved in the discussion in early 1764 – only a few weeks after his entering the House – on the issue of colonial currency.

The issue surrounded that of colonial paper money being used as legal tender and the nature of debt owed by Americans to Britons. It has been estimated that at the outbreak of the American War for Independence, the colonies owed £5 million to Britain, with the

²³ R.C. Simmons and P.D.G. Thomas, *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783* (London: six vols, Kraus International Publications, 1982), I. 428, 456, 508, 520.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, II., 456.

southern colonies in the worst financial position and Virginia alone owing £2 million.²⁵ The colonial gentry, it was claimed, were living above their means and were therefore becoming indebted to British businessmen in order to continue their extravagant lifestyle. Virginia in particular was cited as an example of this colonial profligacy, notably by Lieutenant-Governor Francis Farquier who told the Board of Trade in late November 1762 that ‘there is a much more fundamental Cause of the rise, to wit, the Increase of their Imports, to such a Height that the Crops of Tobacco will not pay for them [or their lifestyle]’ and that while most ‘thinking gentlemen’ knew of the problems ‘the generality [...] obstinately shut their eyes to it’ as they were ‘not prudent enough to quit one article of luxury, ‘till smart obliges them’.²⁶ Even after quite a sharp warning from the Board of Trade to the Virginian Assembly in 1763 explaining that Britain would act to remove the problem of colonial currency if it did not mend its ways, the Board found itself ignored and decided in late 1763 that the debts ought to be paid in Sterling.²⁷

The Board consulted several leading colonial agents, including Richard Jackson who asked unsuccessfully for a postponement of the issue, seeking their views on the debate over the need for an Act to stop the issue of new paper money and the continuation of the then-in-use currency.²⁸ The agents reported that it was their ‘unanimous opinion, that a certain quantity of paper currency ought to be allowed of in each colony, to be a legal tender in all contracts and dealings within the colonies, and that time should be allowed for each colony to consider and report what that sum should be’.²⁹ The decision was made, however, that the whole concept of legal-tender paper currency in the colonies was ‘in its nature founded in fraud and injustice’,³⁰ and that all future paper money ought to be banned while the duration of existing currency could not be extended.

Charles Garth, agent for South Carolina, thought at this time that, as the Parliamentary session was coming to a close, there would be no resolution on the issue that year. He was, however, to be thwarted in this by Bacon who introduced a private member’s Bill at the start of April:

²⁵ E. Evans, ‘Planter Indebtedness and the Coming of the Revolution in Virginia’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, XIX No. 4 (October, 1962), p. 511.

²⁶ T.N.A., C.O. 5/1330/fos. 337-40.

²⁷ See, *Journals of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations (J.C.T.P.) 1759-63*, pp. 330-5; 393-6.

²⁸ See Doren, *Franklin and Jackson*, pp. 126-136.

²⁹ Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, p. 64.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

I have reason to believe we should have heard no more of it this year, had it not been for a Mr. Anthony Bacon (a North Carolina merchant) [who] since that time [1763] he has procur'd himself to be elected for Ailesbury, and on the 29th of March started the question in the House.³¹

The Bill was brought forward on 4 April, a 'Bill to prevent Paper Bills of Credit hereafter to be issued within any of His Majesty's Colonies and Plantations in *America* from being made legal Tender in Payments of Money',³² and was debated in the House.³³ Charles Townshend thought that 'the Colonies ought to have some currency that should be legal under proper regulations'. Bacon wanted a sweeping and grand gesture to be made by Parliament – a gesture much stronger than the Board of Trade had originally intended or discussed – by implementing the eradication of all colonial paper currency, but eventually had to live with the compromise envisaged before, that future paper currency should be illegal and current issues should not be prolonged.³⁴ Bacon's first major foray into politics had been to try to limit American powers in order to promote his own business interests and connexions: he sought simply to establish the basis on which debts owed to him by Americans ought to be paid and thought nothing of the implications for the colonies in his actions.

'Diarrhoea of Words': The Stamp Act and the Crisis

Following the transmission of the details of the Stamp Act to the colonies, Jeremy Belknap commented: 'the bells tolled, and a funeral procession was made for the Goddess of Liberty; but on depositing her in the grave, some signs of life were supposed to be discovered, and she was carried off in triumph [...] The popular spirit,' he continued, 'was sufficiently roused to join in any measures which might be necessary for the defence of liberty. All fear of the consequence of proceeding in the public business without stamps, was gradually laid aside [...] To provide for the worst, an association was formed by the "sons of liberty" in all the northern Colonies, to stand by each other, and unite their whole force, for the protection and relief of any who might be in danger, from the operation of this, or any other oppressive

³¹ L. Namier, 'Charles Garth, Agent for South Carolina: Part II (Continued)', *English Historical Review*, LIV No. 216 (October, 1939), p. 640.

³² *Journals of the House of Commons (C.J.)* XXIX 1027.

³³ 'Bacon the merchant made a motion touching the paper currency of America. Was seconded by Rice. It was a Bill that such a paper should not be lawful tender. Great complaints were made of the American legislatures. Some of them had established inadequate funds to secure the credit of the paper issued. Others had lain subsequent charges on these funds, and had not paid them off at the time stipulated in their acts. There seemed to be difficulties on all sides: the want of cash made the expedient of paper necessary; the abuse of it made it a grievance. Baker, Charles Townshend, Nugent, Cust and others spoke. The matter went.' Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, I. 520.

³⁴ Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 65-67.

act'.³⁵ This type of reaction to the 'most obnoxious act',³⁶ the Stamp Act, was almost entirely unforeseen by Members of the House of Commons.³⁷ The main purpose of the Act was to reorganise, galvanise and regulate the entire *imperium* along lines deemed fit by those in government in the metropolitan centre.³⁸

The first mention of any note relating to the American colonies in the 1765 session came on 21 January.³⁹ Charles Townshend asserted the '*supremacy of this country over the colonies*' and sought to 'keep a medium between too much force, and too much economy'. Barré replied that 'America should pay, but would wish to wait: *our sovereignty should be acknowledged*, but we should be careful not to destroy industry there, or drive them to a species of industry, which might hurt us'.⁴⁰ The first major discussion of the Stamp Bill took place on 6 February 1765; the discussion, however, was not on the proposal of the Bill itself, but on resolutions proposed by Grenville and discussed in the Committee of Ways and Means: Resolutions for Colonial Stamp Duties.⁴¹

The committee was begun by Grenville, who opened with a quite lengthy speech on the nature of the constitutional relationship between the Houses of Parliament and the

³⁵ J. Belknap, *The History of New Hampshire: Comprehending the Events of One Complete Century and Seventy-five Years from the Discovery of the River Pascataqua to the Year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety* (Boston: Bradford and Read, 1813), p. 253. See also, J. Farmer, *The History of New Hampshire by Jeremy Belknap D.D.* (Dover: Stevens and Ela and Wadleigh, 1831).

³⁶ W. Bell, *Patriot-Improvers: Biographical Sketches of Members of the American Philosophical Society: Volume One, 1743-1768* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997), p. 189.

³⁷ Thomas notes that the passage of the Stamp Act was of the 'highest importance' to the administration, and that attitudes towards the reason behind its passing changed over time from a focus on the financial benefits and possible revenue to be gained to an attempt to assert British authority and sovereignty over the Americas: Thomas Whately wrote, for example, 'I doubt they are inclined to object to all taxes, and yet some are absolutely necessary... some attention must be had to revenue, and the colonies must contribute their share' in 1764; three months later, however, in February 1765, he stated 'the great measure of the session is the American Stamp Act. I give it the appellation of a great measure on account of the important point it establishes, the right of Parliament to lay internal tax on the colonies. We wonder here that it was ever doubted. There is not a single Member of Parliament that will dispute it'. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, p. 86.

³⁸ C. Ritcheson, 'The Preparation of the Stamp Act', *William and Mary Quarterly*, X, No. 4 (October, 1953), pp. 543-559.

³⁹ The process of finding the best way to tax America was, however, started in 1763 when the Commissioners reported that 'the Revenue arising therefrom is very small and inconsiderable having in no degree increased with the commerce of those Countries, and is not yet sufficient to defray a Fourth Part of the Expence Necessary for collecting it'. B.L., Add. MSS. 21697, fo 14: A Memorial from the Right Honourable The Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury, date the 4th Instant [October 1763].

⁴⁰ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II. 8. The discussion recorded in these debates comes from three sources: P.D.G. Thomas (ed.), 'The Parliamentary Diaries of Nathaniel Ryder 1764-1767', *Camden Miscellany*, XXIII, Camden Fourth Series, No. 7 (Royal Historical Society, London, 1969), pp. 229-351; The Parliamentary Diary of James Harris. Malmesbury MSS (original in possession of the Earl of Malmesbury); and *The Fitch Papers: Correspondence and Documents during Thomas Fitch's Governorship of the Colony of Connecticut, 1754-1766* (New Haven: two vols, Connecticut Historical Society Collections, 1920).

American colonies as he saw it. Grenville stated that the taxation of America came from a 'public motive' and that 'private considerations of his own choice would have prevented him if they had been consulted. [He further stated that he] wishes those who had gone before him had marked out a path to him which he might more easily follow. His conduct would then have been less liable to misconstruction'.⁴² The rest of Grenville's speech was aimed at allaying the fears of the possible repercussions of colonial taxation, justifying the measure both constitutionally and economically, and explaining why a stamp duty in particular would be effective.

Taxation, he established, was never popular: 'if said, they do not like it, no more does the west like the cyder [*sic*] tax; Scotland the beer tax; the middle of England, the land tax. The interest of all was mutual. The plan was not unjust, nor above their ability'.⁴³ Furthermore, even though the 'objection of the colonies is from the general right of mankind not to be taxed but by their representatives,' Grenville established that 'the Parliament of Great Britain virtually represents the whole Kingdom, not actually great trading towns. The merchants of London and the East India Company are not represented. Not a twentieth part of the people are actually represented'. Notwithstanding the complaints of the Americans, Grenville established that 'all colonies are subject to the dominion of the mother country, whether they are a colony of the freest or the most absolute government'.⁴⁴ There followed a quite detailed analysis of the myriad ways in which the different grants and charters given, particularly by the crown, to the colonies – mainly from the seventeenth century – did not 'exempt a body from the power of Parliament'.⁴⁵

To justify why such a tax was necessary, Grenville established the basis on which the Navy was now running in the Americas: 'the Navy used to cost,' he pointed out, 'about £7 or 8 hundred thousand, now it costs about £1,400,000. The money for these expenses must be raised somewhere. [...] This great increase of the Navy is incurred in a great measure for the service of North America [and] that the military force in North America is said by many military men to be not sufficient. He has never heard anybody say there was more than necessary'. Moreover, a debt was owed by Americans for the support they had been given during the Seven Years War: Great Britain had 'expended so much on the support and defence of North America; we have given them so great [a] degree of security after they

⁴² Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, II. 14-5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, II. 9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, II. 14.

were before in continual wars; the French are now removed, but they still have some enemies against whom, however, Great Britain is employing her troops'.⁴⁶

With regards to the propriety of a stamp duty, Grenville established that it 'takes in a great degree its proportion from the riches of the people' or, in other words, would increase with the wealth of the colonies without being too heavy a burden on them. It would also be exceptionally easy to enforce and police, owing to the fact that non-stamped papers would be legally void meaning there would be 'no great number of officers, no unconstitutional authority in great Boards'. Forgery would be 'the only fright to be apprehended' but could, apparently, be avoided by 'severe penalties [...] the punishment is in this country death'.⁴⁷ With these points firmly established, Grenville sought to finish his argument on a discussion of the foundations of civil government: 'protection and obedience were reciprocal. Governors owed the first to the governed; the governed owed obedience to their Governors; this is the great bond of all society' and, with that, Grenville presented himself as 'ready to give all information'.⁴⁸

In the debate that followed, Barré, Jackson and Garth all feature heavily. Jackson's contribution is less famous and quieter than Barré's attack: he established simply that he was 'not inclined to dispute whether the Americans ought to bear a share of the burden they occasion or to dispute the power of the Parliament. He does not believe the North Americans will dispute either'.⁴⁹ He is recorded as having said:

The Parliament may choose whether they will tax America or not; they have a right to tax Ireland, yet do not exercise that right. Still stronger objections may be urged against their taxing America. Other ways of raising moneys there requisite for the public service exist, and have not yet failed; but the colonies, in general, have with alacrity contributed to the common cause. It is hard all should suffer for the fault of two or three. Parliament is undoubtedly the universal, unlimited legislature of the British dominions, but it should voluntarily set bounds to the exercise of its power; and, if the majority think they ought not to set these bounds, then they should give a share of the election of the legislature to the American colonies, otherwise the liberties of America, I do not say will be lost, but will be in danger; and they cannot be injured without danger to the liberties of Great Britain.⁵⁰

Jackson further wrote to Franklin in an undated letter on his speech in Parliament that 'no Sober wise man can doubt the constitutional Authority of Parl[iamen]t to impose Taxes of

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 10.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, II. 11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, II. 15.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, II. 12.

⁵⁰ G. Bancroft, *History of the United States, from the Discovery of the Continent* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1852), V. 238.

every sort on every part of the British Dominions. Because an Universal Legislature is a necessary part of every intire State, the Parl[iamen]t is that Universal Legislature of the British Dominions & must be so unless it be contended either that the British Dominions do not form one Intire State or that there is some other Universal Legislature'. Jackson established however that 'though the Constitution gives this Power to Parl[iamen]t, because an Universal Legislature seems a necessary part of every well constituted state yet this Power has always been exercised with great Moderation & even Abstinence, because the same Wisdom & Discretion that always governs the Proceedings of Parl[iamen]t have prescribed Moderation & Abstinence in those Cases'. 'It is on this Principle,' he wrote, 'that I have argued that Parliament should not impose *internal Taxes* on America, not that Parl[iamen]t has not an universal & unlimited Power, but that Parl[iamen]t for its own Sake & the Welfare of all the British Dominions will wish that Assemblies may continue in America [...] until they supply their place by calling Members from America & that the People of the Colonys may from thence derive a Confidence in the Legislature'.⁵¹

Barré's contribution to the discussion was somewhat more energetic and lively than Jackson's modestly restrained speech. Barré worried that 'too much will be done on the one side and too much said on the other' and that 'we are working in the dark, and the less we do the better. Power and right; caution to be exercised lest the power be abused, the right subverted, and 2 million of unrepresented people mistreated and in their own opinion slaves'. He pointed out, as Namier did almost two hundred years later, that 'there are gentlemen in this House from the West Indies, but there are very few who know the circumstances of North America [...] The tax intended is odious to all your colonies and they tremble at it. He will go no further upon this ground. He will not raise the feeling of the North American if he will yield to anything for the safety of this country'.⁵²

Part of Grenville's speech had been to declare that the Americans were used to taxation being laid by Parliament, citing the example of '9 Queen Anne, Post Office' which imposed a slight tax on the colonists in order to support the post office in the colonies.⁵³ Barré, however, did not think this an apt comparison or a sound judgement on which to base imperial policy. The colonies had been 'small in comparison' to what they now were and

⁵¹ Doren, *Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson*, pp. 193-7: Jackson to Franklin (undated).

⁵² Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, II. 10. For discussion of the colonial post office, see W. Smith, 'The Colonial Post-Office', *American Historical Review* XXI, No. 2 (January, 1916), pp. 258-75.

‘few agents know the real sentiment of the colonies’. Barré established, however, that ‘one [colonial agent] does very fully and is very able to give the best advice, and I wish his opinion had been hearkened to’. It is not clear who this colonial agent might be, but it seems likely that Barré was referring either to Jackson (who spoke just following Barré’s speech here) or Garth.

After a short speech by Charles Townshend, during which he stated that the colonies were ‘planted with so much tenderness, governed with so much affection, and established with so much care and attention’, Barré’s most famous parliamentary moment followed. Interestingly, while the speech was recorded by at least three attendees, only one of them (Ingersoll) mentioned the phrase ‘sons of liberty’ in their entries. The accounts, however, agree with the substance of Barré’s speech. The record in Bancroft’s *History of the United States* contains the same ideas and general conclusions as the other sources, but provides a much more elaborate interpretation of Barré’s reply. With eyes ‘darting fire and [an] outstretched arm, [Barré gave this] unpremeditated reply’:

They planted by YOUR care! No; your oppression planted them in America. They fled from your tyranny to a then uncultivated, unhospitable country; where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable; and among others to the cruelties of a savage foe, the most subtle, and I will take upon me to say, the most formidable of any people upon the face of God’s earth; and yet, actuated by principles of true English liberty, they met all hardships with pleasure, compared with those they suffered in their own country, from the hands of those who should have been their friends. They nourished up by YOUR indulgence! They grew by your neglect of them. As soon as you began to care about them, that care was exercised in sending persons to rule them in one department and another, who where, perhaps, the deputies of deputies to some members of this house, sent to spy out their liberties, to misrepresent their actions, and to prey upon them; men whose behaviour on many occasions has caused the blood of those SONS OF LIBERTY to recoil within them; men promoted to the highest seats of justice, some who, to my knowledge, were glad, by going to a foreign country, to escape being brought to the bar of a court of justice in their own. They protected by YOUR armes! They have nobly taken up arms in your defence; have exerted a valour amidst their constant and laborious industry, for the defence of a country whose frontier was drenched in blood, while its interior parts yielded all its little savings to your emolument. And believe me – remember I this day told you so – the same spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first will accompany them still [...] God knows I do not at this time speak from motives of party heat; what I deliver are the genuine sentiments of my heart. However superior to me in general knowledge and experience the respectable body of this house may be, yet I claim to know more of America than most of you, having seen and been conversant in that country.⁵⁴

This impassioned speech was ‘thrown out so entirely without premeditation, so forcible and so firmly, and the breaking off so beautifully abrupt, that the whole House was awhile as amazed, intently looking and without answering a word’, reported Ingersoll. He further

⁵⁴ Bancroft, *History of the United States*, V. 240-1.

stated that 'I own I felt emotions that I never felt before and went the next morning and thanked Colonel Barré on behalf of my country for his noble and spirited speech'.⁵⁵

Both Barré and Jackson, therefore, sought to fight on behalf of the colonists before the passage of the Stamp Bill through Parliament. Barré's speech was widely reported and he gathered a rather loyal following in the colonies,⁵⁶ but the sentiments he showed in this debate were mirrored by Jackson. Jackson's speech was perhaps the more sensible: rather than any outlandish claims of colonial oppression from Britain, Jackson's reasoned argument of a development towards the inclusion of Americans in the House of Commons shows an understanding of the issues which soon would so occupy American and British minds. Importantly, however, Barré went to some length here to establish his own credentials as an American expert, claiming to 'know more of America than most of you'. Setting himself as a man knowledgeable about, and interested in, the colonies undoubtedly set the scene for his political career and established him – in reputation, if not in actuality - as a father of the 'sons of liberty'.

The Stamp Bill was again brought before the House on 15 February, where the debate focused on the issue of petitions after Rose Fuller tried to submit a petition from Jamaica. Similarly, Sir William Meredith offered a petition from Virginia, Garth attempted to submit 'one from three residents of South Carolina then in London' and Richard Jackson 'tendered one from "the Governor and Company" of Connecticut'. While all three asked for the Stamp Bill not to be passed, the petitions from Virginia and Connecticut also directly challenged Parliament's right to tax the colonies. These three petitions were the only representations made on behalf of the colonists in Parliament at this time, and only one – that presented by Jackson from Connecticut – had actually come from America.⁵⁷

Both Barré and Jackson again spoke strongly against the Bill: Barré established that 'the measure [was] inflammatory and dangerous' and noted that he hoped to 'find a new asylum

⁵⁵ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 17.

⁵⁶ 'Boston voted that pictures of Colonel Barré and General Conway "be placed in Faneuil Hall, as a standing monument to all posterity of the virtue and justice of our benefactors, and as a lasting proof of our gratitude" [...]The town of Barre, in Massachusetts, perpetuates the memory of this statesman, and of the public indignation toward Hutchinson, whose name it had born from 1774 to 1777. Towns in Vermont, New York, and Wilkes-Barre in Pennsylvania, also bear the honoured name'. J.W. Thornton, *The Pulpit of the American Revolution; or the Political Sermons of the Period 1776* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1860), p. 132. See also, B. Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1974).

⁵⁷ Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, p. 95.

of liberty in America'. Jackson, again the more sensible and calm of the two, noted that 'the defence [for which Grenville had established the Stamp Duty was primarily supposed to pay for] was intended for our new colonies, not our old. Danger of a Bourbon compact distant as to America. Civil establishment in North America £40,000 a year, £80,000 in the West Indies. They pay £300,000 duty on our commodities'.⁵⁸ Ultimately, the opposition chose not to divide over the issue; although only five Members had spoken for the ministry and against the petitions, and seven against the ministry and in favour of receiving the petitions, the mood in the House seemed to be quite obviously in favour of the Bill. On the debate, George Onslow wrote to the Duke of Newcastle: 'I have no news for your Grace'.⁵⁹ The Bill eventually passed without a vote and received the royal assent on 22 March.⁶⁰

Following the passage of the Stamp Act and its transmission to America and after the collapse of the Grenville ministry in July 1765, there appears to have been a lull in interest in the Americas. The main political points of contention had not been the colonies, but had instead focused on a new alliance with Prussia, issues connected with general warrants, and the debate over allocation of offices and positions.⁶¹ Grenville, however, foresaw that the change in ministry would mean a repeal of the Stamp Act and pleaded with George III that 'if any men ventured to defeat the regulations laid down for the colonies [...] he should look upon him as a criminal and the betrayer of his country'.⁶² The response to the Stamp Act at first appeared erratic and unorganised, and official accounts of the troubles varied greatly.⁶³ What was unclear at this point, in Britain at least, was the true nature of the American resistance to the Act.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 27.

⁵⁹ Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, p. 96. B.L. Add. MSS. 32965, fo. 363.

⁶⁰ *C.J.*, XXX. 296. Ingersoll reported that 'Here I feel myself obliged to say that except the gentlemen interested in the West Indies and a few members that happen to be particularly connected with some of the colonies and a few of the heads of the minority who are sure to thwart and oppose the ministry in every measure of what nature or kind soever, I say except these few persons so circumstanced there are scarce any people here, either within doors or without, but what approve the measures now taking which regard America'. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, p. 99.

⁶¹ G. Thomas, *Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his Contemporaries: With Original Letters and Documents* (London: Bentley, 1852), I. 193.

⁶² W.J. Smith, *The Grenville Papers: Being the Correspondence of Richard Grenville, Earl Temple, K.G., and the Right Hon: George Grenville, their Friends and Contemporaries* (London: John Murray, 1852), III. 215-16.

⁶³ See for some discussion on this theme, A. Struan, *An Englishman and a Servant of the Publick: Major-General Thomas Gage, 1763-1775* (Unpublished MPhil dissertation: University of Glasgow, 2006), pp. 49-67.

⁶⁴ For discussion of the American reaction see, E. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1995).

Behind the scenes of the Rockingham administration, Trecothick became quite heavily involved in advising Rockingham and his associates. Although Trecothick was not yet an MP,⁶⁵ he was nevertheless committed to the ideal of repeal of the Stamp Act, and repeal as soon and quickly as was possible. Trecothick became a central figure among Rockingham's unofficial advisors and attended several dinners to discuss the 'American situation'. For example, in December 1765, Rockingham wrote to Newcastle: 'I could not possibly come to your Grace this evening [...] having company to dinner which consisted of Sir William Baker and Dowdeswell and Trecothick, Lord Dartmouth etc. upon American topics'.⁶⁶ These evening meals appear to have been organised with leading merchants and politicians in order to discuss issues dealing with the colonies.⁶⁷ Trecothick had been a well-known opponent of the Stamp Act noted by Ingersoll in 1765:

The merchants of London trading to America also met together about this time (February 1765) and appointed a committee of themselves to make all the opposition they could to the Stamp Bill. Of this committee Mr Alderman Trecothick was deputy chairman [...] They were frequently together and several times before the Ministry upon the Stamp and other bills that related to America where Mr Trecothick was always principal spokesman for the merchants.⁶⁸

By November, Trecothick was writing to Rockingham to attempt to persuade him of the benefits of repeal. Trecothick's view here works quite well as a true representation of the feeling of many merchants connected with the American trade:

Our sugar islands will be deprived of their usual supplies of provisions lumber etc. and will perhaps be disabled from sending home their produce or even subsisting their slaves. The British merchants will have little or no chance of remittances ... these accumulated disappointments must prove fatal to many of the British merchants trading to America ... a total stop must be put to all purchase of manufactures for a country whence no returns can be expected: from this state it naturally and unavoidably follows, that an exceedingly great number of manufacturers are soon to be without employ and of course without bread!⁶⁹

Rockingham's reply to this letter stated that while 'the difficulties are great: the importance of the obedience in the colonies ... [to the] British legislature is no slight matter'. Watson points out that the draft of this letter had many corrections, alterations, additions and deletions and must therefore have been subject to some debate in Rockingham's mind. The

⁶⁵ Newcastle tried to persuade Trecothick to enter the House in 1765, 'saying that the ministry would be glad to have such an expert on America in the House of Commons'. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, p. 144. B.L. Add. MSS. 32970, fos 50-5.

⁶⁶ B.L. Add. MSS. 32972, fo 384: Rockingham to Newcastle, 31 December 1765.

⁶⁷ See for example, B.L. Add. MSS. 32973, fos 3; 11-15.

⁶⁸ F. Dexter, 'A Selection from the Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Jared Ingersoll', *Papers of New Haven Colony Historical Society*, IX (1918), pp. 331-2. Quoted in Watson, *Barlow Trecothick and Other Associates of Lord Rockingham*, p. 27.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 144-5.

pressure put on Rockingham by Trecothick and the other merchants connected with America was, therefore, significant.⁷⁰ Moreover, the committee of which Trecothick was deputy chairman wrote at the start of December to the leading merchant and trading towns in the United Kingdom informing them of the situation regarding the Stamp Act and seeking petitions from them to submit to Parliament.⁷¹ The exact outcome of this action is difficult to determine, but Trecothick undoubtedly had a vast impact on the movement for repeal amongst the merchant classes in the United Kingdom and with the leading members of Rockingham's administration.

After a protracted debate and discussion on whether to repeal the Stamp Act or not, there was on 3 February a debate in the Commons in an 'American committee' on the resolution of the rights of Parliament.⁷² The debate that followed was very detailed, very well attended and lasted well into the morning of 4 February.⁷³ In the debate, which started with Conway asserting Parliament's right to legislate 'in all cases whatsoever', Burke and Barré feature quite heavily. Burke urged a 'mode of caution' and sought to differentiate between 'the ideal and practical right of the constitution [of which there were] many instances of the kind in our own constitution'. Burke pointed out that there had been parts of the British constitution which had been allowed to lapse over time: the royal veto on legislation – a power not used since the reign of Queen Anne – was one such part of the lapsed constitution, along with 'the three estates of the clergy have slid out of the constitution and nobody misses them; and if this House was no more to be missed, then the convocation acts would evaporate out of the constitution as silently as the convocation itself'. Burke challenged the House to recognise the differences here: 'two things,' he said, 'must be laid down: first, the standard of the constitution; second the practical change'. Had silent changes been allowed to happen to the British constitution, Burke asked, would the same not also be possible of the make-up – the constitution, even – of the British Empire as a whole? 'Without subordination, it would not be one Empire. Without freedom, it would not be the *British Empire* [...] The most anxious work for the understanding of men

⁷⁰ Watson, *Barlow Trecothick and Other Associates of Lord Rockingham*, p. 34.

⁷¹ See Appendix II for the content of this letter.

⁷² *C.J.*, XXX, 511-3.

⁷³ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 134-51; Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 196-9.

is to govern a large Empire upon a plan of freedom; but it is as noble as it is anxious, and it is necessary because it can be governed by no other.’⁷⁴

Barré soon followed Burke and rose to address the House, asking that the words ‘in all cases whatsoever’ be left out from the resolution as, in his view, Parliament had no right to lay internal taxes on the Americans. The colonies, Barré established, had become ‘great Commonwealths’ and that while ‘the supreme power is uncontrollable, it should control itself. In this country, grievances are sooner felt, easier complained of, and quicker redressed. At that distance, this is not effected without much difficulty’.

With regards to the colonial situation, Barré noted that the country was ‘larger than Europe and perhaps in the whole contain[ed] more inhabitants, peopled from this little island’. He attacked Jackson’s idea of colonial representation as absurd, however, pointing out the practical difficulties of actual representation:

The idea of a representative from that country is dangerous, absurd and impracticable. They will grow more numerous than we are, and then how inconvenient and dangerous would it be to have representative of 7 millions there meet the representatives of 7 millions here.⁷⁵

Even though the ‘Americans have acknowledged our right of restriction of trade and submitted to it’, they would not be ‘deprived of their property which they acquire under this restriction’. Were this to be the case, the various colonial assemblies would be ‘annihilated’ and it will be looked on forever as a ‘badge of slavery’. Barré’s attack on the imperial policy continued:

If you do mean to lay internal taxes, act prudently and draw the sword immediately. If you do not confine yourselves to general words, the repeal of the Stamp Act alone will not satisfy them. The ulcer will remain, and they will expect another Stamp Act the next year. If you enforce the Act, you must draw the sword. You will force them to submit, but the trade will be forced to submit likewise. If they submit with high words only, the discontent will remain.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, II. 143. See also, P. Langford, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: Volume II, Party, Parliament and the American Crisis, 1766-1774* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), II. 46-51.

⁷⁵ On this note, Pownall established later that actual representation of the colonies would likely shift to the Americas at some point in the future. He, too, realised that the Americas would become far greater in population than Britain or Europe, and wished for a natural course of ‘evolution’ to carry the centre of his *Grand Marine Dominion* from London across the Atlantic to the Americas. See chapter three below.

⁷⁶ Interestingly, this is quite similar to the warnings which Dartmouth as Secretary of State for the Colonies would receive from Gage through the 1770s: ‘I am concerned that Affairs are gone to so great a Length that Great Britain cannot yield without giving up all her Authority over this Country [...] I am obliged to use more caution than could otherwise be necessary, least all the Continent should unite in hostile Proceedings against us, which would bring on a Crisis which I apprehend His Majesty would by all means

The French think you will be bold and wrong-headed enough to force your colonies, founded upon a plan of freedom, to a submission which they did not require from them of provinces in the heart of France. The Spaniards think you are running yourselves upon the Spanish Punctilio. You will cut the throats of the gallant though undisciplined companions of your former glory.

This grand attack on the policies pursued on behalf of the British Empire ended with a chilling warning to the members: 'all colonies have their date of independence. The wisdom or folly of our conduct may make it the sooner or later. If we act injudiciously, this point may be reached in the life of many of the members of this House'.⁷⁷

Grenville spoke soon after and noted that while he differed with Barré 'totally,' he thought his 'conduct more consistent than that of gentlemen [i.e. the administration] who propose such a resolution with such intentions as that of repealing the Act. This conduct is so mean and so distasteful'.⁷⁸ By quarter to three in the morning, Barré's amendment had been negated without a vote. The mood in the house for those supporting the positions of Burke and Barré was quite low at this point: 'we,' noted Thomas Pitt, 'debated strenuously the rights of America. The resolution passed, for England's right to do what the Treasury pleases with three millions of free men'.⁷⁹

On 3 February, Trecothick was summoned before the House of Commons to provide witness to the American situation.⁸⁰ He was examined at some length on 11 February as the first and most important to be heard by the Committee. Trecothick and Newcastle appear to have worked quite closely together on preparing for this examination: the Newcastle papers contain calculations in Trecothick's hand on the money due to Britain from America and are identical to the information he presented to Parliament.⁸¹ Trecothick's time with the Committee was as long as Franklin's, and arguably more influential: Trecothick's main argument was that he, a true expert on the trade between the Americas and Great Britain, believed the Stamp Act harmful to the British economy. Trecothick provided hard facts on

wish to avoid' and 'If you think ten Thousand Men, sufficient, send Twenty, if one Million is thought enough, give two; you will save both Blood and Treasure in the End. A large Force will terrify, and engage many to join you, a middling one will encourage Resistance, and gain no friends. C. Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933), I. 381; Gage to Dartmouth (Private), Boston, 30 October 1774 and II. 685; Gage to Barrington (Private), Boston, 2 November 1774. See also, T.N.A. P.R.O. 30.23.3.2, fos 465-72, P.R.O. 30.29.3.2, fos 475-7 and Centre for Kentish Studies (C.K.S.), U1350 c8511. See also, Struan, *An Englishman and a Servant of the Public*, pp. 83-109.

⁷⁷ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 144.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, II. 145.

⁷⁹ Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, p. 199.

⁸⁰ *C.J.*, XXX, 513.

⁸¹ Watson, *Barlow Trecothick and Other Associates of Lord Rockingham*, pp. 43-4; B.L. Add. MSS. 33030, fo 204.

the situation, whereas Franklin could provide simply the colonial viewpoint. He noted that the trade with the colonies was worth some £3 million but warned that the trade in America was ‘almost wholly’ stopped and that ‘the most considerable exporting colonies have sent orders under such restrictions as disable us to comply with them. All have restricted not to be shipped unless the Stamp Act is repealed’.

Trecothick further established that, without repeal, he would stop trading with the Americans because he would ‘consider it as putting my property into a country [so] embroiled in confusion as to make it uncertain’. The Americans, moreover, would never submit to the Act, even after some modifications, because ‘the people from one end of the continent/country to the other have set their faces against it’ and ‘think it oppressive in its nature and an infringement on their right’.⁸² After Trecothick’s efforts in Parliament it was noted that ‘Trecothick was examined four hours and gave a full and satisfactory account of the distress at home and abroad and stated everything as he did to your Grace [Newcastle] this morning’.⁸³ Trecothick was, therefore, quite heavily involved in what Thomas has called the Rockingham Ministry’s ‘gigantic red herring’: the spotlight was on the British economic situation, on the impact on Britain, and focused almost entirely (through a careful selection of vetted witnesses) on issues likely to appeal to the greatest number of MPs, while effectively ignoring the American situation.⁸⁴ Trecothick’s long and detailed discussion in Parliament was certainly a part of this plan and was, it seems, effective.

In the debate on the repeal of the Stamp Act on 21 February, Barré – who had campaigned so forcibly before on the issue of colonial taxation – appears not to have attended.⁸⁵ The debate, however, marked the start of Burke’s ascension to the ranks of renowned orator: ‘Mr *Burke* spoke well and to universal satisfaction’; he said ‘many ingenious things, but [was] saucy’ and told the House that ‘last year we were all asleep, now were awake, and like people just roused, a little disordered and in confusion’.⁸⁶ Burke was also apparently ‘the only man who could keep up the attention of the House on a Subject already threadbare’.⁸⁷

⁸² Simons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 185-98.

⁸³ B.L., Add. MSS. 32973, fo 411.

⁸⁴ Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 214-6.

⁸⁵ There is no record of his having spoken in the debate nor is there any evidence of his vote. Simons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 280-92.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 286.

⁸⁷ Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 53.

Burke stated that the 'system of government with respect to the plantations effectually excludes taxation'. He established, further, that as Britain had a 'monopoly of their [the American] trade' to also tax the colonies was a 'double monopoly' and would jeopardise the colonial economy.⁸⁸ The colonial policy adopted was completely wrong, but he wished to show 'how right our ancestors were than we who are either less busy or less wise'. Burke rounded off the speech stating that he 'does not wish for experiment, because we have had experiments enough. It is by the providence of God that we have escaped out of our own hand, not the shuttlecock of faction'.⁸⁹ This process of repeal – after one of the most extensive investigations carried out by the House of Commons in the eighteenth century – eventually passed through Parliament and was given royal assent on 18 March.

Throughout the passage of the Stamp Act, and then its subsequent repeal, most of the MPs with American connexions opposed the idea of colonial taxation. Barré in particular was a vocal and dramatic opponent of the tax, while Jackson, Barré and Trecothick all similarly opposed it. Interestingly, although Bacon wrote about the Stamp Act and the problems of colonial taxation, he appears not to have become involved in any of the debates in Parliament. Given the nature of his publication in 1766, it seems most likely that Bacon felt his written word would have had more of an impact on the discussions surrounding the colonies than any contributions he might have made in debate.

While all the American MPs might have agreed on the fundamental issues, they failed to form any coherent point of argument in debates. Jackson sought colonial representation at Westminster; Barré attacked colonial representation as a 'dangerous thing' and sought simply to fight for American rights; Trecothick worked behind the scenes and dealt primarily with issues of trade, ignoring any of the constitutional battles taking place; Burke argued in favour of caution and conservatism, believing that while Parliament had a right to tax, it should not be used. Importantly, however, with these men in the infancy of their Parliamentary careers, they were unable to make a significant impact on the House of Commons and were still seeking to place themselves as prominent experts on the colonies.

'Again before us, an American tax': The Townshend Duties and the Crisis

Following the repeal of the Stamp Act, there was again somewhat of a respite in American affairs in Parliament. While the Rockingham Ministry continued to work to enhance the

⁸⁸ Bacon uses the same argument in his pamphlet. See chapter three below.

⁸⁹ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 284. Also in Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 53.

conditions of trade, in order to try to recover some of the lost impetus in the economy after the end of the Seven Years War, nothing aroused public spirit in the way the Stamp Act had done.⁹⁰ Burke had supported the Declaratory Act, but otherwise the American MPs made less contribution. During the debate in the American committee in May 1767 on the ‘resolutions on New York’ – dealing specifically with New York’s resistance to the Mutiny Act, as well as the Massachusetts Indemnity Act, and the growing disagreements between the colonial assemblies and Westminster - Burke spoke against the proposal to stop the New York Assembly from passing any further legislation until it complied with Parliament noting that ‘the colony could do without new laws if they chose it’ while Barré thought the Mutiny Act ‘odious’ in general.⁹¹

On 15 May 1767, the debate in the Commons allowed for a wide-ranging discussion of American issues. Townshend had announced plans to tax America a few months before this debate,⁹² but this debate is notable as it is the first at which Pownall became involved (having been elected early in 1767) and because Burke wrote a long draft of a speech he intended to give during the debate.

