

## INTRODUCTION

### THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Although the Assembly sessions whose official records appear in this volume are the last sessions of the Proprietary or Provincial Assembly, the last pre-Revolutionary meetings, it would not appear from a reading of the text that this was going to be the case. It is true that on October 15, 1773 (pp. 23-24) the Lower House appointed a Committee of Correspondence and Enquiry, and that the members of the committee were the leaders of the house, and leaders in the fight for independence. But even those who believed that the colonies must some day be independent would not have sensed that independence in 1773 or 1774. The make-up of the Upper House in October 1773 was much the same as it had been in June. The members present at the opening session were Benedict Calvert, Daniel Dulany the Younger, John Ridout, George Steuart, William Fitzhugh, Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer and George Plater. William Hayward re-appeared ten days later, and two new members, Benjamin Ogle and Philip Thomas Lee came for the first time October 28 and 29, at the very end of this session. It was rumored around Annapolis that Ogle had been added to the Upper House at this time for the sole purpose of breaking a tie over the inspection bill by voting against it, but the *Maryland Gazette* for November 4 denied this emphatically. The rejection had been determined on before, even if it had not been carried down to the Lower House.

The same men who made up the Upper House were at the same time members of the Council, the Provincial Court and the Court of Appeals. They were also the well-paid holders of most of the really important Proprietary offices. Benedict Calvert and Dr. George Steuart were judges of the Land Office, Daniel Dulany the Younger was commissary-general, one of the very richest offices in the Province. William Fitzhugh was treasurer of the Western Shore, Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer was the Proprietary's Agent and Receiver-General, Ridout and Plater and Richard Lee were Naval Officers. William Hayward—of Talbot County—was Rent Roll Keeper of the Western Shore. It was estimated that in 1754 the average income of the members from their offices was £372, and that by the time the Revolution broke out, it had increased 50%, an enormous income for the day. Moreover, most of the men were also wealthy outside their offices.

In the Lower House, of a possible total of fifty-eight members, four for each county and two for Annapolis, sixty per cent had been members since before 1771. The newer members, to judge by their performances, were at least as strongly anti-Proprietary as the older ones. Because this was not the first session of the newly elected House, there was no general swearing-in ceremony like that held on June 15, 1773, nor was there now any report from the Committee of privileges and elections (*Archives of Maryland*, vol. LXIII, pp. 335, 368-369). Sometimes on the day set for the Assembly to meet there