

1967

The Political Education of Alexander Spotswood: The Legislative Sessions of 1710-1712

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THE POLITICAL EDUCATION OF ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD
THE LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS OF 1710-1712

(TITLE)

BY

JOSEPH EUGENE ORNDORFF

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1967

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Advisory and technical help has come to me from many quarters. I have to give my many thanks for assistance to several friends, especially to Miss Nancy Larmer and Miss Barbara Best who read the entire manuscript and made several useful suggestions and Mrs. Verva Rocke for typing the manuscript. To Professor Donald Tingley, whose evaluation of the present study and his willingness to give the needed assistance to the author, a special thanks.

A stimulating discussion of colonial history in Professor Richard Jellison's summer seminar in 1962 encouraged me to write about some aspect of Virginia history. A special debt is owed to Professor Richard Wade who made available to me the entire resources of the Harper Library at the University of Chicago.

To Eugene and Virginia Orndorff, my parents, whose faithful support and generous help has been extended to me for nearly 30 years, I owe perhaps most of all. The obligation which I owe to my wife, Sajona Marlene Orndorff, cannot be summarized briefly. Her constant prodding of the author was

frequently necessary to keep the work on schedule. Her lasting faith and support made working on this paper much easier.

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INTRODUCTION

Separated from England by a 3,000 mile barrier, the colonists of Virginia developed a brand of rugged individualism that permeated their political environment and encouraged them to convert the frontier of Virginia into a habitable place to live. The first Virginians, following the "critical years," were true frontiersmen. English culture added to the pragmatism of the Virginia planter gave rise to the landed gentry. By 1680 Virginia had become cosmopolitan in outlook, but obviously not urbane in practice.

The Governor was easily the most important royal official in the colony. He determined what men would receive military promotions and patronage appointments as well as who would hold the local offices of sheriff, justice of the peace, and other minor positions. But the Governor of her Majesty's largest southern colony labored under unmanageable conditions. The instructions to the Governor from the Board of Trade, approved by the Privy Council and finally the Queen in Council demonstrates how the lengthy chain of command made direct and immediate correspondence with the colony difficult. The Governor, all

too often, found himself in the unenviable position of having to protect the interests of the Crown while not appearing to usurp what "local precedents, habits, traditions, and statutes" claimed as ancient rights and privileges.¹ If the Assembly refused to enact the Crown's instructions to the Governor into law, the Governor could only lament the lack of the needed powers to adequately put teeth into these directives.

Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood,² the appointee of Governor George Hamilton, Earl of Orkney³ arrived during June of 1710 for his maiden venture in royal politics. The Governor,⁴

¹Virginians found it convenient to assume that laws passed by the House and Council and signed by the Governor and not disallowed by the Privy Council were a part of their rights and privileges. Several conflicts in Virginia revolved around the belated attempts by the Crown to repeal such laws.

²Alexander Spotswood became Virginia's Deputy or Lieutenant Governor in 1710. For the next 12 years Spotswood was the center of one colonial-imperial controversy after another. Born in Tangier in 1676, Spotswood inherited his father's military interests and pursued his own military career at an early age. He served with distinction under the Duke of Marlborough and was dangerously wounded in the Battle of Blenheim. He left her Majesty's service with the rank of Colonel. R. A. Brock (ed.), The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood (Richmond, 1882), I, vii-ix.

³Earl of Orkney, granted the sinecure of the government of Virginia in 1710, remained in England and received half of the Lt. Governor's £ 2,000 annual salary without performing personally a single act of government.

⁴Because Spotswood performed the actual duties of governor during his 12 years in Virginia it seems appropriate to refer to him as Governor.

a veteran of several wars, brought with him the traditional military mind that demanded order and respect for authority and a sound and needed plan for the defense of Virginia. The Council, after Governor Notts death in 1706, assumed the responsibility of handling important imperial and local questions. When the new governor arrived the Council became reluctant to give up any of its newly acquired prestige and power. Spotswood made repeated efforts to break the Council's grip on Virginia politics and to re-establish the prerogative of the Governor. The emerging exigencies of the moment encouraged the two bodies to reach an accommodation.⁵ This alliance became increasingly practical as the House initiated their assault on both the Council and Governor in the fall of 1711.

The administration of Governor Spotswood was dominated by a conflict between the innovative proposals of the new governor and the entrenched interests of the Virginia aristocrats. Both groups desired to control the Virginia government and promote their own ideas of the prerogative. The reform minded Tory Governor was unable to win the needed support of the Virginia planters. This interpretation should be studied since it helps illuminate many of the conflicting social and economic

⁵Jack P. Greene, The Quest for Power (Chapel Hill, 1963), pp. 3-29.

conditions of the period. But this view is not enough, for it overlooks one important fact: during the transitional period between royal domination and colonial autonomy, historic political alignments in the local power structure were taking place.⁶ Instead of a conflict between the Governor and Council, a larger and ultimately more important assault on the prerogative was being waged by the House of Burgesses on both the Governor and Council. This condition encouraged the Council to seek the aid of the new Governor. He obliged them by creating a "Governor's Party" during the second Assembly of 1712-1714 to defend the larger interests of the Crown in Virginia. The seminal assault by the House occurred during the second session of the 1710-1711 Assembly. During this short and turbulent period, the Governor and Council were both effectively checkmated by the House in their desire to dominate the Virginia government. Frustrated and disappointed by his apparent failure in legislative manipulation, the Governor dissolved the Assembly in January of 1712.

⁶David Alan Williams, "Political Alignments in Colonial Virginia" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of History, Northwestern University, 1959), pp. 87-122.

⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER I

THE DECLINE OF THE PREROGATIVE

IN VIRGINIA, 1607-1705

During the hundred years between 1603, when the Stuarts came to England's throne, and 1710, the year Alexander Spotswood assumed the governorship of Virginia, several salient political practices had undergone a momentous transition. The use of the prerogative by the English Crown and colonial governors had been sharply limited by the House of Commons and the Virginia Council.

Narrowly defined, the royal prerogative is a broad discretionary power inherent in the Crown that permits the King to act for the good of the country in the absence of statutory law. Until the Stuart period the prerogative had been unquestioned. But the Stuart kings, obsessed with Filmer's divine right theories, proclaimed themselves as God's representatives on earth. Because the demands of the Stuart kings so often came into open conflict with the rights and privileges of Parliament, a "showdown" became inevitable. The lawyers and Commons all searched the musty documents in search of

precedents to challenge the divine rule of the kings. The King stoutly maintained that Parliament met as a matter of privilege from a grant of the Crown. The Commons responded that they met as a right and by ancient privileges.

Vigorous assaults on the royal prerogative can be traced to England's earliest time, but it was only after the accession of the Stuarts that its effects had any lasting importance. The Petition of Right, the Puritan Revolution and the Glorious Revolution stand as examples of the progress made by the Commons in limiting the royal prerogative. By 1688 the House had made their point. Parliament now reigned supreme. But its failure to pass along these gains to the lower houses in the American colonies eliminated any possibility of cooperation between those two bodies. As a result, royal governors came to the colonies, were opposed, defeated, and returned home only to be replaced by another governor who had to defend the prerogative from the increasingly acquisitive colonial legislatures.

The application of the royal prerogative to the Virginia colony did not create any immediate deviations in imperial policy. Yet Virginia developed independently of the Mother Country and ultimately came to resist the entire governmental system in 1776. The physical distance between the two countries made constant and effective communications extremely difficult.

The incessant political battles between the Whigs and Tories in England made it impossible for the Crown to develop a comprehensive and consistent trade policy that recognized the interests of the Mother Country without compromising the growing economic and political development of the Old Dominion.¹

The colony of Virginia, established in 1607 to provide an exclusive market for English manufactured goods and to provide England with enough raw materials to free her from European economic dependency proved to be a costly experiment. Early in Virginia's history, tobacco was introduced as the colony's staple crop. Tobacco, however, rapidly exhausted the soil, making it necessary for the planter to acquire large tracts of land.

Indiscriminate land grabbing by the Virginia tobacco planter ran contrary to the royal interests and generated heated debates in the colony and in Parliament.² England intended to use the available land as an added inducement for settlement. Parliament's wish, however, conflicted with the immediate land

¹George L. Beer, Origins of the British Colonial System (New York, 1908), pp. 117-219; Christopher Hill, Century of Revolution (New York, 1966), pp. 43-74, 222-241, 275-290; Herbert L. Osgood, American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century (4 Vols.; New York, 1924), I, 7-41.

²W. Stitt Robinson, Jr., Mother Earth Land Grants in Virginia (Williamsburg, 1957), pp. 11-18, 27-30, 48-65; Philip A. Bruce, Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (2 Vols.; New York, 1895), I, 487-571.

needs of the planters. The method of granting 50 acres of land to every adventurer played into the hands of the land-hungry Virginians who fully exploited the system. A critic of this technique noted:

Ignorance and Knavery of Surveyors, who often gave out Draughts of Surveys, without ever actually surveying it, or even coming on the Land; only they gave the Description, by some natural Bounds. . . .³

If the metes and bounds system was not applicable to a planter he could acquire Certificates for Rights with equal ease. By going to any county court and swearing under oath that

. . . he had imported himself and so many Seaman and Passengers at Divers Times into the Country, and that he never else where made use of those Rights. . . .⁴

could claim 50 acres for each person imported. The land once acquired could then be planted or resold for a profit. By the misapplication of this device, the Crown's intentions of encouraging more people to remove to Virginia was partially nullified. Large tracts of land were taken up, "yet there is very little Improvement on it." The landowner, required to build a house and plant his land, consistently evaded this requirement by complying with the minimum requirements.

³ Henry Hartwell, James Blair, and Edward Chilton, The Present State of Virginia, and the College, ed. Hunter D. Farish (Charlottesville, 1964), p. 17.

⁴Ibid.

They matter not how small a House it is; if it be but a Hog-House it serves the Turn; and Planting, their Law reconizes the planting and tending one Acre of Ground, it is not Matter how badly. . . .⁵

Because the Virginians successfully prostituted the royal plans for land usage, urban development in the colony failed to develop, even though it was repeatedly encouraged by the Crown. More important to the planter than the creation of port towns was the ease and availability of cheap, but fertile land. Since tobacco cultivation determined the structure of Virginia's social and economic life, soil depletion became an agricultural catastrophe as well as a social disaster.⁶

Attempts to diversify Virginia's economy met the same fate reserved for urban development. Virginia remained an agrarian colony during the entire colonial period. This condition was characterized by a total dependency on the European tobacco markets and the absence of an ample labor supply. Slavery helped reduce the labor shortage but contributed to overproduction. It also diverted the planters capital from other productive investment. Costly freight charges made living in Virginia expensive and ruled out any mass immigration possibilities.

⁵Ibid., p. 19.

