RICE UNIVERSITY

ORGANIZATION FOR REVOLUTION:
THE COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE SYSTEM IN MASSACHUSETTS,
1772 - 1775

by

John D. McBride

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts

Thesis Director's Signature:

[Signature]

Houston, Texas

September, 1970
ABSTRACT

The greatest obstacle which the Massachusetts radicals faced in their Campaign to overthrow the Royal government was not the Tory party, but rather the reluctance of the moderate Whigs to engage in any activities which seemed to lead to a direct confrontation with Great Britain. Until late 1772, political control of Massachusetts remained in the hands of the merchants, who as a class were largely satisfied with the state of relations with the mother country, and were most reluctant to jeopardize peace and prosperity for the sake of an abstract political principle. As long as the radicals such as Samuel Adams tried to work within the normal political channels, the moderate Whigs were able to restrain them.

In order to bypass the moderates who were blocking his program, Adams created a separate radical organization based upon the radical control over the Boston town-meeting. The Boston Committee of Correspondence was theoretically responsible to the town-meeting, but actually operated independently of any control save the will of the radical leaders. Adams intended the Boston committee to become the mainspring of a network of similar committees which would extend to all the towns of Massachusetts.

Initially, only a small fraction of the towns actually appointed a committee to correspond with Boston, although many expressed agreement in principle. Nevertheless, Adams
was able to manipulate the responses, using the Boston Gazette, in such a way that the committee system appeared to be very extensive. When the tea crisis developed in December of 1773, the system only functioned in the port-towns and around Boston. The appearance of strength which the system gave the radicals was sufficient, however, that they were able to direct events which resulted in a direct challenge to British rule.

Once the Tea Party had led to the Coercive Acts, the committee system quickly spread into most of the towns. The other committees were no longer willing to follow Boston's leadership without question, however, and showed this by refusing to accept the Solemn League and Covenant. Instead, local committees worked through county conventions to dismantle the old militia system and the Royal courts. They also began the intimidation of Tories by forcing the resignations of the Mandamus Counsellors. The Boston radicals were quick to recognize the necessity for new tactics, and acted through the Suffolk County convention to influence the deliberations of the Continental Congress and insure the completion of their program.
INTRODUCTION

The American Revolution, according to John Adams, "was in the minds of the people, and this was effected, from 1760-1775, in the course of fifteen years before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington." During this period the colonists changed in attitude from an unquestioning, if rather uninvolved sense of membership in the British Empire to the point of a willingness, indeed in some cases an eagerness, to wage war against the mother country. A young Boston patriot, James Lovell, pointed out the extent of this change quite clearly in a letter to Josiah Quincy, Jr. written on October 10, 1774. "I am really pained," Lovell wrote, "at finding that the wickedness of ministerial conduct has brought the Province so generally to make the idea of an engagement between fellow-subjects so familiar to their minds. How would such a thought have shocked us all a few years ago!" The responsibility for making this shocking idea so "familiar" to the people of Massachusetts rests with the relatively small group of radicals, of whom Quincy was one, who seized and exercised political power during the quite brief period in which this change of attitude actually occurred. Although the foundation of Adams' revolution was laid from 1760 to 1772, only in the final two years before Lexington did the idea that resistance to British policy might entail armed rebellion become widespread.
The radicals were few, perhaps no more than a hundred throughout Massachusetts, but they were able nevertheless, in the earliest stages of the controversy with England, almost to pre-empt the major forums of theoretical and abstract political discussion within the colony. The merchants, being practical men of affairs, based opposition to the Stamp and Navigation Acts on concrete economic grounds; they accepted help from the radical theorists, but seldom ventured into the realm of theory themselves. The radicals thus became possessed of a virtual monopoly over such matters, and made any opposition to themselves at a theoretical level difficult indeed. By usage they had fixed the terminology available for theoretical discussions, and by that terminology they were the Defenders of American Liberties. Anyone opposing the radicals bore the burden of proving that he was not an Enemy of American Liberties.