Pownall’s speech is typically long, grandiose and verbose. He focused on the issue of the Mutiny Bill and quartering of troops in America and began by explaining his own knowledge of America:

Mr Speaker, Having borne so great a share in the service of *North America*, I hope it will not be thought improper, that I take some share in the present debate. When matters are brought under consideration, the facts and circumstances of which cannot be supposed to be fully known to the House, it becomes the duty of those whose service and station have rendered them duly cognizant of such circumstances and facts, to bear their testimony to the state of things, and to give their opinion of the state of the business also. However clear and distinctly these matters may lie in my own mind, in the strongest form of conviction, yet, being unaccustomed to speak in public, I am afraid I shall be unable so to dispose and explain them, as to exhibit that same distinctness, and to convey that same conviction to others. [...] it is not only from the situation in general in which I stood, and the relation which I have borne to the business of America, which seems to render it proper that I should not give a silent vote under this occasion – but the

⁹⁰ For discussion of the Rockingham and Chatham ministries, see: Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*; P. Langford, *The First Rockingham Administration, 1765-1766* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); F. O’Gorman, *The Rise of Party in England: The Rockingham Whigs, 1760-1782* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975); R. Hoffman, *The Marquis: A Study of Lord Rockingham, 1730-1782* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1973); P. Brown, *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham: The Great Commoner* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978); and J. Brooke, *The Chatham Administration* (London: Macmillan, 1956).

⁹¹ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 471-3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, II. 410.

particular manner in which I have been concerned in this particular business, does especially call upon me to give my opinion on the matter now under debate.⁹³

On the issue of the Mutiny Bill, Pownall thought it a 'measure dangerous, [...] not necessary [and was] so contrary and discordant to the constitution'. Pownall's objection to the Act was primarily based on what he saw as the impracticality of the measure: 'it neither considers the various circumstances of the service in that country, as they arise and present themselves variously in various parts thereof; nor, as they must be perpetually changing, from time, in the same parts; but directs particular modes, and establishes regulations [...] which must necessarily be incompatible with the nature of the country'. 'It endeavours,' he further noted, 'to lay down general rules, which can never be applied to numberless particular cases that must arise; and, under this spirit of impracticality, it allows no latitude in the execution thereof'.⁹⁴ Using an Act in Massachusetts which Pownall 'had been the author of' while Governor, there follows a long and detailed list of modifications or changes which Pownall thinks ought to be adopted if the Mutiny Act is to be enforced in America.⁹⁵

Of more interest, however, is Pownall's brief discussion here on the issue of taxation and sovereignty. Pownall stated:

If it be prudent and advisable, that Parliament should charge any expense upon the colonies, by way of tax, originated in this House; how shall it direct that charge to be levied and paid? Shall Parliament *direct the Assembly* of any province or colony, to make provision and supply for it? Or shall Parliament, directly and avowedly, imposing that sum upon the province of the colony as a tax, settle the ways and means of levying it, and appoint executive officers to collect it? Or shall it direct the usual executive officer of the colony to levy and collect the tax so imposed? If the imposing by a direct tax be the proper political mode, the latter step is all regular, and but consequential of it is conformable to law. The people having no share *in the will*, or in the *authority*, must submit to the *power* of the Act, and have no duty left, but submissions and implicit obedience.

If Parliament, the supreme legislature, shall order and impose a tax on a body of people, and shall order the legislative part of that body to provide the payment of it, and to see it paid, it must consider the members of that Assembly merely as commissioners of taxes, appointed in such case to receive and register the Act, to apportion and assess the tax. Yet surely this course is somewhat eccentric to the system of our happy constitution; it approaches, I am afraid, too near

⁹³ *Ibid.*, II. 480. Original in J. Almon, *The Debates of the British House of Commons from 1743 to 1774* (London: 11 vols, 1766-75), VII. 301-15.

⁹⁴ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 480-1.

⁹⁵ Pownall's argument here forms one part of a long and protracted debate and battle over the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces in North America. Major-General Thomas Gage took this attack particularly personally and sought to tarnish Pownall's argument. Carter, *Gage Correspondence*, II. 545: Gage to Barrington (Private) 6 July 1770.

to the course taken by the arbitrary and despotic spirit of a neighbouring government, with the Parliaments of its several Provinces.⁹⁶

Pownall similarly warned that any attempt to force this issue in one particular colony – noting New York and Massachusetts – would create a ‘common cause’ which would ‘call up every other province and colony to stand forth in their justification’. This idea of colonial union was one which Pownall feared considerably, and against which he would argue strongly in his publications.

With regards to the nature of the colonial assemblies and their role in the Empire, Pownall noted that if they were to consider ‘each of the Assemblies of the provinces and colonies as what it is, as a legislative, deliberative body, as the will of that province or colony; it must have a right to deliberate, it must have a right to decide’. ‘If it has the free will to say *aye*,’ Pownall stated, ‘it must [also] have the same power of will to say *no*. You may properly order an executive power to execute; but how, and with what propriety, can you order this deliberative body to *exert its will only in one prescribed direction?*’. Attacking the Act in particular, but with serious implications for the entire relationship between Westminster and the various assemblies, Pownall asked ‘if you mean to try this experiment of reducing these absurdities and inconsistencies to practice; if this Bill must pass, and you have not yet predetermined on the title of it, it seems to me the Bill may justly be intituled, *an Act to render more effectual predestination over free-will*. For as your measure now stands, if the Assemblies [...] will not in every mode, article, and particular provision, decide *in their deliberative capacity*, as an Act of Parliament directs and pre-ordains, you consider the colonies as denying the sovereignty of *Great Britain*’.

Pownall here laid out his thoughts on how the empire ought to be governed, at least in the short term: ‘we must return again, and re-establish the system of our politics on that basis whereon they stood, before some late innovations in our system shook that basis. What remains, but that we act, as to external taxes, with that commercial spirit and prudence, which the wisdom of parliament hath always exercised towards the colonies, since their first establishment: and that as to further supplies, when they become necessary, the colonies, are properly applied to be requisitions in the old accustomed, known mode, which hath always succeeded and been found effectual’.⁹⁷ Pownall’s maiden speech, therefore,

⁹⁶ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 482; by ‘Parliaments’ in the last sentence, Pownall meant *Parlements of Courts*.

⁹⁷ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 484-5.

foreshadowed many of the characteristic aspects of his Parliamentary career: his speech was grand, long and protracted; but, he sought to establish the basis of a constitutional and effectual working relationship between the mother country and the colonies, promoted his own knowledge of the Americas as a reason why he should be listened to, and defended certain colonial rights against encroachments from Westminster.

While Burke is recorded as having spoken during this debate, there remains no account of what he said in the House. There is, however, a draft version of a speech penned by Burke which describes the position he would have taken during the debate.⁹⁸ As Langford notes, this draft proves right Burke's claim in the following year that he opposed the Townshend Duties from the start.⁹⁹ The speech is a simple attack on the idea of colonial taxation, wherein Burke asks whether the 'facts are now before you from whence you can infer a difference in their Circumstances or a Change in your own policy' or, in other words, he asks what has changed since the repeal of the Stamp Act to make the taxation of America now acceptable.

Burke's draft vociferously attacks Grenville's proposed plan for a Test Act to apply to the colonies.¹⁰⁰ A test, Burke established, 'never made a principle' but the proposal 'may serve to discover one – they exclude here and there a conscientious Enemy to Your establishment'. Should the Americans refuse the Test, Burke believes that America would be 'again afloat':

An Universal alarm is Spread; a Combination from an opinion of common distress is formed; and we are again voluntarily brought into our former unfortunate Dilemma. If they submit; they will submit not to opinion but to Necessity – Every time they subscribe to your Test, it will remind them of the force which imposed it – and instead of Quieting their minds – it will pass for a new and more provoking badge of Servitude.

Lastly, Burke warns that 'above all, I would object to using all these plans, (let them never be so wise separately): altogether, and in the Lump – Think what a flame it will burst from one Budget – A standing army, Quarters enforced, Legislature suspended, Taxes laid on, Tests imposed all at once'. 'In all political remedies,' Burke warned, 'gradation, order, Series,

⁹⁸ Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 61.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ See, P. Lawson, 'George Grenville and America: The Opposition Years, 1765-1770', *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXVII, No. 4 (October, 1980), pp. 562-76.

times are at least as necessary as the medicine itself – it is the Quiet and insensible Lapse of Silent Steady Policy – and not this noisy and bustling apparatus of busy Politicks!'.¹⁰¹

The Townshend Duties – the American Revenue Bill – received its first reading on 10 June, its second on 11 June, and it went through Committee on 15 June. By this time, attendance at the House had diminished significantly and the Bill's third reading passed on 18 June.¹⁰² The lack of opposition to the Bill is likely due to the distinction, then accepted in Britain, that Americans had drawn between internal and external taxation. This distinction is one that even the American MPs discussed above supported: Barré and Pownall in particular both mention at length the inappropriate nature of *internal* taxation, implicitly implying that external taxation should cause no such problems. Indeed, Thomas believes that Barré's absence from the – albeit scanty – reports of the debates suggests Barré supported the measure.¹⁰³ Whether this is the case or not is impossible to tell, but it is certainly true that the American MPs failed to rally against the American Revenue Bill in the way they had done against the Stamp Act. It is perhaps for this reason – this lack of understanding in Britain, even amongst those supposedly best connected to the colonies of the shifting nature of American appreciation for, and understanding of, the imperial relationship – that British politicians were caught unawares and surprised twice in the space of a few years over colonial taxation.¹⁰⁴

Colonial opposition to the Townshend Duties built during 1767 and early 1768. The true nature of the American reaction to the measure, however, was not truly known in Britain until after Parliament had ended in March 1768. During the summer recess, and the general election of 1768, American affairs played an ever-present although not all-consuming role in British politics. The issue of Wilkes, his return to Britain, and his expulsion from Parliament were to set British politics afire during this time; America was, after the tumults of 1768, somewhat of a secondary consideration.¹⁰⁵

The summer did, however, see serious concern in Britain over the extent to which Americans would revolt. It was widely believed that the colonists were now in open

¹⁰¹ Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 62-4.

¹⁰² *C.J.*, XXXI, 398, 401-2, 407-8, 412.

¹⁰³ Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, p. 359.

¹⁰⁴ See, Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, pp. 198-230.

¹⁰⁵ See, P.D.G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: A Friend of Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) and J. Conlin, 'High Art and Low Politics: A New Perspective on John Wilkes', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, LXIV, No. 3 (2001), pp. 357-81.

rebellion against Britain and that Boston and New York in particular needed to be subdued by military force. An extra two regiments were sent from Ireland to reinforce the numbers under Gage's command in Boston and those in Britain waited with anticipation. On 4 November, news reached London that the troops had arrived peacefully – though under the protection of the guns from a naval escort – in Boston. Trecothick wrote to Rockingham that he at first feared 'that some unhappy incident may still arise in Boston', but soon found that 'by the ships arrived today I find the two regiments from Halifax were quietly landed in the town and quartered in the public buildings'. The Americans had backed down and were viewed by Britons as 'vain blusterers whose bluff had been called'; this allowed Grafton to 'propose conciliation [...] seemingly in a position of strength'.¹⁰⁶ The cabinet reshuffle which brought in Grafton as the Prime Minister in October 1768, and which led to the resignation of Shelburne, saw Barré follow suit and resign his post. This resignation, along with a return to the Opposition benches, allowed Barré to return to the forefront of politics, and to his greatest talent: criticism of government policy. The debates of the late 1760s and 1770s are, therefore, filled with attacks on ministers and ministerial policy from this renowned orator, which is something that had been sorely lacking during the Chatham administration.

On 8 November 1768, the King's Speech discussed in some detail the American situation.¹⁰⁷ The reply in the House of Commons contained an impassioned speech by Burke attacking the entire basis of the Townshend Duties while Barré urged for a calm, considered approach to the colonists. Burke stated that the issue was 'a very great crisis of the tranquillity of the country, and of the subjection, and obedience of America'. All the problems in America had been 'regularly created by ministerial mismanagement' and to not complain of the poor treatment of the empire would be 'a crime'. Speaking of the repeal of the Stamp Act, Burke noted that it was a 'deliberate Act of this House' and that the ministers then had 'commercial opinions of all kinds from the greatest philosophers to a shoemaker. It was a call of the merchants of England upon an affair of the first magnitude. You called for the commerce of England. It was the correction of a former mistake'.¹⁰⁸

Barré spoke on the 'principle point' being 'what are we to do with regard to our colonies [?]'. Barré continued

¹⁰⁶ Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁷ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, III. 1-3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, III. 6-9. See also, Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 94-9.

I fear we are not likely to meet it with that temper it requires. Without having the smallest respect for men, or parties, I speak to your understandings whether in place, or out of place. The administration say, that everything is quiet. The Address speaks war. There is room to expect some great disturbances in Europe [over the French occupation of Corsica]. It says, you are to coerce the colonies. Let us when we speak of America, let us speak without being angry. The Government has teased the colonies. Many reports came from the Commissioners of the Customs. May we not suppose, that the accounts are not quite fair? May not a little mob be called a tumult, and a little insurrection be called a rebellion? It gives me concern to see, that a disposition for war, and landing should be made against the colonies. They have mimicked their mother country in being riotous [...] You have no right to tax the Americans: you wish to have their money, if not by one way, by another. Why not get their money by requisitions? If they refuse that, everybody must turn out under those circumstances. This country can not last long, if we are reduced to our little insular insignificance. I would show the colonies, that we will adopt no language of a minister, without knowing what that language is.¹⁰⁹

Barré was not the only MP during this debate to call for measure and caution in dealing with the Americans. Indeed, the general sentiment of the debate was one of moderation. While, certainly, there was shock and condemnation of the lengths to which the Americans had gone, Barré's wise words here helped sooth the minds of MPs, and helped Grafton to formulate a policy which would appease most Members. There remained, however, a strong – and growing – sentiment that the Americans were ungrateful and childish, and that they needed to be 'put in their place' by Britain.

A week later, on 15 November, Lord North withheld from the House 'A Remonstrance from the Assembly of Virginia to the British Parliament' on the ground that it would 'be attended with bad consequences [and] would stir up the resentment of Parliament'. Trecothick here replied that he saw the Americans as 'deluded' but point out: 'there may be a few factious individuals. We have factions here. The town of Boston does not contain a thirtieth part of the inhabitants of the colony of Massachusetts Bay'. Trecothick was here urging the House to remain calm and to appreciate that, while reports had been given of the problems in *Boston*, this did not mean a widespread and infectious rebellion was taking place throughout all of Massachusetts, or all of America. Similarly, during a debate on the presentation of a petition from Pennsylvania (which was the only petition submitted, as it was less outrageous than the ones from other colonies although it still implicitly denied the right of Parliament to levy a tax), Jackson stated that he believed it did not 'contradict the rights of England'. The Americans 'don't deny the power, they complain of the exercise of the power, and they deprecate, etc.'¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, III. 11.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III. 32.

Again during a wide-ranging debate on American affairs on 7 December, Trecothick and Barré used their knowledge of the colonies to try to influence the discussion. Trecothick, mirroring what Burke had said a few weeks before, noted that ‘to be silent upon this occasion would be criminal’ before trying to prove the worth of the American colonies – even without any internal or external taxes levied on them by Parliament – to the British Empire as a whole. ‘Everybody who is acquainted with the geography, the natural history of America, with the genius of its inhabitants,’ he said, ‘will agree with me, that it amazingly abounds with everything necessary for the great purposes of supporting a commercial nation: manufactures, commerce, navigation; with everything to increase the power of the mother country’. Trecothick further attests to his own appreciation for the colonies saying: ‘Without vanity I would put it upon the test of my own affirmation, of my own experience. The general complexion of the country was submissive to Great Britain for the regulation of trade. I speak from knowledge, from facts, from belief, as I should speak before the great tribunal of all’. As Bacon and Barré had done when they established themselves in Parliament at the start of the 1760s, and as Pownall had done in the latter 1760s, Trecothick was here presenting himself to the House – only a few months after his election – as an expert on America and as someone who from his ‘own knowledge says’ what the conditions of the colonies were, and what actions the ministry should pursue.

On the issue of government policy and colonial taxation, Trecothick’s view had not changed since before the repeal of the Stamp Act. Great Britain, he thought, drew ‘from America everything. We obliged them to come to our market for her supplies: in that restriction is a tax above all taxes’. However, he also believed that ‘America ought to be taxed: she ought to bear a part of the public burden; that is clearly on the side of contenting yourselves with the exclusive trade to America [...] We should monopolise the trade of America, so far as would be useful to us, otherwise we act against ourselves’. To conclude, Trecothick beseeched the House that ‘soothing, conciliating arts should be used [as] they [the Americans] are an high spirited people’ and he asked that the ‘matter may be taken up upon an extensive plan, and not let the wound continue rankling, till it becomes a gangrene’.¹¹¹

Later in the same debate, Barré attacked the ministry – and particularly Lord North – in his usual manner. Exclaiming ‘Why confine it to Boston? Has not the contagion spread through all the colonies? We know whom we may trust, and whom not. It is the cause of the whole’.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, III. 34-5.

‘If we are to believe the King’s Speech, there are disturbances in more than one colony. All Europe say that America is shaking off her dependence. Notwithstanding the assurances of France, will she not force us into a war by taking advantage of our present situation, deprived of the assistance of two, or three millions?’ He continued,

The noble lord says, we are to content ourselves with the Declaratory Act. Troops are sent, not for the defence, but for keeping down the spirit of the Americans. If a war breaks out before this wound is healed, you will be glad to take the Americans, after having denied you their strength, you then will be glad to take them into your bosom again, sooner than leave them a prey to other countries [...] I tremble for the colonies, I wish to give them a rule to go by. We have been told, one administration proposes a Stamp Act, another repeals it; this is enough to torture the minds of people in America.¹¹²

The debate continued – with Pownall stating unimaginatively that the charters of the colonies made distinctions between external and internal taxation – with the eventual defeat of the motion to lay before Parliament a full inquiry into the American situation.

Following the break for the Christmas holidays, and after a delay because of issues surrounding the expulsion of Wilkes from Parliament, the Committee on American affairs again met on 26 January 1769. This debate is notable because all of the primary experts on America – Burke, Barré, Pownall, Trecothick, Rose Fuller, Governor George Johnstone, William Beckford – attacked the ministry over America. Burke spoke at length against the proposal to bring American criminals to England for trial stating that ‘if you have not one party among two millions people [who could be trusted to form a jury], you must change your plan of government, or renounce the colonies forever’. Pownall spoke at length about the issue of quartering – reiterating his maiden speech – and focused heavily on the legal and constitutional history of the issue of quartering troops and the powers of commissioners in the colonies.¹¹³

Barré’s speech focused on the issue of taxation again. ‘All that country,’ he warned, ‘is ripe for a revolt’. The reason for this revolt was the ‘Act of Parliament [which] imposes a duty upon them, which every man in this House allows to be contrary to all commercial principles’. He again insisted that the only way to effectively and fairly tax America would be to ‘take their money from them in the manner which is most agreeable to themselves, by the mode of requisition’. On the Grafton Ministry’s half-measure – a ‘wait-and-see’ measure – Barré pleaded that government take action one way or the other: ‘let us come as

¹¹² *Ibid.*, III. 39-40.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, III. 71-7.

men; let us enforce the Stamp Act, or let us take the other system. This is neither the one nor the other [...] I say without repealing this law, you run the risk of losing America'. Nevertheless, again, although most of the speakers in the House had been against the ministry's motion, it passed with a significant majority. The experts on America had assembled themselves here into one group, had railed and rallied against the government, but had ultimately failed to convince most of the Members.

American affairs were again discussed on 8 February, where Trecothick and Pownall both gave lengthy speeches. Trecothick announced here that he 'quit the cause of America', presumably realising that further discussion of colonial rights would fall on deaf ears in the House. Instead, he sought to 'rise up in the cause of the manufactures of Great Britain!' and hereby attempted to again work for repeal – as he had done during the Stamp Act Crisis – by focusing on the impact on Britain and on British merchants. A tax on America, he noted, 'directly strikes at the root of your manufactures and commerce. It is a solecism in commerce. Even an author, though a Spaniard, lays it down as the first principle that every nation is to send its manufactures to market as cheap as they can. But how can we do this without the raw materials [that would come from America]?' Speaking of the proverbial 'interested trader', Trecothick continued to say: 'I know no class which is attended with more advantages to his country [...] if his trade declines, the profit of the most useful members of society declines also [...] I see such disadvantages arising to this nation which I am afraid to mention'. After a long discussion on Commissioners and the attacks on the rights of the colonial assemblies, Trecothick concluded his speech stating 'these people have been mortified and chastised. They have been deprived of their government. I do think we stand upon the best ground to relax we ever shall stand upon, that phantom we called honour. I hope we shall be wise enough to get back again to our former ground'.¹¹⁴

Pownall's speech during this debate was arguably one of his finest: he discussed at length the growing concern in the colonies, the impact of ministerial policy on the Americans, and forewarned Parliament that any attempts to subdue the colonists by force would arouse their 'temper' and 'spirit' and would break the union between Britain and America forever.¹¹⁵ Pownall maintained, however, that Americans still believed in the distinction between external and internal tax:

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, III. 90-2.

¹¹⁵ See Appendix III.

The colonies have been used to this distinction by the course and practice of government, having in their reasoning marked *an essential difference in the nature of the thing*.

Whatever tax or duty is imposed upon external property imported into their country – is indeed annexed to the *property*, but not upon them either in their rights or persons; until they choose, by purchasing that property with the tax annexed to it, to annex that tax also to themselves; but this is an act of their own consent.

Whatever tax is imposed on any property immediately and intimately united with their persons or rights, must be paid without any interposition of their own will, unless they quit that property, to forego that right. The first is external; and annexed or not, at their own will – the second is internal, and *absolutely annexed to what is inseparable from them*.

Seeing this *essential difference in the nature of the thing*, established by invariable prescription from the first establishment as a government – they reason (and justly too) from this distinction and this prescription, That whatever right of taxing themselves within the precincts and limits of their own jurisdictions they enjoy by the principles of the British Government and their own constitutions.

Pownall ended by almost pleading with the House to see sense and return to ‘the safe old ground on which this matter hath always stood’ and the ‘spirit of your old policy’. This, he noted, ‘would restore again peace, order and government’ and, to prove this point and his American connexions, he further stated ‘I have letters in my pocket from some of the principal, some of the leading men of that country – who say we do not call upon Great Britain to give up her rights and claims – we only desire to be returned back and set again upon our old safe ground, which we understood, and that in the exercise of your power you would return to your old policy’.¹¹⁶

This speech formed part of Pownall’s attempts to destroy the Grafton’s ministry’s plans for America. Even with Pownall’s warnings above, the ministry carried the vote – on the issue of carrying Americans to Britain for trial – by a staggering majority. Pownall was disgusted at the outcome and wrote: ‘We have neither knowledge nor system nor principle, we have but one word... that is our sovereignty – and it is like some word to a mad-man which whenever mentioned, throws him into his ravings’.¹¹⁷ The ministry, thought Pownall, was full of ‘blockheads’ and he worked tirelessly to try to restore again amicable relations between Americans and Britons. Pownall became well known at this time as a ‘Friend of Liberty’ and was praised by several leading Americans, including Franklin and Francis Bernard. He believed also, however, that his letters to the Americans were being opened and read by those in the ministry – he claimed his letters had ‘gone through bad hands’ and

¹¹⁶ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, III. 107-10.

¹¹⁷ Schutz, *Thomas Pownall*, p. 220.

that the Ministry 'have told the King, that I correspond with the *Sons of Liberty*' - but all his correspondence at this time shows a moderate man determined to maintain the British Empire and desperate to return to some kind of normality in imperial relations.¹¹⁸

Similarly, Trecothick was working outside of Parliament to try to build support for repeal of the Townshend Duties. He sought to organise a mass submission of petitions – crucially from British towns and cities, as opposed to the numerous ones rejected by Parliament from the Americas – in order to show widespread distaste at the duties. This plan eventually came to nothing by the first months of 1769.¹¹⁹ However, Trecothick did enjoy one success. A matter of days after his speech of 8 February, the members of the London livery company – all 6,000 of them – submitted instructions to their MPs (Trecothick being one of them) in favour of repeal of the duties and the promotion of colonial trade.¹²⁰

On 15 March, Pownall proposed two changes to the Mutiny Bill to make it less odious to Americans by allowing them to quarter troops 'in their own way' and that local commanders should have power to make local decisions, based on local circumstances, which would benefit and best fit the circumstances. During discussion of the proposals, changes were made to the wording of the first amendment as it 'seemed to derogate from the authority and competency of Parliament' and the second was accepted without any alteration. The change – suggested by Garth – stated that any colony should 'make its own provisions for quartering soldiers' was supported by Trecothick, Conway and Barré.¹²¹

On 19 April, Pownall again proposed a motion in the House. This motion was to have much more wide-spread consequences and was the first time the American Revenue Act was directly discussed in Parliamentary debate. Pownall began the debate by asserting that he was 'inconsiderable, unconnected, independent and that he belonged to neither one side of the House nor the other'. The past troubles over 'war taxes,' he said, had been 'taken up with party views only, instead of being established by any system of policy; they have been taken up, and applied to add to the momentum of this and that party'. He stressed that he was 'unconnected'; that he had 'no party to serve, nor myself to serve by any party' and that it was 'no attack upon ministers, nor meant to revive the dispute of different parties, but [was] for the interest of the public, as that is connected with the colonies'. The Duties

¹¹⁸ F. Griffin, *Junius Discovered* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1854), pp. 221-2.

¹¹⁹ B.L., Add. MSS. 42087, fo 2.

¹²⁰ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XXXIX (London: 1769), 73-6.

¹²¹ Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis*, p. 132.

were, he said, being paid; he stressed, furthermore, that it was only Boston which was under any type of military law, while the rest of the continent remained 'humbled'.

The very nature of the law was unjust as it lay 'duties upon the obedient colonies' and provided a 'net produce [of] £295 per year' but meant that the 'colonies will not purchase our goods'. The Act itself was acting as a 'prohibition' and would destroy the basis of union.

The Act lays a duty upon painted colours. Is there no red, or yellow one in that country? If they had but one colour, they were to call that the colour of liberty. Every house, carriage, and ship would be painted with it. A duty upon glass. It is a premium, and encouragement to other countries. Philadelphia supplies Boston with window glass. They get paper from Holland, or St. Eustatia or the Virgin Islands. Tea. I could show by a letter from Boston which tells me, that that duty has had no effect at all.

Pownall thereby proposed a motion that a Committee should meet on 24 April to discuss the Act and submitted that it was 'the opinion of this Committee, that the said Act hath not answered the purport, and intent thereof, of raising a revenue in his Majesty's dominions in America' and that 'this House be moved to bring in a Bill for the repealing so much of an act made in the 7th year of the reign of his present Majesty intituled "An Act, etc., as imposes certain duties on goods therein mentioned, imported into the British colonies and plantations in America"'.¹²²

The debate that followed saw Trecothick speak first. He seconded the motion and spoke of the 'national concern' and of having 'nothing to gain, [but] much to lose'. 'We have,' he said, 'enacted laws diametrically opposite to the interests of our colonies. We are driving them to a necessity of furnishing themselves with their own manufactures'. All the policies adopted by the British government had 'recoil[ed] upon ourselves' and 'sound policy respecting America seems to have forsaken our council'. Trecothick was, however, one of only a few MPs – even from amongst the Opposition benches and his fellow American MPs – to support the motion.

Barré proposed that Parliament 'come into a resolution that it may be proper in the next session [after the summer recess] to make a general revision of all the laws relating to America that have been made in his present Majesty's reign' and refused to support Pownall's motion. Jeremiah Dyson replied to Barré: 'are they to be left no bounds but their own wishes, and inclinations? Even if the next year we should be inclined to make such an

¹²² Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, III. 148-9.

alteration, under such a motion we should pass a general censure upon all the laws'. Barré replied asking: 'are we to go on from hour to hour, from day to day patching up this wretched system? It is not a system'.

Burke's reply was even cooler. He took particular umbrage at Pownall's attack on party – 'I never thought America should be beat backwards and forwards as the tennis ball of faction' – but urged for restraint and calm from both sides. 'We know not how to advance, they know not how to retreat. This is my opinion of our situation with regard to America. He is a bold man who can say what measures we can take.' Nevertheless, Burke remained set on repeal stating that 'if the question stood repeal, or enforce, I have no doubt to repeal' but he thought Pownall's motion too extreme and stated: 'I never wished to agitate, or stir the question, nor now support it [...] A man of cool, and moderate temper, it is a thousand to one he would be a wise proposer'.¹²³ William Beckford supported Pownall and his 'middle way' but noted that it was not a promise to repeal the Act, but a promise 'that we will look into the grievances of America'. Jackson meanwhile supported repeal in general, but made no comment on Pownall's specific motion: 'the preservation of America depends upon the repeal of this law'.¹²⁴

Ultimately, receiving no support from either the Ministry or the Opposition, Pownall's motion failed. Pownall wrote to Cooper the following week that 'while you are labouring to relieve yourselves from one burden, you must of course become second and subordinate to such *parties*, instead of the whole'.¹²⁵ Pownall's motion was effective in showing that there was considerable support for repeal of the Townshend Duties, but his unfortunate timing at the end of the Parliamentary session alienated many of the potential supporters. Moreover, his attacks on 'party' further pushed Burke from any agreement with him on the issue. Nevertheless, the ministry realised that repeal was popular in the House and worked towards this end.

'Like that Emperor Staying at Home Catching Flies'

The Christmas holidays and the start of 1770 saw another change in leadership. Lord North became Prime Minister in January of that year, but American issues were not to take the centre stage until March. This debate, on 5 March, was well attended but was apparently

¹²³ *Ibid.*, III. 148-51. See also, Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 231-2.

¹²⁴ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, III. 152-3.

¹²⁵ Griffin, *Junius Discovered*, p. 223.

‘not edifying nor animated, and the subject has been worn so threadbare, that patience is tired, and modes have been so often varied, that there is scarce a choice left’.¹²⁶ North put forward the plan agreed by the Cabinet – to repeal all of the Townshend Duties, except that on tea – and began the debate by defending his position. During this debate, Pownall, Barré and Trecothick all participated; Burke was absent for some reason.¹²⁷

Pownall proposed removing the tax on tea along with all the other duties: ‘solely upon commercial grounds I rise to state, what this goes to show, that every argument that goes to those manufactures, goes to the tea also’. The Act, Pownall complained, had ‘thrown them [the Americans] into a spirit of industry. It has made them look into the supplies they have within themselves. It has taught them to retrench the surplus. It has taught them the spirit of manufacturing’. Pownall went further than ever before, however, and sent this warning to the House:

I pledge myself to bring forward the state of his Majesty’s government in America. I will show you, that they are under unlawful authority. As officers, as servants of the Crown, they are every day liable to be indicted of high treason. If indicted, they must be convicted. There is no appeal from it, as in Ireland. Whoever will avow that state of the military command in that country, will be liable to be impeached in this House. That question has already been decided in the Court of Common Pleas. I will further pledge myself to impeach any minister that shall dare to avow it after that decision [...] I believe there is no minister weak or wicked enough to dare to avow it. If he should, I pledge myself to impeach him.

Before finishing, Pownall attacked North’s suggestion that the ‘associations at Boston’ – associations which North had gone out of his way to insist were illegal – were at an end was false. He stated that he had more letters which informed him that the Bostonians had ‘come to a further agreement, if the duties in the Act of Parliament are not repealed’. In other words, the non-importation agreement would continue without repeal. Pownall finished by asking ‘after the word “paper”, you insert those words “and also tea”’.¹²⁸

A ‘very ill’ Trecothick again followed Pownall’s charge and attacked the duty on tea as ‘uncommercial’. The object of the American grievances, he said, was primarily tea. He worried also that, by taxing tea, the British government would force the Americans into the arms of smugglers, thereby harming the British economy further. Barré’s primary focus during his attack was on the failure to repeal the tax before 1770. He attacked the government for a decade of mismanagement and mishandling of colonial affairs: ‘a few

¹²⁶ Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis*, p. 172.

¹²⁷ There are numerous accounts of this debate. See, Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, III. 206-43.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, III. 218-9.

years ago, the genius of a minister [William Pitt], supported by your fleets and armies, set you at the head of the world. The East and West Indies were in your hands. Your infant hands were not able to grasp the world. Instead of that, you have been confining yourself to the lowest business, that of pursuing little, low criminals, instead of giving laws to the world. Like that emperor staying at home catching flies'. Forewarning of future issues, Barré completed his attack by noting that 'this partial repeal is felt as a grievance. It is acknowledged by all to be absurd. We shall see whether it will fester, and make worse those grievances they complain of, and totally alienate their affection from you'.¹²⁹

Pownall's contribution to this debate was seen to be 'very sensible' and 'demonstrated the ruinous, alarming situation of the trade'. Barré's efforts were praised as having been done 'extremely well' with some 'fine strokes'. His image of the emperor playing with flies was particularly noted: 'instead of directing their attention to national objects, they had [Barré said], like the tyrant *Domitian*, when they had done mischief everywhere, even amused themselves at home in catching and tormenting flies'. Yet again, however, the American MPs were to be beaten. Pownall's motion to add the words 'and also tea' was defeated by 142 in favour; 204 against.¹³⁰ A similar motion submitted by Trecothick on 9 April to repeal the duties laid upon tea – by adding 'and on tea' – was defeated with 80 voting for the ministry and 52 with Trecothick. This final defeat ended attempts in Parliament to remove the tax on tea.¹³¹

The Boston Massacre of 5 March 1770 was not known to Britons during the great debates on the repeal of the Townshend Duties. It was not until the end of April that reports started to filter through in the British press and official reports. On 26 April, Trecothick moved that all accounts of disputes between soldiers and colonists since June 1769 be laid before the House. North approved, but asked that an amendment be made to prevent the private accounts of colonial officials being made public in the interest of their safety.

Burke used this opportunity to mount a wide-ranging and bitter attack on imperial policy. Attacking the use of troops, he stated 'The troops [...] were left at the mercy of the inhabitants. Governor Bernard [Governor of Massachusetts] told you all civil government ceased in America. He said, his authority ceased [...] The troops looked upon the people as

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, III. 226-9.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, III. 242.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, III. 249-51.

rebels. The people looked upon the soldiers as enemies. They quarrelled and fought'. He challenged North to govern America effectively telling the House that Britain ought to 'conquer it [America] by your policy. Conquer it by your strong government. Conquer it by your laws'. Of most significance here, however, was Burke's announcement that he would 'open a more ample review of the government of America for three years past'. Barré similarly attacked the use of troops – although he praised Hutchinson for his tact in dealing with the troops on their arrival – stating that British policy had 'made soldiers politicians'. He warned of military governance, however: 'if a soldier hears, it is better to kill twenty today, than a hundred tomorrow, he will go beyond his duty, he will quit his ranks, kill many, and secure to himself a pension for life. His way of managing the military is spread to America'. Viscount Barrington then rose to defend the troops and effectively ended the debate.

The following day, Burke continued his attack with a 'two hours and a quarter' long speech criticising the government.¹³² After an apology for bringing the measure so late in the session – 'when gentlemen wish to retire to their recreation' – Burke established that the past three years had seen a dearth of meaningful policy from him or the Rockinghams: 'no vexatious measures, no inquiry to distract them in their plan of operations has been mentioned from this side of the House'.¹³³ There followed a very long and detailed attack on imperial policy from the Stamp Act through to the use of troops in Boston. The government, Burke claimed, had no solid, no coherent, policy on America. Acts were passed, then repealed; Acts were passed, then partially repealed; 'America is ill-governed'. Burke put forward eight motions – including one stating 'that a principal Cause of the Disorders which have lately prevailed in *North America*, hath arisen from the ill-judged and inconsistent instructions given, from Time to Time, by Persons in Administration, to the Governors of some of the Provinces in *North America*'.

None of Burke's motions passed.¹³⁴ Burke, however, spoke on this: 'You may negative my resolution. You can't negative the recommendation of the Crown to take the affairs of America into consideration. You can negative your own Address. You can't negative the sense of the Parliament upon the general impropriety of the conduct upon ministers on

¹³² Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 323-34. Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, III. 299-307.

¹³³ Notably, when he spoke against Pownall's motion on 19 April, Burke stated that: 'to purpose plans of government from this side of the House are not wise in general'. Apparently, rather than Opposition in general, Burke meant specifically Pownall was unable to form plans of government. Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, III. 151.

¹³⁴ *C.J.*, XXXII, 969-70.

resolutions miserable as they are. You may deal as you please'.¹³⁵ This was the last great salvo in the Commons before the summer recess. During the summer recess, and until the end of 1770, the North Ministry worked to secure its position in Parliament. More than that, however, it established that the tax on tea would remain.

American politics for the next three years became rather quiet by comparison. There was, as Thomas put it, a 'pause in politics' which would be split asunder by the events of 1773. The American MPs remained active in politics during this time, but spoke on affairs of less significance.¹³⁶ The great Parliamentary battles of the mid-1770s were to follow, and these were to provide a significant testing ground of the American MPs and their connexions to the colonies.

Conclusion

The 1760s saw some of the great Parliamentary battles over the rights and responsibilities of the North American colonies. The House of Commons, contrary to contemporary and current thought, was relatively well versed on the nature of the American colonies and colonists. A number of MPs had personal experience, and knowledge, of the Americas from an array of sources and the conclusion that the Commons was ignorant of colonial issues simply cannot stand.

What we have found is that a core group of American MPs sought throughout the decade to enforce their view of the empire onto the whole but were faced with an unresponsive chamber unwilling to agree with their points of discussion. We must not, however, over-emphasise the defeats suffered by these politicians: the repeal of the Stamp Act and the partial repeal of the Townshend Duties are testament to the fact that the men *did* have influence over imperial policy.

The problems lay, however, in trying to convince an otherwise uninterested House that American issues were important in the House. The Stamp Act's repeal focused largely on the impact on British merchants, as opposed to any American concerns. All protestations of American assemblies' rights were seen as direct challenges and threats to the power of

¹³⁵ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, III. 323.

¹³⁶ For example, Pownall spoke in December 1772 on the price of corn and provisions: 'Do you suppose, Sir, that the flour mixed would make as good bread as our own wheat? I mean, would be as wholesome?'. *Ibid.*, III. 455.

