

Richard Chase, the son of the Rev. Thomas Chase, and other freeholders of Baltimore County presented a petition complaining of the recent election in that county, but after mature consideration the House dismissed the petition, assessing at £10:16:0 the fees and costs due to its officers, to be paid by the petitioners (pp. 218-219, 314, 636).

THE RIDOUT AFFAIR

“ This unlucky Affair of Mr. Ridout’s ”, as it is styled in these proceedings (p. 297), had its origin in the removal by John Ridout, Governor Sharpe’s Secretary, acting under orders from the Governor, of certain original militia lists and accounts or memoranda, which had been deposited by him with the Lower House for examination. Ridout had left copies with the clerk, however, which was felt by the Governor to be all that was necessary. These accounts which had been submitted some time previously to the Governor as commander-in-chief by Col. Thomas Cresap in charge of the Provincial troops on the frontier, were found to be defective and incomplete, and had been returned by the Governor to Cresap for correction. The removal of the original accounts was resented by the Lower House, which blamed its clerk for allowing the papers to be removed (pp. 365-375).

The first gun in this dispute was fired on April 30 with a loud report in the form of an order from the Lower House to its sergeant-at-arms to take into custody the body of John Ridout and bring him before the bar of the House for refusing to obey an order of the House to appear a second time before it (p. 205). On the same day the Governor sent a message to the house saying that while “ I was this Day at Dinner, your Serjeant came into my house and demanded to see my Secretary . . . he told me he had Orders from your House to take him into Custody ”. The Governor then added that as the Sergeant had just been appointed, and was doubtless unfamiliar with the duties of his office, he supposed his actions were unauthorized and therefore excusable, “ but if he acted in this Manner by any Order of your House, I can’t but expect that the reason for such an extraordinary Proceeding, without any previous Application [to me], will be communicated to me ” (p. 209). This was followed on October 3 by an address, curt and offensive in tone, from the Lower House to the Governor, declaring that as Mr. John Ridout had “ been Guilty of a Contempt of the Authority, and of a Breach of the Rights and Privileges of this House, at the Bar thereof, we did issue a Warrant to our Serjeant to take him into Custody ”. The message offensively added that “ If the Serjeant, in the Execution of his Duty, behaved in a Manner inconsistent with the Decorum that ought to be observed in your Excellency’s House while you are at Dinner . . . and that if he has been Guilty of the least Intrusion or Indelicacy, your Excellency will impute it to being just appointed to Office ”. (p. 215). The Governor on October 11, sent an indignant rejoinder to the Lower House. In this message he told the house that instead of applying itself to the two matters of paramount importance which required its attention, and for which it had been called together, the support of militia already raised for the defence of the Province, and making