Such proof was especially difficult because the radicals regarded even honest or well-meaning opposition in exactly that light. Their Liberty was a fragile thing, eternally threatened by Tyranny embodied in cunning conspiritors bent on personal gain at the expense of the People. Such conspiritors were by no means all in England; indeed, the most insidious of them resided in the very midst of their intended victims. Consequently the radicals could view opposition on very minor and quite
abstract points as evidence of the darkest designs. Possessing a settled conviction that conspiracy did exist, the radicals took a highly subjective view of outward events. The continuing crisis in Anglo-American relations beginning with the Stamp Act thus became no mere problem of outmoded institutions or poor communications based on semantic differences, but a public climateric the outcome of which would determine whether Liberty or Tyranny would prevail for generations to follow.

Holding this conviction, the radicals were prepared to dare much. Just how early the radicals began privately to consider such shocking ideas as independence and possible war with Great Britain cannot be determined with any certainty; what is certain is that they were sufficiently attached to their principles to be willing to risk war rather than see them jeopardized or compromised. More moderate Whigs, equally attached to American Liberties but lacking the radicals' sense of the irrevocable decisiveness of the immediate future, believed that the supreme crisis should be postponed as long as possible if not avoided entirely. The radicals insisted, probably with some justification, that each capitulation to Parliamentary authority would make the next capitulation yet more difficult to avoid, until finally all Liberties were eroded away.
Historians have often consciously or unconsciously assumed a certain inevitability in the flow of events in the two years before Lexington, as if the colonies, having become prepared for a revolution during the preceding decade, needed only a shove from the British government to send them hurtling down the hill into armed rebellion. The apparent lack of any coherent resistance to the revolutionary movement on any large scale reenforces the view. Yet widespread resistance did exist, although it lacked a focus to make it effective. The changes in British-colonial relations between 1760 and 1772 were opposed by a large majority of colonists, but this opposition was never intended by any but a very small minority ever to extend to armed rebellion. Few of the men who led the resistance to the Stamp Act and Navigation Acts would ever have willingly led America into war with Great Britain. Even as late as 1772, the outbreak of war might have been avoided if the Massachusetts moderates could have controlled their radical brethren. Only with the emergence of a separate radical party in Boston did those who were prepared to resist British authority at any cost have an organizational focus for their efforts. It was the success of the radicals in bypassing the moderate Whigs and in making themselves the instigators of events and the molders of opinion which made the war inevitable.

The war for American independence may properly be said to have begun in the late summer and autumn of 1774. During
this period the colonies, especially Massachusetts, became politically active on a very wide scale and at all political levels, from town-meetings and county conventions to a series of provincial and continental congresses. Simultaneously, and on an equally wide scale, the colonists began active military preparations. At this point the revolutionary movement indubitably had the support of a large majority of the people of Massachusetts. Yet only two years before, according to many contemporary observers and most historians, Massachusetts had been in a period of political calm in which the Boston radicals were threatened with a sharp decline in influence. The dramatic success of the radical program throughout Massachusetts began in November of 1772 with the formation of the Boston Committee of Correspondence. The work of this committee in reaction to a series of challenges from Parliament has rightfully been considered the spark which set off a powder-keg of revolution. Yet the question remains, how important was that spark? Did the radicals' activities finally determine anything beyond the precise date of the revolution? The radical propaganda was obviously compatible with New Englanders' basic political philosophies, and by April of 1775 many very moderate men had become revolutionaries. Even if the Boston Tea Party had not led to the Intolerable Acts, would not repeated British attempts to alter Massachusetts' constitution have finally provoked a revolution?
The greatest challenge which the Boston radicals faced between 1772 and 1774 was not any counterattack from the Royal government or the Tory party which supported it, but the political apathy and the distaste for extreme actions on the part of the majority of the farmers and merchants of the colony. The historical importance of the radical activity is directly proportional to the degree of initial resistance to that activity found among those people who later became revolutionaries. Was political moderation widespread and deep-rooted enough that only dramatic events such as the Tea Party and Intolerable Acts could overcome it, or could it have been overcome by the moderates themselves in the face of a quieter and more gradual erosion of "American liberties" which might have occurred but for the radicals?