Parliament. In this discussion, even the most well connected of the MPs failed to support their American brethren. Barré stands out as the most vocal opponent of imperial designs at this time, but even he continued to mark the distinction between internal and external taxes and he refused to accept any kind of actual representation at Westminster.

Throughout the debates, all of the MPs involved discussed the glory days of the Empire before 1763. Rather than producing a coherent, an attractive, or a workable alternative to the problems being faced by Britons and Americans, these men simply harked back to times-gone-by in a desperate attempt to try to fix the issues at hand. Pownall in particular failed to articulate his grand plans for empire in the House during this time: his speeches contain so many references to seeking to 'restore order', 'keep with the past' and 'maintain that which worked so effectively'. These arguments would have been unattractive to politicians who sought to reorder, restore and reorganise the empire. If the problems had come from attempting to improve that which they thought to be broken, attempts by the American MPs to reclaim and return to that which had been lost would ultimately be unsuccessful.

All of the MPs discussed their connexions with, and knowledge of, the Americas. All of the MPs sought to carve out a place for themselves in the House of Commons as 'American experts'. These men fought variously for the American cause, but failed to unite in order to provide a more coherent opposition. Instead, differences in personalities and outlooks, and differences in the political connexions made by the men in Britain, soured some relations and kept others cool. It is unlikely that any united 'American front' in Parliament would have made any difference – American politics only really captured leading British politicians' attention for short bursts of time – as the various administrations tended to have workable majorities at this time. Nevertheless, as events unfolded throughout the early-to-mid 1770s, America would again rise as a central – as *the* central – issue in British politics, and the American MPs would again find themselves at the forefront of the battle for empire.

CHAPTER II

LOSING AN EMPIRE: THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND AMERICA

‘But, BEHOLD what followed!’ reported the *Boston Gazette* in December 1773, ‘A number of brave & resolute men, determined to do all in their power to save their country from the ruin which their enemies had plotted, in less than four hours, emptied every chest of tea on board the three ships commanded by the captains Hall, Bruce, and Coffin, amounting to 342 chests, into the sea!! without the least damage done to the ships or any other property. The matters and owners are well pleas'd that their ships are thus clear'd; and the people are almost universally congratulating each other on this happy event’.¹ This ‘happy event’ – the Boston Tea Party – marked the end of the constitutional lull which had characterised relations between Britain and America since the early 1770s.²

News of the events in Boston reached London throughout January and February 1774. On 30 January, Lord Rockingham wrote to Burke to explain his desires of ‘being in the House of Lords, when this subject [discussion of the papers received by the government relating to the Tea Party] comes on’. He also mentioned Trecothick’s illness, stating: ‘I am most exceedingly grieved for poor Trecothick, I thought him ill in Health when I last saw him in London, and his spirits were much sunk, but the appearances of friendship and affection towards me, were too warm for me to forget so soon’.³ Burke replied, warning Rockingham that ‘your Lordships [*sic*] friends in the House of Peers ought to absent themselves, and not to countenance the interested Petulance of those Paltry discontented People, who without embracing your principles, or giving you any sort of support, think to make use of your Weight to give consequence to every occasional spurt of opposition they think proper to make’. With regards to American affairs, Burke’s only comment was to remark dryly that ‘any Remarkable Highway Robbery at Hounslow Heath would make more conversation than all the disturbances of America’.⁴ The significance of events had not yet reached Burke or

¹ *Boston Gazette*, 20 December 1773. Quoted in, J. Lee, *History of American Journalism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), p. 86.

² See B. Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); A. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999); and, for an eyewitness report, see C. Snow, *A History of Boston, the Metropolis of Massachusetts from its Origin to the Present Period, with some Account of the Environs* (Boston: Abel Brown, 1825), pp. 197-200.

³ L. Sutherland, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke: Volume II, July 1768-June 1774* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 515-6: Rockingham to Burke, Wentworth, 30 January 1774.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II., 523-4: Burke to Rockingham, 2 February 1774.

the Rockinghams, and events were being treated simply as another matter of 'party politics' in London. The Rockingham point on the issue was clear, however: 'I can never,' wrote Rockingham, 'give my assent to proceeding to actual force against the Colonies'.⁵

The discussion in Parliament took place on 7 March 1774 when Lord North laid before the Commons 109 papers relating to the 'unwarrantable Practices which have been lately concerted and carried on in *North America*, and particularly the violent and outrageous Proceedings at the Town and Port of *Boston*'.⁶ The debate started with a plea from the Ministry to ensure Parliamentary unanimity on such a divisive subject in order to show the Americans how seriously it was being taken by Britons and as George Rice stated, to 'keep up the sovereign authority of this country'.⁷ Pownall replied stating that the Address did not challenge any of the opinions he had held regarding America and that it was his 'opinion that the dependence of the colonies must be held as part of the constitution, [but that] the question is what that dependence is'. As the Address did not 'preclude me from that consideration,' Pownall thought it should pass without division and that he hoped 'for the sake of this country, for the sake of America, for the sake of general liberty, that this Address will go with an unanimous vote'.⁸

Burke spoke next and brought in an attack on the fact that MPs were being asked to support an Address before bearing witness to the various documents. 'Deliberation without information' was, in Burke's view, a pointless endeavour and an insult to Parliament. Moving on from this issue, he attacked the history of American governance, focusing particularly on the Stamp Act and its repeal. 'The honourable gentleman asked a question, should America belong to this country? Yes, it should. Please God, this kingdom belongs to itself. If we have equity, wisdom, judgement, it will belong to this country. If not, it will not belong to this country. It is not agreeable to the law of nature it should belong to this country.' He continued,

If I thought [I could] stop a wicked measure by vexatious opposition, I would do it. If guided by the opinion of people abroad, [I would] certainly do it. First, I declare myself against the use of all those measures, or any of them in the spirit of what you have hitherto found by experience to be ineffectual. I declare myself against that maxim of violence and levity. I declare you ought to proceed wisely against America. You ought to make war against them if in a state of rebellion, but know and be sure that is the case. If [they are] in a state of dissatisfaction arising from a relaxity ...

⁵ *Ibid.*, II. 516: Rockingham to Burke, Wentworth, 30 January 1774.

⁶ *C.J.* XXXIV, 541.

⁷ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, IV. 39.

then remove those discontents, appoint a wiser man. Do not suppose them in rebellion ... If [] war, you have power to reduce the Americans to nothing ... Do not use a military proportion for a civil grievance. Support the civil magistrates.

Civil government, the government that subsists in every English colony, is a popular government ... grand jury ... popular assembly ... If such a government as that is universally discontented, no troops under heaven [can] bring them to obedience. Suppose all the common people were of opinion the execution of any law [was wrong, the] constable [would] not go in pursuit of the man. That government fails in the policy. There is no military remedy ... The magistrate is the man that will be obeyed, the magistrate must be agreeable [...] I say that government, popular government, cannot be enforced by an army. It is absolutely impossible.⁹

Barré similarly rose on this point. ‘We are to consider,’ he stated, ‘a no less important question, [than] whether America is to be ours or not. Depend on these circumstances the mode, the form, the limits. These are not light questions. A plan is to be offered. America is to be brought before us. Let her come with all her sins upon her head. Let her come with all her merits upon her head. Let her come with all her services. Let her be allowed to state the blessings she has procured to this country. I am ready to receive her...’. Barré asked that the debate on a policy for America be postponed until 14 March, but warned that Members must seriously consider whether they wished to continue the governance of America and whether they knew the ‘true footing’ on which the empire – and, importantly, its costs to Britain – stood. He asked: ‘Look at the disturbances, and reflect upon the use and application of the army. Has that America reason to look upon the soldiers as protectors, as defenders? Has that America reason to look upon the soldiers as instruments of oppression? Look at the arrangement of the troops it has made for their defence ... Government of our empire: can you afford [it]?’.¹⁰

Government policy for dealing with America remained highly confidential during this time. While the cabinet discussed their plan of action – a plan now known specifically as the Coercive Acts or Intolerable Acts – the rest of Britain, including the American MPs, remained in the dark. This first foray into American issues however marked a change in the ways in which the American MPs were to act over the coming year: Barré, Burke and Pownall propelled themselves to the very forefront of Parliamentary debate on all things American. Bacon and Jackson both remained largely quiet and spoke only a few times in debate. Trecothick had been ‘touched by the *palsy*’, was suffering from considerable ill health, and barely attended any sessions of the House.

⁹ *Ibid.*, IV. 41-5. The version in Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, quoted above is from an imperfect transcription of notes taken during the speech.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV. 46.

The debates which were to follow involved the American MPs in various guises. Moving from half-hearted supporters of punishment of Boston to vocal opposition to the Coercive Acts, the MPs were crucial and influential members of a small minority. What they lacked in voting numbers – for North’s American policy was to attract the backing of most independent MPs throughout this session, and longer – the MPs made up for in debating prowess and skill. They remained incapable, however, of shifting the British disapproval of the colonies or of softening the attitude towards America. Barré and Burke featured heavily throughout and were undoubtedly amongst the leading champions of America and of a liberal empire. Bacon, interested only in his business ventures and ensuring maximum profit, contributes only on one matter relating to the mercantile impact of the Boston Port Bill. Pownall’s journey was perhaps the most important: he moved from opposition to the Ministry, and support of the repeal of the tax on tea, to supporting North’s proposals.

‘Boston, Bloody Boston!’

On 14 March, Lord North presented to the House his proposal to punish Boston by closing the port. North was sombre and serious throughout. He sought three main aims: firstly, to secure Boston Port and ensure that British goods could be landed safely; secondly, to secure some form of reparation for the tea destroyed; and, thirdly, to punish Boston and the Bostonians by stopping all merchandise from being landed there. North’s speech was crafted in such a way to attract as little debate as possible: notably, he established that even though the punishment of Boston would cause upset to the guilty and innocent alike this policy – of ‘collective punishment’ – had been ‘the principle very much of our laws in very early times, but a principle in all countries where any tumults and riots’. ‘The authority of the town,’ he continued, ‘has seemed to sleep where the bulk of any corporation and society has been influenced from machinations against the public peace [...] upon that principle the counties are answerable this day for injuries committed within that district’.¹¹

Rose Fuller – one of the prominent Rockinghamite MPs with West Indian connexions - gave half-hearted support to the Bill. He approved of the punishment of Boston, stating that they ‘ought to make good their losses’ but whether the proposal would ‘be or not be safe’ and whether it be the right method he had ‘great doubt’. Barré astounded the House by stating that he ‘having weighed it in [his] own mind’ could not help ‘giving it [his] hearty and

¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV. 57-8.

determinate affirmative'.¹² Knowing that of conduct would strike the House as unusual given Barré's record on colonial affairs, he continued with a justification of his position: 'my reason for so doing, I believe, will not be found to impeach or contradict any former part of my conduct when subjects of this nature were under our consideration. I like it, rash as it may appear in the eyes of some very intelligent persons in this House'. He continued

I like it, adopt and embrace it, as cheerfully for its moderation, though this is the first [occasion] the noble lord's conduct in this business will bear the same respect. I am sensible how defective it is in the present circumstances either to defend or punish Boston. I think she ought to be punished. Sir, at the same time I can't help expressing some sentiments that seem to mitigate and I hope will mitigate the offence of that colony. [...] If she [Massachusetts] had not at least ended that [spirit of independence for] forty years, [she would] never have arrived to that pitch of commerce and greatness.¹³

Barré went on to discuss his views of how the empire ought to work, in the vaguest terms. As the colonists were three thousand miles away from Britain 'some sort of connection to keep the people at peace, to prevent anarchy and confusion' must be kept in that colony. 'You must have,' he established, 'some sort of people to look up to, who are the Assembly. Take [it away], the executive power will trample upon them. Ask any man, if man of spirit. I will pledge myself, saying, I oppose that tyrannical system of government'. Barré still believed at this point – keeping to the Chathamite policy of the Declaratory Act – that the Americans only objected to taxation and not to British authority, and that it was best to maintain Parliamentary supremacy but not to enact any laws which taxed the colonies: 'in 1764 [we] made one revenue act, in 1765, made another revenue. 1766 repealed. In 1767, made another. You have been taxing and scratching ever since [...] If you mean the money, take it. If not mean the money, don't insist upon this foolish tax. By liberality and generosity mark your generosity'.¹⁴

Charles James Fox followed Barré, making his first speech on American affairs and moving slowly towards opposition to North. Pownall followed Fox and, like Barré, supported the Bill. He expressed his desire to speak at some other time on the propriety of taxing the

¹² This initial enthusiastic support would haunt Barré for years to come, and those in the Ministry did not quickly forget what he said here.

¹³ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 69-70.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, IV. 71. Thomas states that Barré's position here was partly a tactical move, with Shelburne writing to Chatham the next day: 'Mr. Barré tells me that finding the Rockinghams divided, that is, Mr. Dowdeswell, after some hesitation, directly opposing, and Lord John Cavendish tending to approbation ... [he] thought the best service he could do America was to support government to a certain degree, avowing his original principles, and that he might have more weight to resist propositions of a more coercive nature'. Chatham replied that 'the violence committed on the tea cargo is certainly criminal'. Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*, p. 52.

Americans and noted – to jeering noises from the Members – that he had ‘twice moved for the repeal’ of the tax on tea. Pownall spoke ‘from the situation in which [he had] stood to those people [Governor of Massachusetts], from the connections [he had] had with them’. They had, Pownall insisted, ‘the warmest affection for this country; animated by an animated zeal [*sic*] for its service; the most zealous loyalty for the King of Great Britain upon every occasion of government’. Elaborating on points made earlier in the debate by Dowdeswell, Pownall put forth the belief that the problems in Boston lay in issues arising from the constitution of Massachusetts. ‘The defect in their Charter, left unremedied in the Charter of King William. They have no regular corporations, as other towns. The only meetings are these town meetings. It is a kind of state of nature ... They have nothing to restrain, and withhold them, for want of this very constitution.’¹⁵

Pownall proposed that, were there to be any preventative measures in addition to the punitive ones being then proposed, that ‘they should consider the state of those town meetings while government is at peace, or under the rule and government of wise and prudent men. But the moment anything comes to agitate them ... it is not from the disposition of the people, it is not from their maintaining more violent principles than others, it is not from their being determined to destroy the tea’. The Tea Party, Pownall insisted, was ‘committed by a lower mob’ and he noted that ‘if Boston had the same Charter, [as] New York or Philadelphia, there would have been in Boston much less violence, than in either of the two towns’. Pownall continued by listing his reasons for supporting the Bill: other ports in Massachusetts allowed for the continuation of trade and the town meetings were ‘empowered to raise money for the purpose of the town only’ meaning that the East India Company could be reimbursed with ‘no impracticability’. Pownall finished his speech by summing up again his view of the empire as a *Grand Marine Dominion*:

I am clear this country has the supreme authority over all appendages of the dominion of Great Britain, and all the parts necessary to maintain [and] animate the empire of the whole. All consistent with the very liberty that the colonies require, demand, claim. Which a set of freemen ought to have. Upon that very ground I will undertake to mend every liberty they have claimed consistent with [the sovereignty of] Great Britain.¹⁶

When North brought back a revised version of the Bill on 18 March, Fuller asked whether it was ‘part of a great plan’ to which North replied that it was an ‘animadversion upon Boston for this particular insult’. Pownall seconded North’s outlook here, stating that ‘I do conceive

¹⁵ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 72-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, IV. 73.

it stands simply by itself as a distinct measure' and that it was 'necessary regulation for the protection of the British trade'. He suggested here also that further imperial legislation was required: 'till you make some regulations in the Act of [Parliament], no means at present by which you can punish them'.¹⁷

Upon the first great constitutional battle of the American Revolution, the American MPs had failed to grasp the true nature of American resistance. There is no record of Burke having attended or spoken after the Bill was brought forward, and even the most vocal of American supporters – the father of the *Sons of Liberty*, Barré – supported the North Ministry's measure. The lasting impression from these speeches, and others from those with American connexions such as Rose Fuller, appears to be that either the men thought the current Bill sufficient and warrantable given the circumstances, or that it was still too early to commit themselves irrevocably to any course of action (this in particular appears to be the case with Burke and his Rockinghamite friends). Although the American MPs might have supported this one proposal, however, they remained cautious and aware of the wider implications of colonial taxation and the impact it could have on Anglo-American relations. They all appear, however, to have failed to grasp the shifting situation in the Americas at this point; and, crucially, to have failed to anticipate the American reaction to the punishment of Boston.

In the Committee debate on 23 March, the Bill received its harshest criticisms. Fuller again opposed the main thrust of the Bill, and sought to remove the closure of Boston Port and replace it with a £25,000 fine to be paid by the end of 1774. Fuller stated that such a harsh reaction was uncalled for after the first offence, to which North replied 'Would to God it was the first offence! It is the first time they have destroyed cargoes of tea; but during the whole seven years past there has been a series of offences breathing throughout defiance to the authority of this House and a total independence to the laws of this country; for this is not the first, nor in that light has it any claim to any particular tenderness and lenity'.¹⁸ After what became an infamous speech by Charles Van – a man known for his vocal anti-American sentiment – wherein he demanded that 'the English army should not trespass over that rebel town. Make it a mark that shall never be restored [...] Impress the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, IV. 84.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, IV. 91.

Americans. “That was the town.” Now destroy them if ever you fear a single ball against it. Demolish it, that is my opinion. *Delenda est Carthago*.¹⁹

This crazed attack on the Americans brought Barré to his feet in animated response. He quickly refuted the claims of Van – ‘the honourable gentleman who spoke last had not made a very great impression upon me’ – and moved swiftly back to the topic of the Bill. Here Barré showed himself to be hesitant over the precise nature of action required: ‘I wish the Bill to go through,’ he said, but he noted that he was ‘left in that awkward situation’. Barré worried that the proposed Bill placed too much power in the hands of the ministers as it let them decide when and how full reparation had been made to the East India Company (and therefore when Boston Port could be legally reopened).

He continued with an attack on the ‘odious tax’ on tea, and of American taxation in general. ‘Keep your hands out of their pockets,’ he said, ‘[and] they will be obedient subjects. Take it from them if you will. Do not put your hands in. Let them put their hands in and pay you’.²⁰ Echoing Benjamin Franklin’s report of the previous day that ‘we never had since we were a people so few friends in Britain’,²¹ Barré told of his belief that ‘the country in general are against America’. It was, he noted, ‘bad ground for ministers to take, to go in that temper. It is giving way to the current of the stream. It is his business. An able and a great minister would check that strong passion. We have too much of it ... Take care not to mix this proposal, these rights, these rights in theory which you never can reduce to practice’. He also remarked that, while he gave his support to the Boston Port Bill, he worried that ‘the next measure will be of a great inconsistency and even a darker complexion than this. My carrying it [the Boston Port Bill] to government will have no sort of effect this moment’.²²

Thereafter the House refused to hear a petition from William Bolan on behalf of the Massachusetts Council (which was rejected by Pownall as he believed that the Council could not act independently of the Assembly or Governor, and that all petitions should come only

¹⁹ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 102. The meaning is: ‘Carthage must be destroyed’. See, H. Scullard, *A History of the Roman World: 753 to 146 BC* (New York: 4th ed., Routledge, 1980), chapter XIV.

²⁰ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 103. This phrase is a reference to that made famously by Shaftesbury, and which he repeated several times in a diatribe against the Dutch Republic on 4 February 1673. See, K.H.D Haley, *The First Early of Shaftesbury* (London: Clarendon Press, 1969).

²¹ J. Bigelow, *The complete works of Benjamin Franklin: including his private as well as his official and scientific correspondence, and numerous letters and documents now for the first time printed, with many others not included in any former collection, also, the unutilated and correct version of his autobiography* (London: 10 vols, Putnam’s Sons, 1887-8), IV. 345.

²² Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 103.

from Franklin) and its ignoring the Thatched House petition. The House moved quickly on to the Bill's third reading and Burke rose to provide his first statement on the nature of the Bill itself. Unlike Barré and Pownall, however, Burke opposed the Bill.²³ He acknowledged that his words would do little and that he did not 'attempt to interrupt the unanimity which was through the course of business attempted to be forced upon men by menaces and threats, in order, I suppose, to convey to America that this was [] British people'. He got up to give his 'total dissent to this Bill' and was sure that his 'opinion, overruled by a great majority, can do no harm'. Burke showed here a greater appreciation for the nature of events in America than any of the other MPs had done. Attacking the policy of punishing Boston, and Boston alone, Burke stated: 'Revolt and resistance in America to the taxing power of this country, and accordingly they have resisted the import duties ... But the evil is this. That there is a combination not of Boston but of all America against it'. 'Observe,' he said, 'that the disturbances are universal, that the people are almost unanimous. That is one view *not of the mob but of all the Assembly of America*'.²⁴ Burke ended this heart-felt and passionate speech by appealing for the removal of the tax on tea: 'the measures this day will ever do it. You will keep alive a running sore ... Repeal this tax. Then there will run through all this country a true unanimity. America should be subjected to the old laws of Britain'.²⁵

Bacon spoke only to discuss a practical matter on the issue of storing goods and products from Britain in other storehouses and warehouses throughout Massachusetts; he believed that trade would not be harmed by the Bill and that its passing would mean that 'we are very safe'. Pownall followed Bacon and showed a greater awareness of the American situation:

Have I either of these grounds to stand on? ... Is it not in opposition to the British law this is claimed? Though I hope to see the law repealed, these two grounds taken from me. The people concerned no longer make that distinction, internal and external ... They themselves have destroyed the distinction. Therefore none of the ground I have hitherto acted remain for me to stand on. I remain on the same principle, on the very same principle.

Pownall continued to support the Bill, and again reiterated that the 'people of America have a love for and veneration for government. I found them to have it. I will bear testimony to it'. In total during this debate, eight MPs spoke in favour of the Bill; six spoke against it.²⁶

²³ Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 404-6.

²⁴ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 124. My italics. See Appendix IV for further extracts from this speech.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, IV. 125-6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, IV. 128.

The Bill eventually passed the Commons without a division, was successful in the House of Lords within a matter of days, and received the Royal Assent on 31 March.

The Boston Port Bill passed through the Commons mostly with the tacit approval of even the staunchest supporters of American liberty. Only Burke at this time appears to have been aware of the wider implications of the punishment of Boston and Massachusetts, and the impact it would have on forcing the Americans to work together. Moving from a swift reaction towards supporting the Ministry, and attacking the American outrages, there appears to have been a shift in the sentiments of Burke, Pownall and Barré. While they initially agreed with the punishment of Boston for the Tea Party, as the debates developed and more details of the exact nature of the punishment became available, the MPs became cooler in their support. Thomas has, quite rightly, put this down to the fact that Pownall and Barré believed that, as in the previous arguments with the Americans through the 1760s, the North Ministry would apply a salve of concession to sooth American outcries.²⁷ Burke did not believe this to be the case,²⁸ Barré and Pownall were to be somewhat surprised when Burke was eventually proved correct. By this point, however, Pownall had fully switched sides, became an Administration man and no longer would support repeal of the tax on tea.²⁹

²⁷ Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*, p. 61.

²⁸ He wrote on 6 April 1774 to the new York Assembly:

‘The Gentlemen who spoke against the Bill rejected that State of the question by which it was invidiously presumed, that those who opposed the Bill were for giving up the constitutional superiority of this Country. That imputation will always be cast off with disdain by every good Englishman. Every good Englishman, as such, must be a friend to the Colonies; and all the true friends to the Colonies, the only *true* friends they have had, or ever can have in England have laid and will lay down the proper subordination of America, as a fundamental, incontrovertible Maxim, in the Government of this Empire. This Idea, to which they tenaciously adhere in the full extent of the proposition, they are of opinion is nothing derogatory to the real essential Rights of mankind which tend to their peace and prosperity [...] Very unfortunately, in my poor thoughts, the advice of that sort of Temperate Man can be little attended to, on this side of the Atlantick and rather less on the other. This has brought on misunderstandings and heats, where nothing should exist but that harmony and good correspondence which ought naturally to arise from the entire agreement of their real interest’. Sutherland, *Burke Correspondence*, II. 528-9: Burke to New York

Assembly, 6 April 1774.

²⁹ Pownall was caught unawares by the snap call for an election in 1774. He was forced to go cap-in-hand to Lord North (who might have arranged his defeat with Lord Falmouth) in order to continue to sit in the House. North was happy to help Pownall and worked to secure his trust, and to secure his talents and knowledge of the colonies on the government’s side. W. Laprade, *Parliamentary Papers of John Robinson* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1922), pp. 23-6.

'A Universal Prescription': Controlling Massachusetts

On 28 March, North announced the Massachusetts Government Bill to the House of Commons; knowing that the House would soon break for the Easter recess, he stated that he only wished 'to move to bring in a Bill before the holidays that it may be more fully considered'.³⁰ The proposal aimed to remove some of what had been discussed during the Boston Port Bill debates regarding the apparent defects in the constitution of Massachusetts. The elected council would be replaced by one chosen by the Crown; town meetings required prior approval of the Governor; the Governor would appoint and remove all law officers; and the freeholder system would be abolished. The full details and extent of the proposal were not to be known until after the Easter break, but Pownall nevertheless voiced his support of the Bill. Pownall declared that he would not 'have any alteration made in the legislative capacity of the Council' but supported the notion that 'the Governor should appoint and suspend Council. He should suspend the judges, for all the mischief a judge could do might be done before a Sign Manual could be obtained'. With regards to town meetings, Pownall believed that 'prudent people' were incapable of action because of the rule of the 'lowest and most violent mob'. Importantly, however, his shift towards the Administration's position became tellingly obvious: 'I would not wish to bring on the consideration of the tax now. It must be negated and that would be mischievous'. Fuller, the West Indian, and George Dempster,³¹ maintaining his consistent opposition to the Coercive Acts, both spoke against the continuation of the tax.³²

The American Committee met on 15 April to discuss the proposals put forward by North. The two proposals, the Massachusetts Government Bill and the Massachusetts Justice Bill, were discussed at length and it was here that Barré reconfirmed his position in the opposition. Pownall rose only to provide support to the Bill and to describe briefly the situation of laws and justice in Massachusetts. The Justice Bill – which provided for a 'fair trial' by allowing for the accused to be tried in a different colony or, if needs be, in Britain – was what sparked the most heated debate. Barré reminded the House that he had 'been in something like that duty' – that he had served as a soldier in America – before continuing to attack the premise on which North's Bill stood. Barré asked if there was 'any precedent of a

³⁰ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 146.

³¹ Dempster was a loyal member of the opposition throughout this period. He had followed Rockingham into opposition in the 1760s and stayed there throughout the 1770s, consistently opposing the North Ministry and its proposals.

³² *Ibid.*, IV. 149.

trial of that sort in which a man did meet with injustice or justice was denied?'. He similarly reminded the Members of the events following the Boston Massacre:

If the noble lord [North] had looked a little back in the history, the unfortunate gloomy history of that country, he would have found an instance, a precedent directly in its teeth. In the riots in which the troops were sent to Boston, I believe by the advice of the Governor. These troops being sent tither, great destruction happened in the town upon some alarm, whether just, or not. Not make a long story of it [...] Contrary to his own orders Captain Preston's men fired upon the neighbourhood of the town, without the direction or order of the civil magistrate. Six or seven killed, besides some others wounded. Captain Preston next day [was] arrested, put in the prison [...] In the course of these proceedings Captain Preston from his gaol wrote to the neighbourhood of the town a letter which he published in the *Boston Gazette* signed by himself, thanking the neighbourhood for the humanity, the justice, the tenderness to his innocence that had been attracted, and there laying aside upon that occasion every popular prejudice he gave them thanks for their kindness, lenity, justice, that [he was] afterwards tried at Boston and acquitted.³³

Barré wondered, in addition, whether the law was practical: he doubted that any other colony would be more suitable as a place in which to hold fair trials than Massachusetts ('will the honest smugglers of Rhode Island do much more justice?') and thought it placed undue stress on the governors to decide when to remove people for trial.

Barré reminded the House again that he had served a considerable period of time in America, 'studying the constitution and temper of the people'. He warned the government that the 'kind of insulting and taunting language, that no man descended from the lines of an Englishman can possibly bear' was being used to refer to the Americans. He implored that the government might 'put an olive branch in one hand and [a] sword in the other': Barré continued to believe (even though North had stated that the two Bills proposed would be the only ones put forward to deal with the American situation) that it might be possible to repeal the tea tax, and that this alone would solve many of the problems being faced at this juncture. Later in the speech – after Van demanded that the British use a 'naval force entirely' and that they 'set the woods [of Massachusetts] on fire' to stop any effectual resistance – Barré again reiterated this belief that removal of the tax would cure all the wounds: 'that is the olive branch,' he said, 'that will save you the expense of fleets and armies you cannot afford [...] If he [Van] would go to that country and look at it, he would be the last man to set fire to so beautiful a country'.³⁴

³³ *Ibid.*, IV. 162-3. General Gage found this period, and the trial of Preston, a particularly troublesome time and worked tirelessly both in America and through communications with the leading figures in Briton to try to free Preston and ensure his welfare and safety. Struan, *An Englishman and a Servant of the Public*, pp. 79-83.

³⁴ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 172-3.

On 19 April, Rose Fuller brought the House into a Committee on the issue of the tea tax. Perhaps somewhat ironically, it was Fuller who at this time was most acutely aware of the American situation. His West Indian connexions, and his support for the American cause, caused Fuller some significant problems: the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1774 'recommended electors not to vote for the West Indians, since they denied British sovereignty over America'.³⁵ The West Indian voice, however, was not to unite behind their American brethren through this period. Stephen Fuller consulted 'most of the Jamaica Gentlemen upon the subject, and also the West India Merchant, who, are altho of various opinions in regard to several causes of the Bill, did not chuse to step forth in opposition to it, as a matter of not immediately affecting them'.³⁶ Therefore, even when the West Indian group in Parliament had somewhere between twenty and fifty Members, there were, for example, only twenty-four votes against the third reading of the Boston Port Bill. Burke in particular voiced his concern that the failure of the West Indians to unite to form a coherent grouping on this issue – and their failure to provide support to the mainland colonists – allowed the North Ministry to adopt a firm line and abandon any more conciliatory policies, thereby perhaps bringing the crisis to a head.³⁷

Fuller stated that 'something like the olive branch should show that there is a disposition in the House to do what is just [and] reasonable by the North Americans' and that the British needed to 'gild the bitter pill and to alleviate [discontent]'. He foreshadowed what was to follow, stating:

I am convinced it will be resisted, [in] in two ways. First, an open violence, force of arms. Another by a confederacy. It is my opinion they will resist [...] It may be fatal to you ... Sir, I may be a false prophet. I hope I shall. I take it for granted the Bill on the Table or the great part of it will pass. That law will be resisted [and] I protest myself, I think that when you have to do with a united people, as they are all united upon this point, you will find a difficult matter to get the better.³⁸

The debate that followed contains one of the most famous speeches in Parliamentary history. Burke rose and spoke for over two hours on the various issues surrounding American taxation and the formation and foundation of the empire as he thought it ought to be.³⁹ Before this, however, Barré raised again the Chathamite view of empire: 'I have

³⁵ Donoghue, *British Politics and the American Revolution*, p.89; *Gentleman's Magazine* (London: 1774), p. 404.

³⁶ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, p. 129.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 180-1.

³⁹ For a full account of this speech, see Langford, *Writings and Speeches of Burke*, II. 408-63. See also, Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 201-228. Originally published: E. Burke, *Speech of Edmund*

repeatedly said [we have] no right to tax America. Those who think we have a right to tax America by the Declaratory Act certainly cannot find fault and say this takes away our right. We have it still if we give up this... The repealing of this law does not impeach that power. It remains entire in our hands'. He compared here the struggle of the North Americans with that of the Dutch against the Spanish, and emphasised that that expensive and destructive civil war caused the Spanish and the Dutch to 'struggle for sixty years!'.⁴⁰

Burke's speech combines a striking use of imagery and metaphor with erudite political debate, clever characterisation of various politicians, and a clear description of how he thought the empire ought to work. Burke's intention was not to try to enforce a different plan of action but, rather, to point out the various follies under which American management had suffered for the previous decade (with the exception of the repeal of the Stamp Act under the Rockingham Administration). He sought to place the Rockinghams as the misunderstood saviours of America, while the various other ministries had 'shaken the solid structure of this Empire to its deepest foundations' and had 'shaken the pillars of a Commercial Empire that circled the whole globe'.⁴¹

Burke's speech, however, set out no real working alternatives. Knowing full well that a return to the situation before 1763 was impossible, yet unable to produce any workable alternatives, he pleaded simply that men of valour would take the 'right path' and console the Americans. He argued that the Navigation Acts were all that were necessary to maintain the British presence in America, and that any other attempts to tax the colonists was unfounded and dangerous. His most vivid and telling passage, however, remained his idea of the make-up of the imperial constitution:

The Parliament of Great Britain sits at the head of her extensive empire in two capacities: one as the local legislators of this island, providing for all things at home, immediately, and by no other instrument than executive power. The other, and I think her nobler capacity, is what I call her *imperial character*; in which, as from the throne of heaven, she superintends all the several inferior legislatures, and guides and controls them all, without annihilating any. As all these provincial legislatures are only co-ordinate to each other, they ought all to be subordinate to her [...] She is never to intrude into the place of the others, whilst they are equal to the common ends of their institution. I consider the power of taxing in Parliament as an instrument of empire, and not as a means of supply. Such, Sir, is my idea of the constitution of the British Empire, as

Burke, Esq., on American Taxation, 19 April 1774 (London: J. Dodsley, 1775). The speech, and its use of metaphor and imagery, is discussed at some length in Lock, *Burke*, I. 351-6.

⁴⁰ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 195-6.

⁴¹ Burke, *Speech on American Taxation, 19 April 1774*, p. 18.

distinguished from the constitution of Britain; and on these grounds I think subordination and liberty may be sufficiently reconciled through the whole.⁴²

Were this type of imperial view to be taken on, as it had been in the past, the British would be able to draw ‘more from the Colonies than all the impotent violence of despotism ever could extort from them’. He stated that the ‘new and unfortunate system’ caused ‘the loss not only of peace, of union, and of commerce, but even of revenue, which its friends are contending for’. He worried, however, that ‘we have lost a great deal more; and that those who look for a revenue from the Provinces, never could have pursued, even in that light, a course more directly repugnant to their purposes’.⁴³

As Burke sat down, Solicitor-General Wedderburn rose in anger to defend his old patron, Grenville, from what he saw as a character assassination by Burke. Burke intervened to clarify that he meant no harm. Barré resumed by contending that there was ‘no power to tax America, but [that] the repeal of this law does not take away the power if we have it’ and that ‘as we are about to punish we should heal also’. He warned that ‘you will have all the blood to answer for to God and man. Do what we will, we must come at last to requisition’.⁴⁴ It was Lord North, however, that was to win the day. His calm, mild and reasoned speech – mostly in reply to Burke’s oratory masterpiece – asserted simply that the Americans would continue to take further liberties unless the line was drawn by Parliament: ‘every concession on our side has created more resistance from America’. Fuller’s motion was rejected by 182 to 49. Barré’s pleas and wish for some form of conciliatory measure – an olive branch of peace and hope – were to be denied by a Parliament set on punishing the ‘rebellious children’ of America.⁴⁵

The second reading of the Massachusetts Government Bill, on 22 April, involved only Pownall from the American MPs. He noted that he had told the House ‘three years ago the Americans will be impracticable’. He warned also that the Americans would resist, and that resistance would be effective. ‘By various ways they are prepared. The very first act will be a meeting of this Committee of Correspondence. They will find it inconvenient to conduct business by couriers [...] They will have a good Congress. They will agree on several matters [...] You may make yourselves odious, or you may make yourselves less odious’.⁴⁶ America,

⁴² *Ibid.* pp. 92-3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-5.

⁴⁴ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 233.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, IV. 234.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, IV. 270.

Pownall insisted, would resist, although ‘not immediately by arms, though they are preparing for that’. Rigby then followed, apparently shocked at what Pownall had to say: ‘I now understand by Pownall who has the best intelligence from America that the people are in rebellion’.⁴⁷ This forced Pownall to retreat on his earlier statement: ‘I apprehend,’ he said, ‘I have been totally misunderstood. I did not assert the Americans were *now* in rebellion, but that they are *going* to rebel; when that comes to pass, the question will be who was the occasion of it’.⁴⁸

The Massachusetts Justice Bill received even less attention at its second reading; Dowdeswell announced, however, that the opposition were rallying to fight both measures at their third reading. The second reading of the Massachusetts Government Bill added little to the debate, but displayed how well versed the North Ministry was on American affairs and that they were not operating under any system of ignorance of the colonies or their condition. Pownall shone throughout the debate as the man with the greatest depths and wealth of knowledge on America and American affairs: he rose repeatedly to correct those who were misinformed and to provide a narrative and a description of the situation of America. So widespread and impressive was his knowledge at this point that the *London Evening Post* on 30 April commented that he was ‘the mouth of information to the Committee’. This compliment would probably have greatly pleased Pownall as he sought, and had been seeking for twenty years, to place himself at the forefront of British politics regarding America. The Quartering Bill received even less debate after its proposal: Viscount Barrington proposed the Bill and was seconded by Pownall who provided a very brief description of the troubles troops and their commanders had in landing soldiers in Boston itself, owing to the fact that Castle William Island – three miles into the bay – had previously allowed for magistrates to avoid any issues of quartering in that town.

By the third reading of the Massachusetts Government Bill on 2 May, the opposition had begun to rally, even if the Chathamite and Rockinghamite groupings refused to join forces in opposition. The ten hour debate which followed featured both Barré and Burke. John Dunning, speaking as the leading Rockinghamite in the Commons, gave a two-hour speech and stated that ‘the two Bills formed a sinister system: the Government Bill would drive the colonists into rebellion, and the Justice Bill authorise “people with impunity to cut their

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, IV. 274.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, IV. 280.

throats”⁴⁹. Barré similarly opposed the Bill with his full might. ‘The question before us,’ he stated ‘was a very capital one, much greater than has been agitated in this House for half a century, perhaps more’. The fundamental issue was whether Britain would ‘reconcile [the] colonies to [the] government by sober, temperate and wise measures, or whether by the most tyrannical conduct force the unfortunate inhabitants of those provinces into rebellion’. Barré, like Pownall, believed that rebellion was the likely – if not inevitable – outcome from the Coercive Acts, but Barré continued to believe that repeal of the tax on tea would help to fix the problem.