⁶Ibid., pp. 16-20; Robinson, Mother Earth, pp. 48-65; Thomas J. Wertenbaker, Planters of Colonial Virginia (Princeton, 1922), pp. 105-106.

Because of Virginia's concentration of tobacco, colonial manufacturing did not receive any local encouragement.⁷ This dependence on expensive European imports inevitably led to a perpetual indebtedness to the London and Bristol merchants.⁸

The subsequent demand for more local control stems from England's mistaken assumption that Virginia was a physical extension of the Mother Country and that the colony could adapt to England's changing economic and nationalistic needs. To protect the Old Dominion from the results of these false notions, the colony's Assembly began to discreetly obstruct the enforcement and application of locally harmful laws. By refusing to

⁷Sister Joan de Lourdes Leonard, "Operation Checkmate: The Birth and Death of a Virginia Blueprint for Progress, 1660-1676," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XXIV (January, 1966), 50-61. The alliance between trade and politics in London during the colonial period made relations between the Crown and colonies more complex due to the proximity of the London lobbyist to the King's Ear. Berkeley's diversification program was a radical departure in Crown-colonial and if implemented would have eliminated many of the problems later faced by Governor Spotswood in 1710-1722.

⁸Emory G. Evans, "Planter Indebtedness and the Coming of the Revolution in Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XIX (October, 1962), 517-518. "Indebtedness was such a constant companion of the Virginia planter that it seemed to be almost endemic to the plantation economy. Dependent upon unpredictable tobacco crops and markets 3,000 miles away, few planters after 1660 had managed to stay entirely free of debts during their lifetimes." Ibid. It is difficult to understand that if indebtedness plagued the tobacco planter why he resisted any and all attempts for economic diversification. The answer must lie in the Virginian's optimism that "next year" the crops would improve and the price paid for tobacco increase.

initiate laws or ignoring existing ones the Assembly successfully challenged the royal prerogative of the Governor.

This situation did not mature overnight, instead it involved a slow evolutionary process that took time, patience, and careful planning by the Virginia Assembly. The charter guaranteed to Virginians traditional rights, freedoms, and privileges identical to those enjoyed in England. The Virginia Assembly theoretically served a useful purpose for the Crown because it facilitated the implementation of imperial instructions. England saw no danger in this unique concession, but the crafty Virginians used this vehicle to accumulate and create precedents that enabled it to gradually curtail the power of the Virginia governor.

Virginia was populated by two distinct immigration waves.⁹ The first group came with the Company or shortly thereafter. They cleared the land, planted tobacco, and agitated for the revocation of the Company's charter. The second wave occurred during the few years before the Puritan Revolution and continued during the next ten years. Most of these immigrants were the younger sons of wealthy English merchants and government officials who had been disinherited by primogeniture and

⁹Bernard Bailyn, "Politics and Social Structure in Virginia," Seventeenth Century America, ed. James M. Smith (Chapel Hill, 1959), pp. 98-104.

entail.¹⁰ English families provided these sons with land owned in Virginia. In time they became the colony's outstanding leaders and most outspoken critics of arbitrary royal control.

The political alignment of the "natural leaders" with royal officialdom in the colony was both predictable and immediate. They observed how political and economic successes were intimately associated with the favor of the Crown and the patronage of the governor. In addition to currying the royal favor, marriages between the sons and daughters of the great families almost always insured political success. Daniel Boorstin, in his recent book The Americans, captures the essence of these events when he observes how "the most fertile lands and the richest widows had been taken up or were no longer available to casual immigrants."¹¹

Prior to 1718, the royal governors found the Virginia Council to be cooperative and willing to support most requests from

¹⁰ Primogeniture and entail have been described by such noted historians as Richard B. Morris, Elisha P. Douglas, and Louis B. Wright as contributing to the establishment of large estates in the hands of aristocratic families. Primogeniture means inheritance by the eldest son, while entail prohibited the disposition of a man's property in any other manner than stipulated by law. Entailed estates could be passed on to either male or female within the family. The impact of these two legal devices seem to have had little importance in Virginia. Cf. Robert E. and B. Katherine Brown, Virginia, 1705-1786: Democracy or Aristocracy? (East Lansing, 1964), pp. 80-86.

¹¹ Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans, The Colonial Experience (New York, 1958), p. 101.

the Crown. The social prestige of a planter, however, did not automatically assure him of a seat in the Council. The expansive Virginia population and tobacco economy created several "great" planters and local political and social pressures that the Crown was not prepared to recognize or handle. A group of smaller, but substantial planters and merchants began to emerge and demand a role in local as well as imperial politics.¹² These men had no immediate desire to challenge either the royal prerogative or the powers of the Councilors, but the twelve Virginia Council seats were no longer adequate for the social and political needs of the growing tobacco colony. As the Council became more exclusive, the agitation for new political positions increased. Thus, the rapid growth and importance of the House may be attributed to the demand of the smaller planters to play an increasingly larger role in Virginia politics.

During the period of Puritan control, Virginia supported the Royalist cause until threatened with military invasion. Because of her loyalty, the Old Dominion anticipated a reward after Charles II was restored to the throne. Charles exhibited a vague desire to compensate the colony, but readily surrendered to the London tobacco interests who had established themselves

¹²Greene, Quest for Power, pp. vii-x, 3-47; Williams, "Political Alignments," pp. 87-90.

securely in the new government. To the horror of Virginia the London merchants asked for no less than the complete control of the Virginia trade.¹³ In addition, Charles gave his assent to a new navigation act that placed tobacco on the enumerated list. This resulted in a drying up of what little specie circulated in the country by eliminating the illicit tobacco trade with the Dutch.

The Virginians observed how the royal prerogative, thwarted by a handful of selfish London tobacco merchants, held their successes from them. To resist the merchants in their efforts to control the tobacco trade, the colony countered by sending Governor William Berkeley to London to lobby in their behalf.¹⁴ During Berkeley's year in London he demonstrated a keen understanding of imperial-colonial economics. The Governor's two-fold plan to improve Virginia's ailing economy included encouraging economic diversification and "checkmating" the London tobacco interests who dominated the King's Ear.¹⁵

Berkeley's experiences in England demonstrated several significant departures in thought and practice between the colony

¹³ Leonard, "Operation Checkmate," William and Mary Quarterly, pp. 45-46.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 47-56.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

and Mother Country. First, local Virginia interests were secondary to those existing in England. Second, the royal prerogative could be influenced by effective lobbying. Third, Virginia must solve her economic and political problems with little or no help from the Crown. The significance of this attitude was not lost on the House of Burgesses who saw how the Crown evaded important colonial issues. The unwillingness of the Crown and Parliament to struggle realistically with these and other pressing problems only encouraged Virginians to begin looking for their own solutions to local and imperial problems.

Between 1670 and 1676, a significant political division appeared in the colony. Fluctuating tobacco prices and planter incomes, and the growing scarcity of rich top soil increased the dependence of the planters on the governor who could grant or withhold grants of land. The subsequent privileges given to the few and the exclusion of the many from the royal favor precipitated a new and aggressive political alignment that finally culminated in Bacon's Rebellion.¹⁶

The governors that followed Berkeley provided Virginians with an urgent need to re-evaluate their immediate relationship

¹⁶Thomas J. Wertenbaker, Bacon's Rebellion (Williamsburg, 1957), pp. 1-50 passim.

with the royal governors. Even after Berkeley left, the political power of the Green Spring¹⁷ interests continued to dominate the government.¹⁸

In 1680, Lord Culpeper arrived in Virginia intent on regaining an unpaid debt owed to his father by the Crown. During his administration Virginia planters took the tobacco surplus situation into their own hands. Tobacco on 200 plantations was destroyed before the rioting was forceably stopped. Between 1683 and 1689, Lord Howard of Effingham, sympathetic to James II's Catholic "restoration," arbitrarily removed several Protestant Virginia officials and replaced them with Catholics.¹⁹

Virginians saw and felt the results of arbitrary power. The Assembly, which had been nominally cooperative on matters concerning the Governor's prerogative, organized a vigorous campaign to resist further royal encroachments upon their "ancient rights and privileges." Governor Effingham responded by promptly removing truculent officials and dissolving the disobedient assemblies.

¹⁷A group of loyalists collected around Lady Berkeley to suppress grievances and obstruct legal reform. Because of the frequent meetings held at the home of Lady Berkeley the name Green Spring was applied to the gathering.

¹⁸Wertebaker, Bacon's Rebellion, pp. 55-57; Wertebaker, Government of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (Williamsburg, 1957), pp. 42-48; Wertebaker, Give Me Liberty (Philadelphia, 1958), pp. 101-105.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 119-121.

By 1689 the Virginia Assembly had lost the right to receive judicial appeals from the General Court, to choose their clerk, and to restrict the Governor's indiscriminate charges for the use of the colony's seal. The House, despite constant pressure from the Crown and Governor, preserved their right to control the colonial purse.²⁰ These constant invasions of the peoples' prerogatives taught the Virginians to guard and resist vigorously any future encroachments of their rights.

After the Glorious Revolution the English Parliament assumed control of the government and elected a King, but obstinately refused to allow Virginians a hand in guiding their own affairs. The purpose of the colony continued to be one of supplementing and supporting England's economic and nationalistic interests, and not the development of a rival political and economic force. To offset this disadvantage, the House of Burgesses, aided occasionally by the Council, quietly proceeded to develop a series of precedents that could be converted into a "quest for power" as they defended their ancient rights and privileges against royal incursions.²¹

²⁰Richard L. Morton, Colonial Virginia (2 Vols.; Chapel Hill, 1960), I, 327-329.

²¹Greene, Quest for Power, pp. 1-47; William W. Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large (13 Vols.; Philadelphia and Richmond, 1809-1823), III. This volume covers the years between 1682 and 1710. The impact of Bacon's Rebellion is clearly seen in the ensuing legislation.

The instructions issued to Governor Nicholson in 1698 indicated that extraordinary pressures were in operation behind the scenes in London; and secondly, colonial interests if properly marshalled could exert a limited degree of influence in formulating colonial policy. In 1696, the Lord of Trade and Plantations was replaced by a new advisory body called the Board of Trade and Plantations. The Board functioned to:

. . . secure information which would facilitate the development of colonial commerce and manufactures beneficial to England.²²

In London, Virginia's chief representative and lobbyist was Commissary James Blair²³ who planned to secure the removal of Governor Andros and renew a useful and timely friendship with the philosopher-advisor, John Locke. Locke, the author of several political treatises, was one of the original members of the new Board of Trade. But Locke was not able to dominate

²²Michael G. Kammen, "Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century: An Appraisal by James Blair and John Locke," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 74 (April, 1966), p. 143.