In estimating the extent and nature of moderate resistance to the radical program, one's attention must be focused outside Boston. The Committee of Correspondence of that town became the center of a network of such committees throughout Massachusetts and, eventually, all of New England. While historians have given the Boston Committee the attention it deserves, no one has systematically dealt with the committee of correspondence system throughout Massachusetts. In this paper, I will attempt to trace the development of that system between 1772 and 1774 in terms of its size, activity, influence, and leadership. Much attention
must necessarily be paid to the Boston committee, since the nature both of the data available and of the problem itself is such that the other committees can only be studied through their relations with Boston. Nevertheless, my goal will be an understanding of the nature of the radical organization outside Boston, and the role that organization played in creating a revolution.
CONTENTS

Chapter 1  THE BACKGROUND IN BOSTON  1
Chapter 2  THE COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE SYSTEM DEVELOPES: NOVEMBER, 1772 - MAY, 1774  23
Chapter 3  THE LOCAL COMMITTEES IN THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION: MAY, 1774 - APRIL, 1775  57
Conclusion  86
Bibliography  94
Although the radical party as a distinct organization did not develop in Massachusetts until the 1770's, the elements of that party existed much earlier. The party was composed of two principle groups: first, a relatively small body of men who set policy, acted as political spokesmen for the radical cause, and ran the radical propaganda machine; and second, the political activists who insured radical domination of the Boston town meeting and organized demonstrations, peaceful or otherwise, as required.

Of the radical spokesmen and propagandists, the foremost throughout the fifteen years before Lexington was certainly Samuel Adams. Adams' character is difficult to assess. The biography with the best documentation, a work by John C. Miller,\(^2\) gives the least insight into Adams himself because the author allows his picture of Adams as a sly, scheming politician to obscure other aspects of his character. Miller also identifies and stresses a strong Puritan complex in Adams, for which abundant evidence certainly exists. Adams lived in an austere manner, and apparently possessed genuine and deeply-held religious beliefs. Yet these beliefs either included a degree of religious toleration unusual for a New England Puritan, or else Adams was capable of subordinating religion to polit-
ical advantage, for he worked closely with and even de-
defended publicly a man, Dr. Thomas Young, whose expressed religious beliefs bordered on atheism and were highly repugnant even to others in the radical party. Adams' standards of personal honor were as flexible as his religious beliefs. He wrote his propaganda with utter disregard for inconvenient truths, and his most spectacular success against Royal governor Thomas Hutchison was obtained by violation of a promise made to Benjamin Franklin. Franklin sent Adams certain of Hutchinson's letters, obtained in England, which cast the governor in a most unfavorable light by Massachusetts standards. Adams assured Franklin that the letters would not be made public, lest Franklin's role in obtaining them be known. When it became necessary to discredit Hutchinson, however, Adams promptly had the letters published and exploited them to the utmost. Nothing was so important that Adams would allow it to interfere with his mission of subverting Royal government.

Another of Adams' biographers, R. V. Harlow, interprets him as suffering from an inferiority complex. Adams had entered and abandoned successively the ministry, the bar, and a business career. At business he was definitely a failure, losing a thousand pounds. Yet his dissatisfaction with a legal or ecclesiastical career was probably not based on any lack of ability in those areas, but rather be-
cause he had already developed a taste for political agitation. His political writings show a close familiarity with the political implications of Enlightenment philosophy and with the legal basis of the rights of Massachusetts; so his apprenticeships in the ministry and at the bar were valuable preparation for his later career. His failure to persevere at any constructive profession was probably due simply to his natural subversive temperament.