Barré continued, stating that Britain was the aggressor, was in the wrong, and that ‘like all other aggressors we shall never forgive the injuries we have done them’. Returning to the issue of the Stamp Act, Barré reasserted his belief that Parliament had no right to tax the Americans and that the colonists were justified in their refusal to pay. From the very first attempt to impose a tax on the colonies there had been, Barré stated, ‘nothing in that country, but either riots, or riotous risings, at one time from the seizing of ships, at another time from an alarm given to them from the Army, at another time from [the] imprudent strange conduct of the Assembly to rescind resolutions. They communicated all over the country. From that moment, they became united, they became determined to resist you as far as possible’. Barré continued by reading sections from famous American pamphlets, including John Dickinson’s letters and quotations by James Otis.

The language of both Houses is far from being the language of this country. Too hostile. In one House [it was] said [we have] passed the Rubicon. In the other *delenda est Carthago*. He that first made use of *delenda est Carthago*, I mean the great Lord Shaftesbury, was at the close of his life forced to solicit the protection and support of that very republic whose ruin he [had intended]. He that passed the Rubicon drew his sword against his country and expired at last upon the hand of his own friend. You are committed, the die is thrown, and your language in another House is the sword is drawn, you must throw away the scabbard. If [] this body of troops, you must set your shoulders too, and press your whole weight against your colonies, if resistance. I had rather there were resistance, than [they] disgrace themselves.⁵⁰

Barré finished by warning against taking actions against the Americans which would lead to a diminished force protecting the British Isles: ‘You will have upon the arrival of those troops [...] half of our own infantry fighting against our own subjects. Give me leave to ask the noble lord how he finds the condition of this country? How he finds the condition of its neighbours? Is the court of France pacific? Is Spain so too? Have they given you assurances, that, if you cut one another’s throats, upon all occasions [they will remain so]?’.

⁴⁹ Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*, p. 81.

⁵⁰ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 349.

attacked Pownall here, stating ‘he flips from side to side of the House’, and challenged his position as the sole and right authority in the Commons on American affairs: Barré established that, while many of Pownall’s points had been true, he had forgotten some and been misled in others. He concluded with a sombre warning to MPs stating that ‘the voice of reason, humanity, law, and justice’ had left the courts of Great Britain throughout this ‘wicked proceeding’ and that he feared that ‘the hand of heaven will take the same direction’.⁵¹

Burke stood to speak at 23.45 and was interrupted several times by a House unwilling to listen any longer.⁵² Burke spoke, chastising Members for their putting ‘provinces, and cities, and nations, upon their trial’ and that ‘except when the saints of God are to judge the world’ he knew of nothing of ‘greater importance’. He pleaded with the Members to ‘think a little more’ on the issue, attacked the Ministry for not providing the country with ‘sufficient time [...] to know what you are about’ and begged that ‘the act which gave rise to this disturbance’ be repealed in order that it might ‘be the remedy to bring peace and quietness, and to restore authority’. Having been interrupted with ‘the House being noisy, several Members going out’, Burke responded to their shouting and jeering by announcing: ‘I find, Sir, I have got my voice, and I shall beat down the noise of the House’. He finished his speech by concluding that ‘a great black book and a great many red coats, will never be able to govern America’. Even though the Americans, Burke thought, ‘cannot resist the force of this country’, the measures being proposed by the Ministry would lead to ‘wranglings, scuffling, and discontent’. North stood to reply to Burke and summed up the mood of the Commons, and the nation, when he said: ‘we are now to establish our authority, or give it up entirely; when they are quiet, and return to their duty, we shall be kind, whether by repealing this tax or not [...] when they are quiet, and have a respect for their mother country, the mother country will be good-natured to them’.⁵³ The House divided with 239 in favour and 64 opposed. The Justice Bill passed two days later with very little opposition and in much quieter Chamber, with 127 votes to 24.

‘As From the Throne of Heaven’: The Quebec Act

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, IV. 350.

⁵² The copy of Burke’s speech in Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 365-74 comes from the Cavendish Diary (EG. MSS 256, ff. 108-302; ff. 1-37). This ‘long, if somewhat defective’ version attests to the reliability and accuracy of the better account published in the *London Evening Post* on 12 May 1774. Copies of the account in the *London Evening Post* can be found in Langford, *Writings and Speeches of Burke*, II. 463-5 and Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 382-3.

⁵³ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 382-3.

With the issue of governing the American colonies apparently settled, the North Ministry turned its attention to what had been a much longer-term thorn in the empire's side: the effective government of Canada. Victory over the French in the Seven Years War had secured the presence of the British throughout North America and, in 1763, the king was congratulated 'particularly upon the defeat of the French army in Canada, and the taking of Quebec; an acquisition not less honourable to your majesty's forces, than destructive of the trade and commerce and power of France in North America'. By 1774, however, the Canadians were not quite as popular: 'the conquest of Canada everyone now sees was like the Irishman's prize, gaining a loss'.⁵⁴ The Quebec Bill was proposed in order better to regulate the interior of America and to give a workable and feasible system of government to the mainly Catholic French settlers in the north. While many Americans, and some historians since then, saw the Quebec Act as part of the Coercive Acts, this is simply not the case.⁵⁵ The issue of Quebec, and the governance of Canada, had long been considered by successive British ministries and the Bill was never intended to be part of the Coercive Acts.⁵⁶ The fact that British politicians did not see the connexions which would be formed in the minds of the colonists between this Act and the Coercive Acts does prove quite substantially the gap in understanding by this point between the mother country and the colonies.

The Act had six main provisions: the revocation of the Proclamation of 1763; creation of a bi-racial (French and British) council which, along with the governor, held legislative power; tolerance of Roman Catholicism, subject to the supremacy of the Crown; maintenance of the old, French, system of civil law; implementation of English criminal law (with the exception, importantly, of *Habeas Corpus*); and an extension of the boundaries of Quebec.⁵⁷ The Bill was first introduced in the House of Lords (which was seen as an insult to Parliament and particularly to the Commons) and received little debate during its first reading. The second reading in the Commons, on 26 May, attracted considerable attention.

⁵⁴ P. Lawson, 'The Irishman's Prize: Views of Canada from the British Press, 1760-1774', *Historical Journal* XXXVIII, No. 3 (September 1985), p. 575.

⁵⁵ A cartoon of 1774 shows four Church of England bishops dancing around the 'Quebec Bill', while Lord Bute plays bagpipes to encourage them, and Lord North and the Devil look on happily in M. Aronson, *The Real Revolution: The Global Story of American Independence* (New York: Clarion Books, 2005), p. 164. For an outdated view of the Quebec Act see, for example, C. Metzger, *The Quebec Act: A Primary Cause of the American Revolution* (New York: United States Catholic Historical Society, 1936).

⁵⁶ See, for example, T.N.A. C.O. 42/14, ff. 138-41. See also, Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*, pp. 87-98 and P. Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution* (Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

⁵⁷ Summarised in Donoghue, *British Politics and the American Revolution*, pp. 105-6.

Barré spoke after long debate had already occupied in the House. He objected to 'the part of the Bill [...] which relates to the King's Proclamation; the establishing the law of France; the establishing the religion of France, lastly, Sir, the establishing this legislative body, that is to be formed in the colony'. He attacked the 'very imperfect' and 'very incorrect history of this Proclamation', the ways in which the Ministry had decided to rearrange the colonial boundaries and to stop settlement past the 'Endless Mountains', and the 'poor bankrupts', the 'English subjects', who had travelled to, and settled in, Canada in the belief that they would continue to live under a British constitution. With regards to the French, Barré stated that 'I never knew it was found a grievance to any nation to give them English laws, the English constitution. So far from it, that country [France] admired and revered those laws, as far as they could be made acquainted with them'.

Instead of providing a French system of government, Barré insisted that the 'superior' British constitutional settlement would serve the colonists far better: 'if any customs, or any particular laws are applicable to the people of the country, take those, and graft them upon that law you give them'.

In short, if you had led them with any address, by degrees they would have received great part of the English law; they would have hugged it to their breasts; they would from time to time have stated customs. By this time you would have assimilated them to your constitution, and not left them standing single under and arbitrary power, standing Catholics [*sic*].⁵⁸

He continued by asking the government whether its intentional removal of an assembly in Quebec was to avoid them 'quarrelling with the King' as had the assemblies in the thirteen colonies. To answer this, Barré suggested that, owing to their French nature and thereby their innate loyalty to a sovereign, 'a quarrel with the King to the Canadians is reckoned worse than any vengeance that can be poured upon them'. On the issue of the toleration of Catholicism, Barré pointed out plainly that 'in Maryland, it [Roman Catholicism] has been tolerated, in Ireland persecuted, in Canada you choose to give it an establishment'. This legislative madness regarding the issue of Catholics struck at the heart of a coherent *imperium*, thought Barré, and so while he did not mean that he thought government should 'strike at their religion', it needed to be given 'within certain bounds' and had to make sense throughout the empire.

⁵⁸ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 459-60.

Barré concluded by warning the government that the Bill would subject the Canadians to ‘arbitrary power’ and would make them ‘slaves to the end of time’. He worried, similarly, that the Ministry had grander and more evil plans for the empire as a whole and that this proposal was just the second stage (after the Massachusetts legislation) in a system of complete colonial readjustment and a new type of imperial control. ‘I look upon this measure as bad in itself, as leading to something else to come from it,’ he said, ‘it carries in its breast something that squints, and looks dangerous to the other inhabitants of that country, our own colonies. Forseeing [*sic*] this, looking upon the measure in itself as a very dangerous one, I give my hearty negative to it at this stage’.⁵⁹

When the subject was again raised on 31 May, Burke came to the defence of New York and gained an agreement from North to deal with individual boundary lines case by case and on an individual basis. North eventually approved of, and accepted, Burke’s exceptionally detailed plans for the boundary lines between New York and Quebec, and Burke transmitted these plans to the New York Assembly in August of that year.⁶⁰ Barré repeated many of the points from his previous speech and concluded with a dark warning that he would not ‘like to see an English Parliament disgrace itself by establishing despotism by an Act of its own. I don’t want to see monsters introduced’.⁶¹ Both Barré and Burke attacked the Ministry for its lack of detailed information at this state. Burke stated that he had never ‘since [he] had the honour of sitting in Parliament’ had ‘so little information to decide upon a question of this degree of magnitude’.⁶² These sentiments were in response to the House’s continual rejection of motions to provide various points of French law, tithes, and boundary changes.

The Committee stages of the Bill took place during the first days of June. A number of witnesses were called forth to discuss the various aspects of the Canadian constitution. One witness who had claimed that the French Canadians wished for an assembly, Mr Le Brun, was subject to a particularly nasty form of character assassination by Guy Carleton and Lord North:

‘Lord North: Does the general know anything of a Mons. Le Brun?’

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, IV. 460-2.

⁶⁰ G. Guttridge, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke: Volume III: July 1774-June 1778* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 13-21: Burke to the Committee of Correspondence of the General Assembly of New York, Beaconsfield, 2 August 1774.

⁶¹ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 487.

⁶² *Ibid.*, IV. 490.

Gen. Carleton: I know him very well. He was a blackguard at Paris, and sent as a lawyer to Canada: there he gained an extreme bad character in many respects; he was taken up and imprisoned for a very filthy crime with children of eight or nine years old; for this he was fined, I think, £20, but being unable to pay it ---'

The line of questioning was then interrupted by an 'independent member of parliament', Thomas Townshend, who demanded that Carleton withdraw the statement and chastised him for 'criminating a man unheard – not before you – and with whom you seem to have nothing to do'.⁶³ Le Brun was never called as a witness. The questioning of various witnesses was largely unproductive and difficult. So difficult was the questioning of a soldier that, after over one hundred questions, Barré announced that they had failed to produce one clear answer. These intricate questions and answers, much of which involved settling minor disputes over boundaries, continued until 7 June.

On 10 June, Burke was allowed an opportunity to attack the principles inherent in the Bill, instead of focusing on the minutiae of boundaries and territorial claims.⁶⁴ He started by claiming that as the House had filled 'all of a sudden' with people who had not been present at the earlier debates on the concepts behind the Bill, and that as they 'had now come with good English dinners in their bellies, which would, he trusted, make them good humoured, and by being full of English meat, would undoubtedly be for English laws'.⁶⁵ There were, Burke claimed, three types of people in Canada: firstly, 'the English merchants, the second the English subjects, and thirdly the [French] Canadians'. As the 'old vulgar saying' went, 'one Englishman was always worth two Frenchmen,' Burke claimed that 'in this case, he thought them [one Englishman] preferable to fifty Frenchmen'. Burke asked whether the proposals allowed for any form of civil liberty and protection to these British subjects who were, Burke thought, going to be forced to live under a French tyranny. He would, he claimed, be 'willing to give a Canadian every indulgence in his power, but not grant that indulgence at the expense of the English'.

With regards to trial by jury, Burke proclaimed that it was not an inherently anti-French system or that the French despised the ideas behind it. On the contrary, Burke could 'produce mountains of books wrote by Frenchmen on the justness and excellency [*sic*] of our laws, where they approved of the trial by Jury as one of the greatest excellencies our

⁶³ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, V. 31-2.

⁶⁴ The speech was reported in the *General Evening Post* on 14 June 1774. Reprinted in Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 471-3.

⁶⁵ Langford, *Writings and Speeches of Burke*, II. 472.

constitution produced'. To conclude, Burke stated that he was amazed that a nation who had 'such powerful arms should have such weak heads', that the 'French were in awe of us' and that North must focus his first attention on the British subjects in Canada and on securing their rights and liberties under a British constitution, even at the expense of the French settlers therein.⁶⁶ The final reading of the Bill passed through the Commons on 13 June after a very brief debate in a thin House and was voted by a majority of 56 to 20.

Conclusion

The passage of the Coercive Acts confirmed the dominant British attitude towards the Americans at this time. Britons felt that Americans – the 'rebellious children,' as termed by George III – were being selfish and illogical. They wanted to receive all the benefits of partaking in the British Empire, but refused to support and maintain it. The American MPs found this situation particularly difficult: Burke and Barré knew that their position would not, and could not, win in the Commons, and yet they felt honour-bound to protest against the proposals.

Pownall's shift in allegiance to the North Ministry certainly aided in the passage of the Acts. He was a well known figure on colonial affairs and his contributions to the debates mark him out as one perceived to be knowledgeable about all things American. His support, therefore, for the Bills gave further legitimacy to North's proposals in the Commons and weakened the position of the other American MPs. This sentiment is shown particularly obviously by Barré when he attacked Pownall for 'flipping' from side to side of the House, being inconsistent in his approach to the colonies, and of providing some misinformation regarding America. While we must not over-state Pownall's impact on the House of Commons at this time – he remained only a secondary figure in British politics – it was nevertheless a critical blow against any attempts which might have, or could have, been made by opposition MPs to mount a truly effective counter-attack.

It appears, in the first months after the Tea Party, and as information continued to trickle through to the metropolitan centre, that the American MPs were caught unawares and without any real response to the situation. Their initial support for the punishment of Boston can be seen somewhat in this light. On the other hand, the MPs remained loyal Britons, and would not have supported the outrages of the Americans at this time. There

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 472-3.

was a belief that the North Ministry would, as in the previous crises of empire, repeal the tax on tea and thereby cool the American response. What the American MPs failed to realise was that the mood on both sides of the Atlantic had changed and hardened: Britons were no longer willing to see the Americans apparently trample on the authority of Parliament, and have Parliament back down and surrender bit-by-bit its legitimacy; Americans were no longer willing to continue to live under what they viewed as a tyrannical Parliament bent on the eradication of *English* liberties throughout the empire.

As the precise nature of the Coercive Acts became known to politicians, Barré and Burke increased their attacks on the Ministry and its proposals. They appear throughout to have been too acutely aware of the outcome of events both in Britain and America. At numerous points throughout the debates, both of these men pleaded that they be heard and that, although their opinions were unpopular in a House intent on dishing out retribution and trying to regain lost control, their ideas of empire and their views of how it ought to be run *needed* to be said and heard.

The Quebec Bill allowed for more widespread discussion of the nature of the empire the MPs wished to govern. There was never any doubt over the legitimacy or authority of Parliament over the entire dominion at this point from any of the MPs whom we are discussing. These types of 'federal' government would not be discussed truly until after the outbreak of war, and even then would remain largely on the fringes of the political spectrum. The Quebec Bill, however, showed that Barré and Burke remained passionate about protecting British liberties for the settlers across the Atlantic. While they might not have viewed the French Canadians yet as true subjects, they both fully believed that assimilation and acclimatisation would allow for these foreigners to become part of the empire. While they were aliens inasmuch as they were Catholic and were to be given French civil law, the fact that they lived under British protection and in part of the British Empire – even the furthest-flung corner of it – meant that they ought to be protected by the 'blessed constitution', be party to English civil and criminal law (including trial by jury), and be allowed to take part in, and be governed by, an assembly. The American MPs were unwilling to have anything other than a Westminster-in-the-Wilderness and to impose any other system on the settlers – British and French alike – was akin to tyranny.

The view that the British Parliament was 'either very ignorant, or very corrupt, or very sinful, or all three' simply does not stand the test. The Parliament was well versed in,

knowledgeable about, and subject to expert advice from many persons familiar with American affairs. The North Ministry did not walk blindly into conflict with the colonists. On repeated occasions, Burke, Barré, Rose Fuller and even Pownall warned the Commons that rebellion, and open, organised, effective and dangerous rebellion at that, would be the outcome of the Coercive Acts and British punishment of Boston and Massachusetts. While the opinions of the American MPs were perhaps not always in line with the majority of the House, they were respected for their knowledge and experience of the colonies. They provided throughout the debates detailed and specific information on the nature of America and the Americans and went to great lengths to impress upon their fellow Members of Parliament the reasons behind, and for, colonial resistance.

On the other hand, however, part of the problem for the American MPs at this time was the ways in which the Americas and Americans had changed over time. The MPs here discussed were well versed in the Americas of the 1750s and early 1760s. The speed of change throughout the 1760s and early 1770s took even these MPs by surprise and left them in the dark regarding the extent to which the American position had changed. As a result, the MPs were wrong in their belief that the Americans would take the punishment of Boston and Massachusetts.

The MPs moreover failed to provide any true challenges to North's proposals throughout 1774. There was a failure of coherence amongst the MPs due to British political issues. Rockingham and Chatham, and their various followers, though largely aligned on American issues, refused to work together – and the two peers only started to communicate again late in the session – or to form any meaningful plan of attack. Similarly, the West Indians showed a cold lack of interest in the plight of their American brethren and only Rose Fuller stands out as a West Indian with the American interests at heart. While the impact any larger grouping in Parliament opposed to North's Ministry might have achieved can only ever be guess-work, it remains an interesting question as to the impact these men – men who had and could continue to have the upper hand in all debates in the Commons – might have had on the outcome of votes had they joined forces and mounted a consistent, a connected, and a prolonged attack on the American proposals.

Ultimately, the House remained convinced by the North Ministry's attitude to the Americans. Perhaps nothing the MPs here could have said would have made any difference (and there is certainly no reason to suggest that either Chatham or Rockingham would ever have been

able to form anything other than small groupings, even though Barré suggested that Chatham was being invited into the Ministry in March of 1774)⁶⁷ but the House was well versed in all things American and, when the revolution started in 1775, no MP present during the debates over the Coercive Acts and Quebec Act ought to have been shocked by events.

⁶⁷ *London Evening Post* 24 March 1774.

CHAPTER III

TRUTHS WHICH SHOULD BE KNOWN: THE POLITICAL TEXTS OF BACON AND POWNALL

Outside of the Houses of Parliament Burke, Bacon and Pownall were also actively involved in the publication of tracts and theses on the American crises during the 1760s, 1770s and early 1780s. Burke's works are undoubtedly the most famous of the three, and have received significant attention from contemporaries and historians alike. As a result of this, Burke's works have been purposefully omitted from this chapter to allow greater focus on, and emphasis of, the works of Bacon and Pownall.¹ Bacon's publications were limited to a publication run of as few as twenty copies, were distributed amongst select groups of MPs and merchants, and have received almost no historical attention or debate. Lastly, Pownall – certainly the most prolific writer of the three, although the most difficult to read – published several tracts, and several editions of these tracts, throughout the period of the American Revolution which were of some significance to contemporaries, but have been given only passing consideration by most historians. The major purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine and analyse the works of these men. The chapter will include: discussion of the main threads and arguments in each tract; analysis of the major themes and importance of the texts to contemporaries, including information on publication details; and the levels of agreement, and disagreement, between the men.

When discussing political tracts such as these, it is nonetheless important to remember the milieu in which they were circulated. As Stephen Conway has pointed out, the majority of ordinary people in the British Isles were unaware of the great constitutional battles of the American Revolutionary War, and oftentimes seemed uninterested in the war itself.² Nonetheless, as Conway goes on to establish, the war was of central importance to the shaping of the culture, communities and politics of Britain, and these political tracts played a significant role in the development of a British understanding of the North American

¹ For discussion of Burke's works, see Lock, *Burke*, I and II; and Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*. See also: F. Bruyn, *The Literary Genres of Edmund Burke: The Political Uses of Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); S. White, *Edmund Burke: Modernity, Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Sage, 1994); I. Hampsher-Monk, *The Political Philosophy of Edmund Burke* (London: Longman, 1987); C. Ritcheson, *Edmund Burke and the American Revolution* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976); B. Hill, *Edmund Burke on Government, Politics and Society* (London: Harvester Press, 1975); F. O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973); and F. Canavan, *Select Works of Edmund Burke* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999).

² Conway, *The British Isles and the War for American Independence*, pp. 85-6.

colonies. The works seem to have further enhanced the men's reputation as American experts: Pownall in particular makes reference to his own understanding of, and appreciation for, the Americas in his tracts, and lays out his plan for the colonies with the hopes of furthering his position as the British government's *de facto* American expert.

'Bringing the Contending Parties to Reason': The Works of Anthony Bacon

During the 1760s and 1770s, Bacon published three pamphlets on the issue of trade and commerce within the British Empire. As a well-connected merchant, his primary concern was in maintaining the status quo and ensuring continued trade between Great Britain and the Americas. The first pamphlet, *The True Interest of Great Britain, with Respect to her American Colonies, Stated and Impartially Considered by a Merchant of London*, was published in 1766 and, although the authorship is not definite, the style and substance of the work indicates that Bacon is the most likely author. The second, *Considerations on the Present State of the North American Colonies*, was published in 1769; and the third, *A Short Address to the Government, the Merchants, the Manufacturers, and the Colonists in America, and the Sugar Islands, on the Present State of Affairs*, was published at the height of pre-war Anglo-American tensions in 1775.³

Most of the attention devoted to Bacon's publications thus far by historians has been somewhat cursory: more often than not, his works are mentioned as an aside or in a footnote, with no great attempts to explain or understand his positions and reasons for writing.⁴ On occasion, historians offer some more in-depth analysis into Bacon's perceptions of the American crises and of the nature of the relationship between Great Britain and the colonies. For example, Christopher Leslie Brown, in his book *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism*, explains some of Bacon's positions when discussing the British attitude towards legal and natural rights: "Natural rights" had no practical meaning,

³[A. Bacon], *The True Interest of Great Britain, with respect to her American colonies, stated and impartially considered, by a Merchant of London* (London: Printed for G. Kearsley, 1766), B.L., 104.i.8; A. Bacon, *Considerations on the Present State of the North American Colonies* (London: 1769), B.L. MFR/1700 4416; and A. Bacon, *A Short Address to the Government, the Merchants, the Manufacturers, and the Colonists in America, and the Sugar Islands, on the Present State of Affairs by a Member of Parliament* (London: Printed for G. Robinson, 1775), B.L. 102.f.34.

⁴ See, for example, J.P. Reid, *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority to Legislate* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993) or N. Baker, *Government and Contractors: The British Treasury and War Supplies, 1775-1783* (London: Athlone Press, 1971).

insisted Anthony Bacon, since “men are born members of society, and consequently can have no rights, but such as are given by the laws of that society to which they belong”.⁵

This lack of historical interest so far can be somewhat forgiven due to the nature of Bacon’s publications: his writing is not particularly skilful or eloquent; his appeal is, and was, limited; and he restricted the number of prints produced to very small numbers (for example, *Considerations on the Present State* was limited to only twenty copies) with the aim of passing them amongst friends and colleagues in government circles. In other words, Bacon intended not to influence the population of Great Britain or the colonies on the whole, but sought to work behind the scenes by influencing key policy makers. Nonetheless, Bacon’s position as an influential merchant, an Atlantic trader, a government supporter, and his connexions throughout the Empire means that his works are of historical interest and deserve scholarly attention.

‘Their Late Misbehaviour’: *The True Interest of Great Britain, with Respect to her American Colonies, States and Impartially Considered by a Merchant of London*

The first of Bacon’s pamphlets, published in 1766, was a direct response to the issues raised in the colonies over the Stamp Act. The pamphlet is short, numbering thirty-one pages, and cost 1s 6d.⁶ Unsurprisingly, considering Bacon’s commercial connexions, the pamphlet opposed the Stamp Act. More than that, however, Bacon opposed most forms of taxation in the American colonies and made some effort to show the Americans as poor and under great financial strains. He, in addition, supported the removal of all taxation on trade carried out between colonists and foreign powers, particularly the French and Spanish, in order to promote American trade. This sentiment shows an unusual attack on the mercantilist policies normally adopted and promoted by eighteenth-century merchants at this time. Importantly, however, Bacon never attacked any ministers or the government: he instead goes to some length to establish that he is attacking the general ‘system’ of colonial management and that it is this ‘system’ which should be altered to improve political conditions and trade.

The pamphlet started by demonstrating Bacon’s understanding and experience of North America. He establishes that ‘the importance of the American colonies to Great Britain,

⁵ C.L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 128.

⁶ J.R. Smith, *Bibliotheca Americana: A Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Books & Pamphlets Relating to the History & Geography of North & South America & the West Indies* (London: E. Tucker, 1853), p. 124.

seems to be so well understood, that it would be misspending time to endeavour to continue any body of a truth which is universally acknowledged' before starting discussion on the commercial importance of the colonies to Great Britain.⁷ He further states quite unequivocally that the disturbances in the Americas as a result of the Stamp Act should occasion 'the most immediate and attentive consideration of the legislature' and that he hopes the pamphlet would be 'found useful' to both members of the government and the public in general.⁸ Bacon then proceeded to explain the main ways in which the American colonies were of, in his opinion, *great* benefit to the United Kingdom.

To demonstrate this, Bacon split North America into three parts: the north (comprising 'all the country north of the Jerseys'); the midlands (made up from 'the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina'); and the south ('consisting of South Carolina and all those countries which we are in possession of to the southward').⁹ The north, Bacon explained, produced 'excellent masts, and other timber [and] the animals furnish us with plenty of rich furs, and the seas and rivers abound with procligious quantities of fish, both of the greater and lesser kinds'. The midlands 'produce tobacco, all kinds of corn, grain and pulse; live cattle of all sorts, both for burthen and provision; the country abounds in iron and copper mines; and, if the inhabitants can be induced to make the attempt, there is not the least doubt but the best wines may be produced in a country, where most delicious grapes grow wild on vines of a size hardly to be credited by those who have not been eye-witnessed of the fact'. Lastly, as Bacon points out, the south would be 'capable of providing silk, coffee, cocoa, indigo, cotton, rice, olives, fruit, and wine' while there were also some articles common to all three parts, such as hemp, flax, naval stores, pelt, pot-ash and lumber.¹⁰

Bacon also shows the many great benefits the British Isles get from the Americas. He states that the Americans 'receive from Great Britain not only every necessary (except provisions) but almost every luxury of life' and that 'in order to pay for which, they send the whole produce of their land, which will find a sale with us; but as that is much insufficient for that purpose, they also send every thing else, which is the production of their country, to every place we will permit them to traffick in order, thereby, to enable them to make up the deficiency'. The colonies, Bacon established in a nutshell, would 'be a continual source of

⁷ [Bacon], *The True Interest of Great Britain*, p. 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

wealth to these kingdoms, as it insures us a constant supply of raw materials, and an increasing market to return them to, when wrought up'.¹¹

The reason for this rather long and detailed description of the commercial relationship between Great Britain and the Americas was to establish the footing on which any form of effectual taxation could in Bacon's opinion take place. Bacon emphasised that there was a need to tax the Americans, but that the method of taxation ought to be different:

This short view of the nature of our trade with the North American colonies sufficiently points out from whence we are enabled to support that burthen of taxes which our very existence, as a free people, obliges us to raise, in order to put ourselves upon a respectable footing in Europe, and to impower [*sic*] us to afford our colonies that protection and liberty they have so lately experienced, and still continue to enjoy. But, while we are straining every sinew in order to make that protection effectual, and that liberty permanent, it is not to be wondered at that we call upon them to sustain a part of that weight with which we are oppressed. The chief question is, whether the share laid upon them be too great, or whether it is not rather injudiciously placed?¹²

Bacon further established that Britain owed a debt of gratitude to the Americans as 'they have not endeavoured to enter into any kind of cultivation which will be prejudicial to the produce or manufactures of Great Britain'. That they had not yet done so, however, should not mean that competing with Britain was not 'in their power'. On the contrary, Bacon points out, that 'any person who is the least acquainted with North America, but must be sensible that the wool of their sheep [for example] is as well adapted for all the uses to which it is applied in England, as any in the world' and, as a result, Britain must make sure that 'they turn their force to other objects, which we cannot so properly attend to, and making it as much their interest as ours, to see a different employment from that of their fellow subjects in England'.¹³

Having established the basis of the mercantile ties between America and Great Britain and, interestingly, making several references to his own knowledge and experience of the colonies, Bacon moved onto discussing his proposals for improving the system of trade with, and taxation of, America in the hope that doing so would resolve the issues behind the Stamp Act crisis. Firstly, Britain must ensure, Bacon thought, that 'every thing demanded by them from Great Britain [should] come to their hands as cheap as possible' as 'thereby every temptation will be removed to their endeavouring to produce, or make it themselves'. Secondly, Britain must ensure that 'every facility ought also to be given to their exports, in

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

order to enable them to pay for what they receive from us'.¹⁴ In other words, Bacon proposed managing the American economy to ensure that goods and products manufactured in Britain were not duplicated in the colonies, in order to limit, or remove, competition in these fields. He further suggested ensuring that British goods be sold in the American market as cheaply as was possible, in order to avoid the Americans either being able to purchase the goods, often through smugglers, from foreign powers or – perhaps more dangerously, in Bacon's view – producing the goods themselves. Lastly, Bacon recommended increasing the amount of money available in the Americas in order to facilitate the payment of British goods by Americans.¹⁵

Much of what followed in the pamphlet was an attack on the system of taxation: Bacon believed that the laying of 'such a tax upon them [the Americans] amounts to a prohibition'.¹⁶ More significantly, however, Bacon showed an acute awareness of the situation in much of British America (including, importantly, the West Indies). Concerning trade, at least, he showed himself to be a true 'man of the Empire' and wanted to maximise the benefits to each constituent part through careful management of trade and production. Bacon stated,

I am well aware, I shall be told, that such tax upon the importation of the articles above-mentioned, from the foreign American Islands to our settlements in North America, has been imposed in order to the advantage and emolument of our own islands, and not with any view to raise money upon the North Americans

I have too great a regard for the islanders, *as fellow subjects*, to wish North America any advantages at their expense; but I have also the same regard for the inhabitants of North America; and cannot without concern, see laws made to the prejudice of the latter, which are not only of no advantage to the islands, but manifestly prejudicial to the interest, both of North America and Great Britain: such must every law be, which prevents the export of those commodities from N. America to strangers, which cannot be exported by them to [the] advantage of G. Britain, or the British American Islands, or of which they have more than either, or both the last-mentioned countries can purchase from them; except the goods received in payment, should be such as manifestly tend to destroy the trade of some other part of the British Empire; the contrary of

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁵ Note here that Bacon opposed any form of paper currency regulated by the various colonial assemblies in the Americas: his suggestion here, then, is not to increase the amount of paper currency available.

¹⁶ Bacon states that 'the following goods cannot be imported into North America without paying:

Foreign Sugar	£1 0s 2d per quart
Coffee	£2 9s 19d per quart
Indico [<i>sic</i>]	£0 6s 0d per lb'

And that 'the duty of foreign molasses is indeed reduced to three-pence per gallon; but I doubt whether any great advantages have resulted from this alteration'. [Bacon], *The True Interest of Great Britain*, p. 11.

which, I hope to be able to prove, will be the case with respect to the articles above-mentioned, of sugar, coffee and indigo.¹⁷

These telling paragraphs show a man interested in, and passionate about, the Empire as a whole. Undoubtedly his vast commercial ties – in the Americas, in Africa and in the British Isles – gave an extra impetus to these sentiments, but Bacon here typifies a member of the ‘Atlantic community’ as discussed by Gould.¹⁸ There is no doubt that, at least in the mid-1760s, Bacon saw in the British Empire a connected, coherent and single body, united primarily by trade and commerce, spread throughout the Atlantic world.

Moreover, Bacon supported a greater amount of liberalisation in the American markets. He believed that, as the resources of America appeared to be boundless, that the Americans would be ‘able to supply not only our islands, but the whole world’ and that, therefore, ‘a freedom of exportation ought to be permitted, not only to the American, French and Spanish Islands, but also to Europe’. In addition, he believed that the Americans should be able to trade and barter with the European powers, contrary to the opinions of ‘some people’ who believed that the colonists ‘ought not to be permitted to receive any thing, in payments, but cash’.¹⁹ Bacon argued that by allowing the Americans to exchange the ‘superfluous part of the produce of their country for sugar, cotton, coffee, indigo &c.’, Britain would be providing ‘the North Americans with a means of paying for those goods which they purchase from us, for which they have no other way of making remittances’.²⁰

Bacon’s final argument in the pamphlet involved the practicality of taxation in the Americas. He stated that, in the British Isles, it was an ‘absolute impossibility totally to prevent smuggling, although the number of supervisors, tide and land waiters, riding officers &c. are almost as numerous as the traders’ and so, in the vastness of the American seaboard ‘where

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12. My emphasis.

¹⁸ Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*.

¹⁹ [Bacon], *The True Interest of Great Britain*, p. 13.

²⁰ To back-up this statement, Bacon provided details of the conduct of the English and French in the West Indies, stating that:

‘It was under the same pretences of supporting our own sugar colonies, and distressing those of France, that English ships were prohibited loading sugars home to England from the French islands, by the very heavy duty which they still are liable to; it was urged, if we did not bring them home, the French could not; but what was the consequences of the experiment? The French merchants either freighted or bought ships from other nations, and we not only lost the freight, but a nursery for a great number of seamen, which is now a very considerable source of the French naval strength.’

Moreover, as the French colonies were subject to much lesser levels of taxation, Bacon stated, their sugar could be provided at a significantly cheaper rate. As Britain had a technical monopoly of sugar and rum trade in North America, Bacon argued that every effort should be made to distress the French output as much as possible, while trying to increase British production. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

not more than a dozen officers are appointed to superintend and guard the commerce of that coast, from Cape Charles to Rhode Island', there could be no method of patrolling and controlling contraband goods from entering the colonies. Bacon believed, therefore, that the only solution was to reduce the tax levels on the imports so as to remove any 'temptation to engage in clandestine commerce' which would, Bacon foretells, 'produce a much more considerable sum, than what has been collected under the present duty'.²¹

Although entirely focused on the issues of trade, commerce and taxation, and paying little heed to any cultural, social or political factors at play, Bacon's pamphlet provides an interesting and valuable insight into the nature of the Anglo-American relationship in the 1760s. Bacon's ideas and ideals were, without a doubt, moulded by his own experience as a trader, and his proposals were, to some degree, designed to enable him to make a great profit in trade. This does not, however, detract from the importance of the text in the context of this thesis: Bacon repeatedly makes reference to a knowledge of the colonies throughout the pamphlet, placing himself as a learned and experienced trader with an understanding of the New World and, perhaps more significantly, showing a real appreciation for what we now call the Atlantic Community. His main aims were to foster a spirit of wellbeing amongst the various parts of the British Empire and to increase, as much as possible, the levels of trade between them. He finished the pamphlet by blaming the Stamp Act crisis on the pressures put on the Americans by unfair and unreasonable taxation: 'I am apt to believe the difficulties we have put them to, have produced no one advantage, either to Great Britain or its revenues, while the inconvenience they have felt, has ill disposed their minds towards us, and [...] been the source of their late misbehaviour'.²²

'No Intention but to do Good': Considerations on the Present State of the North American Colonies

Bacon's second pamphlet, *Considerations on the Present State of the North American Colonies*, is his most intricate and detailed. In the form of a letter to the Duke of Grafton, and never originally intended for publication, this piece of work goes into more detail on Bacon's thoughts on the nature of the British Empire than his other two works.²³ Published in 1769, the pamphlet is 39 pages long, details Bacon's personal history relating to the Stamp Act and lays out a format for resolving the issues between the colonies and Britain.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²³ Bacon, *Considerations*, p. 35.