²³The partisan Scotsman, James Blair, came to Virginia in 1685 at the request of the Bishop of London, Dr. Henry Compton, as a missionary. Within four years Blair became the Bishop's first official representative or commissary in the colony. The history of Blair in Virginia is stormy. He played a major role in the removal of Governors Andros, Nicholson, and Spotswood; and was thoroughly despised by Governor Gooch who described him as a "very vile old fellow" in 1728. Farish, ed., Present State, pp. xxii-xxvi; Louis B. Wright, "William Byrd's Defense of Sir Edmund Andros," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., II (January, 1947), 47-48.

the Board with a struggle that involved the new political alignments in London versus the old.

Late in 1697 and early 1698

. . . a dual between the colonial administrators who looked to Locke for their lead and the traditionalists around Blathwayt²⁴

struggled to control the Board and shape colonial policy. The Present State of Virginia, a work by Hartwell, Chilton, and Blair,²⁵ and the equally effective Some of the Chief Grievances of the Present Constitution of Virginia, With an Essay Towards the Remedies Thereof, written by Blair specifically for Locke, provided the nucleus for attack. These two tracts illuminated the numerous "abuses committed by the governor and upper house" and pointed to the need to institute "a gradual constriction of their institutional responsibilities and privileges."²⁶ The instructions to Governor Nicholson in 1698 indicated that Blair and Locke had carried the day.

²⁴William Blathwayt, the surveyor and auditor general of the king's revenue in America, was appointed to secure a more orderly administration of colonial revenue. Blathwayt believed the colonies should be controlled by the Crown in the interest of the Mother Country. Osgood, American Colonies, I, 25-26.

²⁵The three authors were stout defenders of the prerogative and resented the turn of events in Virginia. Since no one of them were native born Virginians their views differ in many respects from the popular feelings of that colony. Farish, ed., Present State, pp. xx-xxii.

²⁶Kammen, "Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, p. 153; Board of Trade to Governor Nicholson, August 23, 1698, Great Britain, Public Records Office, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1697-1698 (London, 1905), No. 766, p. 400.

The nomenclature for colonial reform in 1698 should not be misconstrued to imply a blanket grant of power to the House of Burgesses. Blair had no desire to unleash the voice of the people, but only to realign the actions of the Governor and Council to the interests of the Crown.

Nicholson dashed any other hopes the Burgesses might have of dominating the Virginia government by ignoring the ancient rights and privileges of the Virginians. The Governor soon broke with his former benefactor, Commissary Blair.²⁷ In addition, he antagonized the Council by frequent acts of an indelicate nature in which his temper went beyond the bounds of good taste.

The House of Burgesses continued to regulate the internal polity of their house by determining the qualifications for the

²⁷ Nicholson's break with Blair apparently occurred on the way to Virginia when the latter cautioned the Governor to restrain his temper. Nicholson's instructions, drafted by Locke and Blair, were immediately circumvented. The Board hoped to increase the power of the Council and reduce the powers of the more popular House of Burgesses. "The legislative initiative of the House was to be reduced by having the governor and Council revise Virginia's laws and submit them to the corrections of the Board of Trade; this done, the House would be permitted only to accept or reject each of the altered laws." Nicholson frustrated this plan by first sending the laws to the House for revision and then to the Council. The power of the executive remained intact under Nicholson. Stephen S. Webb, "The Strange Career of Francis Nicholson," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XXIII (October, 1966), 535-536; Peter Laslett, "John Locke, . . . and the Origin of the Board of Trade, 1695-1698," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XXIV (July, 1957), 398.

Burgesses, regulating juries, and appointing committees for revising Virginia laws.²⁸ These acts, while individually unimportant, placed the House in a position that buttressed their importance in local affairs and conditioned the people to look to them for concerted leadership when conditions became intolerable.

²⁸Hening, ed., Statutes, III, 172-187.

CHAPTER II

ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD: THE TORY

AS A LIBERAL

Alexander Spotswood faced few new problems in Virginia, but the permanent issues of land grants, adequate defense, quit-rents and the church continued to plague the new governor. In addition, the Old Dominion contained her share of petty personal animosities and aggressive private aspirations that made cooperation between the Governor and colonists more difficult.

The new governor approached his job with ambition, vigor, and a sincere determination to ameliorate the economic and social conditions that kept Virginia in a state of constant political chaos. In his attempt to bring order into Virginia politics, the Governor had to deal with economic and social problems that had been festering for several years. His plans called for selective economic diversification that supplemented the needs of the people without harming the delicate imperial trade interests in England; the conversion and education of Indian children; and the encouragement of the red man to be more cooperative by granting him special trade privileges. The Governor's

plan for reapportionment of several large counties and parishes promoted a more equal distribution of the population and alleviated the financial burden of the smaller units. His plan for a new land policy encouraged regulated expansion and provided for equalized distribution of land.

A dispute over the financial responsibility for defense claims in 1711 involved the Governor and Council on the one hand and the House of Burgesses on the other in a short but acrimonious exchange that thwarted any hopes the Governor envisioned about an early settlement of the permanent issues in Virginia.

Three days after Alexander Spotswood's arrival within the Capes of Virginia, the Council met at the Capitol in Williamsburg. After the Governor's commission¹ was publicly read at the General Court House and the other oaths taken in the Council Chambers, the Governor

. . . made a courteous speech and to the Council that he was come with a full disposition to do the Queen and country service and hoped we should all concur with him that good design.²

¹The governor's commission was a formal document that granted broad powers under the great seal. It established the individual in the office and defined his powers. The less uniform instructions conveyed specific directives to the governor. It then became the task of the governor to convince the colonial assembly to enact these instructions into law. Leonard W. Labaree, Royal Government in America (New York, 1964), pp. 7-36.

²Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712 (Richmond, 1941), p. 195.

That afternoon the President of the Council,³ Edmund Jennings, entertained the Governor and Council. In the evening the Governor travelled to Green Spring, the former estate of Governor George Berkeley. There he dined with Lady Berkeley and her second husband, the future Auditor of the colony, Philip Ludwell.⁴ Beginning in July, several pressing colonial problems were taken up. Traditional questions concerning the sale of quit-rents, disposition of land grants, county and parish division, defining the limits of the royal prerogative and tobacco frauds occupied the Governor, Council and House of Burgesses for the next two years.

In 1922, Professor Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker observed:

. . . one can understand almost nothing of Virginia, its infancy, its development, its days of misfortune, its era of prosperity, its peculiar civilization, the nature of its relations to England, unless one knows the history of tobacco.⁵

³The President was the ranking member of the Council. During the absence of a Governor or Lt. Governor it becomes the responsibility of the President to lead the Council.

⁴In January of 1716, Spotswood ousted both Ludwell and Byrd from office for failing to keep accurate books.

⁵Wertenbaker, Planters, pp. 23-24.

When Spotswood came to Virginia the price of tobacco had already fallen to one pence per pound,⁶ a situation that caused many planters to be indebted to the London merchants.⁷ The ability of the planter to grow huge crops of tobacco was never in question. Production of tobacco from one man's labor averaged between 1,500 and 2,000 pounds.⁸ The reward of successful production in Virginia was a glutted European market and a corresponding decline in prices. In addition, the planter still had to pay agents' commissions, freight insurance, and export duties. To offset this calamitous situation many of the larger planters turned to the increased use of Negro slaves and experimented with limited economic diversification to provide foodstuffs and to help them reduce their general expenses.⁹

⁶Melvin Herndon, Tobacco in Colonial Virginia (Williamsburg, 1957), p. 48.

1704	--	2d
1706	--	1/4d
1710	--	1d
1713	--	3s

⁷Spotswood to the Board of Trade, August 18, 1710, Letters, I, 12; Evans, "Planter Indebtedness," William and Mary Quarterly, pp. 517-518.

⁸Herndon, Tobacco in Colonial Virginia, p. 11.

⁹Louis Morton, Robert Carter of Nomini Hall (Charlottesville, 1945), p.123.

The planter attributed his economic distress to the two shilling export duty placed on each hogshead¹⁰ of tobacco. However, the new Governor assured the country that this was not the case. Instead, the

. . . unhappy State of Europe is the Truest Cause you can assign for this Decay in your Trade; which Doubtless will Revive and flourish so soon as her Majesty has Compassed That Glorious Work she has in hand, of Restoring peace to Christendom.¹¹

The government of Virginia had two sources of income that were independent of the colony's legislature. Quit-rents, imposed as a yearly obligation on all land owners amounted to one shilling for every 50 acres.¹² The second came from an export duty of two shillings on every hogshead of tobacco exported from the colony. The resulting revenue provided the Governor with funds to meet the operational expenses of the government. Unfortunately for the Governor, the amount of royal income was not fixed; instead it was bound inextricably with the success or failure of the

¹⁰In 1657, the hogshead was standardized at 43" x 26". In 1696, it was raised to 48" x 30", or between 700 and 800 pounds. Merndon, Tobacco in Colonial Virginia, p. 18.

¹¹Henry R. McIlwaine and John P. Kennedy, eds., Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia (13 Vols.; Richmond, 1906-1915), 1702-1712, October 26, 1710, p. 241.

¹²Wertenbaker, Planters, p. 50; Beverly W. Bond, The Quit-Rent System in the American Colonies (New Haven, 1919), p. 235; Leonidas Dodson, Alexander Spotswood, Governor of Colonial Virginia, 1710-1722 (Philadelphia, 1932), Appendix III, p. 308.

tobacco market. Quit-rents were always hard to collect, but the Collector, also called the Receiver-General, William Byrd II held the job as a sinecure. Byrd appointed county sheriffs who in turn appointed deputy collectors. The frequency of bribery cannot be determined with any accuracy, but quit-rent collections rarely produced their full worth. During hard times the colony refused to assume its normal financial responsibilities and demanded the Crown use its money to provide the colony with protection and defense, but the royal fund in Virginia was almost always overdrawn.

Bad markets also encouraged illicit trading¹³ to escape paying the two shilling export duty. Heavy draughts on royal revenues and the consequent diminution of the royal income caused the Council and Governor to take immediate action. To prevent frauds and abuses¹⁴ searchers in small boats were appointed to examine vessels before they were given clearance to set sail. This proposal became law, not because Virginians were eager to pay the export duty, but because of the protection the act afforded what tobacco they exported from clipping, salting, and other devious methods of ruining good tobacco.

¹³Spotswood to the Board of Trade, August 18, 1710 and October 24, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 10, 18.

¹⁴Hening, ed., Statutes, III, 397-399.

In the past tobacco lost weight between Virginia and England. Hopefully, this act would reduce this pernicious practice.

Unfortunately the tobacco act only scratched the surface of a more complex problem in colonial-imperial trade relations. The real problem of overproduction, trash tobacco, and costly stops at every planters' pier were put off until 1713.

The sale of quit-rent tobacco in Virginia involved the Crown in a fruitless exchange of letters with the Virginia Council. In 1705, during the administration of Governor Nott, the Crown had sent instructions directing the quit-rent tobacco to be sold "by inch of candle at the respective County Courts to the highest Bidder."¹⁵ The Council responded by arguing the "inch" system to be "very prejudicial to her Majesty's Service and a Diminution of the said Revenue"¹⁶ because of the scarcity of buyers in the scattered Virginia counties. A year later Governor Nott died and the Council ignored the directive.