Although his enemies considered him the incarnation of the spirit of mob rule, and historians have called him "the man of the town-meeting", Adams was not a true demagogic mob leader. He was emphatically not a social incendiary; his appeal was primarily to the literate classes. As an orator Adams was no better than average. Although he associated closely with many leaders of the Boston working class, his own attitude towards the mobs he used so skillfully was revealed in a letter to Elbridge Gerry:

"The tumult of the people is very properly compared to the raging of the sea. When the passions of a multitude become headstrong, they generally will have their course: a direct opposition only tends to increase them; and as to reasoning, one may as well expect that the foaming billows will hearken to a lecture of morality and be quiet. The skillful pilot will carefully keep the helm, and so steer the ship while the storm continues, as to prevent, if possible, her receiving injury."

Rivaling Adams in importance to the radical cause in the years before 1770 was James Otis, who was much more the
demagogue, being noted for his wildly inflammatory harangues in Boston town-meetings. Eventually his activities led to a quarrel with a Royal official in which Otis received a severe blow on the head. After that his effectiveness diminished, especially as he periodically went mad for months at a time. His place in the radical leadership was eventually taken by Dr. Joseph Warren, who had first joined the radicals as a young medical student during the Stamp Act crisis.

Joseph Warren is not as well known to students of history as is Samuel Adams, but he ranks with Adams in his importance to the Massachusetts revolutionary movement. Indeed, by 1775 he had probably passed Adams in political power, for he had been selected President of a Provincial Congress, and was the most active member of the Provincial Committee of Safety. He was deeply ambitious and was apparently intent on following Adams' path to political success. According to his biographer, he was "widely known as a competent physician, a skillful politician, and a sincere patriot". John Adams wrote of him as "our dear Warren". Although he was gentle and honorable in his private and professional life, his passionate attachment to the cause of Liberty made him willing to use violent means in support of that cause. He was thirty-four when he was killed at Bunker Hill; he had been commissioned a Major-General of Massachusetts troops, but was serving as a volunteer
in the ranks during the battle. He had a fondness for violent action, it seems; he was probably the leader of the "Mohawks" at the Tea Party.\textsuperscript{9} If he had survived the battle with his enthusiasm for combat intact, he might well have become a leading American commander. He had no military experience, it is true, but that comes with time; basic traits of character are more important in the long-run.

Warren began his political career as a composer of emotional propaganda, written with a florid style which also characterized his oratory. He rose to leadership among the radicals during the series of disorders of 1768, 1769, and 1770, particularly the uproar following the seizure by customs officers of John Hancock's ship \textit{Liberty}, and the Boston Massacre and its aftermath. It is ironic that during these episodes and, indeed, even up through 1774 Warren was regarded as a principled and cool-headed man with whom business might be done, by many Conservatives who regarded Samuel Adams as an unmitigated scoundrel. Principled Warren certainly was, and personally calm and cool, but as a political leader he was the foremost firebrand of Massachusetts.

Both Warren and Samuel Adams rose to political power through a device known as a caucus club. As the name implies, these were simply groups which met in advance of town-meetings to agree on concerted action. The caucus
clubs had been strongholds of radicalism for decades; Samuel Adams began his political career under the sponsorship of the original club. Early in 1772 the North End Caucus was reorganized by Joseph Warren with the aid of Paul Revere, the silversmith, and quickly passed the older South and Middle caucuses in activity and influence. Like its predecessors, the North End Caucus was composed primarily of artisans and skilled workmen, but its leadership, in addition to Warren, included radicals such as Dr. Thomas Young and the lawyer Benjamin Kent. Young, in addition to holding unorthodox religious views, was not entirely reputable as a physician. In 1767 he had been engaged by Warren in an acrimonious public debate over his treatment of a lady who had unfortunately not survived the bloodletting he had prescribed. He was, however, as passionately attached to the radical cause as was Warren. In 1774 he left Boston for Philadelphia, where he died in 1777 from a disease contracted while serving in an army hospital. Kent had no particular distinction in the legal profession except the dubious one of having been a member of more committees of the town of Boston between 1760 and 1775 than any other man. Doubtless he had political ambitions.

