

INTRODUCTION

The continuing struggle, which gained momentum with the passage of years, between the Proprietary interest, as represented by the Governor and the Upper House, and the people, as represented by the Lower House, is well brought out by the journals of the two houses for this 1762-1763 period. Summaries of legislative events which transpired at the 1762 and 1763 sessions, will be followed in this introduction by discussions by the editor, under their several headings, of the more important questions, controversial or notable for other reasons, which have already been referred to in the Letter of Transmittal, matters which either gave rise to legislation, or served merely to increase the already existing tension between the two houses. Messages between the two houses, or between Governor Sharpe and the Lower House, bring into clear relief the irreconcilable conflict between the interests of the people and those of the Lord Proprietary.

SESSION OF MARCH-APRIL 1762

The Assembly which had been elected in the early autumn of 1758, after six fruitless meetings held in the years 1758, 1759, 1760, and 1761, was prorogued on May 6, 1761, to meet again on October 3 of that year. But this session was never held, and the Governor, disgusted with what he called "the obstinate behavior" of the Lower House, decided to take his chances once more with the electorate in the hope of securing a less antagonistic house, and issued writs for a new election of delegates. This election took place in October and November, 1761, and the Assembly was called to meet on November 17. For reasons not revealed, however, it was prorogued until April 19, 1762 (*Arch. Md.* XXXII; 17). But letters from the Earl of Egremont, the King's Principal Secretary, and from General Amherst made an earlier meeting necessary, and the Governor on February 25, 1762, issued his proclamation that it meet on March 15, 1762 (*Md. Gazette*, Feb. 25, 1762). Probably because there was an inadequate number of delegates present, the Assembly did not actually meet, however, until March 17. Subsequent events show that the anti-Proprietary delegates, which composed the popular or country party had a somewhat smaller majority than in the last house, but still had an actual majority, and many of the same uncompromising leaders were in control. Figures published in the *Maryland Gazette* show that of the fifty-eight delegates composing the Lower House, thirty-five had been members of the last Assembly, eight had been members of previous assemblies but not of the last Assembly, and fifteen were new members.

The members of the Governor's Council, who also composed the Upper House of Assembly, were eleven in number at the time of the March-April, 1762, session. These were Benjamin Tasker, Sr. (1690-1768) of Annapolis, who had been a member of the Council since 1722 and its President since 1727;