¹⁵ Leonard W. Labaree, ed., Royal Instruction to British Colonial Governors, (2 Vols.; New York, 1935), II, No. 790, 554; Henry R. McIlwaine, ed., Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia (4 Vols.; Richmond, 1925-1930), III, July 5, 1710, 248. Inch of candle sales is a method of auction. The tobacco is divided into lots and exposed for sale. A one inch candle is lit when the bidding begins. The highest bidder when the candle goes out is entitled to buy the tobacco. Brock, ed., Letters, I, 7 n.

¹⁶ Ex. Journals, III, July 5, 1710, 248.

In still another attempt, the Crown directed Spotswood to initiate the open auction system. The Council, unanimous in their advice to Spotswood recommended the "inch" system not be employed since it was harmful to her Majesty's revenue. Behind the scenes a clearer picture emerges that explains the Council's action. Quit-rent tobacco was sold by the Receiver-General to members of the Council and their friends before it was offered to the public. Alteration of the system would not benefit the country and therefore Spotswood informed the Board that no changes were necessary.

England's repeated insistence that Virginia conform to the "inch of candle" method to dispose of quit-rent tobacco is indicative of the Mother Country's failure to accept the reality of their totally agrarian colony. Designed for an urban area where large markets were common, the "inch" system was simply not applicable where the population proximity played such a determining role. England's repeated recommendation for the encouragement and establishment of port cities and Virginia's repeated evasions, continued to exasperate the Crown throughout the entire colonial period.¹⁷

Spotswood either realized the impracticality of the "inch" sales and gave in or he quietly encountered the ability

¹⁷ Labaree, ed., Instructions, II, No. 777, 778, p. 545; Bond, Quit-Rents, pp. 230-234, 237-243.

of the Council to maneuver around royal wishes without openly affronting or disobeying the instructions. The length of time and the backlog of problems facing the Board of Trade prevented any further action on this question.¹⁸

One of the Governor's instructions of 1710 directed him to repeal the 1705 act of the Assembly concerning the "granting, seating and planting" of land. Because Virginia was so dependent on land availability and usage, instructions of this nature caused immediate and intense concern. These instructions had first been received in Virginia during the absentia administration of Governor Hunter who had been captured by pirates. The Council undoubtedly recognized the potential threat to their interests and estates and postponed any action on the directive. After Spotswood's arrival he examined the records of past assemblies in an attempt to determine what had been done and what remained for his immediate attention. While in the Council office he uncovered a copy of Her Majesty's order for the repeal of the 1705 act. Spotswood informed the Council of his discovery and demanded an explanation for the apparent evasion of royal directives. The Council defended their actions by citing a convenient technicality in the directive. The proclamation

¹⁸Board of Trade to Spotswood, October 26, 1710, Cal. State Papers, 1710-1711, No. 449, p. 242.

uncovered by Spotswood had been signed by the Secretary of the Board of Trade, William Popple, instead of having the Seal of the Privy Council impressed upon it.¹⁹ Since the Board was only an advisory agency of the Privy Council, the directive had not the authority to repeal an act allowed by the Crown.

Several objectionable provisions in the land act of 1705 discouraged smaller planters from taking up land.²⁰ By the old provisions the patentees were required only "to seat and plant" the tract of land "within three years" or lose their patent.²¹ Spotswood emphasized these weaknesses but the Council responded with a unanimous vote that no change should be made at this time. The new Governor, after only two months' experience was neither willing nor able to challenge the most powerful group in an open dispute. Dutifully, Spotswood requested further directions from the Board of Trade.²²

The Crown had no interest in depriving the planters of either their land or their rights, but only to restore the

¹⁹Spotswood to the Board of Trade, August 18, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, o. William Popple was the Secretary to the Board of Trade.

²⁰Board of Trade to the Queen, February 22, 1711, Cal. State Papers, 1710-1711, No. 673, p. 370; Hening, ed., Statutes, III, 305-328; Labaree, ed., Instructions, II, No. 838, 839, pp. 588-589.

²¹Hening, ed., Statutes, III, 314.

²²Spotswood to the Board of Trade, August 18, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 9.

original principle for granting land. Land engrossed by speculators and tobacco cultivationists retarded the desired urban growth and promoted a retarding rural sprawl, making compact and profitable trade difficult for English merchants.

In an attempt to put the Virginians at ease, Spotswood outlined his instructions concerning the proposed change in a proclamation which he prepared and submitted to the Council for their advice. The Governor thought it would

. . . soften what appeared harsh to them . . . and to make the alteration proposed therein go down the more easily.²³

The six Councilors procrastinated, preferring to await a "fuller Council" to discuss the matter more thoroughly.²⁴

Ambiguity over land grants raised a peculiar humor among the people, one that Spotswood doubted would result in any positive action during the forthcoming Assembly. Several counties, according to Spotswood, were excluding the gentlemen from being Burgesses and electing in their place

Only persons of mean figure and character; by what I have yet heard, the business of taking up Land is the Chief Grievance they have recommended to their Burgesses to get redressed.²⁵

²³Ibid., October 24, 1710, I, 19.

²⁴Ex. Journals of the Council, III, September 15, 1710, 250.

²⁵Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 24, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 19-20.

Anticipating an unaccountable House, the Governor assured the home government that he would work assiduously to promote her Majesty's service. Failing in this, he would certainly prevent any actions that would damage the royal interests.²⁶

The Governor's opening speech to the 1710-1712 Assembly ignored any mention of land granting changes, only that "Some Acts . . . need amendments by Reason They Contain Clauses which have been Judged unfitt for the Royal Approbation."²⁷ Spotswood concluded his speech with a bit of advice and what proved to be his guiding political philosophy:

. . . and here let me Mind you, how vainly you Make laws, if they Square not either with the prerogative of the Crown, or With The Interest of That Country Which protects us.²⁸

Spotswood's straight line interpretation of the prerogative left much to be desired by the land-hungry and liberty-conscious Virginians. How could the planters in Virginia be expected to see the prerogative through the eyes of a British Governor who was sensitive to any encroachments on the royal rights? With tongue-in-cheek, the Assembly openly agreed with Spotswood's graceful speech,²⁹ but continued to practice the time tested and

²⁶Ibid., p. 20.

²⁷Journals of Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, October 26, 1710, p. 241.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Wright, ed., Byrd Diary, p. 248.

highly successful technique of delay and obstruction in all matters that affected the people's prerogative.

A related question concerning lapsed and escheated lands involved the Governor and Council in a short but pointed controversy. While sitting as a judge in the General Court, Spotswood discovered petitions for lapsed and escheated lands being directed solely to the General Court. The Governor understood clearly that the right to grant land in all forms was a royal prerogative. The defender of royal rights in Virginia expressed his amazement

. . . to see petitions presented to the General Court, and orders passed there in a stile which I thought very derogating to her Majesty's Royal Prerogative since no Court could order her Ma'ty to dispose of her own property.³⁰

This practice, encouraged during the absence of a resident governor between 1706 and 1710, Spotswood decided to halt. The Council realized that the law under which they acted had already been repealed. To avoid the appearance of a total surrender, the Council declared a general moratorium of grants issuing from the General Court, but "that all such Cases be reffered till the next General Court."³¹

³⁰Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 24, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 22-23.

³¹Ex. Journals of the Council, III, October 21, 1710, 256.

The intervening few months brought a limited victory for the Governor. After commending him for his prudent action in the matter, the Board of Trade in a letter to the Queen suggested repeal of both the 1666 and 1705 land acts.³² Significant alterations replaced the older land acts. Instead of a general requirement of "planting the tract" which was left to the discretion of the planter, Virginians were now obliged to "Cultivate and Improve Three Acres part of every fifty acres so Granted within the Term of Three Years."³³ Failure to comply with the new regulations would result in a forfeiture of the newly granted land. To limit the amount of land taken up and to control large tract engrossment, the Governor claimed the right to examine the capacity of the petitioner to plant and cultivate the grant.³⁴

³²Board of Trade to Spotswood, October 26, 1710, Cal. State Papers, 1710-1711, No. 449, 242.

³³Ex. Journals of the Council, III, December 10, 1710, 580. A Proclamation declaring her Majesty's pleasure concerning the Granting of Land.

³⁴Journals of Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, December 6, 1710, pp. 292-293. Message from Spotswood to the House. This shrewdly worded message destroyed the colonists pretensions to their so-called ancient constitutions. "I observe that, untill This Colony Came into the Liberall hands of The Monarch Lands were much more Sparingly Distributed, and Twenty-five or Thirty Acres Were Then judged to be a Sufficient Divident for one Man; Nay, and an Additional Quantity of Ten Acres has been Thought a great Reward for Some Publick Services." Ibid. There is not evidence to indicate that the speech curbed planter desires for more lands.

Certificates of Rights, sold by the Receiver-General, were in the future to be under 400 acres, unless the approval of the Governor had been previously obtained.

The proclamation of the Governor, finally read to the Assembly the day before prorogation of the first session, had already been incorporated into a bill and sent to the Governor for his signature. The bill included all of the Crown's requests and mitigated any fears Virginians had about the security of their lands. The security came from that clause stating

That all such Patents for any Lands in this Colony, formerly granted . . . shall be held, deemed, and taken, and are hereby declared to be . . . as firm, valid, and available in Law . . . forever.³⁵

This clause prevented any retroactive prosecutions for lands already patented where building, planting, and quit-rent violations had occurred.

At the close of the session the House and Council observed that Spotswood held the power in this matter and decided that it would be useless to fight the prerogative of the Crown. The new Governor accomplished his goal by forcing the Assembly to recognize the royal instructions as a valid source of current authority. This practice prevented Virginians from basing complaints on their interpretation of ancient rights, precedents,

³⁵Hening, ed., Statutes, III, 542.

and practices and prevented them from reading more or less into the law than intended by the Crown.

Spotswood's substantive views concerning Virginia's ancient rights were clearly spelled out in a letter to the Board of Trade in 1711.

. . . Since it is apparent that those Concessions of the Crown in relation to the granting of Land after being passed into Laws have been no longer considered as matters of favour, but as the right of the people. But if those Laws are once set aside, I don't think the people will be dissatisfied . . . with such conditions as her Majesty shall think proper, so long as they are not inconsistent with their Charter.³⁶

The Governor intuitively saw the problem facing imperial-colonial relations. The Governor's suggestions, however, were lost on the Board of Trade. Cajoled by prominent colonial lobbyists and pressured by interested London merchants the Board pursued a restrained policy that placed the royal governors squarely on the firing line. Thus the growing independence of the House of Burgesses and Council, fortified with precedents, only encouraged bolder action by the always alert planters and a subsequent decrease in the respect for the royal prerogative.