Closely connected with the caucus clubs were the Sons of Liberty who, according to John C. Miller, "were simply the Caucus Club writ large". This organization was founded in Boston in 1765 during the Stamp Act crisis, and
was quickly copied in other large American cities. Its founders in Boston called themselves the Loyal Nine; they were all artisans or shopkeepers except John Avery, a merchant who was Warren's friend and classmate at Harvard, and Benjamin Edes, the printer of the Gazette. During the decade following their organization, the Sons of Liberty formed the hard core of the Boston mob, directing its activities in accordance with the needs of the radical cause. Since the leaders of the caucus clubs were also prominent Sons of Liberty, that organization was as effective in the town-meeting as it was in the street.

Although the principle elements of the radical party were in existence as early as 1765, the party itself did not appear until 1772. Before that year, the radical elements were but part of the much larger Whig "party", if a group which comprised almost the entire population may be called such. The balance of political power in the province was held by the merchant class, who, according to Arthur M. Schlesinger, had a controlling influence over a large majority of the people. Maintenance of order was obviously in the interest of the merchant class, but in 1765 they felt the Stamp Act to be a greater threat than a mob; accordingly they acquiesced in the formation of the Sons of Liberty. By 1767, however, the merchants had become apprehensive of this group and had resolved that any future protests should be made only by dignified petitions and, if
necessary, economic sanctions such as nonimportation. The beast the merchants had allowed to waken, however, could not be put back to sleep. The mob, or rather the mobs had been in existence for many decades, but had been tolerated because they largely restricted their activities to mauling each other in the annual Pope's Day rioting. The Stamp Act crisis had made them aware of their potential power in community affairs, and after 1765 mobs were an intrinsic part of Boston politics.

The position of the mob, and of the radicals in general, was strengthened by the apparent success of violent methods in securing repeal of the Stamp Act in February, 1766. In fact the violence against the stamp distributors had hindered rather than aided the struggle for repeal by friends of the colonies in Parliament. The merchants, who maintained regular communication with England for business purposes, were undoubtedly aware of this. The general populace, however, linked violent resistance with success, and the overall effect was to enhance the prestige of advocates of radical methods and to reduce somewhat the influence of more moderate leaders.

In England, too, the crisis and its aftermath discredited moderates who desired compromise. After 1768 most members of Parliament were convinced that the repeal had been an act of mistaken leniency which should not be re-
peated. Repeal had been accompanied by a Declaratory Act asserting Parliament's continued right to tax the colonies; and new taxes, the Townshend Acts, were duly enacted in 1767. The colonists replied with acts of violence against customs officials, as well as nonconsumption and nonimportation agreements.

These agreements, aimed at coercing Parliament by putting pressure on British merchants, at first had the approval and cooperation of the colonial merchants. By 1770, however, their interest in nonimportation had dwindled. Their old stocks of goods, which had commanded higher prices during nonimportation, had become exhausted; their debts had been called in; and, most important, they had perceived the increasingly radical trend of events. When Parliament repealed all the Townshend Acts except the duty on tea, the pressure to resume importation became very great. To the radical leaders, one tax was as much a threat in principle as a number of taxes, and for several months the Sons of Liberty forced the merchants to continue nonimportation. But by September, 1770, New York and Philadelphia had resumed importation, and finally, on October 12, the Boston merchants persuaded the town-meeting to allow importation of everything but the dutied tea.

The merchants were now dominated by a desire to prevent any further strengthening of radical power and by a
substantial satisfaction with the concessions Parliament had made. Thomas Cushing, an immensely popular merchant who was one of Boston's representatives on the General Court, felt that "high points about the supreme authority of Parliament" should be allowed to "fall asleep" lest there be "great danger of bringing on a rupture fatal to both countries". Times were prosperous, in part because nonimportation had built up a supply of specie which was not exhausted for some time. (The drain of "hard" money to England had long been a major colonial grievance.) Most people had lost interest in political issues; even the dutied tea was imported on occasion when smuggled Dutch tea was in short supply. In February of 1771 John Adams recorded in his diary that he had met with Warren, Dr. Benjamin Church, William Cooper, and other radicals at John Hancock's house, where he had been served tea "from Holland, I hope, but don't know".