Bacon began by stating that he was writing to Grafton – who was the then Prime Minister – in the hope that there might be some form of ‘reconciliation’ between America and Britain. ‘The subject,’ he said, ‘now before me is one in which I have been conversant all my Days’. He further established that he was ‘bred up in the Places I am to speak of; have been engaged in extensive Commerce with them ever since; and by Experience, as well as Observation, acquired an accurate and distinct Knowledge of every Branch and Circumstance of their Trade’. He further stressed to note at the start of the letter that ‘the *North American Colonies*, in the present State of Improvement, are an increasing Source of Wealth to us, a growing Nursery of Strength; and the Measures your Lordship shall be pleased to adopt at this Time, in your Conduct towards them, will, in all probability, be decisive to the commercial Interest of the Nation’. He lastly stated in his introduction that he had written the letter for those reasons – the ‘Interest of the Nation’ – and sought to submit in the ‘honest Language of a plain man’ his ‘real Sentiments’ with ‘no Intention but to do good’.²⁴

Moving on, Bacon attempted to exonerate any guilt he may have had over the passing of the Stamp Act. He stated that while he had ‘the Honour of a Seat in Parliament at the Time of the *Stamp-Act*’ and while it ‘was natural for my Friends, both at home and abroad, who judged me to be experienced in *American Affairs*, to apply to me for all the Assistance it might be in my Power to give them’ and ‘being perfectly acquainted with the Case, and knowing the Interest of Government therein to be one and the same with theirs, I readily undertook it for the Service of both’. Instead of becoming involved in the heated debates in Parliament, Bacon reasoned ‘after mature Consideration of the best Means that could be employed’ that the ‘most respectful, as well as the most likely to succeed, seemed to be, a *private* Representation of the *Affair*’. He therefore, he claimed, ‘repeatedly addressed myself to the Right Honourable Gentleman who then presided at the Board of Treasury [George Grenville]’ but was ‘never able to obtain from him the Favour I had requested’.²⁵

Bacon followed this by summarising his own beliefs and opinions on the Stamp Act. It would have been, he claimed, ‘severely felt by all’ resulting in ‘an universal Dissatisfaction’ and would ‘produce an Advantage to the Revenue, in no Measure proportionate to the Loss that

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

would be sustained by it'.²⁶ He put forth the following two points regarding the ways in which America did contribute to the empire, without direct taxation:

I., That, as *Great Britain*, in Return for its Manufactures, actually receives from its Colonies the whole Produce of their Labour, without paying them even a single Shilling in Specie for it – And is, moreover, itself the Carrier out and in of the Produce of both – It has already from the Colonies all it possibly *can* have, and on the most advantageous Terms likewise to itself, that can, I think, be conceived.

II. That as the Demands of the Colonies for our Manufactures are to full Amount of their whole Produce, and *more* (which must always be the case while they are improving) every Tax laid upon the Colonies must, by a necessary and unavoidable Consequence, in Proportion to the Degree of it, continually lessen the Demand for our Manufactures, and instead of operating to our Advantage where it was intended, return with it increasing Detriment upon ourselves. For it will appear to any one, who will be at the Trouble of examining the Entries at the *Custom-House*, that the greater Part by far of the Exports to *North America* are the very Necessaries of Life, which, as they cannot do without them, must be had somewhere or other. If they have them from *us*, we have all the Advantage of it. If you take a Part of the Produce of their Labour from them in *Taxes*, you, by depriving them so far of the Means of paying for such Necessaries from hence, compel them, in the Proportion you tax them, to make for themselves; in which Case, the Hands they will be obliged to set to work in their own Manufactories, for this Purpose, will be taken off from the only Employment that brings Advantage to us, the Cultivation of their Lands, and engaged in another, on the contrary, the most detrimental to use that can be imagined; which would deprive our Manufactories, in a great Measure, of Employment, our shipping of the Profits of its usual Freight, our Strength by Land and Sea of its main Support, and the Revenue itself of a considerable Resource of Supply by the Decrease of Taxes here at Home.²⁷

Bacon expanded further that he was 'persuaded it was as contrary to the Interest of *Great Britain* as of the Colonies, and, on the Principle of Duty and Affection for both, by which I had been guided all along, most heartily concurred in the Repeal of an Act which I had done my utmost to prevent'. He reminded his reader, however, that while he had not supported the Stamp Act the claim – 'as *new* as it is dangerous' – which he 'almost shudder[ed] to repeat' that 'the Legislative Power of *Great Britain* has not a Right to tax the Colonies' was not one which found any sympathy with him and was 'fundamentally destructive of the very Being of Government, and subversive to the Constitution!'.²⁸

In order to ensure that the British Government dealt fairly with the Americans, Bacon established the main benefits brought to them by the Americans: firstly, 'that the *Exports* from this Country to the *North American* Colonies arise to the yearly Amount of no less than Five or Six Millions'; secondly, that the imports from America – mainly of raw goods and 'bulky Commodities' – which can be wrought up and then '*exported* again by us for the Use

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

of *Foreigners*' significantly 'turns the Balance of Trade much in our Favour'. Thirdly, 'the vast Number of Hands' necessary for maintaining all aspects of the Atlantic trading networks and the experience these seamen gain in that trade 'which must increase as our Trade increases' would add 'continual Strength to our Naval Power, which is the Defence and Ornament of the *British* nation'; and, fourthly, the growth of the American colonies and their demand for British goods and trade would 'raise the Trade Navigation and Manufactures of this Kingdom above the Want of any foreign Aid' and would 'secure to it the Balance of Trade, against all the rest of the Powers of Europe, and leave it in an unrivalled Possession of the Sovereignty of the Sea'.²⁹ Bacon similarly here touched on the 'African trade' and believed that, with 'some prudent Regulation' the connexions between the British, North American and African trades— or, in other words, the Atlantic trade — could be brought 'to Perfection'.³⁰

While the colonies, Bacon thought, were 'undoubtedly in a State of Disobedience to the Mother-Country', the 'very Term of the *Mother-Country* will remind your Lordships, that (however disobedient) they are her *Children*'. Instead of treating them 'as Enemies' and 'before you proceed to Extremities' 'every Expedient [must] be tried, every Argument offered to convince their Reason, every Effort of Love exerted to the utmost to recover their Affection'.³¹ To achieve this, Bacon established six maxims that he thought ought to be obeyed when governing the Anglo-American relationship:

1. First Maxim is – That *Great Britain* has an absolute and undoubted Right of Legislation over her Colonies; and whenever she judges it expedient to enact any Law relative to them, they are indisputably bound to receive such Law, and pay unreserved Obedience to it...
2. The Colonists have, on the other Hand, a Right to the Protection of Government, in the full Meaning and Extent of the Word, the same Right that ourselves have, as Fellow-Citizens and Fellow-Subjects...
3. They have a Right likewise to represent their Wants, to prefer Matter of *just* Complaints, and apply for Redress of *real* injuries – in a constitutional Way. The Mode in which this is to be done is not yet determined, but the sooner it is, it will be the better...
4. They are intitled to every proper Indulgence from the Mother-Country, in Return for their *exclusive* Trade...
5. The Mother-Country should, in Consideration of her Emolument as well as their's [*sic*] receive every Article of Produce they are able to raise from *them*, instead of *Foreigners*; and every

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Encouragement should with this View be given, particularly to engage them in the Cultivation of such things as we have most Occasion for...

6. No Tax can be laid upon the Colonists in their present State, with a View to draw *Money* from them, without the Alienation of their Affection from the Mother-Country.³²

The maxims, thought Bacon, would provide a solid ground on which to base the relationship between Britain and America. He realised that a large part of the problems faced by the empire at this time resulted in a misunderstanding – on both sides of the Atlantic – of the ways in which the imperial authority worked.

Not content to simply discuss the imperial make-up in the abstract, Bacon proposed several suggestions to improve and cement the relationship between the colonies and Great Britain. He proposed first that a ‘general Review be made of all the Laws that relate to them [the colonies]; and if any shall, on Examination, be found to be detrimental, either in Whole or in Part, to their Trade or Improvement, and of no real Benefit to those of the Mother-Country, let such Laws be amended or repealed’.³³ Secondly, Bacon wanted to promote a stronger sense of ‘belonging’ to Britain amongst the colonists. ‘I would beg Leave,’ he said, ‘to propose some Encouragements, for the Benefit of the rising Generation among them, which would, I think, under proper Management, greatly redound, in the End, to the Interest of the Mother-Country’. His suggestion here was that British universities should be provided with funds to provide ‘assistance of such as were inclined to educate their Sons for any of the learned Professions here in *England*’ in order to enjoy ‘the Benefit [of such] Connections and Friendships here (which are generally the most lasting) [and] would retain and undoubted Affection for the Place where he received such Advantages, and for those to whose Liberality he was indebted for them’.³⁴

Thirdly, Bacon suggested extending ‘some Titles or Dignities’ to the colonists ‘as peculiar Marks of the Royal Favour and Approbation’. This, he thought, would ‘exert the true patriotic Spirit of public Improvement, by bringing any new Article of Culture, that was wanted here, to Perfection’. This, Bacon thought, would enable a ‘loyal and steady Attachment to the King’s Person and a ready and well-tempered Zeal for the Honour, Peace

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28. On this note, see O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, pp. 20-27. ‘The tradition of a British education,’ O’Shaughnessy says, ‘bound the white elite to the mother country to an extent unparalleled in the northern colonies’. See also S. Lively, *Going Home: Americans in Britain, 1740-1776* (Unpublished PhD dissertation: Harvard University, 1996).

and Prosperity of his Government'.³⁵ Fourthly, Bacon proposed that Americans should be given a greater choice over their governors. Unpopular governors were the source of many of the problems faced in America and by allowing the colonists to pick their own governors – or, at least, have more of a sway over the choices made by government – even if Americans picked 'an indifferent person, with less Ability', their support for the governor's position would mean that things would 'oftentimes succeed better'.³⁶

Fifthly, and perhaps most interestingly considering the focus of this thesis, Bacon proposed that 'some honest Persons, of plain Understanding, and of tolerable Judgement and Experience, could be engaged, at the Government's Expence, to make the general Tour of *North America*'. He continued:

...with a view to the public Service, they might, by introducing themselves into all Companies, to whom the Design of their Appointment should not be known, have many Opportunities of explaining and representing Things to great Advantage, and of procuring even a favourable Reception of some Points, which, from a total or partial Ignorance of the Reasons and Utility of them, might, without such a preparatory Introduction, be contested. An Acknowledgement of the Legislative Power of *Great Britain* over her Colonies might, I think, by these Means be at length obtained; and if only one of the Assemblies of any of the Provinces could be induced to address the King with a Recognisance of this Sort, all the rest, I am confident, would soon follow the Example: For the Fact itself is to common Sense indisputable, however unhappily, because injudiciously, as I think, the Power may have been exerted.

The person appointed, Bacon further established, would serve a further purpose of being 'able to procure for you a more accurate Knowledge of the Countries, and of the Temper and Sentiments of the People, than could possibly be obtained any other Way; as their real Opinions would, in the Freedom of Conversation, be declared to them without Reserve'.³⁷

Bacon's final proposal was to attempt to bind together Britain and the American colonies legally and constitutionally. 'The heads of LAW,' he said, 'which would be of Force sufficient to collect and unite the whole Power and Strength of *Great Britain* and *North America* together, in a Bond that would (humanly speaking) be, I think, indissoluble; a LAW, which at the same Time, that it most amply provides for the Protection and Employment of the Colonies, would effectually secure to the Mother-Country the Dominion over them'. This law, he pleaded, would be able to be 'carried into Execution without much Difficulty' but he

³⁵ Bacon, *Considerations*, p. 29.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

stressed ‘the longer it is deferred, it will be more difficult to do, as the Evil itself is every Day increasing, which it is intended to remedy’.³⁸

Bacon’s letter ends with a very unexpected and out-of-character plea to Grafton. As the letter was not originally intended for publication, Bacon asks that the Ministry start ‘an Enquiry [...] into the State of *Religion* there, and an Attention to that *first* Principle of Unity on which all the rest depends’. He believed that ‘a Neglect of this, in the Days of our Ancestors, has been, I fear, the fruitful Source of every Inconvenience we now sustain. The Ecclesiastical Form of Government by *Bishops*, established by Law in this Kingdom, is, I verily believe, the true and apostolic one, and entirely conformable to the Word of God’. Therefore, he urged for ‘the first Establishment of a Protestant Episcopacy in America’. The establishing of the Church of England over the entirety of America would allow the Americans, thought Bacon, to participate fully in the rights and practices of the United Kingdom and would encourage a due loyalty to Britain, the Crown and God.³⁹

This pamphlet is by far the most illustrative of the three published by Bacon and provides us with the greatest insight into his views on empire and the colonies. It is perhaps striking that Bacon is capable of being both erudite and engaged with his American brethren – by asking, for example, that they be given more say in the appointment of their governors and by attempting to promote a greater understanding of the other part on both sides of the Atlantic – while also failing to grasp the significance and importance of other suggestions (notably the establishment of a working and practicing Church of England throughout the colonies). The pamphlet shows, nevertheless, that Bacon was a well connected man with a strong appreciation for what would, and what would not, make the empire function in its best capacities, and this shines through in this pamphlet perhaps more than anywhere else.

‘Bringing Contending Parties to Reason’: A Short Address to the Government, the Merchants, the Manufacturers, and the Colonists in America, and the Sugar Islands, on the Present State of Affairs

A Short Address to the Government, the Merchants, the Manufacturers, and the Colonists in America, and the Sugar Islands, on the Present State of Affairs, published in 1775, was Bacon’s final pamphlet on the American crises of the 1760s and 1770s, and is his longest

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-3.

³⁹ On this note, see T. Hanley, *The American Revolution and Religion: Maryland 1770-1800* (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 1971) and H. Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

tract. Costing 2s, the 40 page long piece focused on the issues of taxation in the colonies, the rights of Parliament, and discussion of the politics of the crisis.⁴⁰ This pamphlet is the most vociferous attack on the Americans for their conduct and on the government for its short-sightedness regarding taxation. In comparison to *The True Interest*, Bacon resolutely attacked the Americans – or, the American patriots specifically – for their actions regarding taxation. He, moreover, flatly denied that the Americans should be granted any form of independence. As before, Bacon’s primary motivation and point-of-reference is trade: he was concerned primarily with the effects any disagreement between Great Britain and the American colonies might have had on commerce. The pamphlet, however, does shed some interesting light on Bacon’s political and constitutional opinions regarding the Americas and, although perhaps not a groundbreaking piece of political debate with unexpected or new solutions to the problem, it is nonetheless a valuable and worthwhile insight into an Atlantic merchant’s view on the crisis.

Bacon began the pamphlet by addressing the general issue of the American problem, and pleaded that some reason might be brought to the argument, stating that ‘he that wishes to bring the contending parties to reason and [that] moderation has a right to be heard’.⁴¹ Bacon was also very quick to establish his own credentials as an American expert. He claimed: ‘I am not altogether unqualified to judge of the merits of the question before us, having passed many years of my life in one of the colonies, and traded very extensively in them all’.⁴² As in his earlier tracts, Bacon was keen to quickly point out his own expertise with regards to the American colonies to enable him to discuss, with some authority, the key issues in the Anglo-American relationship.

The pamphlet then swiftly moves onto attacking the politics of the Stamp Act. Bacon, as his earlier texts established, was never in favour of the Stamp Act but, in *A Short Address*, we find a very strongly worded attack on it and its instigators. These attacks are quite different from the slights of ‘the system’ in *The True Interest*. Bacon states ‘the author of these papers was favoured with a long, though unsuccessful, conference with the ministers then in being, on the subject of the American stamp-act; in the course of which all that has since

⁴⁰ J.R. Smith, *Bibliotheca Americana: A Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Books, Pamphlets, Manuscripts, Maps, Engravings, and Engraved Portraits Illustrating the History and Geography of North and South America, and the West Indies Altogether Forming the Most Extensive Collection Ever Offered for Sale* (London: E. Tucker, 1865), p. 241.

⁴¹ Bacon, *A Short Address*, p. 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*

happened, in consequence of that ill-concerted measures, was very nearly predicted'.⁴³ In addition to this, Bacon attacked the ministers involved in drafting the problematic American taxes, stating

'Though the power of taxing the Americans is undeniable, that mode of taxation was proposed by persons who in this respect misunderstood the real interest both of Great Britain and America. It was an idea too hastily conceived, too firmly maintained, and too peremptorily insisted on, even to the end. The friends however to both countries have now the satisfaction of reflecting, that they did not fail to assure the author of that tax, that it had every thing in it, which must render it hateful to the Americans: that it must needs be very oppressive in many instances; since whatever was laid by parliament would have been trebly increased in many parts of the colonies, when it come to be levied. That it would be attended with unsurmountable difficulties, and, after all, would be unprofitable to this country.'⁴⁴

The attack on the Stamp Act, and its authors, continues for another two pages in the pamphlet. Bacon's belief, here, is that there ought to be no '*general* tax in the colonies' and that the colonies 'had great reason to complain, not because they were taxed, but because they were so taxed'.⁴⁵

Moving on from the Stamp Act, Bacon also railed against the Townshend duties. This attempt of the 'British Parliament to assert its right of taxing the colonies' through placing a 'tax on paper, glass and painter's [*sic*] colours' was, according to Bacon, 'another very exceptionable mode of taxation, taken up too inconsiderately by another very ingenious minister'.⁴⁶ 'Notwithstanding the allowed great abilities of this minister,' Bacon states, 'a more absurd or insufficient tax was never conceived, both with respect to the Americans and ourselves. They indeed complained; but we had no less cause: for the act was absolutely *felo de se* [suicide]'. The reason for Bacon's disapproval of the Townshend duties is quite simple: he opposed the taxing of trading goods amongst the single entity of the British Empire as, in his view, nobody could benefit from such an action. Bacon asked 'if we lay a tax upon our own manufactures exported to our colonies, what is this, but to injure ourselves in a double capacity?' and points out that 'it serves both to discourage the Americans from trading with us in those commodities [glass, paper and so on]; and also (as its necessary consequence) to tie up the hands of our own manufacturers'.⁴⁷

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7. His emphasis.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

Given the nature of Bacon's attacks on British methods of taxation, it would be quite easy to brand him as an American sympathiser only interested in maintaining his American connexions and promoting his own trade. This is, however, not the case at all: Bacon reserved most of his anger for the *methods* of protest used by the Americans. Bacon had no doubts that the King-in-Parliament ought to be supreme over the colonies: he claimed, for example, that 'the legislative authority of Great Britain extends itself to all its dominions without reserve' and in response to the colonists' complains of 'a want of representation' and belief that 'it is an act of tyranny to propose taxes which so nearly affect themselves while they have no voice in our public councils,' he plainly (and somewhat unimaginatively) says that 'in answer [...] I must beg them to observe, that as they are colonies, and not kingdoms, they can be no more than virtually represented: and this they now are, being included in the commons as members of the kingdom of Great Britain'.⁴⁸ Bacon's main complaint, however, was not with constitutional or theoretical issues of sovereignty, but to do with the *realpolitik* of protest and dissent in the colonies.

Bacon pondered also the American position and asked why the Americans chose to submit to some taxes (such as those on wine and molasses), but refused any form of tax on other goods. He states that 'if they now insist that themselves are to be the only judges, when and in what respects this instance of legislative authority [the power of Parliament to tax] is, or is not to be exerted, we must needs confess, that they are the most capricious subjects upon earth'.⁴⁹ Throughout the text, Bacon asserts that Americans and Britons must be aware of the nature of the disagreement between the colonies and the mother country; he believes that 'there is a *Demetrius* with his craftsmen in every country, and in every age; who when they find their interest at stake, will soon grow clamorous, and encourage even idolatry itself, rather than suffer their *craft* to be brought to nought' and that people need to be aware of the distinction between 'the outcries of faction, and complaints of real grievances'.⁵⁰

Somewhat spectacularly, Bacon compares the American issue over taxation to the English Civil Wars of the previous century and claims that the Americans appear to want to destroy the basis of society. He states that

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2 and pp. 17-8.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15. His emphasis.

‘Then it is argued, in language which is pretty sure to captivate, that such grievances are not to be born by a free people; who, when they feel themselves oppressed, have a right to take up arms, and, like their ancestors, of famous memory, by *every* method to take care *ne quid detrimenti republica capiat*. The truth is, confusion and its consequence (a general scramble) is the object of their hope; to those who have nothing to lose, every prospect of gain is welcome. But what have men of property to expect? What about a sequestration of their estates; which may be disposed over, as they were heretofore, to serjeants [*sic*], drummers and all the instruments of republican usurpation?’⁵¹

And that ‘it is the act of ill-designing men to take advantage of the present dissatisfaction, and magnify every little incident into a mischievous design of government to oppress and enslave; to violate all laws, and abuse authority to the ruin of dependent provinces’.⁵²

There appeared to be no doubt, then, in Bacon’s mind as to who in the colonies were causing the troubles for Britain. He believed, as did the majority of British politicians and military commanders, that the Americans were subject to the whim of a small group – a *faction* – who were determined to oppose British authority for their own, selfish, gains. Bacon remained convinced that most of the colonists were loyal subjects, who were rightly outraged at the various constraints and pressures put upon them by short-sighted ministries in Britain, and the ‘outrages’ had been carried on by a small, limited group.⁵³

The pamphlet finishes by explaining why some Americans want independence and what the results of that would be. The reason for *some* taxation of the Americans (Bacon is always careful to ensure that he is clear with regards to this point: he believes Americans ought to be taxed, but opposed the methods by which they had been carried out) was to remove Great Britain from ‘labouring under a most grievous burthen of debts and taxes’ and, as Americans were ‘in the full enjoyment of British liberty, without partaking with her in any of her difficulties or distresses’ to ensure their fair share to the Empire. With regards to American motivations for their opposition, Bacon suggested that they wished to remove themselves from any debt owed to Britons and free themselves, economically, from any ties:

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17. The use here of republican imagery, and of the supposed tyranny of republican rule, is an interesting one. Bacon has purposefully chosen to elicit the very common memory of the English Civil Wars and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. These events, still widely remembered and feared (in the case of the Civil War) in British society, served as a potent reminder as to what could happen when the ‘lower sorts’ tried to gain power. Bacon’s argument here, then, is filled with connotations of death, desperation and destruction, and appeals very strongly to the national memory of Cromwell’s rule.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

'this [is a] deeply concerted plan, to put off the duty of payment, or eventually perhaps wipe out all the debt'.⁵⁴

As Colley and Breen have done in the past few decades, Bacon also stated that the basis of the British nation, and of the British Empire, lay in the carrying of trade and commerce.⁵⁵ He states that if the Americans refuse to accept British authority to tax them 'such a resolution strikes at the root of all our trade: the consequence [of which] will be a virtual repeal of the act of navigation; the colonies will become independent separate states, and they will trade with Great Britain just as far as they find it convenient to themselves, and no farther.'⁵⁶ He, further, believed that American independence would destroy the West Indian colonies and ruin most of the Atlantic trade.⁵⁷

The pamphlet finishes with a warning to Bacon's fellow merchants: they must, he insists, not fall victim to American demands in the hope of short-term gains. He tried to persuade merchants to brave any on-going American embargoes in the knowledge that, in doing so, they would be on the right side. More importantly, however, he emphasises the fact that, should the merchants and traders give in to American demands, the Americans will eventually become independent and all trade will be ruined. It is in this vein that Bacon finishes his text, asking the rest of Britain to prevent the Americans from falling 'a prey to themselves'.⁵⁸

'All the Right of Freedom': The Works of Thomas Pownall

Unlike Bacon, who wrote only short pamphlets on issues directly relating to his personal experience and interest, Pownall was a prolific writer on a great many subjects. Although much of his later life was spent writing, and rewriting, Pownall had no flair for language: his texts are complicated, verbose, abstract and often difficult to follow. His writings sadly are often very dry; the language is colourless and lacking in any imaginative or emotive connexions for the reader. His long, complex paragraphs often jump about with little or no structure and, as a result, it can be challenging to follow the flow of his arguments. Indeed, the very well informed former Governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson, complained

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵⁵ See Colley, *Britons* and Breen, *An Empire of Goods*.

⁵⁶ Bacon, *A Short Address*, pp. 31-2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40.

after having read the fifth edition of *The Administration of the Colonies* that he had 'just looked into it, [to] find it above [his] capacity'.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, Pownall's list of publications is quite astounding in its breadth and grasp. He wrote on topics as varied as: American geography; Sepulchral monuments in Ireland; the archaeologies of various churchyards and abbeys; East Indian affairs and trade; economics and trade relations in general; vases found on the Mosquito shore in South America; stone formations in Sussex; Roman earthen-ware; Irish antiquities; European ancient history; and the relationship, and rivalry, between the industrial and the agrarian sections of society.⁶⁰ It is, however, Pownall's works on the American colonies which are relevant to this work. In that vein, Pownall published several works: *The Administration of the Colonies*; *A Memorial Most Humbly Addressed to the Sovereigns of Europe, on the Present State of Affairs between the Old and New World*; *A Memorial Addressed to the Sovereigns of America*; and *Two Memorials, Not Originally Intended for Publication, Now Published; with an Explanatory Preface*.⁶¹ Pownall also wrote, in 1752, *Principles of Polity, Being the Grounds and Reasons of Civil Empire* but this was written before any real disagreements between the Americans and the British surfaced, and is outwith the scope of this work. The *Principles of Polity* provides the reader with a very embryonic view of Pownall's opinions and ideas of empire, which are much more deeply analysed in his later works.

⁵⁹ Schutz, *Thomas Pownall*, p. 238.

⁶⁰ T. Pownall, *Six Remarkable Views in the Provinces of New-York, New-Jersey, and Pennsylvania in North America* (London: 1761); T. Pownall, 'A Description of the Sepulchral Monument at New Grange, near Drogheda, in Ireland', *Archaeologia* Vol. II (1770), 236-275; T. Pownall, 'On the Boundary Stone of Croyland Abbey', *Archaeologia* Vol. III (1771), 96-100; T. Pownall, *The Right, Interest, and Duty, of the State, as concerned in the Affairs of the East Indies* (London: 1773); T. Pownall, *A Topographical Description of such parts of North America as are Contained in the (annexed) map of the Middle British Colonies, &c., in North America* (London: 1776); T. Pownall, *A Letter from Governor Pownall to Adam Smith, LL.D. F.R.S., Being an Examination of Several Points of Doctrine, laid down in his "Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations"* (London: 1776); T. Pownall, 'Observations Arising from an Enquiry into the Nature of the Vases found on the Mosquito Shore in South America', *Archaeologia* Vol. V (1778), 318-324; T. Pownall, 'Account of a Singular Stone amongst the rocks at West Hoadley, Sussex', *Archaeologia* Vol. VI (1782), 54-60; T. Pownall, 'Governor Pownall on Roman Earthen-Ware and the Boundary Stone at Croyland Abbey', *Archaeologia* Vol. VI (1782), 392-399; and T. Pownall, *A Treatise on the Study of Antiquities as the Commentary to Historical Learning* (London: 1782).

⁶¹ T. Pownall, *The Administration of the Colonies* (London: 1764, 1765, 1766, 1768, 1774 and 1777); T. Pownall, *A Memorial Most Humbly Addressed to the Sovereigns of Europe, on the Present State of Affairs between the Old and New World* (London: 1782); T. Pownall, *A Memorial Addressed to the Sovereigns of America* (London: 1783); T. Pownall, *Two Memorials, Not Originally Intended for Publication, Now Published; with an Explanatory Preface* (London: 1782).

'Factions, Parties, Independent Interests, and Such Stuff': *The Administration of the Colonies*

The Administration of the Colonies was undoubtedly Pownall's greatest work. First published as a pamphlet in 1764 and costing 4s 6d, it contained the detailed analysis of Pownall's impressions of, and opinions on, the governance of the American colonies. Much of the significance of the work, however, lies in the fact that Pownall republished several editions throughout the 1760s and 1770s. These editions effectively provide a narrative of Pownall's reaction to, and thoughts on, the growing crisis of empire. New editions were released in 1765 (containing 262 pages and costing 7s 6d), in 1766 (containing 314 pages and costing 9s), in 1768 (with 391 pages and a price of 10s 6d), and in 1774 (in two volumes with a total of 767 pages and a cost of 15s).⁶² A subsequent, and unchanged, edition was released in 1777.

The first edition of 1764 lays out Pownall's ideas on the British Empire and has, at least, 'the merit of brevity'.⁶³ This first edition establishes the basis on which Pownall's later treatises on government and empire would be built. Pownall – having attended Newton's college, Trinity College, Cambridge – was greatly influenced by Newton's ideas of gravity and believed that politics was dominated by the force of *commerce*. He explained that 'the spirit of *commerce* will become that predominant power, which will form the general policy, and rule the powers of Europe: and hence a grand commercial interest, the basis of a great commercial dominion, under the present site and circumstances of the world, will be formed and arise'.⁶⁴ Moreover, Pownall explained, Britain was precisely the right power to attempt this transformation of colonial politics. He stated,

it is therefore the duty of those who govern us, to carry forward this state of things to the weaving of this lead into our system, that Great Britain may be no more considered as the kingdom of this Isle only, with many appendages of provinces, colonies, settlements, and other extraneous parts, but as a *grand-marine dominion* consisting of our possessions in the Atlantic and in America united into a one Empire, in a one centre, where the seat of government is.⁶⁵

These grand goals were based on Pownall's belief that the British Empire needed to be radically reformed in order to continue: the problems he faced while Governor of Massachusetts Bay, and his determination to avoid any further governorships unless 'the

⁶² H. Stevens, *Historical Nuggets: Bibliotheca Americana or A Descriptive Account of My Collection of Rare Books Relating to America* (London: Whittingham and Wilkins, 1862), pp. 604-5.

⁶³ Guttridge, 'Thomas Pownall's *The Administration of the Colonies: The Six Editions*', p. 33.

⁶⁴ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, p. 8. His emphasis.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9. My emphasis. See also, Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, 2nd ed., pp. 9-10.

King's positive commands' directed him to do so, convinced him of the need for reform.⁶⁶ With very broad brushstrokes, Pownall was establishing the basis of his treatise on empire. The basis of Pownall's plan was quite simple: the empire should have a natural flow of trade, in accordance with Pownall's idea of 'political gravity', with a benevolent mother country at the centre. The mother country's duty would be to protect and foster the colonies, while the colonies should send all produce in return and be the 'sole and special' customers. This system, thought Pownall, removed the dangers inherent in foreign trade and would be, moreover, buoyed by the shared language, culture, religion and constitution of the empire.

The first point Pownall discussed in his plans to renovate the empire focused on London. Any chance of there being a dutiful, compassionate and understanding mother country as in Pownall's Grand Marine Dominion was, he thought, being destroyed by the incompetence, jealousies and apathy of the various Secretaries of State responsible for the colonies. There should, Pownall explained, be a strong and effective 'Home Office' which

...ought from this centre, to be able fully, uniformly, and efficiently, to distribute its directions and orders. Wherever the wisdom of state shall determine that this centre of information shall be fixed; from whatever department all appointments, orders and executive administration shall issue, it ought somewhere to be fixed, known, of record, and undivided; that it may not be partial, it ought to extend to all times and all cases.

Further, Pownall established that 'whether this [position] be a Secretary of State, or the Board of Trade and Plantations, is of no consequence; but it ought to be intirely [*sic*] in either the one or the other' and that

Whenever, therefore, it is thought proper (as most certainly it will, some time or other, tho' perhaps too late) to form such [a] department, it must (if I may so express myself) be sovereign and supreme, as to everything relating to it; or to speak plainly out, *must be a Secretary of State's office in itself.*⁶⁷

Pownall then explained why the situation could not be made to work. Should the administration of the colonies be given to the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, Pownall asked, 'how will the Southern Department act, when any matter of commerce arises in the plantations, that has special connections or interferences with the Dutch, Hamborough, Danish or Russian trade?'. Moreover, according to him, 'it [the administration of the colonies] cannot lie in the board of trade, properly so called, until it be

⁶⁶ C. Colden, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1923), p. 371.

⁶⁷ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, 2nd ed., pp. 12-14. His emphasis.

found proper, and comes a measure of government, to erect that board into a secretary of state's office for this department'.⁶⁸ Without such measures taken, and taken effectually, Pownall believed that 'the people of the colonies [...] will never believe government is earnest about them, or their intent, or even about governing them'.⁶⁹

It is interesting to note that Pownall was not alone in these sentiments. The position of the Secretary of State for the Colonies was established in 1768, with Wills Hill, the Earl of Hillsborough, the first to hold the office. Nevertheless, the idea of a single authority, in London, over the colonies was not a new idea, nor one unique to Pownall. Lord Halifax as early as 1751 had publicly stated that he believed in reform. Halifax no doubt played a large part in influencing Pownall's opinions on empire while Pownall spent time as his confidant during the Seven Years' War. There was also constant discussion amongst high-ranking politicians about the need for an American Secretary and Lord Chesterfield, in 1766, wrote 'if we have no secretary of state with full and undisputed powers for America, in a few years we may as well have no America'.⁷⁰ Spector further explains that 'Hillsborough, an adherent of the Court faction, and Dartmouth seem to have heeded his [Pownall's] warning that America would never take England seriously until an efficient system of administration was adopted' and that, in 1765, 'when some change in the status of the Board of Trade was under consideration, Hillsborough assured Dartmouth that the acceptance of anything short of the authority wielded by the Treasury and Admiralty in their respective departments would bring him continual disappointment and perhaps undeserved disgrace'. Pownall's ideas, then, seem to have travelled far and been widely accepted amongst high-ranking politicians.⁷¹

Having assuredly discussed, and put forward solutions for, the problems in the United Kingdom, Pownall then turned his attention to the colonies themselves. It should be noted here that although Pownall believed that the Americans *might* move toward independence, he dismissed any notion of revolt out of hand.⁷² Pownall believed strongly in the ideal of

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷⁰ M. Spector, *The American Department of the British Government, 1768-1782* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 12.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷² 'But perhaps it may be proper on this occasion, nay, it is justice to say it, that if, by becoming independent is meant a revolt, nothing is further from their [the Americans] nature, their interest, their thoughts. If a defection from the alliance of the mother country be suggested, it ought to be, and can truly be said, that their spirit abhors the sense of such; their attachment to the protestant succession in the house of Hanover will ever stand unshaken; and nothing can eradicate from their hearts their

mercantilism and in the subordination of the colonies, in matters of trade, to Great Britain.

He said,

It becomes the duty of the mother country to nourish and cultivate, to protect and govern the colonies – which nurture and government should precisely direct its care and influence to two essential points. 1st, That all the profits of the produce and manufactures of these colonies centre in the mother country: and 2^{dly}, That the colonies continue to be the sole and special proper customers of the mother country. It is on this *valuable consideration* [that] they have a right to the grants, charters, privileges and protection which they receive; and also on the other hand, it is from these grants, charters and privileges and protection given to them, that the mother country has an exclusive right to the external profits of their labour, and to their custom: To these two points, collateral with the interests, right and welfare of the colonies, every measure of administration, every law of trade should tend.⁷³

In order to avoid any ideas of American independence, Pownall proposed the idea of self-governing, privileged corporation-colonies as part of the British Empire, and ‘connected in their various orbs and subordination of orders, as to be capable of receiving and communicating, from the first mover (the government of Great Britain) any political motion, in the direction it is given. Great Britain, as the centre of this system, must be the centre of attraction, to which these colonies, in the administration of every power of their government, in the exercise of the judicial powers, and the execution of their laws, and in every operation of their trade, must tend’.⁷⁴

In addition, contrary to his later reputation as a ‘Friend of the American Revolution’,⁷⁵ Pownall’s view of the colonists was on occasion quite patronising. In order to maintain British control at the centre of the dominion, Pownall believed that ‘they [the Americans] must be guarded against having, or forming, any principle coherence with each other above that, whereby they cohere in this centre: having no other principle of intercommunication between each other, than that by which they are in joint communion with Great Britain as the common centre of all’. Furthermore, he pointed out, Americans ‘should always remain incapable of any coherence, or of so conspiring amongst themselves, as to create any other equal force which much recoil back on this first mover [Great Britain]. It is essential to the

natural, almost mechanical, affection to Great Britain, which they conceive under no other sense, nor call by any other name, than that of *home*. Besides, the merchants are, and must ever be, in great measure allied with those of Great Britain; their very support consists in this alliance, and nothing but false policy here can break it [...] The liberty and religion of the British colonies are incompatible with either French or Spanish government; and they know full well, that they could hope for neither liberty nor protection under a Dutch one. Any such suggestion, therefore, is a false and unjust aspersion on their principles and affections; and can arise from nothing but an intire [*sic*] ignorance of their circumstances’. Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, 2nd ed., pp. 28-9.

⁷³ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, pp. 35-6.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷⁵ See J. Reich, *British Friends of the American Revolution* (London: M.E. Sharp, 1998).

preservation of the empire to keep them disconnected and independent of each other'.⁷⁶ How possible and practical Pownall thought this plan was cannot now be ascertained, but the fact remains that, at least in the earlier editions, Pownall had no interest in American independence and was a strong advocate against any growth in American power.

The first edition paid little attention to issues over revenue or Native American issues as both were, at that time, under official consideration. Pownall did believe, however, that the best way to tax the colonists was through a levy on trade and other customs duties, and perhaps through some form of land tax. He did point out, however, that there might be a problem in 'how far even the supreme government of the mother country can, consistently with general liberty, proceed in laying taxes on its colonies, where the consent of the people cannot be, in any constitutional way taken'.⁷⁷ Pownall mostly skips this controversial issue, but affirmed that, however revenue was raised, it should primarily be made to free the various governors and officials of their dependence on the local assemblies.

Finally, with regards to trade amongst the 'colonies, as corporations united to the realm' and Great Britain, it must, Pownall established, be allowed to flourish 'so as to form not a dependant appendix to the demesnes of the crown, but a subordinate united part of a whole one, this great commercial dominion of Great Britain'.⁷⁸ Pownall, here, regarded the Navigation Acts as basically sound in theory, but wanted to expand the reach of 'British markets' in foreign countries. Pownall said,

An occasion of establishing *British markets even in other countries*, the true use would be derived to the general interest from these advantageous circumstances, while in particular the colonies and the mother country would be mutually accommodated [...] If, under certain restrictions, securing also those duties which the produce of the colonies, carried to market, ought to pay to the mother country, the colonies were permitted to export their produce directly to foreign countries, if so be they sold it to any *British house* established in such place, and were also permitted, if they bought their supplies from a *British house* established in those parts, to supply themselves with the natural fruits and produce of that country (all manufactures that in any way interfere with the British manufactories excepted) paying there to some British officer, or upon their arrival in the colonies, the same duties as they would have paid by purchasing the same commodities in England.⁷⁹

In other words, Pownall believed that the colonists should have the right to trade directly into, and out of, foreign powers – provided the trades were carried out by British merchants

⁷⁶ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, 2nd ed., pp. 36-7.