Another, but less successful, scheme than land regulation involved the production of iron ore and naval stores in Virginia. The tobacco colony during 1710-1711 experienced a severe

³⁶Spotswood to the Board of Trade, March 6, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 61.

depression that provoked numerous illegal practices that violated the navigation acts and royal instructions. Illegal tobacco trade, clipping of hogsheads and colonial manufacturers flourished, causing the Governor and Council to seek a remedy.³⁷ William Byrd, the colony's Receiver-General, accurately described the tobacco market and the resulting economic conditions in a letter to the Lord High Treasurer in England when he said:

Tobacco is grown of no value by reason that the vast quantity now made exceeds all consumption. The poverty of the inhabitants under such circumstances prevents them from paying money for the said quit-rents.³⁸

Byrd proposed that Virginia planters be encouraged to diversify and produce hemp, flax, rosin, and selected naval stores. To assure cooperation, Byrd recommended that quit-rents be payable in one or more of the products to be encouraged instead of the 24 pounds of tobacco heretofore allowed.

Spotswood, equally aware of the oppressive economic conditions, feared the planters would leave the production of tobacco for a more reliable cash crop. The Governor observed

³⁷Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 24, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 18-19; Spotswood to the Commissioners of Customs, May 5, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 75-80; Ex. Journals of the Council, III, October 10, 1710, 253.

³⁸William Byrd to the Lord High Treasurer, October 24, 1710, Cal. State Papers, 1710-1711, No. 437v, p. 238; Spotswood to the Board of Trade, March 20, 1710/1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 72-74.

that many planters

. . . disappointed of the necessary supplies of Cloathing for their familys in return for their tobacco, found themselves under a necessity of attempting to Cloath themselves with their own Manufacturers.³⁹

Over 40,000 yards of woolen, cotton, and linen cloth had been produced in 1710, causing Spotswood to feel that

. . . time and practice makes most things . . . Easy and habitual, it is certainly necessary to direct their Applications to some other Commodity that may be beneficial, at least less prejudicial, to the Trade of Great Brittain, and wherein the Planters too may find their Accounts.⁴⁰

Spotswood visualized two possible solutions for the economic depression in Virginia. One involved the mining of iron ore; the second, the production of naval stores.

Iron deposits had been discovered in northern Virginia and near the James River falls. Virginians characteristically ignored the mining potential, preferring instead to grow tobacco and take their chances with the erratic tobacco market. The Governor realized that some diversification would be beneficial to both the Crown and colony since it would lessen Virginia's dependence on a single crop and provide the Mother Country with an inexpensive source of ore. The Governor, believing he was helping both countries, pursued the project vigorously but was overwhelmed by colonial apathy and royal resistance to the project.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

The House of Burgesses failed to grasp the importance of limited diversification because the mines were not common to the entire colony and because Spotswood asked the House to raise the necessary capital to initiate the works.⁴¹ The House during this time was not willing to engage in anything that required an expenditure unless it produced an immediate return. After being refused by the House, the Governor turned to the Board of Trade for encouragement. In two different letters the Board flatly refused to assist the Governor. Agreeing with the action taken by the House in rejecting the plan for iron mines, the Board was

. . . not sorry the last Assembly did nothing in that matter, for unless there be other reasons than what do occur to their Lordships at present, they do not see it will be for the advantage of this Kingdom.⁴²

The Board's correspondence to Spotswood ended any hope of iron mines being subsidized by the Crown, but the Governor continued working to reduce planter dependence on the fluctuating market conditions.

Spotswood, hoping to bring the Board to the assistance of the planters, outlined the existing economic conditions that

⁴¹Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 24, 1710 and December 15, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 20-21, 41. Although the Assembly failed to act on this measure, Spotswood started his own iron mine at Germanna in 1714. German immigrants were used as skilled workmen.

⁴²Popple to Spotswood, June 29, 1711, Cal. State Papers, 1710-1711, No. 911, 569.

were promoting low tobacco prices in the colony. Always apprehensive about growing colonial economic self-sufficiency and seeing a causal relationship between the increased number of Negro slaves, overproductions, and market glutting, Spotswood saw in the production of naval stores a partial cure for Virginia's economic ills if only the Crown or the colony would support his plan.

Spotswood challenged the English tobacco merchants who frequently profited from tobacco production while the Virginians lived in misery, to "extend their thoughts a little further than what concerns tobacco, which they understand, but have no Enterprising Genius for new Adventurers."⁴³ The Governor's challenge was ignored. Royal objections, stemming no doubt from the loss of the export duty revenue and the effective pressure of the interested London tobacco merchants, halted further efforts to diversify the tobacco colony in America.

Thus, Spotswood's efforts to change the vital source of Virginia's historic cash crop met failure, not because the plan was poorly conceived, but because Virginians, English merchants and officials, fearful of change, closed their eyes and purses to a bold adventure in selective economic diversification

⁴³Spotswood to the Board of Trade, March 20, 1710/1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 73.

designed to alter the colony's economic pattern and reduce its dependency on tobacco.

Before the Assembly met in 1710, Spotswood directed a letter to the Board of Trade informing them of the existence of "partys and Factions" in the country. While not alarmed, the Governor felt a major source of the friction was caused by the need to divide old parishes and erect new ones.⁴⁴ Virginia had three political divisions. The smallest, the precinct, was a division of the parish, which was a division of the county.⁴⁵ Local parish government provided the colonists with an adequate administration of religious affairs, such as selecting ministers and promoting healthy religious attitudes within the parish.⁴⁶

Division of a parish in practice was carried out by the Assembly who instructed the county court to make the necessary boundary alterations. After 1643, a continuous stream of grievances were received by the General Assembly requesting boundary changes and the creation of new parishes. The most common complaints involved supplying minister and building or

⁴⁴Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 24, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 20.

⁴⁵Hening, ed., Statutes, I, 224.

⁴⁶Philip A. Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (2 Vols.; New York, 1910), I, 55.

repairing churches. But neglect, caused by the extraordinary size of the parish, was the fundamental grievance.

Sensitive to these complaints, Spotswood offered to step in as a "disinterested Judge" to ameliorate parish problems concerning boundary changes. Authority for this action, Spotswood informed the Board of Trade, came from her Majesty's instructions granting "to her Governor" the power to "bound and settle Parishes as he shall think fitt."⁴⁷ For the Governor to derive this interpretation, he read very narrowly the last sentence of his instructions that read:

And you are to take care that the parishes be so limited and settled as you shall find most convenient for the accomplishing this good work.⁴⁸

Spotswood recalled for the Board how previous Governors had allowed the Assembly to handle this matter but he was resolved never to "suffer any encroachments of her Maj'ties Prerogative." After a full discussion of the problems facing the parishes and the unhealthy precedent continuing legislative action would create, Spotswood closed his desideratum by noting that he "would very unwillingly be engaged in a dispute with the Assembly unless it be thought worth the contending for."⁴⁹

⁴⁷Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 24, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 20.

⁴⁸Labaree, ed., Instructions, II, No. 694, 482-483.

⁴⁹Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 24, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 20.

The reason for the Governor's concern in this matter stemmed from the wretched condition of the clergy in Virginia. Spiritually the clergy had a tendency to lapse into conditions of licentiousness and frivolity. These conditions were stimulated in part by the low wages paid to the ministers and the ability of the vestries to completely dominate the livelihood of the clergy.⁵⁰

The salary of a minister fluctuated between 16 and 20,000 pounds of tobacco annually, or £ 80 to £ 100.⁵¹ His tenure was rarely secure as most parishes refused to present their minister to the Governor for induction.⁵² Spotswood realized few changes were likely in the system until the low prices paid for tobacco improved and the planter could again provide for their own needs. The conditions preventing changes for the ministers also eliminated any hope of parish alterations.

⁵⁰Dodson, Spotswood, pp. 189-196; Spotswood to the Bishop of London, August 16, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 4-5. Cf. Bruce, Institutional History, I, 206-207.

⁵¹Dodson, Spotswood, p. 189; Bruce, Institutional History, I, 145-162.

⁵²Induction of a minister conferred tenure to him. His removal from a parish after induction could only be secured by legal action. Most parishes preferred to keep their ministers from year-to-year, renewing their contracts annually. Farish, ed., Present State, pp. lxxv-lxxix, 65-68. Bruce, Institutional, I, 138-139; Spotswood to the Bishop of London, March 6, 1710/1711, Brock, ed., Letters, pp. 66-67.

The larger the parish was, the smaller the individual financial responsibility of the planter. Consequently, the inhabitants of the outlying areas, often 40 miles from their court house and church, had to bear the inconveniences until the Assembly decided upon a remedy.⁵³ Not wanting to antagonize the majority of voters in their county and jeopardize their next election the Burgesses avoided any constructive action involving parish boundaries.⁵⁴

A related question concerned the division and readjustment of counties. Essentially the inconveniences attending the parishes were characteristic of the counties. Reapportionment in colonial Virginia, as in current times, drove fear into the hearts of those Burgesses who would lose their political support by any boundary changes. The successful battle of the Burgesses against reapportionment was typified by "the private interests of particular Members of the House of Burgesses." After securing the "unanimous Concurrence of the Council," who were not popularly elected, Spotswood proposed the division of several counties between the York and the James Rivers.

⁵³Spotswood to the Board of Trade, December 15, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 38-39.

⁵⁴Williams, "Political Alignments," chap. iii.

The proposed change would make

. . . them all very commodious for the Inhabitants, and pretty near on Equality in their Tithables and consequently in their County Levys and publick Charges.⁵⁵

On the fifteenth business day of the Assembly, the Governor addressed a message to the House in which he presented a long and complex plan for altering the boundaries of Charles City, James City, New Kent, Warwick, and Elizabeth City counties.⁵⁶ Within four days the House had refused to act on the Governor's proposal but designed one of their own for the Northern Neck.⁵⁷ This action by the House brought a tersely worded message from the Governor. In it he chastized the House for rejecting his proposition and failing to explain their actions. The Governor, struggling to find a useful precedent to justify his involvement in the controversy, seized upon the 1684 commission of Lord Effingham, in which the governor was empowered to bound counties and parishes.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Spotswood to the Board of Trade, December 15, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 36.

⁵⁶ Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, November 10, 1710, p. 263. Message of Spotswood to the House.

⁵⁷ Ibid., November 14, 1710, p. 267.

⁵⁸ Ibid., November 27, 1710, p. 281.