In this atmosphere the conservative party which supported Governor Hutchinson regained some strength. The General Courts of 1771 and 1772 remained dominated by moderates, but contained rather more conservatives and fewer radicals than in earlier years. John Adams announced his retirement from politics, and the radical leadership was further reduced by John Hancock's estrangement from the group. In 1772 Samuel Adams campaigned for election as register of deeds for Suffolk County, but was defeated by a
large majority. In May of the same year the conservatives attempted to unseat Adams from his position as one of Boston's four representatives through a vigorous get-out-the-vote campaign among the well-to-do classes. The caucus clubs and Sons of Liberty organization controlled enough votes to insure Adams' reelection, but he received some 200 fewer votes than the other successful candidates. 

Samuel Adams' victory in this election is indicative of the position of the radicals during the years 1770-1772. The general interpretation of this period by historians has been that it was a "period of quiet" in which the people had no real grievances except those the radicals created. In the view of both Arthur M. Schlesinger and John C. Miller, only a blunder in policy by the British saved Samuel Adams and the radicals from declining influence and possibly ultimate defeat. This interpretation has been challenged by Robert E. Brown, who contends that while affairs were quieter in Massachusetts during this period, "it was a quiet tempered more by resentment than contentment," and Adams was never in serious danger of final political defeat. Brown's point is valid to a large extent, although his preoccupation with proving his thesis about democracy in Massachusetts leads him to overstate his case. The popular basis of radical strength remained during this period, as Adams' election in 1772 demonstrates. Nevertheless, Brown misses one important point which the
older interpretation had made; whatever potential strength the radicals possessed, they proved unable during this period to use it effectively to influence events. They lacked both an issue around which they might rally the people and, most important, an organization outside the control of the moderate Whigs.

The town-meeting gave the radicals a secure political stronghold from which to operate. But the town-meeting itself had few powers beyond electing Boston's representatives and town government. The radicals needed a method of exerting the power of their position on a province-wide scale. The most obvious way to do this was through the Boston representatives to the General Assembly. As representatives of Massachusetts' capital and only metropolis, they commanded a position of some influence. Moreover, the annual Instructions of the town-meeting to the representatives were a potent propaganda device, for they received wide circulation and close attention throughout the province.

There were serious difficulties involved in the direct approach, however, as the radicals had good reason to know. Boston's delegation was the largest in the House, but it was still a very small minority of the total membership. There were other radical members, of course, and relatively few conservatives. But the balance of the representatives
were moderate, and any action by the House depended upon their support. And in late 1772, the radicals' problem was precisely that they did not have that support. The feelings of the Boston town-meeting, no matter how vehement, could have little direct effect on representatives of other towns, and the town-meeting was the radicals only tangible political asset.

Besides, even if the moderates could be persuaded to join the radicals in opposition to British policies, the other branches of the Massachusetts government would to a large degree cancel the effectiveness of the House. The governor had considerable powers in determining the time and place of the legislative sessions, and could dissolve them if he chose. In 1768, the House had continued to meet as a convention despite the governor's dissolution, but when the troops arrived to support the governor the moderates proved unwilling to follow the radicals any further. Opposition was one thing; revolution was quite another.

The British government provided the radicals with the issue they needed, but it proved to be one which only a separate radical organization could exploit effectively. In the spring of 1772 rumors began to circulate in Boston to the effect that Great Britain was going to assume responsibility for the salaries of the Superior Court judges, thus making them independent of the people of Massachusetts.
Governor Hutchinson had indeed been corresponding with Lon¬
don about this reform, but no definite news regarding the 
salaries was known to the public. The radicals were con-
cerned about the issue, however, and expressed that concern 
when a town-meeting of May 14, 1772, chose a committee to 
prepare Instructions for the newly elected representatives. 
The committee consisted of nine men: Joseph Warren, Benja-
min Church, Josiah Quincy, William Mollineux, William Den-
nie, William and Joseph Greenleaf, and Thomas and Richard 
Gray. The radicals held the majority within the group, 
for all save the two Grays later became members of the Com-
mittee of Correspondence. Thomas Gray was later to be an 
avowed Loyalist.