⁷⁷ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, p. 67.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-5.

in those countries. Moreover, the trade of the East and West Indies, Pownall thought, should be brought into line with Anglo-American trade in order to improve the benefit to all and restore harmony amongst the merchants of the empire. Importantly, Pownall emphasised, there should be no economic diversification: Americans should not therefore be allowed to make products currently made by Britain as this would lead eventually to a destruction of the 'natural' systems of trade and colonial independence.

The Administration of the Colonies appears to have been generally well received by its contemporaries. It received warm praise in both *The Monthly Review* and *The Gentleman's Magazine* and was widely read by those interested in the colonies and their administration. *The Gentleman's Magazine* commented that the work 'seems to be written with great knowledge of the subject, and upon the most enlarged and comprehensive principles'.⁸⁰ Moreover, as Schutz points out, 'the wide publicity given his essay attracted the attention of Benjamin Franklin, who renewed his partnership with Pownall'.⁸¹ Franklin's correspondence, however, shows us that he thought the first edition – which was published anonymously – was not drafted by Pownall at all, but by Richard Jackson: 'I saw in the Chronicle a Line of Notice, that after the Christmas Hollidays would be published *The Administration of the Colonies*. I imagin'd it might be the Title of your intended Work, and hop'd to have had it here by this time'.⁸² Nonetheless, Pownall's decision to republish the tract in 1765, in a second edition, means that he must have felt the text a worthwhile contribution to the debate on the British Empire at this time.

'Begun Upon my Revisions': The Editions of the *Administration of the Colonies*

The second edition of the *Administration of the Colonies* was published merely a year after the first. This edition, unlike the first, was not published anonymously and contained a more detailed analysis of the colonial situation. Moreover, it took account of George Grenville's American programme and dealt with the proposed Stamp Act and the beginnings of the American crisis. It contains, in addition, a several page dedication to 'the Right Honourable George Grenville, First Lord Commission of His Majesty's Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer, etc, etc, etc'.⁸³ The dedication, further, states that 'while such is the temper

⁸⁰ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XXIV (London: 1764), 103.

⁸¹ Schutz, *Thomas Pownall*, p. 193.

⁸² Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson, Philadelphia, 1 June 1764. *The Benjamin Franklin Papers* (American Philosophical Society): <http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/> [accessed 20 July 2008]. See also Doren, *Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson*, pp. 159-61.

⁸³ Pownall, *The Administration of the Colonies*, 2nd ed., p. i.

of the great minister, there cannot be too much caution and prudence exercised in preventing the inferior members or officers of government from acting under any sense of resentment or prejudice, against a people improperly supposed to be under disfavour'.⁸⁴

Perhaps most importantly, however, Pownall went to some length to emphasise his own expertise on the colonies in the dedication. He says that 'the experience I have had in the affairs of the colonies must at least have given me a practical knowledge of them: and the relation I have borne to the people has given me an affection for them' and that he has 'a right to say this [that the colonists will always remain loyal to Britain] because experience has given me this impression of them. I do not say it to flatter them [...] but I speak it as a truth which I think should be known, lest the intemperance and imprudence of their false and mistaken patriots should give any undue impression of their disadvantages, and cause any alienation of that natural affection which at present subsists [...] between the people of Great Britain and those of the colonies'.⁸⁵

The second edition itself contains much more detail on the issue of taxation. While the first edition contained only a brief glance at the topic, the second edition goes into some depth on the matter. Pownall stated that he does 'not suppose that it will not bear a doubt but that the supreme legislature of Great Britain is the true and perfect representative of Great Britain, and all its dependencies' and that 'as it is not in the power of the House of Lords or Commons to exempt any community from the jurisdiction of the King, as supreme magistrate, so that it is not, nor ever was, or could be in the power of the crown, to exempt any persons or communities within the dominions of Great Britain from being subject and liable to be taxed by parliament'.⁸⁶ As a result, Pownall pointed out, the various charters and grants given to the colonies – either by the Crown or by Parliament – could not exempt them from imperial taxation.

However, that said, Pownall then qualifies his position. Should the various colonial legislatures and assemblies, he pointed out, already levy a tax on a specific item or source, then Great Britain must not double-tax the same resource. Similarly, as the land of the colonies was best known and understood by the local bodies, any form of land tax should be left to the American assemblies. With regards to taxation in general, Pownall emphasises

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. v.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. iii and pp. vi-vii.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

that Britain must act ‘with the utmost delicacy and regard to the colonies’ power of taxing themselves’.⁸⁷ This lenity should be allowed as the colonial bodies contributed towards the Crown in general and were therefore active members of the British Empire.

Regarding the stamp duty in particular, Pownall believed that it ‘ought to be much lower than those laid here in England’. The reason for this, he established, was ‘because the same kind of transactions, acts, and deeds, passed and done in America, as those here in England, are done for concerns of much less value’.⁸⁸ Again, however, Pownall tried to sit on the middle ground between Britain and America. He pointed out a few pages later that it seems obvious how ‘little reason the Colonists have to complain of these moderate duties and imposts, which the mother country expects them to bear in aid to her, whilst government leaves to them untouched those internal funds, so fully adequate to all the internal services of each province’.⁸⁹ Pownall further explained that ‘the provinces under-mentioned could annually raise, by one shilling in the pound on the produce of the rateable property, estates real and personal in each province:

Province	£	s	d
Massachusetts Bay	13172	7	11
New York	8000	0	0
New Jersey	5289	17	0
Pennsylvania	15761	10	0
South-Carolina	6971	1	11
Sterling	49395	16	10 ⁹⁰

With this figure doubled to include all the other colonies’ contributions, Pownall points out that a yearly sum of £98791 13s 8d could be collected. He, thereafter, went to some length to establish to readers on both sides of the Atlantic that these figures were from his own ‘private collections’ and that they were also a few years out of date. Nevertheless, he pointed out, the information was unlikely to be seriously wrong and served as a worthwhile example of how easily, and profitably, Americans could be taxed.⁹¹

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-7.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100.

Similarly, Pownall touched on the issue of Indian affairs in this second edition. Pontiac's Rebellion,⁹² which had raged in the Americas since 1763 and ended – officially – in July 1765, had caused some considerable problems for the British and British-Americans in America. Pownall shows in his discussion of the Indian problem some compassion for their situation. He says that, while 'the European power may finally extirpate them' it can never conquer them. Moreover, although the increasing numbers of Europeans in the Americas would, Pownall thought, eventually destroy any form of Native American culture, the cost would be dear 'both in blood and treasure [...] for our horrid injustice'.⁹³ On a more practical note, Pownall further established that, due to the cost of maintaining an army capable of defeating any Indian uprising – and he estimates the number of Indian 'fighting men' at 23,105 – the best fiscal policy, and the best way to ensure the safety of Americans, would be to base the relationship between the two peoples 'in faith and justice, toward the remnant of these much injured native of the country'.⁹⁴

The final main change to the second edition was the addition of an attack on the position of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces in America. The Commander-in-Chief was based in New York and had general control over, and responsibility for, all the troops in North America. From 1763, the position was held by Major-General Thomas Gage. Pownall believed that the precedent set by a single authority over the whole Americas, in the position of the Commander-in-Chief, was a dangerous one as it alluded to a possible American unity. Pownall stated

If it should upon consideration and advice, of which I am no judge, be found that the dictatorial power and command of a military commander in chief, superior to the provincial governors (however necessity, in time of war, might justify it, ne quid respublica detrimenti capiat) is not agreeable and conformable to law, and to the constitution either of Great Britain or of the colonies in time of peace; it may be supposed that such will no be continued in time of peace, and that as soon as the hostile state of Indian affairs ceases, this power will be made to cease also.⁹⁵

The example of a single Commander-in-Chief, therefore, set the example of an American Empire and was, Pownall thought, the beginning of the end for any form of British sovereignty in the New World.⁹⁶ Pownall, instead, proposed that the American army be

⁹² See G.E. Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993) and L. Sonneborn, *Chronology of American Indian History: The Trail of the Wind* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2001).

⁹³ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, 2nd ed., p. 163.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-6.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62. Note that Pownall here uses the same Latin phrase as Bacon above.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

divided, the position of Commander-in-Chief be removed, and that ‘the several commandants of the troops appointed, each to their respective districts, having every power necessary for the discipline and government of the regular forces under their command’ and that they will remain in ‘subordination to the civil power of that government, within which their command lies, as commander in chief in Ireland stands to the supreme civil power of Ireland’.⁹⁷

News of Pownall’s thesis on the Commander-in-Chief took some time to reach the Americas. When it did, however, it proved rather irksome to Thomas Gage. He wrote to the Secretary at War, Viscount Barrington, in July 1770 that:

According to Governor Pownall’s Interpretation of Law, no Army in America can be under the Command of one Chief, unless brought together in one Province; and a Day’s March carries them under a second Commander: so that an Army in less than a Month, might be under the Direction of three or four different Commanders; for if every Governor has a Right to command by Law, I know of no Power that can limit or controll his Command, whether he is a King’s Governor a Proprietary, or Charter Governor, and if he commands in the highest Instance, he must also in all others. To draw Lines, and make nice Distinctions, between the Powers of Civil and Military Officers over Troops, may tend to create Disputes, but will never serve any good Purpose. Troops may be stationed in different Places, under so many Chiefs, but they cannot be moved from the Stations, or assembled on any Emergency, unless there is one Chief Commander, who acts as superior to, & independent of all others. We are told that most Laws are founded upon Sense and Reason, but I can’t say so much of Mr. Pownall’s.⁹⁸

The third edition, released in 1766, appeared after the disturbances following the Stamp Act and after the Rockingham ministry had replaced that of Grenville. Pownall kept the dedication to Grenville and made almost no changes to the main body of the text. He did, however, add a substantial appendix – which he also published separately as *Considerations on the Points Lately Brought into Question as to the Parliament’s Right of Taxing the Colonies, and of the Measures Necessary to Be Taken at this Crisis*.⁹⁹ The third edition goes into greater detail and depth on the main points, and fills them out with more examples and information. The appendix also tried to make sense of the fast pace of changes in the Americas, but this is somewhat clumsily done and difficult to follow.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

⁹⁸ C. Carter, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State* (New Haven: two vols, Yale University Press, 1933) II. 545: Gage to Barrington (Private) 6 July 1770. See also J. Alden, *General Gage in America, Being Principally a History of his Role in the American Revolution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948) for a somewhat biased, and very critical, view of Pownall.

⁹⁹ T. Pownall, *Considerations on the Points Lately Brought into Question as to the Parliament’s Right of Taxing the Colonies, and of the Measures Necessary to Be Taken at this Crisis* (London: 1766).

Nonetheless, Pownall again reaffirmed that the colonies remained attached to Great Britain and thought of it as 'home'. With regards to American administration, Pownall went into much more depth on the history of the Board of Trade and, again, restated his belief that a new Secretary of State needed to be created to deal with, and only with, the American colonies. He further believed that the British government must unite in order to ward off any American advances and attacks and that, only when Britain understands its position vis-à-vis the colonies will the Americans see the true light.¹⁰⁰ Pownall, further, believed that a 'considerable person' should be sent to the colonies to establish the nature of the basis of the Anglo-American relationship. Schutz believed that Pownall envisaged this man to be Lord Chatham, but Guttridge has proven that the person Pownall believed should be sent was Edward, Duke of York (George III's brother).¹⁰¹ This great man, who would be respected and show Britain's true regard for, and interest in, the colonies, was to treat with the leading Americans (including governors, lawyers, officers, and officials) to establish a 'general bill of rights, and establishment of government and commerce on a great plan of union'.¹⁰² Pownall also stated that Great Britain needed to work to ensure the continuation of the union between the two sides of the Atlantic and that the natural centre to that union would be, for now, Great Britain. He accepted that, at some point in the future, the natural centre point would likely shift to the Americas, but believed that Britain had to do everything possible to maintain the link between the colonies and the mother country.

The fourth edition was entirely redrafted to take account of the ever-shifting nature of Anglo-American relations and British politics. By this time, Pownall had abandoned the brief hope that the Chatham administration would set right colonial governance and had entered Parliament to further his American cause. Published in 1768, the fourth edition uses much of the same text and phrasing of the earlier editions, but it was substantially reorganised. The dedication to Grenville was kept, but entirely rewritten. The new dedication laid out Pownall's belief that Grenville, now called only a respected Member of Parliament, shared his basic principles – 'those of peace and government, established on political liberty' – with regard to the American colonists.¹⁰³ He also established that he felt it his duty to attest to 'the affection which the Colonists ever bore to the mother country, to their zeal for its welfare, to their sense of government and their loyalty to their sovereign' and expressed his

¹⁰⁰ Pownall, *The Administration of the Colonies*, 3rd ed., pp. 20-1.

¹⁰¹ Schutz, *Thomas Pownall*, p. 209 and Guttridge, 'Thomas Pownall's The Administration of the Colonies: The Six Editions', p. 38.

¹⁰² Pownall, *The Administration of the Colonies*, 3rd ed., p. 35.

¹⁰³ Pownall, *The Administration of the Colonies*, 4th ed., pp. vii-viii.

regret at the situation existing between the Americans and the British regarding taxation and the constitutional positions.¹⁰⁴

Before publishing the fourth edition, Pownall wrote to Grenville asking him permission to use his name in the tract and to further his own ambitions. The somewhat pleading letter, written in July 1768, asked Grenville to bring ‘forward the proposal referred to [in the *Administration of the Colonies*], in Parliament’ and stated that Grenville was the only minister with the capability of taking the action necessary to solve the problems between Great Britain and America.¹⁰⁵ Grenville’s reply, on 17 July, was somewhat less enthusiastic. He thanked Pownall for his consideration but emphasised that Pownall needed to make it *plainly* obvious that the sentiments, thoughts and suggestions raised in the tract were nothing to do with him: ‘I do not see,’ said Grenville, ‘how I can be affected by it, if it is fully understood and explained in your Introduction, that you speak your own sentiments and not mine’.¹⁰⁶

The fourth edition itself focuses much more on the issue of sovereignty and the problems of the clashing constitutions in Britain and America. Pownall provides the reader with a brief constitutional history of the colonies from the time of James VI and I, and establishes that the colonies ought to be subject to the *King-in-Parliament*. Pownall further stated that the various American colonies ought to make payment to the Crown for ‘support’. He established, however, that ‘this order of the crown is generally, if not universally rejected, by the legislatures of the colonies’ because ‘the executive power is immediately administered by the King’s Majesty’ but that ‘under the circumstances in which they [the Americans] find themselves, there is no other measure left to them to prevent the misapplications of public money, than by voting and appropriation of the salaries of the governor and other civil officers, issuing from monies lodged in the hands of the a provincial treasurer appointed by the assemblies’.¹⁰⁷ Pownall’s opinion on this matter was quite clear.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ W.J. Smith, *The Grenville Papers: Being the Correspondence of Richard Grenville, Earl Temple, K.G., and the Right Hon: George Grenville, their Friends and Contemporaries* (London: John Murray, 1852), IV. 312-314: Pownall to Grenville, Marlow, 14 July 1768.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, IV. 318: Grenville to Pownall, Wotton, 17 July 1768. See Appendix V for the full versions of each of these letters.

¹⁰⁷ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, 4th ed., pp. 77-8.

He believed that the executive arm of government must be independent of the ‘popular branch of government’ in order to avoid corruption.¹⁰⁸

Much of the work in this edition involves an attempt to quantify the colonies’ position within the Empire. In that theme, Pownall explained their constitutional evolution and predicament. He said:

Let us review the state of this matter as it seems actually to have stood. If the state of it which we shall represent, cannot and must not be supposed right in law; may we be permitted to state it, at least, as an hypothesis.

The Colonies, from their remote distance, and local circumstances, could not have been incorporated into any country, city or borough; at least, so it is said: and yet, at the same time, they are supposed to be, and considered as, within the diocese of London. The Colonists were considered as having gone forth from, and having *quitted the realm*; as having settled on lands *without the realm*.

The Colonies thus remote and separate from the realm, were formed and incorporated into distinct communities; were erected into provinces; had the *jura regalia* granted to them; were, in consequence thereof, to all intents and purposes, *counties palatine*, in like and as ample manner as the county palatine of Durham was, some matters of form excepted. They were dominions of the King of England; although, according to the language of those times, “not yet annexed to the crown”. They were under the jurisdiction of the King, upon the principle of federal sovereignty: although considered “*as out of the jurisdiction of the kingdom*”. The parliament itself doubting, at that time, whether it had jurisdiction to meddle with those matters, did not think proper to pass bills concerning America. The Colonies had therefore legislatures peculiar to their own separate communities; subordinate to England, in that they could make no laws contrary to the laws of the mother country; but in all other matters and things, free uncontrolled and compleat [*sic*] legislatures, in conjunction with the King or his deputy as part thereof.

When the King, at the restoration, participated this sovereignty over *these his foreign dominions*, with the lords and commons, the Colonies became *in fact*, the dominions of the realm – because subjects of the kingdom. They came, in fact, and by actual constitutional exercise of power, under the authority and jurisdiction of parliament. They became connected and annexed to the state: By coming as parts of the British realm, not as a separate kingdom (which is the case of Ireland) under subjection to the parliament, they became participants of the rights and liberties on which the power of parliament is founded.¹⁰⁹

In other words, Pownall has here somewhat pre-empted later historians’ discussion on the nature of the American Revolution. The reasons now stated, and stated by Pownall, revolve around a clash of sovereignty. This clash came, in effect, from a misunderstanding of the *nature* of politics and the constitution on each side of the Atlantic: the events of the English Civil Wars, the Glorious Revolution and the Hanoverian succession in Britain had instilled a sense of governance by the *King-in-Parliament*; while, in America, these events had not

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-41. His emphasis.

caused the same seismic shift in constitutional theory and, so, the Americans failed to see themselves as subject to Whitehall. Pownall's own opinion was, however, perfectly clear: he believed that all parts of the British Empire – America included – were subject to the power and authority of Parliament, although he thought that there were perhaps certain limitations to this power given the nature of the American situation.

Having concluded that Americans were part of the realm, and therefore under the authority and jurisdiction of Parliament, Pownall then moved on to discuss the issues of representation. He believed, quite simply, that the Americans ought to be represented in Parliament. The colonies, Pownall stated, ought 'to have knights and burgesses in parliament, *of their own election*, to represent the condition of their country'.¹¹⁰ This right to representation was, he believed, both an established tenet of the British constitution and a natural right, and ought therefore to be given to the Americans. Any idea of 'virtual representation' was dismissed by Pownall as unworkable and unconstitutional; there should, instead, be a union between America and Britain in the same manner as there was between Wales and England.¹¹¹ This form of union would remove any American desires for independence and would secure the Anglo-American empire. Without it, however, Pownall warned that the Americans would break away to form their own, American-only, union. If this parliamentary union were to be secured, however, Pownall believed that his own goal could also be achieved: that of 'A Grand Marine Dominion, consisting of our possessions in the Atlantic, and in America, united into a one Empire, in one centre, where there seat of Government is'.¹¹²

The fourth edition was read, and partially commented upon, by Burke. Burke appears to not have been a fan.¹¹³ The comments, which are confined to the first third of the book, show Burke's attachment to the Rockingham Whigs. Pownall's choice of dedication to Grenville would have started the tract on a sour note for Burke, as the Rockingham Whig's main American policy was that of opposition to Grenville. More importantly, however, Pownall's consistent attacks on party and faction, and his blaming them for all the troubles both in America and in Britain (Pownall states, for example, that, because of parties, 'the mother country and her colonies will continue to live in perpetual jealousies, jarrings and disputes

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141. His Emphasis.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-7.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 27. Printed in capital letters in the original.

¹¹³ Guttridge, 'Thomas Pownall's The Administration of the Colonies: The Six Editions', p. 42.

[...] until some event shall happen that will totally break all union between us')¹¹⁴ would significantly have alienated Burke, as he was one of the main proponents of party-politics.¹¹⁵ Pownall's mention of faction caused Burke to write: 'has this paragraph [an attack on faction] any particular meaning? It seems to squint at some particular set of men' and he attacked Pownall's discussion of party 'in this loose manner'.¹¹⁶ Burke, also, probably believed that the 'considerable person' – discussed above – was Chatham and questioned whether this plan was the 'key of this work'. Burke further believed that this plan was inherently flawed as to 'encourage complaints deliberately was against all sound principles of government, and would be simply a scheme for exciting universal ferment'.¹¹⁷

The fifth edition, published in 1774, was released as two volumes. The sixth, and last, edition, published in 1777, has almost no substantial changes from the fifth edition, and so both will be discussed in the following paragraphs together. The title for these editions was altered to *The Administration of the British Colonies*. The first volume was essentially the same as the previous, fourth, edition with the second volume containing an entirely new essay on the developing situation. The dedication to Grenville remained at the start of the first volume and there was a somewhat bitter footnote added after Pownall's discussion of the Secretary of State for America. He stated:

An office of Secretary of State for the plantations in America, was erected since the writing of the above, 1764. But as it was sown in jealousy; so, in proportion as it arose to power, the resistance of cabinet faction obstructed it at home, and nursed up opposition to it abroad. To this an impractical line of conduct, mistaken for system, and an unhappy tone of government misunderstood for firmness, gave ample scope; so that the last state of this unfortunate government became worse than the first. 1772.¹¹⁸

The second volume contains Pownall's appraisal of the situation and discussion of his earlier editions. This volume is uncomfortable to read: Pownall's disappointment, resentment and bitterness, at both the politicians in Britain and the radicals in America, pour off every page. Pownall said, for example: 'I feel that I shall not be approved by many of my countrymen; and I am sure I shall be extremely disapproved by the Americans' and makes no attempt to hide his disgust at the handling of colonial affairs by Britons.¹¹⁹ The second volume spent a

¹¹⁴ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, 4th ed., pp. 28-30.

¹¹⁵ Guttridge, 'Thomas Pownall's *The Administration of the Colonies: The Six Editions*', p. 42.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Pownall, *Administration of the British Colonies*, 5th ed., I. 16.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II. vi-viii.

lot of time praising the course of action proposed in his earlier editions and attempted to quantify and qualify Pownall's position regarding the governance of the colonies.

Any attempts at promoting a Grand Marine Dominion are abandoned by Pownall here; he appears to have lost all hope in any kind of reasonable or appropriate – in his eyes – settlement. He warns early on: 'if we are to *treat*, there must be some line to which our negotiations have reference: if we are to *fight*, there must be some line which shall bound and be the end even of our victories'.¹²⁰ Similarly, he warns that government must make sure not to give any concessions of the rights of Britons as it would be a 'seducing and betraying spirit' resulting in 'nothing being gained [and] every thing [being] lost by such concessions'.¹²¹ The major thrust of this volume can be easily summed up from the following quote: 'I wish,' said Pownall, 'the government of this country to define its own rights; and standing on that sure ground, to acknowledge those of others. I wish the people of America, as they love liberty, so to honour true government, which is the only basis on which *real liberty* can stand: *and in that line to see peace*'.¹²²

Pownall again reiterated his belief that some form of parliamentary union should take place between Britain and the Americas. He had, however, simplified the process and granted more powers to the Americans by 1774. Any attempt at including the Americans in the business of Westminster was ruled out and, in their place, a 'federal' system of government should be established. Pownall maintained that he did not believe the Americans wished to establish separate 'national government' and proposed that the colonial legislatures should be 'free and sovereign [...] within the limits of its own jurisdiction'.¹²³ In all cases outside this jurisdiction, the Parliament of Great Britain was to be sovereign. Pownall was aware that this continued form of subjugation, or subordination, would not sit well with many of the more radical Americans and so he tried to soothe the blow by adding that Parliament could only intervene if the constitution itself was under attack by the colonial legislatures.¹²⁴

In other words, Pownall's Grand Marine Dominion had changed from a great union of the Anglophone peoples spread around the Atlantic sharing, through the British constitution, liberty, freedom and the right to elect representatives to a desperate attempt to return to

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, II. vii.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, II. viii.

¹²² *Ibid.*, II. xi.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, II. 35.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, II. 34-40.

the pre-1763 situation of salutary neglect. Realising that the Americans would be likely to break away in some fashion, Pownall pleaded that the British government should have the foresight and the determination to maintain the ties and links of old. 'If Great Britain and her Colonies,' he says, 'are come to that dreadful crisis, that they no longer remain *on their old standing*: if there cannot be a *British union*: may the Americans see and be convinced, that the safest and happiest form of an *American union*, is that whereof a British Stadtholder, a Lieutenant of the Crown [...] and may Britain have the temper, the spirit, and the wisdom, *to take such a lead!*'.¹²⁵

The various editions of the *Administration of the Colonies* provides us with an insight both into Pownall's deteriorating opinion of, and regard for, his fellow politicians and the political establishment, and also into his ideas of empire. The changing nature of the editions – from a relatively short and vague treatise on the broad principles of colonial governance to multiple volumes of detailed information on the colonies and how to run them – shows us the growth in Pownall's ambitions and in his goals for the British Empire. The desperation in his final editions, and the pleas for peace and understanding, reveal a man frantically trying to hold his ideals together, and blaming politicians, political parties and the selfish nature of humankind for their failure.

The editions are, nonetheless, an exceptionally valuable resource on the nature of empire in the eighteenth century. It is hard not to draw parallels between Pownall's latter discussion of federal sovereignty – of various assemblies connected throughout the British Empire by a common culture and all subordinate to the Imperial Crown – to the eventual settlement of the Commonwealth of Nations in the twentieth century. That said, however, we must bear in mind that the eighteenth century provided a different set of circumstances and that, perhaps more than anything else, Pownall's pleas in this regard with the utterances of a desperate, and despairing, man trying to secure in any way possible the continuing attachment of the American colonies to the United Kingdom.

'Honour of the Crown and Nation': Three Memorials Most Humbly Addressed to the Sovereigns of Europe, Great Britain, and North America

The three memorials in this pamphlet were also published separately as *A Memorial Most Humbly Addressed to the Sovereigns of Europe, on the Present State of Affairs between the*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, II. 86-7.

*Old and New World; A Memorial Addressed to the Sovereigns of America; and Two Memorials, Not Originally Intended for Publication, Now Published; with an Explanatory Preface.*¹²⁶ The content of each was replicated in the *Three Memorials Most Humbly Addressed to the Sovereigns of Europe, Great Britain, and North America* with the addition of a new preface outlining Pownall's own view of his publication and political history.¹²⁷ These pamphlets are quite a challenge to read and they suffer quite badly from Pownall's usual lack of flair. So bad are parts of it, in fact, that a 'translation' of the *Memorial to the Sovereigns of Europe* was written after its publication.¹²⁸ The translation explains that as there 'are so many quaint words, and dark expressions, intermixed with so many good thoughts and so much knowledge of America [...] it seems worth translating [into intelligible English]'.¹²⁹ The translation does exceptionally well to put Pownall's ideas into a more coherent and easy to understand fashion. It does, however, leave out much of Pownall's discussion for a proposed European council of trade and commerce which was to deal with the ramifications of American independence and, therefore, somewhat misses the thrust of Pownall's work. Nonetheless, the translation opened up to the ordinary reader a more accessible alternative.

Although the authorship of the first *Memorial* is not for certain, the similarity of ideas and the *extensive* quotes from the various editions of the *Administration of the Colonies*, along with the typical Pownall style, mean that the authorship is – and was – easy to pin down. The pamphlet began by stating that American independence was a foregone conclusion and that even the military might of Great Britain could not stop the eventual independence of the American peoples. Pownall, here, used his faithful Newtonian principles of gravity to discuss politics and international relations:

North America is become a new *primary planet* in the system of the world, which while it takes its own course, in its own orbit, must have effect on the orbit of every other planet, and shift the common centre of gravity of the whole system of the European world.

North-America is *de facto* an INDEPENDENT POWER which has taken its equal station with other powers, and must be so *de jure*. The politicians of the Governments of Europe may reason or

¹²⁶ T. Pownall, *A Memorial Most Humbly Addressed to the Sovereigns of Europe, on the Present State of Affairs between the Old and New World* (London: 1780); T. Pownall, *A Memorial Addressed to the Sovereigns of America* (London: 1783); T. Pownall, *Two Memorials, Not Originally Intended for Publication, Now Published; with an Explanatory Preface* (London: 1782).

¹²⁷ T. Pownall, *Three memorials most humbly addressed to the sovereigns of Europe, Great Britain, and North America* (London: 1784).

¹²⁸ [Anon], *A Translation of the Memorial to the Sovereigns of Europe upon the Present State of Affairs, Between the Old and the New World, into Common Sense and Intelligible English* (London: 1781).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

negotiate [*sic*] upon this idea, as a matter *sub lite*. The powers of those Governments may fight about it as a new Power coming into establishment; such negotiations, and such wars, are of no consequence either of the right or the fact. It would be just as wise, and effectual, if they were to go to war to decide, or set on foot negotiations to settle, to whom the future sovereignty of the moon should belong. The moon hath been long common to them all, and they may all in their turns profit of her reflected light. The independence of America is fixed as fate; she is the mistress of her own fortune; knows that she is so, and will actuate that power which she feels she hath, so as to establish her own system and change the system of Europe.¹³⁰

Pownall's opinions here are hardly hidden: he believes that America will, and ought, to be independent and, perhaps more significantly, shows a somewhat republican leaning. His attacks on the 'European system' appear as a veiled attack on monarchy in general and he believed that the American Revolution would be the starting point for a much more widespread World Revolution, dramatically altering the systems of governance and trade, and the basis of society, in its wake.

Pownall further urged European leaders to consider the economic situation of the Americas: the land seemed to supply almost boundless amounts of natural resources which would, Pownall suggested, make the Americans flourish and enable them to flood the European markets with cheap goods. Perhaps more importantly, however, Pownall viewed Southern America as the greater resource to mankind. Although held back by 'political immaturity', the resources of the southern continent would provide, Pownall thought, humanity with an even greater wealth of resources. The eventual revolution of South America against Spain would not 'be after the manner or in the form of that of North America' which created a 'Democratick or Aristocratick Republick'. Rather, Pownall established, 'The falling off of South America will be conducted, in *its natural* progress, by the spirit of some enterprising Genius, taking the lead of a sense of alienation and a disposition of revolt, to the establishment of a great Monarchy'.¹³¹

The American people, Pownall established, were also different from their European brethren. Common Americans were, unlike Europeans, able to choose their occupation, to possess often large amounts of land, and to reap the benefits of their own hard work. The Americans were, unlike Europeans, therefore naturally suited to the creation of a new nation. The versatility of their abilities, and their keen interest in learning new ways and means to ease the difficulty of their frontier lives, meant that Americans would be able to create 'an abundance of statesmen and philosophers, artisans and farmers, shipbuilders and

¹³⁰ Pownall, *Three Memorials*, pp. 4-5.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

merchants, and other kind of occupations which the new nation would need'.¹³² Similarly, the American population had seen extraordinary growth while under British control and Pownall saw no reason for this to end. As a result, while Europeans suffered under starvation, deprivation and poor living conditions, the American population would be able to expand, leading to a great pool of resources in the New World.

The gist of Pownall's message in this pamphlet was of trying to promote the idea of a new, and a powerful, American nation. Pownall again used the planetary metaphor to describe the American situation but, this time, took it further, stating:

If I were to address myself to a philosopher, upon a supposed adventitious state of the planetary system, and ask him, whether, if an accretion of matter should enlarge any satellite till it grew into magnitude, which balanced with its primary; whether that globe, so encreased, could any longer be held by any of the powers of nature in the orbit of a secondary planet; or whether any *external force* could hold it thus restrained, he will answer me directly, No. If I ask the father of a family, after his son has grown up to a man's estate, to full strength of body equal to the parent, to full power of mind and vigour of reason; whether he can be held in the same subordinate pupillage, and will suffer himself to be treated, under correction, as aforesaid in his childhood? The father will be sorry to be asked the question, and will wish to evade it; but he must answer, No. Yet, if I ask an European politician, who learns by hearsay, and thinks by habit, and who supposes of course that things must go on, as they have always gone on; whether if North America, grown up, by a distinct and independent interest in their economy and commerce, to a magnitude in nature, policy, and power, will remain dependent upon, and be governed by, any of the metropolitan states on the other side of the globe; he will confidently say, Yes.

Pownall's message here is clear enough: contrary to the flawed opinions of unreasonable and out of touch politicians (note here that the attacks on politicians continued from the earlier editions of the *Administration of the Colonies*), the Americans had grown to full capacity and could no longer, *under any circumstances*, be controlled by any European power.

Lastly, in order to promote a sense of cohesion and peace amongst the peoples of the Old and New World, Pownall suggested a complete reordering of the basis on which international trade and relations were carried out. As in the first edition of the *Administration of the Colonies*, Pownall does not go into any details; instead, he set out a plan, in general terms, which would see Europeans – and all Europeans – and Americans trading peacefully to the benefit of all. Pownall therefore proposed a *general council* to regulate and control the sinews of trade and power: although this council, in Pownall's design, would be politically powerless (as he was apt to realise that, at least in the

¹³² Schutz, *Thomas Pownall*, p. 258.

eighteenth century, such a thing was impossible) he saw the value 'of deliberation and advice, and a *seat of judicial administration* common to all'.¹³³ This council would have the ability to establish a 'Great and General Court of Admiralty' which would be able to enforce the trade and commerce regulations of the Atlantic World. Perhaps most importantly in Pownall's view, however, was the fact that this *general council* would be able to prevent 'a most dreadful general war'.¹³⁴

The memorials of the 1780s show us a desperate and disconnected man. Pownall had lost all faith in the British political system and had mostly withdrawn to write his essays and tracts. The memorials do not provide us with the same insight into the colonies, colonial management and the British political view of America as the earlier *Administration of the Colonies* did, mostly because of Pownall's alienation from the *real* political world. They are, as much as anything else, a flight of fancy and detail Pownall's idealised hopes and ambitions for whatever could be salvaged from his Grand Marine Dominion.

Conclusion

The works of Bacon and Pownall provide the historian with a unique insight into the ways in which men with strong connexions to, and impressions of, the Americas sought to solve the imperial crises of the 1760s and 70s. These men were not alone in this position – men such as James Abercromby, Francis Bernard and John Mitchell wrote on similarly from a position of experience and authority on Britain's empire – but their attempts to reshape the empire along lines they thought more sensible provide us with a lens through which to view their ideas of empire.

Pownall's editions of the *Administration of the Colonies*, and the fact he updated them throughout the period leading up to the American Revolution, are an excellent account of the shifting grounds of understanding between Britons and Americans. As was the situation in Parliament, Pownall's first-hand experience of the colonies meant that his views were shaped very much by events in the 1750s and early 1760s. By the time of the mid-1770s, Pownall could no longer claim to have direct and personal experience of the empire, and this lacking knowledge shone through.

¹³³ Pownall, *Three Memorials*, p. 121.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2.

More than that, the ways in which both Bacon and Pownall viewed North America's past influenced their view of their situation. Both these men believed that the reasons for the disagreement were because of a lacking central authority. As Bacon put it, 'the very Term of the *Mother-Country* will remind your Lordships that (however disobedient) they are her *Children*' implied that something had been lost between America and Britain, and that Britain needed to regain and restore it in order to once more fully govern the Americas. What they failed to realise was that there was never a 'golden age' of imperial authority over the American colonies and that this very interpretation was partly what caused the breakdown in Anglo-American understanding.

That said, however, we must not diminish the attempts made by both of these men to improve and regulate their empire. Pownall's dedication to his subject cannot be doubted, while Bacon's attempts – notably in his letter to the Duke of Grafton – to restructure the politics and reinforce the societal make-up of the empire are noteworthy and praiseworthy. Perhaps with more men capable of such thought, and educated in the ways of the Americans, the Anglo-American relationship could have been a very different one in the later eighteenth century.

CHAPTER IV

AN EMPIRE OF LIBERTY? THE BRITISH ATLANTIC WORLD

‘The rulers of Great Britain have,’ said Adam Smith, ‘for more than a century past, amused the people with the imagination that they possessed a great empire on the west side of the Atlantic. This empire, however, has hitherto existed in imagination only’. The empire, he continued, had ‘hitherto been, not an empire, but the project of an empire ; not a gold mine, but the project of a gold mine ; a project which has cost, which continues to cost, and which, if pursued in the same way as it has been hitherto, is likely to cost immense expence, without being likely to bring any profit; for the effects of the monopoly of the colony trade, it has been shewn, are, to the great body of the people, mere loss instead of profit’. In order to avoid such a loss of profit, Smith urged: ‘It is surely now time that our rulers should either realize this golden dream, in which they have been indulging themselves, perhaps, as well as the people; or that they should awake from it themselves, and endeavour to awaken the people. If the project cannot be completed, it ought to be given up. If any of the provinces of the British empire cannot be made to contribute towards the support of the whole empire, it is surely time that Great Britain should free herself from the expence of defending those provinces in time of war, and of supporting any part of their civil or military establishments in time of peace, and endeavour to accommodate her future views and designs to the real mediocrity of her circumstances’.¹

Smith wrote these words as the British Empire in North America started to crumble. The basis on which Anglo-American relations had existed since the establishment of Virginia as the first successful English colony had by this point, in 1776, ceased to exist. The division in the British Empire was not, however, a natural one or one which was the logical conclusion after the settlement of America. Quite the opposite, in fact: the collapse of British legitimacy and authority over the thirteen colonies marked the ending point of a world which had existed for almost two hundred years. As Bailyn succinctly phrased it: ‘the birth of the American nation-states in the independence movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was not the goal toward[s] which Atlantic history had been inevitably trending, but the opposite: it marks not the fulfilment but the demise of the world

¹ A. Smith, *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Waugh & Innkes, 1814), Book V, Chapter. III, 481-482. See also A. Skinner, *Adam Smith: The Wealth of Nations Books IV-V* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. 550-1.

that had gone before'.² The American Revolution, contrary to earlier nationalistic historiography on the topic, cannot be seen as simply the obvious outcome of an inherent American demand for liberty in response to British tyranny.