Hoping to end the conflict in a display of resolute vigor, he sent an address to the House:

And now Telling you That I shall Appoint and Authorize fit and unconcerned persons to Settle The Bounds Between Northumberland and Lancaster Countys⁵⁹ I expect That you forbear for The future to Begin upon the Dividing of Either Countys or parishes untill her Majesty shall be graciously pleased to yield up That Branch of her Royal Prerogative into Your hands.⁶⁰

In a letter, Spotswood reviewed the entire parish-county question for the Board of Trade. The Governor admitted that his instructions did not contain any specific authority to fix the bounds for counties, but questioned the propriety of continued Assembly action in this matter since it was so detrimental to her Majesty's prerogative. The Governor asked the Board for specific instructions since he would be forced to engage "several men of Considerable figure in the Government,"⁶¹ if he pursued the matter. If the Board remained silent on this question, Spotswood illustrated how the counties would be forced to continue under their present hardships because:

⁵⁹ In the Northern Neck.

⁶⁰ Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, November 27, 1710, p. 281.

⁶¹ Spotswood to the Board of Trade, December 15, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 39.

. . . their Assembly's who, besides their private interests, are so fond of their old Customs and Constitutions that they are afraid to make any alterations, tho apparently for the better.⁶²

During the next session of the Assembly, Spotswood's proposals for boundary alterations were allowed to die on the table. Beginning in November of 1711, a series of circumabulatory resolves by the House on the "said Proposition" of the Governor were referred for future action. In December, the House in a sarcastic message to the Governor informed him that no action would be taken on the matter

. . . because we would endeavor to avoid all Contests with the Royal Prerogative altho that power hath been continually Exercised here by the Legislative Authority.⁶³

Again one of Spotswood's forward looking proposals to initiate a positive change in Virginia was frustrated by the lack of planter support and the skillful maneuvering of the House. The House, using its right not to act, sidestepped all disagreeable suggestions offered to them by the Governor and placed themselves in the enviable position of protecting the Crown from prejudicial changes in the Constitution of Virginia.

⁶² Ibid., p. 37.

⁶³ Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, December 21, 1711, p. 344. Message of the House to Spotswood.

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATION

The peaceful setting that marked the opening and close of the first session of the 1710-1712 Virginia Assembly rapidly deteriorated as the complicated issues of November and December, 1711 became increasingly complex. Governor Spotswood had recently taken numerous defensive measures to protect the colony from marauding Indians and rumored French invasions. To finance these measures Spotswood expended money from quit-rents and tobacco export duty funds. In addition, he successfully encouraged other Virginians to extend their credit to the colony during the crisis. The trouble between the Governor and the House erupted when the latter rejected numerous public claims presented to it for reimbursement. The continued existence of low tobacco prices and Queen Anne's War exerted undue pressure on the Assembly and created conditions that made potential acrimonious exchanges inevitable.

Events in Europe played a material role in Virginia affairs between 1710 and 1711. In 1705, a group of war-Whigs

broke the Tory majority in the House of Commons. By 1708, they completely dominated the lower house. Fate, however, dealt them a severe blow when they could not end the war. The war-weary country returned to the Tories in 1710. Queen Anne systematically dismissed her Whig ministers one by one and replaced them with Tories. Sunderland, the Secretary of State for the Southern Province, was replaced by Lord Dartmouth.¹ The continued rivalries of 1710-1711 between Tories and Whigs caused the Board of Trade to move cautiously, if at all. The success or failure of the Board rested on its ability to avoid being involved in the political quarrels between the Whigs and Tories. It accomplished this by diverting its attention from the colonies to the plans for the future Treaty of Utrecht.² As a result, colonial business was postponed and increased delays in vital correspondence between the Board and the royal governors occurred.

¹Dartmouth to Spotswood, July 31, 1710, Cal. State Papers, 1710-1711, No. 327, p. 151. Spotswood to Sunderland, August 18, 1710 and Spotswood to Dartmouth, December 15, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 13, 43. A battle-by-battle account of the conflict may be found in A Collection of the Parliamentary Debates in England . . . (London, 1741), Vols. I-VI. Located in the Berlin Collection at Harper Library, University of Chicago. The underhanded methods used to discredit the Whigs and the opportunistic Tories feeding on the Whig failure to end the war is clearly illustrated. A more detailed account of Parliament's inner workings is William Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England . . . (London, 1811), Vols I-VII.

²Cal. State Papers, 1710-1711, p. xx.

This untimely situation enabled the colonies to pass laws on a temporary basis and enjoy their benefits until the acts were disallowed. But as the time-lag was so great between enactment and disallowance, the damage to the prerogative was a fait accompli. In matters of defense this delay and general ignorance of colonial affairs became critical.

Virginia's intermittent interest in Queen Anne's War resulted in part from Sieur de Pierre le Moyne Iberville's projected conquest of the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland, and New York and his plan to annex them to his own empire in Louisiana.³ The constant pressure applied by the French in the north and the continued threat of hostile Indians from the north, west, and south worried the unprepared Virginians. The tobacco colony, protected by the Carolinas, ignored the realities of their enemies encirclement of them and lagged behind in defense preparations.

Upon Col. Spotswood's arrival, he was shocked to find the colony without adequate military defenses.

³ Le Seur, founder of Louisiana, constantly harassed the southern colonies after 1698. Verner W. Crane, The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732 (Ann Arbor, 1959), pp. 71-74.

I would Willingly Whisper to You The Strength of Your Country and The State of Your Militia; Which on the foot it Now Stands is so Imaginary A Defence, That we Cannot too Cautiously Conceal it from our Neighbors and our Slaves.⁴

The repeated and bloody incursions of the Indians in the neighboring North and South Carolina affected Virginians only indirectly. They sympathized with the Carolinians and occasionally sent them aid, but made little attempt to prepare the colony for war. The tobacco colony experienced no shortage in commissioned colonels, captains, and majors--most of the commissions having been purchased or acquired through influence.⁵ But the country's militia was a pitiful example of obsolescence.

"An Act for settling the Militia,"⁶ passed in 1705, provided that all able males from 16 to 60 serve on horse or foot in the country militia. Each soldier was to provide "himself with arms and ammunition,"⁷ attend both the yearly and quarterly musters. The act also "provided, that No soldier on horse or foot, be fined above five times in one year for neglect in

⁴Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1707-1712, October 26, 1710, p. 240. Message of the Governor to the Assembly; Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 15, 1711, Brock, ed. Letters, I, 117.

⁵Ex. Journals of the Council, III, September 15, 1710, 252.

⁶Hening, ed., Statutes, III, 335-342.

⁷Ibid., p. 338.

appearing."⁸ Another act passed in 1705 provided for the "security and defence of the country in times of danger."⁹ It authorized the Governor to call out the militia, impress provisions, and fit men and artificers. The Governor's use of this power was restricted to an enemy invasion by land or sea, or upon any insurrection.¹⁰ The Security Act of 1705 expired in 1708, but was re-enacted during the first session of the Assembly in 1710 for two additional years because of Spotswood's insistence.¹¹

The willingness and ability of the Crown to assist Virginia in creating and maintaining an adequate defense program was hindered by the shortages caused by the war and the government's ignorance of colonial military needs.

A case in point is the correspondence between the Board of Ordinance and the Board of Trade. The Ordinance department, in the process of preparing estimates for the coming year, complained that "great quantities of ordnaces stores" had been shipped to "H. M. Plantations . . . in America, for which we

⁸Ibid., p. 339; Dodson, Spotswood, pp. 202-206.

⁹Hening, ed., Statutes, pp. 362-367.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 362-367.

¹¹Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, December 9, 1710, p. 298; Spotswood to the Board of Trade, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 58.

received no satisfaction, we desire your Lord'ps will please let us know if there be any demands. . . ."¹² No doubt there was an urgent demand for military stores. All of the colonies pleaded with the home government to supply her with guns, powder, and ammunition. But the cost-conscious Board of Ordinance in an appeal to the Queen informed her that "Parliament has not given this Office any money for such a service."¹³ In the opinion of the Board of Ordinance defense was the responsibility of the colony and not a proper charge of the Crown. In a later correspondence the Board of Ordinance resisted the attempts by Spotswood to exchange "dead" gun powder for new. "We are humbly of the opinion that if it be decayed, it is for want of care in keeping . . . and that it would be a very ill president to cause such powder to be exchanged."¹⁴ The Board of Trade supported Spotswoods' plan.¹⁵ The Ordinance office was fearful of

¹²Board of Ordnance to the Board of Trade, October 26, 1710, Cal. State Papers, 1710-1711, No. 443, 240. In 1702, £ 3,388 2s 4d worth of ordinance was sent to Virginia, for which payment was not received. Board of Trade to Dartmouth, Mary 15, 1712, Cal. State Papers, 1711-1712, No. 417, 283.

¹³Board of Ordnance to Queen, August 7, 1711, Cal. State Papers, 1711-1712, No. 69, 69.

¹⁴Dartmouth to Board of Trade, Report of the Board of Ordnance, November 30, 1711, Cal. State Papers, 1711-1712, No. 1991, 170.

¹⁵Board of Trade to Dartmouth, December 6, 1711, Cal. State Papers, 1711-1712, No. 204, 172.

the "president" such action might establish but apparently ignored the consequences of the colonies being lost for want of ordinance for defense.

In one other area the Crown's ignorance of Virginia's situation can be demonstrated. In the absence of a guardship for the Virginia coasts, Spotswood was of the opinion "that a small fort built upon Point Comfort would be of good use."¹⁶ It would impress the enemy, create a port for retreat, and provide useful work for a company of invalids Spotswood proposed to have the Crown send to Virginia to build the fort. The charge for the fort the Governor said, were small but that poor crops and an unwillingness of Virginians to give assistance made it improbable that the colony would defray the charges. Instead Spotswood requested funds be diverted from the quit-rent revenues to cover the expense.

Two months later the Board of Trade, in what appeared to be a logical response to Spotswood's request, replied:

You say the charge thereof will be but small. If so, and if the same be so much for the security of the inhabitants and their shipping, we cannot doubt but they will readily contribute to that work.¹⁷

¹⁶Spotswood to the Board of Trade, August 18, 1710, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 11.

¹⁷Board of Trade to Spotswood, October 26, 1710, Cal. State Papers, 1710-1711, No. 449, p. 242.

Point Comfort provided only for the security of sea-boing trade and not defense for the Indian-plagued planter on the frontier. The Crown, by distinguishing between Crown and colony charges, unwittingly provided the Virginians with a new strategy in their assault on the prerogative. During this pivotal period the House began to distinguish between country and crown charges. To the House of Burgesses, the building and maintaining of a fort on this site was clearly a Crown responsibility, since the fort would protect her trade!

The continuing low tobacco prices and Queen Anne's War exerted unprecedented financial pressures on the Assembly. The ensuing conditions increased the potential threat for heated exchanges between the Governor and the House of Burgesses over the financial responsibility for the country's defense.

