

other American assemblies what they should do, but rather to obtain an expression of their opinion, and ends with the usual protestations of "Firm confidence in the King, our common Head and Father" which was felt by "his distressed American Subjects" (ibid, *Arch. Md.* XXXII, 240-243).

No action whatever was taken upon this letter by the Lower House until near the close of the session, when a preemptory command by the King that the letter must be ignored, inflamed the Assembly. On June 20, 1768, before adjourning, Governor Sharpe, who had just received orders from the ministry in London in regard to the Massachusetts letter, sent a message to the Lower House in which he declared that the King "hath been pleased to order it to be signified to me that he considers such measure [the Massachusetts Letter] to be of a most dangerous and factious Character calculated to inflame the minds of his good subjects in the colonies, to promote an unwarrantable combination to excite and encourage an open opposition to, and denial of the authority of, parliament, and to subvert the truest principles of the constitution." The Governor was also directed to say to the Lower House that the King had no doubt that the repeated evidences of respect shown by Maryland to the Crown, Parliament, and law would cause them to show a proper resentment to this attempt to divide the colonies and the mother country, and that "by taking no notice of such letter—will be treating it with the contempt it deserves" (p. 399). What the Governor did not divulge to the Lower House, although it is certain that knowledge of it had leaked out, was that not only was his message based on instructions sent him in a circular letter from the Earl of Hillsborough, Secretary of State for the Colonies, addressed to him and the other colonial governors, dated Whitehall, April 21, 1768, but that Hillsborough had further directed him under orders from the King, that if the Governor failed in his endeavors, and "there should appear in the Assembly of your Province a Disposition to Receive or give any Countenance to this Seditious Paper, it will be your Duty to prevent any proceeding upon it by an immediate prorogation or Dissolution" (*Arch. Md.* XXXII, 239-240). The letter from Hillsborough to the Governor will also be found printed in the *Maryland Gazette* for July 14, 1768. This order of Hillsborough, commanding the several colonial governors to dissolve their assemblies if any notice were taken of the Massachusetts Letter made prompt prorogation mandatory if any notice were taken by the Lower House. Thus warned the house timed its moves most cautiously.

It is not clear what formal action, if any, the Lower House would have taken on the Massachusetts Letter at this session had this threat of the King not been made, but from the timing there is some reason to believe that a petition to the King was contemplated, or had actually been prepared, before matters were brought to a head by the message of June 20th from Sharpe to the Lower House. Be that as it may, events moved rapidly following the receipt of the message. These may be summarized as follows. The Sharpe message, communicating the commands of the King, was read on June 20th (p. 399). On the following morning it was read again and a committee headed by Matthew Tilghman was appointed to draft an answer to the Governor (pp. 405-406). Immediately thereafter, Tilghman, from the committee appointed June 8 to draft a