The problems between Americans and Britons stemmed from a misunderstanding of the role of the central authority – Parliament – throughout the empire. This lack of appreciation for the role of Parliament stemmed from the ways in which the colonies had been established throughout the seventeenth century. The 'coercive and centralised model of imperial organisation derived from late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century empires' which had been the lens through which we had tried to view the First British Empire does not stand up to investigation. Rather, the colonies and the colonial make-up were 'very much reflections or logical extensions of the states to which they were symbolically attached. Those states were not modern states'. Therefore, while our understanding of the process of colonisation depicts a one-way extension of authority (of state-sanctioned colonisers extending the reach of the European metropolitan centre), the spread of authority, as Jack Greene shows, is characterised by two phases. 'The first,' he established, 'involved the creation in America, through the activities of the participants in the colonising process, of new arenas of individual and local power' while the second involved 'the actual creation of authority through negotiation between those new arenas and the European centres that aspired to bring them under their jurisdiction and to which those arenas desired to be attached'.³

This initial lack of metropolitan authority or involvement was due to four factors. Firstly, early modern European states simply lacked the resources to colonise in this manner: colonisation was an expensive and resource-intensive process which the various European states could not afford. Secondly, the distances involved between America and Europe made effective centralised control almost impossible. 'The European colonies in America,' as Adam Smith noted, were vastly 'more remote than the most distant provinces of the greatest empires which had ever been known before'.⁴ Thirdly, the 'economic orientation' of the colonising process remained popular in the metropolitan centres. While there were some attempts to Christianise Native Americas and the idea of creating a 'New Jerusalem in

² B. Bailyn, *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 2.

³ J. Green, 'Transatlantic Colonization and the Redefinition of Empire in the Early Modern Era: The British-American Experience', in C. Daniels and M. Kennedy (eds), *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 268-9.

⁴ Skinner, *Adam Smith*, p. 167.

America was a prominent aspiration for the settlers of the orthodox Puritan colonies', the major incentive for those exploring and colonising the New World remained solely economic and mercantile. Metropolitan centres were, therefore, only too happy to receive the benefits provided by the endeavours of those enterprising merchants. Finally, 'participants in colonial enterprises everywhere revealed a profound desire to retain a connection to their respective metropolitan heritages' and were, as a result, no threat to the European powers.⁵

As the colonies became increasingly wealthy and successful, European governments sought to standardise relations and improve and increase their control systems over the myriad colonies and settlements throughout the New World. Iberian powers, having stumbled across vast stores of natural wealth in Southern America, had less difficulty in extending the central metropolitan authority. British North America was quite different, however, with no quick-fixes of bullion; rather, the wealth of the British Empire came from the ability of the colonies to work as suppliers of natural resources (wood, tobacco, sugar, cotton and so on) and as avid collectors of manufactured goods. As a result, before 1730 all of the British colonies in America and seven of the eight colonies in the West Indies (Jamaica had been conquered from the Spanish after the result of a government effort) were 'the result of private initiatives or chartered companies or individuals or groups of landed proprietors'.⁶

The British ministries throughout the 1760s and 70s were not the first to attempt to regulate and control American governance. The latter part of the seventeenth century had seen a concerted, if unsuccessful, attempt to extend the political authority over the American colonies with, for example, the creation of the Dominion of New England, which was to be governed by no representative institutions.⁷ The basic premise was, quite simply, that 'the colonies were not simply commercial enterprises in the service of the metropole but also adjuncts of royal power [and might therefore] be governed from London *directly*, not through local colonial institutions *indirectly*'.⁸ The policy was ultimately abandoned and only again taken up by ministers – asserting now that the King-in-Parliament had sole and

⁵ Greene, 'Transatlantic Colonization', pp. 269-70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁷ See, V. Barnes, *The Dominion of New England: A Study in British Colonial Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923); J. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006); and, J. Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King: Indians, English and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

⁸ Greene, 'Transatlantic Colonization', pp. 272-3. His emphasis.

legitimate authority – after the end of the Seven Years War. What is significant about this is that, rather than an extension of the metropolitan’s central control, imperial authority in the eighteenth century was based on negotiation between centre and periphery; between the colonies and the metropole.

There were similar tension points about the precise nature of the British Empire at this time.⁹ Thomas Jefferson argued in 1774 that the colonists were right to resist Parliamentary legislation and taxation because Britain had no *imperium* over Americans, except for that which the *dominion* established by the colonists themselves.¹⁰ That is to say, while the colonies were part of the extended authority of the British state – and were thereby part of the dominion of Great Britain – the imperial authority was limited by the varying jurisdictions of King-in-Parliament and the colonial legislatures. Parliament’s *imperium* extended ‘only to the shore of North America [and was articulated] as a constitutional principle the division between the territorial and oceanic peripheries, between the jurisdiction of the Crown-in-Parliament and the jurisdiction of colonial governments’.¹¹

This type of disagreement over how the empire should be composed – be it territorial or oceanic – formed part of a debate which had been central to British and English politics for a century.¹² The events of the Seven Years War and colonial relations in India since the 1740s, however, proved to many in Britain the need for a greater territorial empire in North America and for increased central and imperial authority in the American continent (with, for example, the establishment of Native American superintendents, William Johnson and John Stuart; and the varying issues of authority and control between colonial governors and assemblies, and the Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces in North America).

The decision to maintain a significant proportion of the army in North America in 1763 formed part of this more expansive and territorial British view of empire. The expense of

⁹ See for example, D. Hulsebosch, ‘Imperia in Imperio: The Multiple Constitutions of Empire in New York, 1750-1777’, *Law and History Review*, Vol. XVI, No. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 319-379; E. Morgan, ‘Colonial Ideas of Parliamentary Power, 1764-1766’, *William and Mary Quarter*, Vol. V, No. 3 (July 1948), pp. 311-341; R. Johnson, ‘“Parliamentary Egotisms”: The Clash of Legislatures in the Making of the American Revolution’, *Journal of American History*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 2 (September 1987), pp. 338-362.

¹⁰ E. Mancke, ‘Negotiating an Empire: Britain and its Overseas Peripheries, c. 1550-1780’, in Daniels, *Negotiated Empires*, p. 252.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² See, for example, J. Swift, ‘The Conduct of the Allies, and of the Late Ministry, in Beginning and Carrying on the Present War’ (1711), quoted in A. Ross and D. Wooley (eds), *Jonathan Swift: Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.293. See also, G. Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (London: Hambledon Press, 1987).

the Seven Years War and the belief that the Treaty of Paris (1763) provided merely a short respite from colonial and inter-imperial warfare meant that the decision to protect the colonies was made easily by the British. The intention was, as Grenville noted during the debates on the Stamp Bill, to place North America on as secure and stable a footing as was possible so that when the Catholic powers again attacked, Britain could rely on a blue water policy alone to defeat France and Spain. One pamphleteer asked: 'Should the Enemy presume, in future, to disturb our legal Possession in any Quarter of the Globe, with what Facility we may pour Vengeance upon them, when our *American* Continent [is] conveniently placed ... to controul the Islands of the *West-Indies*?, and another stated that 'the many new countries in *America*, added to what we formerly had, will in Time secure us from the future Insult of *France* or *Spain*'.¹³

The establishing of a large army in North America, along with the British maritime control of the Atlantic, would mean that Britain would have the power to 'wage another war with equal efficacy, and with infinitely less expence'. Importantly, Grenville's move to tax the colonists directly put an end to the 'age of treaties and guarantees' and the 'subsidies, extras, quotas, and *dedommagements* [compensation]' – the policy which had been adopted by the Whigs since the Glorious Revolution and which was seen to tie Britain unnaturally to the European continent, and especially Hanover – and replace it with 'the resources of a strict oeconomy'.¹⁴ That the British constitution, British political norms and British systems might not apply as effectively to the American situation seems not to have crossed the minds of many British politicians at this time. It was in this theme that Sir Francis Bernard reminded the Massachusetts Assembly in 1765:

In an empire, extended and diversified as that of Great Britain, there must be a supreme legislature, to which all other powers must be subordinate. It is our happiness that the supreme legislature, the parliament of Great Britain, is the sanctuary of liberty and justice; and that the prince, who presides over it, realises the idea of a patriot King. Surely then, we should submit our opinions to the determinations of so august a body; and acquiesce in a perfect confidence, that the rights of the members of the British empire will ever be safe in the hands of the conservators of the liberty of the whole.¹⁵

The Americans did not agree with these new interpretations of empire, however. To the Americans, the control of trade through the Navigation Acts worked as both the symbol of

¹³ Both quoted in Gould *Persistence of Empire*, pp. 114-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁵ J. Almon, *A Collection of Interesting, Authentic Papers Relative to the Dispute Between Great Britain and America, Shewing the Causes and Progress of that Misunderstanding from 1764-1775* (London: 1777), pp. 8-9.

British authority (the imperium over the seas and over trade, and solely dominion over the colonies) and as sufficient payment to meet the empire's needs. James Otis proclaimed that his one wish was to 'see Great-Britain at the head of the world, and to see my King, under God, the father of mankind' and John Dickinson stated that 'every drop of blood in my heart is *British*'. Dickinson stated moreover that the Navigation Acts and monopoly of trade meant that 'they [the colonies] eventually contribute very largely to all supplies granted there to the crown'. Similarly, John Morgan wrote in 1766:

The whole trade of America to all parts of the globe employs, one year with another, above two thousand sail of English ships, by which treasures of greater wealth are conveyed to Britain, than are derived [by Spain] from Mexico or Peru... From the commodities of America, chiefly manufactured in England, and conveyed through innumerable channels of trade to every quarter of the globe, Great-Britain acquires immense wealth, keeps up a spirit of industry among her inhabitants, and is enabled to support mighty fleets, great in peace and formidable in war.¹⁶

The distinction remained, however, between maintaining British authority over the seas and not the colonies: 'As long as this globe continues moving,' wrote Dickinson in 1766, 'may [Great Britain] reign over its navigable parts and may she resemble the ocean she commands, which recruits without wasting, and receives without exhausting'.

'The Rule of Conduct on this Occasion'

In this light, the varying interpretations of British North America put forth by the American MPs must be judged. Jackson's communications with Franklin provide the most illumination on his views of empire. He believed that local colonial banks – with the same, or similar authority as the Bank of England – ought to be established in each colony as it would 'provide an Ample Fund not only for the Publick Services to which the Interest of your subsisting Loans are appropriated, but for the carrying into full execution all those Beneficent views, at this time entertained among you'.¹⁷ While Jackson opposed the idea of paper currency in the colonies under the system then in operation – because it could be 'liable to sudden Changes of value [and] must necessarily subject Buyers & Sells, Creditors & Debtors to Risques which if they be unnecessary out to be removed' - he believed that a colonial bank, which used gold and silver to support the value of the currency, would enable the colonists to far better maintain their economy without involving the British government in ineffective micro-management. To counter claims that establishing a bank would lead to

¹⁶ Gould, *Persistence of Empire*, pp. 123-5.

¹⁷ Doren, *Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson*, p. 43: Jackson to Franklin, 17 March 1754.

gold and silver being stored in the colonies and not providing any benefit to the empire as a whole, Jackson wrote:

But it is said Gold & Silver will not stay in the Country, for that the Balance is against it & this Case is by no means inconsistent with the Condition of a Thriving Infant State, for Every State is Thrifty that Superlucrates [*sic*], but if the Increase of Stock, the Improvement of Lands & Efficiencies produces a much greater Income the whole Superlucration [profit] may be expended this way together with a Debt, that may augment every year & get the Country more able to support it; indeed where there is best Industry & Credit it must be so.¹⁸

He similarly opposed any attempts to militarise the British Empire any further than was necessary, and thought that a ‘small army with ample means to support it, is of greater force than one more numerous, with less’. In order to achieve this state of affairs, the British Empire must have ‘means of supporting armies, and, consequently, the power of exerting external strength’. The best way to able to do this, and carry forth British strength, thought Jackson, was ‘in the industry and frugality of the body of a people living under a government and laws that encourage commerce, for commerce is at this day almost the only *stimulus* that forces every one to contribute a share of labour for the publick benefit’. Maintaining any troops in the colonies would be a waste of money and effort, would be resented in the colonies and would be ‘for the most part maintained for the Interests of G[reat] Britain only’.¹⁹

Jackson maintained, however, that Parliament ought to be the ‘Universal Legislature of the British Dominions & must be so unless it be contended either that the British Dominions do not form one Intire State or that there is some other Universal Legislature’. Parliament ought, however, to maintain ‘Moderation & even Abstinence, because the same Wisdom & Discretion that always governs the Proceedings of Parl[iamen]t have prescribed Moderation & Abstinence in those Cases’. He concluded: ‘it is on this Principle, that I have argued that Parliament should not impose *internal Taxes* on America, not that Parl[iamen]t has not an universal & unlimited Power, but that Parl[iamen]t for its own Sake & the Welfare of all the British Dominions will wish that Assemblies may continue in America, (which they will hardly do if there be no occasion to call them together) until they supply their place by calling Members from America & that the People of the Colonys may from thence derive a Confidence in the Legislature that is essential to the well being of Gov[ernmen]t’.²⁰

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-50: Jackson to Franklin (undated – 1754?).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138: Jackson to Franklin, Inner Temple, 26 January 1764.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-6: Jackson to Franklin (undated - 1765?). See Appendix VI for a full account of this letter.

On the issue of Parliament's role in the empire, most of the other American MPs appear to have agreed. They all believed that Parliament was the true and sole universal legislature for the entire empire, but their views on the extent to which the powers of this universal legislature ought to extend differed quite dramatically. Barré believed, like his fellow Chathamites, that Parliament had the right to tax America but should not, in practice, extend such an authority. Parliament's right and authority, he claimed, 'should be acknowledged' but at the same time, Britain had to take every step possible 'not to destroy industry there, or drive them to a species of industry, which might hurt us'.²¹ The line of policy so far as Barré saw it remained clear: the right to tax America lay ultimately with Parliament; the 'rightness' in doing so, however, did not and would not. Therefore, while Parliament could tax the colonies, it ought not to for the sake of the empire as a whole.

Burke thought similarly to Barré. He acknowledged that Parliament was the supreme body in the empire, but thought that the actions should be checked to take into account the political realities of the situation. 'Sovereignty, Burke understood, was absolute in principle. This fact, however, did not in any sense modify the imprudence of trying to make its actions boundless and irresponsible.'²² 'An Englishman,' Burke said, 'must be subordinate to England, but he must be governed according to the opinion of a free land. Without subordination, it would not be one Empire. Without freedom, it would not be the British Empire'.²³

This speculative Idea of a right [being] deduced from the unlimited Nature of the supreme legislative authority, [is] very clear and very undeniable, but, when explained and proved and admitted [it is] little to the purpose. The Practical, executive, exertion of this Right may be impracticable, may be inequitable and may be contrary to the Genius and Spirit even of the Constitution which gives this right at least contrary to the principles of Liberty. This Practical Idea of the Constitution of the British Empire to be deduced from the general and relative Situation of its parts[...] It must be governed upon the principles of Freedom.²⁴

Pownall agreed that Parliament was supreme in all cases whatsoever. The issue of Parliamentary sovereignty was, for him, quite clear-cut. Parliament should be the body which 'animates the whole' and which works as a mother Parliament, ensuring the various

²¹ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 4.

²² R. Bourke, 'Liberty, Authority and Trust in Burke's Idea of Empire', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, LXI, No. 3 (July 2000), p. 455.

²³ *Ibid.* He stated almost exactly the same beliefs during the debates on the Stamp Act Crisis: 'Without subordination, it would not be one Empire. Without freedom, it would not be the *British Empire* [...] The most anxious work for the understanding of men is to govern a large Empire upon a plan of freedom; but it is as noble as it is anxious, and it is necessary because it can be governed by no other.' Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 461-51.

²⁴ Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 47.

colonial assemblies work in unison towards the overall benefit of the empire. In this way, thought Pownall, a system of confederacy might be considered appropriate. He objected to the haphazard way in which the empire worked, and sought to standardise inter-colonial and intra-imperial relations. He wanted to ensure that all claims of Parliamentary supremacy remained 'consistent with the very liberty that the colonies require, demand, claim [and w]hich a set of freemen ought to have'.²⁵ Pownall's view of the constitutional situation of the colonies remained clear throughout the 1760s and early 70s:

When the King, at the restoration, participated this sovereignty over *these his foreign dominions*, with the lords and commons, the Colonies became *in fact*, the dominions of the realm – became subjects of the kingdom. They came, in fact, and by actual constitutional exercise of power, under the authority and jurisdiction of parliament. They became connected and annexed to the state: By coming as parts of the British realm, not as a separate kingdom (which is the case of Ireland) under subjection to the parliament, they became participants of the rights and liberties on which the power of parliament is founded.²⁶

Pownall agreed on this principle with Jackson: Americans ought to send MPs to represent them in Parliament. Neither man went into any details as to how this might be accomplished practically, but they both believed that it was the best way to maintain American liberty. Barré disagreed on a practical note: 'The idea of a representative from that country is dangerous, absurd and impracticable. They will grow more numerous than we are, and then how inconvenient and dangerous would it be to have representative of 7 millions there meet the representatives of 7 millions here'.²⁷ Bacon's view was even further from that of Pownall and Burke. He stated dryly that: 'I must beg them to observe, that as they are colonies, and not kingdoms, they can be no more than virtually represented: and this they now are, being included in the commons as members of the kingdom of Great Britain'.²⁸

Burke and Pownall, however, disagreed over the nature of the empire itself and the basics of its constitution. While Pownall advocated a Grand Marine Dominion – and a union formed between the varying parts of the British Empire to form one coherent whole – Burke believed this to be a route to tyranny. Burke believed that the various colonies could not feasibly be attached to the realm and Kingdom of Great Britain. Rather, while Westminster remained supreme in all cases, the empire had, in order to function, to maintain the system of diversified subjection:

²⁵ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, IV. 73.

²⁶ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, 4th ed., pp. 138-141. His emphasis.

²⁷ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, II. 145.

²⁸ Bacon, *A Short Address*, p. 2.

Perhaps, Sir, I am mistaken in my idea of an empire, as distinguished from a single state or kingdom. But my idea of it is this; that an empire is the aggregate of many states under one common head; whether this head be a Monarch, or a presiding republick. It does, in such constitutions, frequently happen (and nothing but the dismal, cold, dead uniformity of servitude can prevent its happening) that the subordinate parts have many local privileges and immunities. Between these privileges and the supreme common authority the line may be extremely fine. Of course disputes, often too, very bitter disputes, and much ill blood will arise. But though every privilege is an exemption (in the case) from the ordinary exercise of the supreme authority, it is no denial of it. The claim of a privilege seems rather, *ex vi termini*, to imply a superior power.²⁹

On the issue of the central role of Parliament throughout the empire, even the American MPs could not agree on a course of action. While they all agreed that Parliament ought to be supreme and at the head of the empire, the varying ways in which it should or should not become involved in colonial politics and imperial management put forth by these men provides a snapshot of just how difficult this problem was in the eighteenth century.

Burke had the most realistic understanding of the nature and situation of the empire, while Pownall's was perhaps the most unreasonable. The basis of Pownall's mistake was in the assumption that 'the very word *colony* implied subordination'. Pownall was not alone in thinking along these lines: several men with wide-ranging experience of colonial government, including James Abercromby, Henry McCulloh, Archibald Kennedy, William Bolla, William Douglass, Malachy Postlethwayt, Francis Bernard, Henry Ellis and John Mitchell all thought similarly.³⁰ These men, and Pownall, believed that the empire had been built initially through the extension of direct and accountable metropolitan control. Their situation had developed as a result of the 'prevalence of self-interested behaviour among the colonists, the size and diversity of the empire, the growing wealth and populations of the colonies, and, most important, metropolitan neglect'.³¹ They therefore believed that by 'fixing' such problems, through direct central control and the removal of local liberties, charters and practices, the empire could be made to be a stronger, more powerful, and united force in world affairs. Burke was to realise that this 'new Colony system', which aimed to render 'government powerful and paramount over the several dependencies of the British Empire' was not the ways in which the British Empire was organised and run, sought to overturn the 'ancient system of governing the colonies' and ignored the principle that 'Liberty and Commerce' formed the 'true Basis of its Power'.³²

²⁹ E. Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (London: 16 vols, 1826-27), III, 69-70.

³⁰ Green, 'Transatlantic Colonization', p. 277.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 278.

The central issue over Parliament's authority and jurisdiction was, of course, taxation. On this topic, the MPs were generally more coherent. Most agreed with Pownall that 'it will not bear a doubt but that the supreme legislature of Great Britain is the true and perfect representative of Great Britain, and all its dependencies' but that 'as it is not in the power of the House of Lords or Commons to exempt any community from the jurisdiction of the King, as supreme magistrate, so that it is not, nor ever was, or could be in the power of the crown, to exempt any persons or communities within the dominions of Great Britain from being subject and liable to be taxed by parliament'.³³ That said, however, the MPs thought that the taxes ought to be laid 'with the utmost delicacy and regard to the colonies' power of taxing themselves', if they were to be laid at all.³⁴

With regards to colonial taxation and the limits of Parliament's authority over the colonies, Jackson was quite clear. All laws, he thought, should be 'built on a foundation consistent with the Constitutions of the Colonies, & on the Principles of Relation between the Mother Countries & her colonies'. Moreover, he said 'it is not disputed that the M[othe]r Country is Mistress of the Trade of its Colonys, this Right has always been challenged & exercised by England & all other Countries, the M[othe]r C[ountry] may prohibit foreign Trade, it may therefore tax it. And the Colonys have a Compensation, in Protection but I dread internal Taxes'.³⁵ He stated similarly in 1764 that he had 'long since given up all hopes of preventing some Parliamentary Tax to be imposed on North America' and reaffirmed that he was 'most averse to an Internal Tax' because of 'how far such a precedent may be extended, & I have frequently asked, what internal Tax they will not lay'. The only effective and legal method of taxing the colonies, he believed, was through 'customs as well as Prohibitions on Trade' which had been 'laid by England from the time of the long Parl[iamen]t [and which he] wish[ed] to be the Rule of Conduct on this Occasion'.³⁶

Bacon believed similarly that taxing the Americans at point, and then again through their trade, was a bad idea in principle. He asked: 'if we lay a tax upon our own manufactures exported to our colonies, what is this, but to injure ourselves in a double capacity?' and warned 'it serves both to discourage the Americans from trading with us in those commodities [glass, paper and so on]; and also (as its necessary consequence) to tie up the

³³ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, 2nd ed., pp. 89-90.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁵ Doren, *Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson*, pp. 122-5: Jackson to Franklin, Temple, 27 December 1763.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-9: Jackson to Franklin, Inner Temple, 26 January 1764.

hands of our own manufacturers'.³⁷ Bacon's point of view on this issue, as with most of his other contributions towards the debate over the role of Parliament, revolved around his being a merchant. He sought simply to ensure the best conditions for trade throughout the empire, as long as those conditions benefited Britain to the maximum possible potential.

Burke, with his usual astute understanding of the reality of the situation, established that the basis behind the 'quarrel' was the 'subject of *taxation*'. He warned the House of Commons that they must 'estimate the value of the object to be conceded, [to the Americans on the issue of taxation] before they agree to give it up. If they were of opinion, that the taxation of America could repay them their expenses, or compensate their risks, they ought to pursue it. If, on the contrary, it was evident beyond all contradiction, and so evident as to force reiterated acknowledgements, that they never could enjoy a moment's quiet as long as that matter of contention continued – it was then altogether essential to the preservation of their own authority in all other points, as to the liberty of America and the quiet of the whole empire, to give it up, with such limitations and concessions, as the rights of sovereignty required'.³⁸ He continued:

That the Parliament of Great Britain were not the *representative* but (as Lord John Cavendish had said, some days before, with great truth and propriety) the *sovereign* of America. That the sovereignty was not in its nature an idea of abstract unity; but was capable of great complexity and infinite modifications, according to the temper of those who are to be governed, and to the circumstances of things; which being infinitely diversified, government ought to be adapted to them, and to conform itself to the nature of things, and not to endeavour to force them. That although taxation was inherent in the *supreme power* of society, taken as an *aggregate*, it did not follow that it must reside in any *particular* power in society. That in the society of England, for instance, the King is sovereign; but the power of the purse is not in his hands; and this does not derogate from his power in those things, in which our constitution has attributed power to him. If Parliament be the sovereign power of America, Parliament may, by its own act, for wise purposes, put the local power of the purse into other hands than its own, without disclaiming its just prerogative in other particulars.³⁹

Burke's message, and his vision of empire, was simply put: Parliament might be the sovereign body of the empire but this did not necessarily mean that it ought to have the right to tax the colonists directly. Rather, Burke held a grander view of empire: one built on common liberty and practice in which the many different parts, held together under the sovereignty of the Crown, functioned almost separately to improve the whole.

³⁷ Bacon, *A Short Address*, pp. 9-10.

³⁸ Simmons, *Proceedings and Debates*, VI. 265.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

While the disagreements over the role played by Parliament are most obvious between Burke and Pownall, all of the MPs here studied agreed on the basis on which the British Empire ought to function. Pownall called it his Grand Marine Dominion, Bacon regarded it as a trading network of connexions, and Burke believed it to be the only basis on which the empire could function; they all believed in the primary importance of trade and commerce. The basis of this type of empire was, Burke thought, 'wholly new in the world. It is singular: it is grown up to this magnitude and importance within the memory of man; nothing in history is parallel to it. All the reasonings about it, that are likely to be at all solid, must be drawn from its actual circumstance. In this new system, a principle of commerce, or artificial commerce, must predominate'.⁴⁰

As Pownall phrased it: 'the spirit of *commerce* will become that predominant power, which will form the general policy, and rule the powers of Europe: and hence a grand commercial interest, the basis of a great commercial dominion, under the present site and circumstances of the world, will be formed and arise'.⁴¹ While all of the MPs agreed on the basis of British wealth, prosperity and power, they disagreed on how best to maintain and increase their lead. Pownall thought that all commerce should follow the forces of *political gravity* and must thereby be centred in Britain: Britain and the British colonies, he thought, must not ever compete with each other in issues of trade, and Britain must maintain the balance of power over all colonial commercial interests. Bacon's view was more liberal, however. He believed that 'every facility ought also to be given to their exports' and that 'a freedom of exportation ought to be permitted, not only to the American, French and Spanish Islands, but also to Europe'. Unlike stricter mercantilists, Bacon believed that some type of free system of trade ought to exist between Britain, its colonies and the other European powers. This opening of trade routes, Bacon thought, would allow for British and American merchants to capitalise on their inherent superiority in issues of business and commerce.

Burke summed up the ways in which a commercial empire ought to work during his speech on American taxation in April of 1774. He established here that the issue of direct taxation of the colonists was 'absolutely new in policy and practice' and that it was damaging to the make-up of the empire as a whole.

⁴⁰ Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 194.

⁴¹ Pownall, *Administration of the Colonies*, p. 8. His emphasis.

By his immense capital (primarily employed, not for their benefit, but his own) they were enabled to proceed with their fisheries, their agriculture, their ship-building (and their trade too within the limits [of the Navigation Acts]), in such a manner as get the start of slow languid operations of unassisted nature. This capital was a hot-bed to them. Nothing in the history of mankind is like their progress. For my part, I never cast an eye on their flourishing commerce, and their cultivated and commodious life, but they seem to me rather antient nations grown to perfection through a long series of fortunate events, and a train of successful industry, accumulating wealth in many centuries, than the Colonies of yesterday; than a set of miserable out-casts, a few years ago, not so much sent as thrown out, on the bleak and barren shore of a desolate wilderness three thousand miles from all civilised intercourse.

All this was done by England, whilst England pursued trade, and forgot revenue. You not only acquired commerce, but you actually created the very objects of trade in America; and by that creation you raised the trade of this kingdom at least four-fold. America had the compensation of your capital, which made her bear her servitude. She had another compensation, which you are now going to take away from her. She had, except the commercial restraint, every characteristic mark of a free people in all her internal concerns. She had the image of the British constitution. She had the substance. She was taxed by her own representatives. She chose most of her own magistrates. She paid them all. She had in effect the sole disposal of her own internal government. This whole state of commercial servitude and civil liberty, taken together, is certainly not perfect freedom; but comparing it with the ordinary circumstances of human nature, it was an happy and a liberal condition.

Whether you were right or wrong in establishing the Colonies on the principles of commercial monopoly, rather than on that of revenue, is at this day a problem of mere speculation. You cannot have both by the same authority. To join together the restraints of an universal internal and external monopoly, with an universal internal and external taxation, is an unnatural union; perfect uncompensated slavery. You have long since decided for yourself and them; and you and they have prospered exceedingly under that decision.⁴²

A flourishing empire would be based on a vast network of trading connexions throughout the various parts of the empire, bringing the myriad goods and products available from the furthest reaches of the wilderness of the Americas to British shores. The construction of that 'lead' – the British ability in trade – into the very core of the empire's system, these men thought, would ensure continued British success and perpetual wealth.

Atlantic Arguments; Oceanic Union

While the various ways in which Parliament ought or ought not to become involved in the day-to-day management were the focus of attention throughout the Revolutionary years, a secondary matter remains of crucial importance. This matter, which Burke dealt with effectively and which historians now look at in some depth, revolves around the connexions made by the many different types of people in the parts of the British Empire and how they felt knitted together, if they did at all. These connexions were formed around, through, in

⁴² Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Burke*, II. 428-31. Burke's Speech on American Taxation to the House of Commons, 19 April 1774.

spite of, and because of the Atlantic Ocean. It was these connexions that allowed Americans to participate in all the liberties of the British constitution and of Britishness, and which allowed the numerous complex trading networks to transport goods – both raw and manufactured – around the globe. These Atlantic connexions, as David Hancock has said, had ‘three key attributes’ including ‘decentralisation, networks, and self-organisation’. They were, in other words, controlled not by the metropolitan state, but by the individuals involved in the Atlantic World.⁴³

A large part, politically and socially, of how these connexions worked were in part due to the extension of the idea of Britishness or Englishness. Colin Kidd has discussed similar expansions of the concept of Britishness onto ‘North Britons’ – Scots – in the eighteenth century and has discussed some of the parallels between the two. ‘Like the peoples of other British “provinces”,’ he says, ‘North Britons participated in the cult of English constitutionalism’. They noticed, however, the ‘hypocrisy displayed by the English on the subject of their much-vaunted liberty’ but nevertheless ‘retained an enthusiastic commitment to English *institutions*’ and that ‘a healthy scepticism did nothing to diminish the widespread sense of relief that, through the Union, Scots had, by a stroke of good fortune, had entailed upon them the hard-won birthrights of Englishmen’. This applied similarly to those in the American colonies who claimed that they had all the rights of Englishmen by ‘supposed biological descent’.⁴⁴ While they had left the British Isles, claimed the Americans, they had not *quit the realm* or left Greater Britain and therefore forfeited none of the rights of Englishmen.

The British-in-Britain attitude to these claims, however, remained inconsistent. Americans initially hoped that ‘the interest of *Great-Britain* and her colonies be ever united’ and hoped that colonists would ‘enjoy the freedom, and other benefits of the *British* constitution, to the latest page in history!’. Americans and Britons had ‘the same laws, the same religion, the same constitution, the same feelings, sentiments, and habits [...] We have these general benefits to defend against the rest of the world, which is hostile to all, or the greater part of them’.⁴⁵ As Gould has elsewhere established, the ‘legal geography’ of the Atlantic World

⁴³ D. Hancock, ‘The Triumphs of Mercury: Connection and Control in the Emerging Atlantic Economy’, in Bailyn, *Soundings in Atlantic History*, p. 115.

⁴⁴ C. Kidd, ‘North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotisms’, *Historical Journal* XXXIV, No. 2 (June 1996), p. 382.

⁴⁵ [Arthur Lee], *An Appeal to the Justice and Interests of the People of Great Britain, in the Present Disputes with London* (London, 1774), p.3, quoted in E. Gould, ‘Fears of War, Fantasies of Peace: British

differed across the British Empire.⁴⁶ What was considered to be acceptable – legal or illegal – in Britain was not always the case in the reaches of the British Empire. Therefore, not all of the rights of Britons in Britain could be transferred as easily throughout the entire empire.

Burke's view of empire – of the bonds of the imperium – mirror quite closely the connexions which we see forged across the Atlantic, although set in an idealised world. In this idealistic version of the British Empire, the Houses of Parliament are set as the 'primary movers' of empire but are a 'sublime, distant, and divine power' – Parliament's Acts should be 'as from the throne of heaven', in other words.⁴⁷ Parliament was the central and focal point of empire and ensured that *all* those subjects of the British Crown were guaranteed 'in every nation, in every land, in every climate, language, and religion, in the vast domain that still is under the protection, and the larger that was once under the protection of the British crown' the true rights of Britons.⁴⁸

In order to protect and ensure respect for Parliament as the 'gem' of empire, Burke thought it crucial that 'the most perfect unity of sentiments, principles, and affections' be maintained between Britons and Americans. The concept of 'liberty' was the basis on which the empire should function: 'it spreads out a large and liberal platform of common Liberty, upon which we may all unite forever'.⁴⁹

As mentioned above, however, Burke's concept of imperial unity was not that of a single or simple sovereignty. What remained crucial to Burke's interpretation of empire was its heterogeneity and its many, distinct and different, parts forming a greater whole. Bonds should be fostered to maintain the connexions, but a unitary view of empire should not be adopted. Rather, he said:

For that service, for all service, whether for revenue, trade, or empire, my trust is in her interests in the British constitution. My hold of the Colonies is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges, and equal protection. These are the ties, which though light as air, are as strong as links of iron. Let the Colonies always keep the idea of their civil rights associated with your Government – they will cling and grapple to you; and no force under heaven will be of power to tear them from their allegiance.

Politics and the Coming of the American Revolution', in E. Gould and P. Onuf, *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution and the Atlantic World* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 25.

⁴⁶ E. Gould, 'Zones of Laws, Zones of Violence: The Legal Geography of the British Atlantic, circa 1772', *William and Mary Quarterly*, LX, No. 3 (July 2003), pp. 471-510.

⁴⁷ B. Mitchell, *An Incomprehensible Dispensation: Edmund Burke, Aesthetics and Empire* (Unpublished PhD dissertation: University of Virginia, 2008), p. 85.

⁴⁸ Langford, *Writing and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, IX. 167.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, III. 278.

He warned further that ‘as long as you have the wisdom to keep the sovereign authority of this country as the sanctuary of liberty, the sacred temple consecrated to our common faith, wherever the chosen race and sons of England worship freedom, they will turn their faces towards you’.⁵⁰

Richard Jackson echoed these sentiments to the House of Commons in 1769 where he advised that fear would be a ‘poor engine of government’ and that, at such a distance, laws could not effectively ‘be carried into execution [where there was] an universal discontent among the people’. Burke encouraged that ‘the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the extremities’ and that “‘all Nations, who have extensive empire, derived from a prudent relaxation in” the peripheries and that to govern distant areas of empire at all it was necessary to govern them “with a loose rein”’.⁵¹

Conclusion

The ways in which the British Empire was viewed, conceptualised and idealised in the years immediately before and during the American War for Independence show us how unexpected the eventual divisions were. Politicians were, all of them, trying to reorder and restore the empire along lines of peace and security after the end of the Seven Years War. Perhaps part of the reason why the American MPs were ultimately so unsuccessful in promoting their vision of empire, and of adopting any effective conciliatory policies in the mid-1770s, was because the metropolitan centre, and the Members of the House of Commons, believed Lord North when he claimed to want to bring peace to the empire. The conclusion of the Seven Years War allowed Britons to really see for the first time the precise nature of their empire, and the various benefits it could bring. The attempts to restructure and reorganise the imperial mechanics throughout the 1760s and 70s was an attempt by those in London to reorganise, reorder, rebuild and restore the empire as a whole.

It is likewise interesting to note that the growth in the connexions between Britons and Americans politically at this time perhaps created some of the problems the two peoples then faced. Pownall, for example, was one of the most educated and experienced men with regards to the Americas, and yet it was policies similar to that which he advocated (direct central control through a Secretary of State, greater cohesion and organisation throughout

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, III. 164.

⁵¹ Quoted in Green, ‘Transatlantic Colonization’, p. 276.

the empire, and so on) which eventually brought Americans and Britons to blows. This greater awareness and understanding of, appreciation for, and interest in the colonies caused the breakdown of the loose and heterogeneous systems under which the empire had previously existed and functioned.

That Burke alone was able to see the distinctions between sovereignty and direct authority – between imperium and dominion – is likewise a testament to the difficulty with which eighteenth-century imperial administrators and reformers grappled. Ultimately, the victory of the United States of America reshaped the ways in which Britons viewed both their empire and the Atlantic World. The British Empire became one much more focused on building and reorganising local elites, but at the same time became far more racially diverse than ever before. The Atlantic World became not an ‘inherently imperial space, but [...] a region that could be organised as a system of independent states, an international regime defined by free trade and the rule of law’.⁵²

⁵² Gould, *Empire and Nation*, p. 15.

CONCLUSION

In 1776, the Second Continental Congress published the Declaration of Independence:

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

That Americans could be pushed to this extreme measure shows ultimately the failure of the British government to react to the American situation, and of the American MPs to persuade an unresponsive House of Commons and British public. While that may or may not be the case, the view that the British Parliament was very ignorant, very corrupt, or very sinful when looking at the decades before the American Revolution simply does not stand up to scrutiny.

Rather, what we have found is a House of Commons with some strong American connexions and one far better versed in the American situation, at least in the early 1760s than had been thought previously. Instead of thrashing around blindly in imperial affairs, successive British governments sought to standardise and improve imperial relations and based their policies on the knowledge, judgement and experience of those directly involved in the colonies. The House of Commons debates show a multitude of opinions and facts being presented on the issue of America from men experienced in colonial trade and governance.