The Governor opened the second session of the Assembly with a detailed analysis of the disorders in North Carolina and a brief summary of the measures taken to contain the Indians. Other matters facing the present Assembly included reimbursement of public claims and the desperate poverty of the clergy. The important part of the message involved the threat of war. Spotswood carefully emphasized his care in initiating only "frugal projects" for the country's defense. Spotswood appealed to the Assembly to continue that spirit of cooperation displayed

during the last session and to give him support in furthering his program of defense.¹⁸

Unfortunately, the following 48 meetings of the Assembly were marred by a struggle between the Governor and Council on one side, and the House of Burgesses on the other, in an active battle concerning the right to amend money bills and the reimbursement of expenses not specifically authorized by the Burgesses. The source of the conflict came from two related problems faced by the colony--Indians and defense.

Spotswood's Indian policy was both comprehensive and complete. In an attempt to continue peaceful relations with the tributary tribes, the Governor proposed to educate their children at the college. Each tribe was to send two children. In return, the Governor remitted to them "their whole Tribute of Skins as long as they kept their children at the College."¹⁹ In addition to securing peaceful relations, the Governor anticipated two corollary benefits for Virginia: The first, and most important, involved the transformation of young Indian savages into English-speaking Christians. Secondly, the Indians once

¹⁸Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, November 8, 1711, pp. 301-303. Message of the Governor to the Assembly.

¹⁹Spotswood to the Board of Trade, November 17, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 121-122; Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, November 8, 1711, p. 302.

converted to the "true faith" would be more cooperative. The twin benefits of this program had much to recommend it for acceptance. In letters to the Board of Trade,²⁰ Lord Dartmouth,²¹ and the Bishop of London,²² the Governor astutely lobbied for approval and financial assistance.

By November 20, 1711, the first Indian children arrived in Williamsburg to be educated. Their presence created a dilemma for the Governor. The House had failed to provide any funds for this project and the Boyle fund²³ was not adequate for a long range program. If it became necessary to return the children to their parents, it would expose the colony's weakness to the Indians. The Governor presented this problem to the Council, who recommended encouragement to

. . . this good disposition of the Indians, and that all the said Children be admitted into the College and receive the education of which they seem so desirous, not

²⁰Ibid., pp. 121-123.

²¹Spotswood to Dartmouth, November 11, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 124-126.

²²Spotswood to the Bishop of London, November 11, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 126-127. Spotswood is critical of the previous policy towards the Indians. How could a sincere Christian country that is interested in saving souls have ignored the Indian for so long? The Governor planned to eliminate all of Virginia's Indian troubles by Christianizing and educating the red man.

²³The naturalist and philosopher Robert Boyle left a legacy to the college of £ 200, apparently for the education of Indian children.

doubting but the College will be enabled to support that charge either by an Exhibiton from the General Assembly or by . . . private Charity.²⁴

Any act of faith that anticipated support from the House of Burgesses proved to be unwarranted. Within a short time the Council learned that the Burgesses were not willing to carry the financial burden of Indian education. The position of the House became abundantly clear; expenditures of this nature were not the responsibility of the country but of the Crown. What to do with the hostage Indian children was not settled until 1714, when the Indian Company was established to regulate the Indian trade and educate the children at Fort Christ-anna. In the meantime, the expenses came from the diminishing Boyle fund.

The House of Burgesses found it convenient to distinguish between country and Crown charges when Governor Spotswood's emergency defense expenditures were presented for reimbursement. During the 1710 session of the Assembly, Spotswood made repeated efforts to alert the House of the country's "naked Condition." But the expenses appeared to be greater than the danger and the House refused to do any more than re-enact the 1705 Security Act.²⁵

²⁴Ex. Journals of the Council, III, November 20, 1711, 291.

²⁵Spotswood to Dartmouth, October 15, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 120; Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, October 26, 1710, p. 240; Hening, ed., Statutes, III, 362-367.

Most of the Virginia Indians willingly submitted to English authority, but the Iroquois provided a dangerous exception.²⁶ On September of 1711, the Tuscaruro Indians committed a series of savage attacks, killing over 120 people in North Carolina. Unable to defend themselves, Governor Hyde of Carolina implored Virginia to send aid. Because of Spotswood's sense of duty to a sister colony, several detachments of the Virginia militia were dispatched to help the stricken colony. This move was not entirely a selfless one, since it thwarted any attempt of the Virginia Indians to join the raiding savages.²⁷

Spotswood and the Council, in 1711, planned to reorganize the entire Virginia militia. In recent instructions the royal governors had been directed to place their militias on a ready basis.²⁸ All of the English colonies were instructed to "be kept under arms" to oppose "the enemy." The enemy in this instance was France, but Spotswood knew a good opportunity to ready the militia when he saw one. To implement these

²⁶Dodson, Spotswood, p. 70. "The Pamunkey, Chicahominy, and the Nansemond were Algonquian, survivors of the powerful Powhatan confederacy. The Nottoway and Meherrin were Iroquoian, and were thus related to the Tuscaruro of North Carolina and to the redoubtable Five Nations to the north." Ibid. Cf. Spotswood to the Board of Trade, July, 26, 1712, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 167.

²⁷Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 15, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I. 117.

²⁸Ex. Journals of the Council, III, August 16, 1711, 282.

instructions the Council and Governor ordered a general muster, construction of a spy sloop, development of a warning system, and a battery of cannons to be sent to Point Comfort, Tyndal's Point, and the mouth of the York River.²⁹ In addition, ten pieces of ordinance were to be mounted on field cannons and the people to operate them pressed into service.

After the massacre of September 22nd,³⁰ the proposal for militia reform was no longer the Governor's rhetoric but immediate necessity. By virtue of the re-enacted security act and in the absence of the Assembly, Spotswood carried out defensive operations during the alarm. Any further trade with the "Tuscaruro or any other Indians for any Sort of Commodity" was prohibited until further notice. This resulted from information that the Indians were "better provided with Ammunition than We our selves."³¹

The Governor and Council, aware of the enormous expense of an all out war, had no wish to prosecute hostilities against the entire Tuscaruro nation. When they were informed that

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰The brunt of the attack involved the colony of Swiss and Palatines located on the Neuce and Pamlico Rivers. The leader of the settlers, Baron de Graffenried, removed to Virginia after the massacre. Spotswood to the Board of Trade, October 15, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 115-117, 116 n.

³¹Ibid.

several Tuscaruro villages had not been involved in the recent massacre, the Council anxiously dispatched a representative to the Indian tribes to arrange for a treaty. As an added inducement for Indian cooperation, safe conduct and the restoration of full trading privileges were promised. The Council and Governor gave illuminating evidence that selective alliances with peaceful Indians should be encouraged with more than promises. If the Indians would "carry on a War by themselves against the Nations concerned" a reward of

. . . six blanketts for the head of each man of the said Indians killed by them, and the usual price of Slaves for each Woman and Child delivered as Captives³²

made obedience to the term profitable as well as bloody.

Indians were forbidden to enter the English settlements. This practice became necessary to prevent Indian discovery of the disorganized and weak condition of the colony. Regulation of the Indian did not stop at the colony's edge. To determine the Indian's tribe, all Virginia tributary Indians were required to wear identification badges.³³

The Virginia representative sent to talk with the peaceful Tuscaruros returned with an agreement to meet on September 7th to discuss terms of a treaty. In order to display a semblance

³²Ex. Journal of the Council, III, October 24, 1711, 287.

³³Ibid.

of unity and strength, the entire militias of Isle of Wright, Surry, and Prince George counties were mustered and put under arms. When the Indians arrived at the Nottoway village to negotiate "they were not a little surprized to find there a great body of men in such good order."³⁴ Spotswood made demands and offered his terms. Unfortunately, the Indian representatives had no authority to conclude a treaty without the approval of the entire nation. Tentative agreements were reached and the Indians promised to return with an answer by November 20. However, a delay caused by the illness of an Indian delegate prevented the meeting on the scheduled date. As a result, both the House and Council declared war on the entire nation of Tuscaruros and their allies. When the Indians finally arrived the treaty was signed, but the problems from the untimely delay contributed to the growing conflict between the Council and the House of Burgesses.

Defense in Virginia proceeded on two different levels during this session of the Assembly. The Governor and Council tried to secure Indian allies, while the Burgesses reflected "a good Indian is a dead Indian" policy. In a message filled

³⁴Spotswood to the Board of Trade, November 17, 1711, and Spotswood to Dartmouth, November 11, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 121, 123. In the letter to the Board the size of the detachment is listed at 600, while in the letter to Dartmouth it is given as 1,600.

with lofty praise of the Governor's recent actions, "prudent conduct" and "Superlative goodness" the House thanked the Governor for his "timely" efforts.³⁵

Two days later the parlor manners disintegrated when the Governor sent a message to the House demanding the country be prepared for war.³⁶ In a polite but innocuous note, the House inquired about what had been accomplished "that we may be the better Enabled to take proper measures for acting effectually in Concurrence with your Honour therein."³⁷ The Governor informed them of the impending treaty negotiations with the eight Indian villages, but disappointedly added, the Indians had not yet returned with any definite commitments. Spotswood took this opportunity to lecture the House for their inefficacy to make arrangements for implementing any commitments he might make with the Indians and failing to provide immediate funds to deal with the remaining Tuscaruros. In the absence of a firm treaty with the Indian towns the House, with a minimum of debate,

³⁵Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, November 21, 1711, p. 314. Address to Spotswood from the House.

³⁶Ibid., November 23, 1711, p. 316. Message to the House from Spotswood. The Governor realized the Indian threat was not considered critical by Virginians. Spotswood's fear is that Virginia will be caught with an inadequate defense.

³⁷Ibid., November 24, 1711, p. 318. Message to Spotswood from the House.

resolved to declare war against the Tuscaruro and their allies. In a flourish of false encouragement, the House assured the Governor that it would "Exert its Self to the utmost in giving Such Speedy and effectual Supply as may Enable him to prosecute and carrye on the Said Warr."³⁸ The House requested the Governor to submit an estimate of expenditures for carrying out the war for six months. Concurrence by the Council declaring war came on November 28th and preparations for war began--or so Spotswood thought.³⁹

Costs for carrying on the expedition were estimated to be £ 20,000. In raising this sum the earlier cooperation within the Assembly turned into a bitter legal struggle over the right of the Council to amend a House-initiated money bill.

On December 3, 1711, the House resolved that duties be placed on goods imported and exported from Virginia. Estimated revenue from these sources amounted to £ 15,000. To raise the remaining sum a committee studied the possibility of an additional

³⁸ Ibid., November 27, 1711, pp. 319-320.

