

received and gave rise to violent repercussions. This was a circular letter, addressed to the lower branches of the assemblies of all the American colonies suggesting that concerted action be taken against the Townshend Acts. Even this letter did not stir up the Maryland delegates when it was first read at the opening of the 1768 session, for we find no attention was paid to it until just at the close of the session, when a message from Governor Sharpe in regard to the Massachusetts letter produced rather dramatic results. Sharpe stated that he had just received a command from the King to order the Lower House to pay no attention to the seditious Massachusetts letter and to make no reply to it. Resolutions indignantly protesting against these commands were at once passed and a petition of protest to the King was adopted. The Speaker was directed to reply favorably to the suggestion of the Massachusetts House. Sharpe then addressed the Assembly, telling the Lower House that the King had further commanded him to dissolve the Assembly, if the house were disposed to take favorable action upon the seditious letter, and he thereupon prorogued it. But prorogation came a little late, as the resolution and the petition to the King had already been adopted, and an order passed directing the Speaker to reply sympathetically to the communication from Massachusetts.

A number of matters of great importance to the Province were considered and acted upon by the Assembly at the sessions held during the 1766-1768 period. Perhaps the most important of these was the passage in 1766 of an act providing for the payment of the public debt, accumulated over a ten-year period, which had reached in amount 8,800,000 pounds of tobacco, equivalent to £55,000 Maryland current money or £41,250 sterling. Too large to be paid by public levy, provision was made for its payment by the issue of ten-year Bills of Credit in the form of paper currency. These were more than amply secured by Bank of England Stock and uninvested funds owned by the Province in the hands of trustees in London, the stock alone having a market value of over £41,000 sterling; to this as a sinking fund there were to be added the annual dividends on the stock. While the credit of some of the colonies had become so bad that Parliament had recently passed an act prohibiting the issuance in the colonies of paper money for use as legal tender, the credit of Maryland, amply secured as it was, had, and continued to have, high standing until the Revolution demoralized all American currencies. It is of interest that previous issues of Bills of Credit had been in terms of pounds and shillings, Provincial currency. This new issue of paper money, to run for ten years, was issued in terms of *dollars*, at the rate of four shillings six pence sterling to the dollar.

A number of bills relating to parishes and churches were passed, most of these providing for the erection of new churches and chapels of ease. It was