If the problems stemmed from a British desire to reorder and recast the empire along more profitable and metropolitan lines, this could partially be viewed as the ultimate success of an Atlantic World and the connexions fostered therein. Americans viewed themselves as Britons and became *more* British over time.¹ While a united 'America' existed in the minds of Britons before it did that of Americans, the concept of running the entire empire effectively from London can be seen to be a direct consequence of greater imperial coherence and unity. That politicians such as Pownall, Bacon, Jackson and Trecothick all sought to standardise in some fashion the relationship between Great Britain and the

¹ J. Murrin, *Anglicizing an American Colony: The Transformation of Provincial Massachusetts* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation: Yale, 1996).

thirteen colonies, shows us the ways in which the Atlantic World had become important to the British metropolitan elite. More than that, however, the concept of a shared British identity was spread across the Atlantic. What it meant to be British at this time remained very much in flux,² and Britons were willing to share in their nationhood with their brethren across the ocean. What the American MPs – along with all those who sympathised with the American cause – found particularly challenging was proving to an increasingly sceptic British population that the Americans wished to share in the benefits (and, importantly, bear a share of the burden) of being British. The problems faced by Britons in shearing off a part of their empire and a part of themselves changed how they were to define themselves: ‘Never again,’ stated Gould, ‘would the British think of any part of their empire as an extension of their own nation – at least not in the way they had before 1776’.³

This thesis has sought to shift the ways in which we view the politics of the American Revolution. Rather than seeing the British political side to the American Revolution as part solely of ‘British History’ or as eighteenth century Hanoverian politics, this work hopes to place the politics of the metropolitan centre at this time firmly in the Atlantic and imperial connexions under which they operated. That is to say, rather than looking simply at the politics of the American Revolution as an event in itself, this thesis has attempted to place it – to place the British political scene during the 1760s and 70s – in a wider Atlantic perspective through the analysis of those involved in the connexions that the ocean afforded them. This work has been based on Pocock’s plea that historians ensure that they included all parts of ‘Greater Britain’ (including Scotland, Wales Ireland and, at least until 1783, America), but has attempted to recast that in some way into a more Atlantic or imperial type analysis.

What we have found is that any claims Parliament, its enemies, or subsequent historians might have made regarding the supposed ignorance of its Members regarding America is not true. Not only were there a larger number of MPs with personal ties to the American colonies (not to mention those with more informal ties, or with ties to other parts of the empire), but a small – and vocal – group of these men became actively and heavily involved in the politics of Britain regarding America. While they formed no single group and did not act together, they were all well-known as American experts, deferred to on American issues, and spoke at length about America and the problems of imperial management.

² Gould, *Persistence of Empire*, pp. 183-241.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

What strikes most from the records and accounts of the debates, however, is the extent to which even these well-connected MPs – these American MPs – failed in some respects to grasp the reality of the situation after 1773. By this point, most of the men had not spent any time in the colonies for a number of years and relied heavily on second-hand information. They became, as a result, unaware of the shifting nature of the American condition at this time and were, as a result, unable to foretell the problems the Quebec Act would pose, for example. That said, however, Burke and Barré in particular, and Pownall to a lesser extent, warned and foreshadowed throughout the likely American reaction to the Coercive Legislation. The eventual resistance and the open rebellion of the Americans – and not simply just those in Massachusetts – had been predicted repeatedly in the House of Commons by these men. British policy at this time was not lurching from one ignorant blunder to the next and British politicians were not bumbling fools incapable of governing their empire or understanding their American brethren. What remains significant, however, was that even as the empire collapsed around them, most British MPs and politicians treated it as another aspect of the British political scene.⁴ The debates were filled with exceptional and gifted speakers trying their best to defend the liberties of *all* Britons spread across the Atlantic, but these speeches did little to influence MPs' opinions.

The publications of Bacon and Pownall allow us a further insight into the hopes, dreams and aspirations regarding the Americas. They warned of the problems faced by imperial management, but sought to maintain and improve upon the situation inherited from the Seven Years War. These texts can only really make sense when placed and studied alongside the political events of the same years. Without them, they can appear idealistic and disjointed, but when considered together they show a greater depth to the arguments the MPs put forth in Parliament. Two things are most striking from these texts: Bacon, a relatively quiet Member (when compared to, for example, Barré or Burke) worked hard behind the scenes to further his own political aims and objectives. More than that, however, his *Considerations* shows him to be truly well informed on the situation in general, and with some practical and sensible proposals to help solve the problems. Pownall's later works – after the outbreak of war – become increasingly desperate but show that he was willing to abandon all hopes of a Grand Marine Dominion and was 'finally flexible enough to exchange [these] for an alternative plan in which Great Britain and the other nations of

⁴ On this note, A. Olson, *Anglo-American Politics, 166-1775: The Relationship Between Parties in England and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

Europe would lay aside their mercantilistic restrictions and trade freely with a group of newly independent American nations'.⁵

Through these publications and speeches and contributions, we are able to deduce the type of empire these men wanted. They all hoped for a grand commercial union, enhancing the power and the prestige and the wealth of Britain and of America, and worked to improve the conditions of trade throughout the Atlantic. Even though they predicted the open rebellion of Americans, the thought that Britain might actually lose the colonies at that point appears to have remained only a worst nightmare. Rather than focusing on the negative aspects of the American situation, they provide a positive and enlightening account of how the empire in the eighteenth century might have been organised and governed. Burke in particular is a success in this: while many challenged his belief that the Declaratory Act and unlimited Parliamentary supremacy did not contradict his support for American liberties, further analysis of his thoughts show a far more complex and a far more sublime understanding of the many ways in which Britons were connected, governed and bonded throughout the Atlantic World.

Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together. – Edmund Burke

⁵ Reich, *British Friends of the American Revolution*, p. 165.

APPENDIX I

Acland, John Dyke (1746-78) Callington	Army 1774 – 22 Nov. 1778
Affleck, Edmund (1725-88) Colchester	Navy 4 Mar. 1782 – 19 Nov. 1778
Alexander, William (c. 1690-1761) Edinburgh	Merchant 1754 – 1761
Amyland, John (1751-80) Camelford	Merchant 1774 – 5 June 1780
Atkinson, Rickard (1738-85) New Romney	Merchant 14 June 1784 – 28 May 1785
Bacon, Anthony (c. 1717-86) Aylesbury	Merchant 25 Jan. 1764 – 1784
Baker, William (1705-70) Plympton Erle	Merchant 14 Dec. 1747 – 1768
Baring, Francis (1740-1810) Grampound Chipping Wycombe Calne Chipping Wycombe	Merchant 1784 – 1790 1 Feb. 1794 – 1796 1796 – 1802 1802 – 1806
Barré, Isaac (1726-1802) Chipping Wycombe Calne	Army 5 Dec. 1761 – 1774 1774 – 1790
Barrington, William Wildman (1717-93) Berwick-Upon-Tweed Plymouth	Secretary at War (1765-1778) 13 Mar. 1740 – 1754 1754 – 24 May 1778
Boscawen, Hon. Edward (1711-61) Truro	Navy 21 June 1742 – 10 Jan. 1761
Bristow, John (1701-68) Bere Alston	Merchant 1734 – 1741

St. Ives	1741 – 1754	
Bere Alston	1754 – 1761	
Arundel	1761 – 1768	
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Burgoyne, John (1732-92)		Army
Midhurst	1761 – 1768	
Preston	29 Nov. 1768 – 4 Aug. 1792	
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Burke, Edmund (1729-97)		Colonial agent
Wendover	23 Dec. 1765 – 1774	
Bristol	1774 – 1780	
Malton	7 Dec. 1780 – 11 July 1794	
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Burrard, Harry (1755-1813)		Army
Lymington	1780 – June 1788, 1790 – Apr. 1791	
	9 July – Dec. 1802	
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Burton, Ralph (<i>d.</i> 1768)		Army and colonial government
Wareham	18 Mar. – 29 Sept. 1768	
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Campbell, Alexander (1756-85)		Army
Nairnshire	1784 – Nov. 1785	
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Campbell, Archibald (1739-91)		Army
	Stirling Burghs 1774-1780, 21 Aug. 1789 – 31 Mar. 1791	
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Campbell, James (1737-1805)		Army
	Stirling Burghs 1780 – 22 July 1789	
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Cathcart, Hon. Charles Allan (1759-88)		Army
Clackmannanshire	1784 – 10 June 1788	
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Clinton, Henry (1730-95)		Army
Boroughbridge	27 July 1772 – 1774	
Newark	1774 – 1784	
Launceston	1790 – July 1794	
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Cockburn, Sir James (1729-1804)		Merchant
Linlithgow Burghs	9 Jan. 1772 – 1784	
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Colebrooke, Geroge (1729-1809)		Merchant
Arundel	1754 – 1774	
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Colebrooke, James (1722-61)		Merchant
Gatton	27 Apr. 1751 – 10 May 1761	
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Colleton, James Edward (c. 1709-90)	American
Lostwithiel	1747 – 1768
St. Mawes	4 Dec. 1772 – 1774
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Collier, Sir Geroge (1738-95)	Navy
Honiton	1784 – 1790
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Cornwallis, Hon. William (1744-1819)	Navy
Eye	1768 – Mar. 1774, 3 Apr. 1782 – 1784
Portsmouth	1784 – 1790
Eye	1790 – Jan. 1807
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Cox, Laurence (d. 1792)	Merchant
Hontion	1774 – 1780
Bere Alston	14 Feb. 1781 – 1784
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Cruger, Henry (1739-1827)	American
Bristol	1774 – 1780, 1784 – 1790
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Cuninghame, James (c. 1731-88)	Army and colonial government
East Grinstead	3 Mar. 1786 – 10 Sept. 1788
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Dalrymple, William (1736-1807)	Army
Wigtown Burghs	1784 – 1790
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Devaynes, William (c. 1730-1809)	Merchant
Barnstaple	1774 - 1780, 1784 – 1796
Winchelsea	13 Dec. 1796 – 1802
Barnstaple	1802 – 1806
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Drummond, Adam (1713-86)	Army
Lymington	1761 – 1768
St. Ives	1768 – 11 Dec. 1778
Aberdeen Burghs	11 Jan. 1779 – 1784
Shaftesbury	1784 – 17 June 1786
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Drummond, Hon. Henry (1730-95)	Merchant
Wendover	24 Dec. 1774 – 1780
Midhurst	1780 – 1790
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Drummond, John (1754-1835)	American
Shaftesbury	5 July 1786 – 1790
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Durand, John (?1719-88)	Merchant
Aylesbury	1768 – 1774
Plympton Erle	7 Feb. 1775 – 1780

Seaford	1780 – 1784	
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Eden, William (1744-1814)		Merchant
New Woodstock	1774 – 1784	
Heytesbury	1784 – 22 May 1793	
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Fitzherbert, Thomas (?1746-1822)		Merchant
Arundel	1780 – 1790	
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Fitzpatrick, Hon. Richard (1748-1813)		Army
Okehampton	20 Oct. 1770 – 1774	
Tavistock	1774 – 1807	
Bedfordshire	1807 – 1812	
Tavistock	1812 – 25 Apr. 1813	
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Fludyer, Samuel (?1704-68)		Merchant
Chippdenham	1754 – 18 Jan. 1768	
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Fraser, Simon (1726-82)		Army
Inverness-shire	1761 – 8 Feb. 1782	
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Fuller, Rose (?1708-77)		American
New Romney	8 Dec. 1756 – 1761	
Maidstone	1761 – 1768	
Rye	1768 – 7 May 1777	
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Garth, Charles (c. 1734-84)		Colonial agent
Devizes	15 Jan. 1765 – 21 Nov. 1780	
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Gordon, Lord Adam (?1726-1801)		Army
Aberdeenshire	1754-1768	
Kincardineshire	1774 – Apr. 1788	
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Gordon, Lord George (1751-93)		Army
Ludgershall	1774 – 1780	
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Gould, Charles (1760-1846)		Army
Brecon	6 Dec. 1787 – 1796	
Monmouthshire	1796 – 1831	
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Grant, Sir Alexander (<i>d.</i> 1772)		American and merchant
Inverness Burghs	1761 – 1768	
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Grant, James (1720-1806)		Army
Tain Burghs	26 Apr. 1773 – 1780	
Sutherlandshire	1 Aug. 1787 – 1802	

Gulston, Joseph (c. 1694-1766)	Merchant
Tregony	2 Mar. 1737 – 1741
Poole	1741 – May 1765
Hammet, Benjamin (?1736-1800)	Merchant
Taunton	20 Mar. 1782 – 22 July 1800
Harcourt, Hon. William (1743-1830)	Army
Oxford	1768 – 1774
Hardman, John (c. 1694-1775)	Merchant
Liverpool	1754 – 6 Dec. 1755
Harley, Hon. Thomas (1730-1804)	Merchant
London	1761 – 1774
Herefordshire	22 May 1776 – 1802
Hayley, George (<i>d.</i> 1781)	Merchant
London	1774 – 30 Aug. 1781
Henniker, John (1724-1803)	Merchant
Sudbury	1761 – 1768
Dover	1774 – 1784
Herries, Sir Robert (1730-1815)	Merchant
Dumfries Burghs	1780 – 1784
Hervey, Hon. William (1732-1815)	Army
Bury St. Edmunds	24 Feb. 1763 – 1768
Hobart, Hon. Robert (1760-1816)	Army
Bramber	15 Dec. 1788 – 1790
Lincoln	1790 – 1796
Holmes, Charles (1711-61)	Navy
Newport	1 June 1758 – 21 Nov. 1761
Howe, George Augustus	Army
Nottingham	1747 – 6 July 1758
Howe, Richard (1726-99)	Navy
Dartmouth	23 May 1757 – 20 Apr. 1782

Huske, John (1724-73) Maldon	American 26 Apr. 1763 – Oct. 1773
Irvine, Alexander (c. 1754-89) East Looe	Army 24 May 1786 – 24 Dec. 1789
Jackson, Richard (?1721-87) Weymouth and Melcome Regis New Romney	Colonial agent 1 Dec. 1762 - 1768 1768 – 1784
Jervis, Sir John (1735-1823) Launceston Great Yarmouth Chipping Wycombe	Navy 31 Jan. 1783 – 1784 1784 – 1790 1790 – Jan. 1794
Johnstone, George (1730-87) Cockermouth Appleby Lostwithiel Ilchester	Colonial government 24 May 1768 – 1774 1774 – 1780 1 Dec. 1780 – 1784 22 Feb. 1786 – Feb. 1787
Keppel, Hon. Augustus (1725-86) Chichester New Windsor Surrey	Navy 15 Jan. 1755 – 1761 1761 – 1780 1780 – 22 Apr. 1782
Lindsay, Sir John (1737-88) Aberdeen Burghs	Navy 9 Jan. 1767 – 1768
Livingston, Adam (c. 1723-95) Argyllshire	Army 20 Feb. 1772 – 1780
Luttrell, Hon. James (c. 1751-88) Stockbridge Dover	Navy 16 Dec. 1775 – 1784 1784 – 23 Dec. 1788
Luttrell, Hon. John (c. 1740-1829) Stockbridge	American 1774 – Dec. 1775, 1780 – Jan. 1785
Lyttelton, William Henry (1724 – 1808) Bewdley	Colonial government 9 Dec. 1748 – Jan. 1755, 1774 – 1790
Macartney, Sir George (1737-1806) Cockermouth	Colonial government 1768 – Mar. 1769

Ayr Burghs	1774 – Jan. 1776	
Bere Alston	1780 – Feb. 1781	
Macbride, John (<i>d.</i> 1800)		Navy
Plymouth	1784 – 1790	
Mackay, Hon. Alexander (1717-89)		Army
Sutherland	1761 – 1768	
Tain Burghs	1768 – Mar. 1773	
Macleane, Lauchlin (?1727-78)		American and army
Arundel	1768 – May 1771	
Macpherson, James (1736-96)		Colonial government
Camelford	1780 – 17 Feb. 1796	
Maitland, Hon John (1732-79)		Navy
Haddington Burghs	1774 – 22 Oct. 1779	
Mauger, Joshua (1725-88)		Colonial government
Poole	1768 – 10 Feb. 1769, 18 Feb. 1769 – 1780	
Mayne, Robert (1724-82)		Merchant
Gatton	27 Dec. 1774 – 5 Aug. 1782	
Monckton, Hon. Robert (1726-82)		Colonial government
Pontefract	26 Nov. 1751 – 1754, 24 Mar. – 30 Sept. 1774	
Portsmouth	10 Aug. 1778 – 21 May 1782	
Montagu, Lord Charles Greville (1741-84)		Colonial government
Huntingdonshire	5 June 1762 – Dec. 1765	
Montgomerie, Hugh (1739-1819)		Army
Ayrshire	1780 – 2 Apr. 1781, 1784 – June 1789, June – 30 Oct. 1796	
Moore, Daniel (<i>b.</i> 1701)		American and merchant
Great Marlow	1754 – 1761	
Moore, John (1761 – 1809)		Army
Linlithgow Burghs	1784 – 1790	
Morris, Staats Long (1728-1800)		Army
Elgin Burghs	1774 – 1784	
Mostyn, Savage (?1713-57)		Navy
Weobley	1747 – 16 Sept. 1757	

Murray, James (1734-94) Perthshire	11 June 1773 – 19 Mar. 1794	Army and colonial government
Murray, John (1726-1800) Linlithgow Burghs	1754 – 1761	Merchant
Nesbitt, Arnold (?1721-79) Mitchell	27 Jan. 1753 – 1754	Merchant
Winchelsea	1754 – 1761	
Cricklade	1761 – 1768	
Winchelsea	15 Jan. 1770 – 1774	
Cricklade	1774 – 7 Apr. 1779	
Nugent, Charles Edmund (1758-1844) Buckingham	1784 – 1790	Navy
Ogilvie, Charles (c. 1731-88) West Looe	1774 – May 1775	American and merchant
Oliver, Richard (1735-84) London	11 July 1770 – 1780	American and merchant
Oswald, James (1715-69) Dysart Burghs	1741 – 1747	Merchant
Fife	1747 – 1754	
Dysart Burghs	1754 – 1768	
Palliser, Sir Hugh (1723-96) Scarborough	1774 – Feb. 1779	Navy and colonial government
Huntingdon	28 Nov. 1780 – 1784	
Parker, Sir Peter (?1721-1811) Seaford	1784 – 21 Mar. 1785, 29 Mar. 1785 – 13 Mar. 1786	Navy
Maldon	19 Feb. 1787 – 1790	
Pelham Clinton, Lord Thomas (1752-95) Westminster	1774 – 1780	Army
East Retford	17 Dec. 1781 – 22 Feb. 1794	
Penn, Richard (?1734-1811) Appleby	1784 – 1790	American and colonial government
Haslemere	20 Dec. 1790 – June 1791	
Lancaster	1796 – 1802	

Haslemere	1802 – 1806	
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Pennant, Richard (?1736-1808)		Merchant
Petersfield	1761 – Nov. 1767	
Liverpool	4 Dec. 1767 – 1780, 1784 – 1790	
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Percy, Hugh (1742-1817)		Army
Westminster	15 Mar. 1763 – 5 Dec. 1776	
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Phipps, Hon. Henry (1755-1831)		Army
Totnes	1784 – 1790	
Scarborough	1790 – 13 Aug. 1794	
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Pigot, Robert (1720-96)		Army
Wallingford	1768 – Jan. 1772	
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Pownall, John (1720-95)		Navy and colonial government
St. Germans	23 Nov. 1775 – May 1776	
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Pownall, Thomas (1722-1805)		Colonial government
Tregony	4 Feb. 1767 – 1774	
Minehead	31 Dec. 1774 – 1780	
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Preston, Sir Charles (c. 1735-1800)		Army
Dysart Burghs	1784 – 1790	
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Rodney, George Brydges (1719-92)		Navy
Saltash	13 May 1751 – 1754	
Okehampton	24 Nov. 1759 – 1761	
Penryn	1761 – 1768	
Northampton	1768 – 1774	
Westminster	1780 – June 1782	
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American and colonial government		
Barnstaple	1761 – 1774	
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Sargent, John (1715-91)		Merchant
Midhurst	25 Jan. 1754 – 1761	
West Looe	19 Jan. 1765 – 1768	
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Scott, John (1725-75)		Army
Caithness	1754 – 1761	
Tain Burghs	1761 – 1768	
Fifeshire	1768 – Dec. 1775	
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Scott, Robert (?1746-1808) Wootton Bassett	1774 – 1780	American and merchant
Seymour Conway, Hon. George (1763-1848)		Army
Orford	1784 – 1790	
Totnes	1796 – June 1801	
Sharpe, John (?1700-56) Callington	1754 – Oct. 1756	Colonial agent
Shuldham, Molyneux (c. 1717-98) Fowey	1774 – 1784	Navy and colonial government
Stanwix, John (1696-1766) Carlisle	1741 – 26 Jan. 1742, 26 Nov. 1746 – 1761	Army
Appleby	1761 – Oct. 1766	
Stephenson, John (?1709-94) Mitchell	22 Apr. 1754 – 24 Mar. 1755, 1761 – 1780	Merchant
Tregony	1780 – 1784	
Plympton Erle	1784 – 1790	
Tregony	1790 – 17 Apr. 1794	
Stewart, Alexander (c. 1739-94) Kirkcudbright	16 Aug. 1786 – 16 Dec. 1794	Army
Storer, Anthony Morris (1746-99) Carlisle	1774 – 1780	American
Morpeth	1780 – 1784	
Stuart, Hon. Charles (1753-1801) Bossiney	20 May 1776 – 1790	Army
Ayr Burghs	1790 – May 1794	
Poole	1796 – 25 Mar. 1801	
Thomlinson, John (1731-67) Steyning	1761 – 1 Feb. 1767	Merchant
Touchet, Samuel (c. 1705-73) Shaftesbury	1761 – 1768	Merchant
Townsend, Chauncy (1708-70) Westbury	16 Mar. 1748 – 1768	Merchant
Wigtown Burghs	23 Dec. 1768 – 28 Mar. 1770	

Trecothick, Barlow (?1718-75)	Merchant and colonial agent
London	1768 – 1774

Vaughan, Hon. John (c. 1731-95)	Army
Berwick-upon-Tweed	1774 – 30 June 1795

Waldegrave, George (1751-1789)	Army
Newcastle-under-Lyme	1774 - 1780

Watson, Brook (1735-1807)	Merchant and colonial agent
London	26 Jan. 1784 – Feb. 1793

Wilson, Sir Thomas Spencer (1727-98)	Army
Sussex	1774 – 1780

Wombwell, George (1734-80)	Merchant
Huntingdon	1774 – 2 Nov. 1780

Wrottesley, John (1744-87)	Army
Newcastle-under-Lyme	22 Mar. – June 1768
Staffordshire	5 July 1768 – 23 Apr. 1787

APPENDIX II

COMMITTEE OF LONDON MERCHANTS (WRITTEN BY TRECOTHICK) TO THE TOWN OF NORWICH, 4 DECEMBER 1765

From: P.D.G. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 146-7. Original: B.L. Add. MSS. 22358, fo 52.

‘Sir, the present state of the British trade to North America, and the prospect of increasing embarrassments which threaten the loss of our depending property there, and even to annihilate the trade itself have occasioned a general meeting to be called of the merchants in this city concerned in that branch of business.

As the gentlemen of your city and almost every other maritime and manufacturing part of these Kingdoms must be affected by the distresses of North American commerce we have thought it our duty to acquaint you (as we now do by the copy enclosed) with our proceedings, as well as to ask your concurrence and assistance in support of a regular application to Parliament or otherwise by a petition from your body and by all the interest you can make with your own Members and with the Members in your neighbourhood, who with all other land owners we think greatly interested in the prosperity of trade and manufactures from which so great an additional value is derived to their property.

We desire to be united with you in a measure so essential to the best interests of Great Britain, wishing to have your sentiments on the subject, through the course of which we mean to take for our guide the interest of these kingdoms, it being our opinion that conclusive arguments for granting every ease or advantage the North Americans can with propriety desire may be fairly deduced from that principle only.’

APPENDIX III

SPEECH BY POWNALL IN HOUSE OF COMMONS (8 FEBRUARY 1769)

From R.C. Simmons and P.D.G. Thomas, *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783* (London: six vols, Kraus International Publications, 1982-7), III. 103-110. Original in J. Almon, *The Debates of the British House of Commons from 1743 to 1774* (London: 11 vols, 1766-75), VIII, 93-117.

‘If they consider that they may be presented by their Governor, a single man, and in consequence of that presentment taken into custody, and sent prisoners 3000 miles, to be put upon their trial, which of itself, should they be acquitted is a punishment of the severest and most cruel nature; if they consider that they are thus deprived of the common liberty which we enjoy, of not being presented and put upon trial but by the inquest of twelve lawful men of our country – to what predicament must they think themselves reduced? – I own I dread the consequence if the Americans should feel that they are in that predicament; but I am comforted, because I am sure they will never feel it, as I am convinced that such commission never will nor can be issued, that such proceedings never will be, nor can be, carried into execution.

I will therefore next consider this measure connected with the military manoeuvres in America – *as a political measure*, planned and designed to enforce the execution of the revenue laws in that country. – To be able to judge of the effect of such measure, it will be necessary to state the case to which it is applied.

On one hand, you have your declaratory law, - your revenue laws as the exertion of the declared right – you have your commissioners to execute these laws – and the military to *enforce* this execution. – On the other hand, the Americans do universally, invariably, and unalterably declare, that they ought not to submit to any internal taxes imposed upon them by any legislature wherein they have not representatives of their own election. On this principle they opposed such taxes by their petitions and remonstrances *only, as yet*; but there is something threatening in the bad temper and ill blood which seems to be forced up – so that the issue is well nigh brought to force. The people of that country and the King’s troops are, as it were, set in array against each other. The sword indeed is not drawn – but

the hand is upon it. The word for action is not indeed yet given, but mischief is on tip-toe; and the slightest circumstance would in a moment throw everything into confusion and bloodshed. And if some *mode of policy* does not interpose to remove this exertion of military power – the union between Great Britain and North America is *broken for ever* – unless (what is worse) *both are united in one common ruin*.

[...] And here I cannot withhold an observation which a friend of mine in that country makes on this occasion: “If you mean to govern the country by the aid of military force, you have not sent a sufficient number of troops – if you do not mean this, you have already sent too many.” But – thank God, resistance by force and arms is not the resistance which you have to guard against. The people of America are husbandmen and merchants; who have lived by their dependence upon, and under the protection of Great Britain – are unaccustomed to arms – are not trained up in a military spirit – do not (to use an expression of their own) *feel bold* to resist by arms; yet, if you attempt to force *taxes* against the spirit of the people there, you will find, when perhaps it is too late, that *they are* of a spirit which will resist all force – which will grow *stronger* by being *forced* – will prove superior to all force – and ever has been unconquerable: they are of a spirit to abide, nay, to court, persecution: and if amongst other propositions which they have taken up, they should once take it into the heads that they are under a state of persecution; that spirit of enthusiasm which is of their temper, and of their very nature, will arise; and every mischievous consequence, in every extreme, will accompany it.

[...] That spirit which led their ancestors to break off from every thing which is near and dear to the human heart – from every connection which friendship, relations, blood could give – which led them to quit every comfort that a settled and civilised country (their own native country) could afford; and to encounter every difficulty and distress, which a wild wilderness of savages could oppose to them, to struggle even for their existence:- that spirit, equally strong and equally inflamed, has but a slight and trifling sacrifice to make at this time – they have not to quit their native country, but to defend it – they have not to forsake their friends and relations, but to unite with and to stand by them, in one common union. The only sacrifice they have to make is that of a few follies and a few luxuries. It is not necessity that is the ground of their commerce with you; it is merely the affectation of your modes and customs – the love for home, as they call England, that makes them like everything which comes from thence; but passion may be conquered by passion, and they will abominate as sincerely as they now love you; and if they do, they have within themselves

everything which is necessary to the food, raiment, or the dwelling of mankind, and have no need of your commerce.'

APPENDIX IV

SPEECH BY BURKE IN HOUSE OF COMMONS (25 MARCH 1774)

From R.C. Simmons and P.D.G. Thomas, *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783* (London: six vols, Kraus International Publications, 1982-7), IV. 124. Speech by Edmund Burke on the Boston Port Bill, 25 March 1774.

‘At Philadelphia ... they did not proceed to throw tea in the river, because the master of the ship was made sensible, so the account said, of the impropriety and danger of landing it there and submitted therefore to go out of the river ... The noble lord who has proposed, and upon whose authority you have taken it, has declared two modes of remedy, one moderate, temperate, [the] other more lasting ... Observe that the disturbances are universal, that the people are almost unanimous. That is one view not of the mob but of all the assembly of America. Show me one port of America ... in which a single ship [] permitted ... The present remedy is to struggle with the present disturbances. What have you chosen? A remedy penal to one port to operate. A proper remedy, but from the very nature of it a silly remedy ... Sir, can anything in the world be more uncertain than the operation of [this Bill]? Whether it will increase these combinations, or lessen [them], whether it will irritate or whether it will terrify, are things in the womb of time ... Not worth risking one of the principles of justice for the sake of running the risk of procuring it ... I beg leave to have it observed that this remedy will have an uncertain operation. If it does not succeed the consequence of it will be []. You are to look to that. If the town of Boston was not only coerced, if burnt to ashes, what would be a better course? Much more just, much more moderate. (a laugh.) Don’t laugh too soon. Our days of laughing [] ... You have to wink at the destruction of America ... If you attempt to follow this example [] the next town, suppose Pennsylvania, Portsmouth. If you follow with an example to that next place, though you believe in your conscience by the punishment of Boston you will a free reception to the tax duties in the other ports of America. Say what will be the consequence. Then you will present to Philadelphia, to Charlestown, to New York, Anapolis Royal, or Williamsburg ... Then the consequence will be, one town must always be in propose to all the rest of America in rebellion ... Are you prepared to stand the consequences of putting a universal prescription on the whole trade of America? ... There is in the news enough to satisfy people’s minds ... that the ancient colony of Virginia is connected with Boston ...

Suppose Virginia should fall in some scrape. If it should, what honourable gentleman calls rebellion, what the noble lord says is not rebellion ... You may think [to] stretch a boom across that bay. If you could stretch a boom across that bay ... the consequence [] the tobacco trade of England [] at the end. The consequence of whole monopoly to France. ... You proscribe the town of Glasgow, town of Edinburgh. I mean this. They are great towns in that trade. The town of London will feel a severe blow. Then all England will ask what is the example of that measure ... I have, therefore, I hope, proved if the example does not prove effective, in other ports you cannot exercise the same [remedy].'

APPENDIX V

LETTER FROM POWNALL TO GRENVILLE (14 JULY 1768) AND GRENVILLE'S REPLY (17 JULY 1768)

From: W.J. Smith, *The Grenville Papers: Being the Correspondence of Richard Grenville, Earl Temple, K.G., and the Right Hon: George Grenville, their Friends and Contemporaries*, vol. IV (London: John Murray, 1852).

'Mr. Pownall to Mr. Grenville – Westthorp, Marlow, July 14, 1768

Dear Sir, --- The fourth edition of the Administration of the Colonies is in the press, and printed off to the last sheet. I have continued the Dedication of it to you, by a new and particular Address, stating the views of men, and the certain consequences of things as matters are at present circumstanced; also pointing out a measure, which I am from conviction persuaded ought to be taken up at least, not on the grounds of policy, but from necessity.

As the tenor of this Address may carry with it suggestions that may or may not be proper, as it may or me not be found expedient to adopt the idea of this measure, as it may or may not be proper to avow it, if taken up, I have taken the liberty to send the draught of it to you before it goes to the press. For as I sincerely mean, to the utmost of my abilities, to aid those whom this country must look up to, if ever it again returns or is forced into a spirit and temper of doing business, so I am sure I would not, in the most distant point, say or do anything respecting yourself that might be occasion of embarrassment to you.

If you conceive that any proper use may be made of bringing forward the proposal referred to, in Parliament, I shall be very glad to communicate with you upon it. I am very shy of obtruding myself or my views upon any one, especially on such who I conceive have sentiments of friendship towards me, and that is the true reason that I did not take a ride over on this errand myself; but if you wish to have a conversation on these American matters, either as to facts or opinions, I think I can not only point out how they might be taken up as concerns the business itself, but particularly how, as they respect the situation in which you stand towards them, and towards the various clanships of factions which take a part in them. Whatever is settled as the measure to be taken up, ought to be agreed upon

early, that the various grounds on which the various parties might be led to join in it, should be prepared and laid.

There is now open to you, and to you only, with consistency, a noble track of politics. I am an enthusiast for you striking into it: it would do you honour, and establish you as a Minister of this country and, what is more, it would lead to the establishing of peace and prosperity in this country.

I have a thousand things to say that I neither can nor will write about.

As to the part I shall myself take, both here and in America, I have, upon very serious and deliberate resolution, determined unalterably. In one other thing I am unalterable, my regard and attachment to you.

I have the honour to be, &c.

T. Pownall'

'Mr. Grenville to Mr. Pownall – Wotton, July 17, 1768

Sir, --- I am very sensible of the honour which you do to me, both in this and in the Address prefixed to the former edition of your Treatise upon the Administration of the Colonies, and am much obliged to you for the expression of your regard and good opinion.

You say very truly in the beginning of your present Address, that our opinions differed on several points, but we agree entirely in our wishes that the constitutional powers of this kingdom and the fixed government of laws may prevail, and the rights of the subject be established upon true political liberty.

As to the great question of our Parliament's granting to America a competent number of representatives to sit in our House of Commons, you are no stranger to the declarations I repeatedly made in the House, at the time when the repeal of the Stamp Act was agitated "that if such an application should be properly made by the Colonies to Parliament, in the

same manner as those which were made from Chester and Durham, and probably from Wales, it would in my opinion be entitled to the most serious and favourable consideration”

I continue still in the same sentiments, but I am much afraid that neither the people of Great Britain nor those of America are sufficiently apprized of the dangers which threatens both from the present state of things, to adopt a measure to which both the one and other seem indisposed.

Some of the Colonies in their address to the *Crown* against some late *Acts of Parliament* have, if I mistake not, expressly disclaimed it, and I do not think it has been kindly received in Great Britain, when it has been thrown out in Parliament, or started in any pamphlet or printed paper.

The fullest conviction of its necessity, and the hearty concurrence both of the Government and of the people, are indispensably necessary to set so great a machine in motion, as that of united all the outlying parts of the British dominions into one system.

As to what relates personally to me, I have done my duty by endeavouring to assert the sovereignty of the King and Parliament of Great Britain over all the dominions belonging to the Crown, and to make all the subjects of the kingdom contribute to the public burthens for their own defence, according to their abilities and situation.

I thought that we had the clearest right imaginable, and that we were bound, by every tie of justice and of wisdom, to do this; and I am convinced it would have been accomplished, without any considerable difficulty, if America had not received such encouragement to oppose it from *hence*, as no other people would have resisted. To this the present confusion is entirely owing, nor will it not cease if we shall run into the contrary extreme of violence on the other side. Nothing but a plan of wisdom, justice, moderation and firmness can now extinguish the flame which has so weakly and so wickedly been raised both within and without the kingdom. For my own part, I shall wait the event with concern, and shall be ready to give any assistance I can whenever I see any practicable road opened to our safety.

As to what you obligingly mention in your letter respecting me, that you would not do anything which might be the occasion of any embarrassment to me, I desire to return to you my thanks for this kind mark of your attention to me, but I do not see how I can be affected

by it, if it is fully understood and explained in your Introduction, that you speak your own sentiments and not mine; and if I keep myself at full liberty as to my own conduct and opinions, which I am determined to do, I certainly ought not to put any restraint upon yours.

I shall always be glad to receive from you in any manner which is most convenient and agreeable to you, such information upon these American matters both as to facts and opinions, as your knowledge and experience may enable you, and your kind dispositions toward me may incline you, to give to me.

I am &c &c

George Grenville'

APPENDIX VI

From *'Jackson's Arguments'* (Jackson-Franklin Correspondence) undated (1765?) in C. Doren, C., *The Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson, 1753-1785* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1947), pp. 193-6.

'No Sober wise man can doubt the constitutional Authority of Parlt to impose Taxes on every sort on every part of the British Dominions.

Because an Universal Legislature is a necessary part of every intire State, the Parlt is that Universal Legislature of the British Dominions & must be so unless it be contended that either the British Dominions do not form one Intire State or that there is some other Universal Legislature.

Whatever was the Origin of Parliament; it has so long made Laws for every part of the Dominions of England though every part has never been actually represented by members whose Election they had a share that the constitutional Right of doing cannot be called in Question but upon Principles that will overturn every Constitution in Europe.

It has in fact made such Laws at all times for the Colonies in America, & for the Kingdom of Ireland, & it likewise made Laws that bound Wales the Counties of Durham & Chester & many other parts of this Island before those parts sent Reptives to Parlt.

But thought the Constitution gives this Power to Parlt, because an Universal Legislature seems a necessary part of every well constituted State yet this Power has always been exercised with great Moderation & even Abstinence, because the same Wisdom & Discretion that always governs the Proceedings of Parlt have prescribed Moderation & Abstinence in those Cases.

It might be proved were it necessary that the Countys of Durham & Chester were once not taxed in common with the rest of the Km & Subsidys & [obscure] imposed by Parliament & when it was judged expedient to blend these Countys as well as Wales with the other Parts of the Kingdom it was judged just & politick to give them a share in the Election of that Body which when chosen was the Reptive of the whole Body of Commons of the Nation, which

indeed it was before, but with-out answering the Ends for which a Representation is designed so compleatly as it did after this Addition to it.

The reasons that induced these Additions are set forth with so much force in the Preamble that the Conts giving the Right to elect Members of the Towns & County of Chester & Durham particularly the former, that I can add nothing to them.

For reasons of the like kind this Right has at various times been communicated to many other Towns in the Kingdom, & even to the Towns of Berwick & Calais without it.

It has never been given to Ireland or to any part of the Plantations, because it has not hitherto been judged expedient to make frequent Laws respecting either or to impose any Taxes meerly for the sake of raising Money. Taxes it is true have been laid for the sake of regulating Trade, & a Post Office has been erected in America with an exclusion of all private persons from carrying on the same business, such an exclusion is necessary to the existence of a General Post office, & such a Post Office is almost necessary to the well being of a commercial State; but although this Institution may produce a Revenue, as well as Laws for regulating Trade neither can properly be called Tax Laws any more than Penal Laws can be called so, which yet may produce a considerable Revenue to the Govt.

It is on this Principle, that I have argued that Parliament should not impose *internal Taxes* on America, not that Parlt has not an universal & unlimited Power, but that Parlt for its own Sake & the Welfare of all the British Dominions will wish that Assembles may continue in America, (which they will hardly do if there be no occasion to call them together) until they supply their place by calling Members from America & that the People of the Colonys may from thence derive a Confidence in the Legislature that is essential to the well being of Govt.'

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