³⁹ Ex. Journals of the Council, III, November 28, 1711, 291-292. Arrangements calling for a conference between North Carolina and Virginia and "prudent endeavors be used for engaging those towns of the Tuscaruro Nation that refused to join in the late Massacre . . . and for securing their friendship upon the proposals offered them at Nottowaytown," was called for by the Council. Ibid.

duty being laid on tobacco.⁴⁰ By December 6, a bill entitled "for granting to her Majesty certaine Dutys upon Severall goods and Merchandizes for carrying on a Warr against the Tuscaruro Indians, their Adherents and Abettors" received a first reading.⁴¹ The authors of the act ignored three important implications of the proposed bill: First, the burden of the war would fall heavier on the English merchants than on Virginians. Second, the revenue from these sources were anticipated, not actual or immediate. Finally, the bill was of an extraordinary nature and thus required the special approbation of the Crown before it could go into effect.⁴²

⁴⁰Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, December 4, 1711, pp. 324-325. The Committee of Propositions and Grievances estimated the revenue derived from the duty bill to be £ 15,500. The list illustrates how Europe was being maneuvered into paying for Virginia's defense. A six per cent duty was placed on all goods imported from Europe. Exported pork paid 2s 6d per barrel. Exported pitch paid 1s 6d per barrel. Exported corn and doe skins paid 3d. Exported wheat and buckskins paid 6d. Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., December 8, 1711, p. 327.

⁴²Spotswood to the Board of Trade, December 28, 1711 and May 8, 1712, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 130-131, 151; Labaree, Royal Government, pp. 227-230. Merchants engaged in trade with the colonies always managed to insure themselves against colonial laws that were harmful to their interests. All acts of an unusual and extraordinary nature and importance required a suspending clause that made the act inoperative until the crown approved the bill. The 1713 tobacco act of Virginia, put into operation by Spotswood without the suspending clause, came under attack in 1717 and was repealed.

On Saturday, December 8, the Indians delayed by two weeks arrived to complete the treaty between their towns and Virginia.⁴³ Since a treaty of this nature did not involve the House, they were not consulted. Problems arose when the Governor realized the Crown and the country had to pay the inducements promised to the Indians.

While the Governor and Council prepared a treaty with the eight towns of the Tuscaruro, the House on December 8th continued to prepare for a war against the entire nation of Indians.⁴⁴ Not recognizing the distinction between peaceful Indian allies and the savage Tuscaruros, the House reported another bill to "raise a land force" against the Indians.⁴⁵ On December 12, the bill passed the House and was sent to the Council.

Before the House could pass the controversial duty bill, a message from the Governor inquired about the promised money to

⁴³Ex. Journals of the Council, III, December 8, 1711, 293-295; ibid., December 11, 1711, p. 295.

⁴⁴Spotswood to the Board of Trade, December 28, 1711, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 130-131. Spotswood anticipated favorable support from the House since the treaty would lessen the charges of any offensive measures. To the Governor's chagrin the House ". . . at the very time these Negotiations were on foot they went on with their bill for raising the Twenty thousand Pounds, and without signifying any dislike to or taking any notice of the Treaty, appropriated the Fund for carrying on a War against the whole Tuscaruro Nation in general, and insisted strongly on it even after the Treaty was laid before them." Ibid.

⁴⁵Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, December 6, 1711, p. 327.

be used against the outlaw Tuscaruros. He reminded the House of their promise of November 28th to provide "timely Supplys."

On the same day, a written message to the House from the Council requested several amendments to the duty bill before they gave their approval. The request, while not unusual, created obvious concern. To insure a full debate on this matter every "Member then failing in his duty of Attendance be lyable to ye Censure of this House."⁴⁶ On December 14, amendments by the Council and agreed to by the House were permitted. This concession proved to be empty since the House only allowed a few minor changes in wording.⁴⁷ To resolve the apparent disagreement with the House, a conference was requested by the Council. The House agreed, but resolved that the House conferees were forbidden to discuss anything but the title and preamble of the bill.⁴⁸ This effective maneuver eliminated the Council as an equal partner in formulating the bill and created a precedent, if allowed to stand, that placed the House in commanding position to deny or accept future money bills desired by the Governor and Council. The English House of Commons had secured this right after the 1688 revolution. There the Lords and Crown could

⁴⁶ Ibid., December 14, 1711, p. 335.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 336.

⁴⁸ Ibid., December 17, 1711, p. 337.

only accept or reject the bill. But this privilege had not been permitted in the American colonies. All messages from the Council demanding another conference were rejected "on account of its being the province of the Burgesses to raise money after which method they pleased."⁴⁹

The Council, on December 21, attempted to obviate any pretensions the House had concerning their similarity with the English Commons.

Admitting (but not granting) that it is a Priviledge of the House of Commons in the parliament . . . to have the Sole Grant of all Aides and Subsidys So that nothing remains to ye House of Lords there besides their bare assent or Dissent to Such Bills[.] [W]e think it would not follow from thence that the House of Burgesses in this Country hath the same priviledge unless Something could be shewed from any Grant from the Crowne of England investing them with all those priviledges.⁵⁰

Legally, the Council reflected the opinion of the Board of Trade, but specific instructions of this nature did not appear in Virginia until 1756.⁵¹ Instructions to Governor Hunter of New York from the Board of Trade gave little comfort to the Virginia Council.

⁴⁹Wright and Tinling, eds., Byrd Diary, p. 455; Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, December 19, 1711, pp. 338-339.

⁵⁰Ibid., December 21, 1711, p. 346. Message to the House from the Council.

⁵¹Labaree, ed., Instructions, I, No. 180, 112-113.

As to the Assembly's pretense that the Council cannot amend a money bill, it is groundless and will not be allowed here, the Council having an equal right with them in granting of money, there being nothing in H. M. Commission to you . . . to the contrary. You will do well to acquaint them . . . that they may no longer insist upon what is so ill grounded.⁵²

The Governor of New York and the Council both continued to insist the legislature recognize their rights, but the lower houses in both colonies stood firm.

The position of the House of Burgess was clear:

. . . the Granting of Aids and ye method of Laying Impositions and Dutys to be the undoubted Right and Inherent priviledge of the Burgesses in Assembly representing the people of this Colony which Rights and priviledges this House being desirous to preserve and continue to their Posterity.⁵³

After the Council had been so summarily dealt with by the House, Spotswood intervened. In a message of December 19, the exasperated Governor charged the House with ignoring his request for immediate financial and military assistance. Specifically he charged the House with failure to provide any revenue by purposely designing a bill that required special approbation from the Crown before it became useful. Secondly, he charged them with willfully ignoring all measures to make

⁵²Board of Trade to Governor Hunter, November 13, 1711, Cal. State Papers, 1711-1712, No. 169, p. 146.

⁵³Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, December 19, 1711, pp. 338-339. Message to the Council from the House.

the militia functional. Finally, he charged them with refusing to reimburse the numerous expenses incurred before the Assembly met during the September crisis.⁵⁴

The Governor's angry message had no effect on the House who responded with a lengthy and detailed public procedural analysis. Asserting their right to raise revenue and analyze public claims, the House rejected the Governor's requests for militia improvements and military fortifications. In so doing, the House judged it proper to "wait the Event of that Warr before we entered upon that Regulation."⁵⁵

The breach between the two groups completed, each attempted to justify their actions. The House explained how they had tried to raise the necessary funds in a way "most agreeable to her Majesty and least Burthensome to her people."⁵⁶ This

⁵⁴Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, December 19, 1711, p. 339. Message to the House from the Governor. In this communique the empty financial assistance promises from the House are exposed. Spotswood blamed this situation on the attitude held by the Burgesses "that he is the best Patriot that most violently opposes all Overtures for raising money, let the occasion be what it will . . . since the far greater part of the late Burgesses had scarce any other merit to qualify them for the people's Choice." Spotswood to the Board of Trade, February 8, 1711/1712, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 140.

⁵⁵Journals of the Va. Burgesses, 1702-1712, December 21, 1711, p. 344. Message to Spotswood from the House.

⁵⁶Ibid.

tongue-in-cheek expression the Council reversed, since no revenue was raised and it was most burdensome to her Majesty.

The nomenclature devised by the House for public claims is instructive. Charges were divided into three categories: county, country, and Crown. The Council's efforts to convince the House that charges incurred without the consent of that body were allowable country charges met with repeated failure. Thus any expenditure not duly authorized by the House automatically became a Crown charge. If the Governor continued to insist on limited war with the Indians, assistance to North Carolina, building new fortifications, and educating Indian children, the House suggested that he should use the royal revenue instead of imposing new burdens on the already impoverished planters of Virginia.⁵⁷

As a result of the position taken by the House on the defense question, the Governor could only

. . . sitt down under the Mortification of seeing myself unable to protect the Majesty's Subjects untill a nearer approach of danger convinces the people . . . of there [sic] Error in not making timely provisions to hinder the growing power of the heathen.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Williams, "Political Alignments," pp. 135-136.

⁵⁸Spotswood to the Board of Trade, July 26, 1712, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 171.

Before Alexander Spotswood ventured to take the responsibility of expending money and raising money in the future, he would require "directions" from the Board of Trade.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Spotswood to the Board of Trade, May 8, 1712, Brock, ed., Letters, I, 151.

CONCLUSION

Governor Alexander Spotswood encountered several political failures during his first two years in Virginia. The colony's distance from England and practicality in every day affairs engendered a spirited resistance to any extension of royal authority. Spotswood's proposed changes were unsuccessful because the Governor, unable to convince the Virginia planter of any desirability coming from a comprehensive military program in 1710, acted on his own during the September Indian crisis. After the immediate threat disappeared, the House developed an adamant attitude concerning reimbursement of public claims not approved by that body. This confrontation between the Governor and the House of Burgesses demonstrated to Spotswood the actual weaknesses of his position. He could not initiate legislation or create new laws by proclamation, a situation that forced him to depend heavily on the cooperation of the Council and House.

The Governor attempted to provide the colony with enlightened political leadership by constant messages to the House suggesting ways of improving the colony's economic and

military position. But these suggestions involved a change in the status quo and the unwritten propositions of the country's constitution. Thus, because of the lack of any broad based popular support, Spotswood's progressive reform measures failed to become law.

During the Assembly of 1710-1712, nothing less than a legislative metamorphosis occurred. In the past, the House of Burgesses had been forced to accept an inferior position to that of the Council. The Burgesses had made repeated but unsuccessful attempts to change the balance of power to their advantage. In 1711, both the Council and Burgesses found themselves subjected to a barrage of new pressures. The Council, in the previous 30 years, had developed a working philosophy that successfully limited any drastic changes in the colony's power configuration. The four-year period preceding the arrival of Governor Spotswood saw the power and prestige of the Council at its height. The following Assembly (1710-1712) brought that to a crashing halt.

During this same period, the caliber of the House leadership changed. Growing planter groups had developed a sense of political awareness and a readiness to seize the initiative from the Council. The House's awareness of its political inferiority encouraged it to seek a change in the existing power structure. During the explosive second session, personal and group stratagems came together in the House and challenged with phenomenal success

the leadership of the Council. The right of the Governor and Council to initiate any activity that entailed a colony expense was checked. A period of growing laissez faire politics had begun in Virginia. The House flexed its political muscles and surprized the Governor, Council, and itself. From the close of the Assembly until the outbreak of the War for Independence, the House of Burgesses continued to seek aggressive changes that increased their prestige, power and effectiveness in Virginia's political affairs.

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