This committee presented a set of Instructions on the 
morning of May 20 which were highly radical in content and 
which the town-meeting accepted. The Instructions did not, 
however, include any reference to the rumored salaries of 
the Superior Court judges, and the committee was directed 
to correct this deficiency. The meeting then adjourned un-
til the afternoon of the same day. At that time, Benjamin 
Austin and William Cooper were added to the existing group. 
Cooper, at least, was a firm radical. The meeting then ad-
journed until May 22, at which time the committee was to 
present the results of its deliberations. When that day 
arrived, however, the committee reported that it could not 
agree on any set of Instructions. A motion to appoint a new
committee was rejected "after long debate", and the matter was referred to the next town-meeting.\(^{25}\)

The failure of the eleven-man committee to agree on any instructions raises interesting question. John Cary, in his biography of Joseph Warren, concludes that "Warren and the other radicals on the committee seem to have been outnum¬bered", and that in the future "Warren and Samuel Adams avoided the mistake of allowing moderates to ruin their plans".\(^{26}\) An examination of the past and future careers of the committee members, however, makes this conclusion somewhat dubious, for at least eight of the eleven had a lengthy association with the radical party, including membership on the Committee of Correspondence. The committee's lack of agreement was due not to opposition by moderate members, but to a division among the radicals. What, then, was the nature of this division?

No other evidence except the Boston Town Records seems to exist concerning this affair, so any conclusions must be as much a matter of interpretation as of evidence. The sequence of events, however, as well as the make-up of the committee, gives grounds for belief that the disagreement was not based on ideological differences. Instead, any uncertainty within the committee was probably the result of a lack of reliable information concerning the judicial salaries. The nine-man committee had, after all, submitted a
thoroughly radical report, and at least one of the two additional members was a radical. The action of the next town-meeting, on October 28, supports this view. After some debate, the meeting decided "by a vast majority" "that a decent and respectful Application...be made to his excellency the Governor...whether his excellency had received any advice relative to this matter..." The meeting then adjourned for lunch, while Samuel Adams, Warren, and Church drew up an Address to the Governor on the subject of the rumored salaries. Reconvening at three p.m., the meeting approved the Address, which was respectful in tone but radical in content. A seven-man committee was appointed to deliver it to Hutchinson.27

If the divided counsel among the radicals was based primarily on a simple lack of information, Thomas Hutchinson had no intention of correcting this lack. He replied, in effect, that his official correspondence was none of the town's business.28 Nothing daunted, the meeting voted to petition the governor to permit the General Assembly to convene, so that "that Constitutional Body" might deliberate on the matter. Samuel Adams, James Otis, and Thomas Cushing drew-up the petition, and it was presented to Hutchinson by the same committee who had delivered the Address.29

Up to this point, the radicals had been operating within normal and existing channels. Samuel Adams, however, had
already been considering another method of influencing events on a province-wide scale. On October 27, 1772, he had written to Elbridge Gerry; "Our enemies would intimidate us, by saying our brethren in the other towns are indifferent about this matter....I wish we could arouse the continent." Two days later, he again wrote to Gerry; "If each town would declare its Sense of these Matters I am persuaded our Enemies would not have it in their power to divide us, in which they have all along shown their dexterity. Pray us your Influence with Salem and other towns." These lines also give some indication of the arguments used against the radicals in debates in the town-meetings, and possibly within the Instruction committee as well. Adams clearly had considered the likelihood that Hutchinson would block any action through the General Court, and was prepared for the eventuality. At the town-meeting on November 2, the governor's reply to the petition was read. Hutchinson had written that he did not feel "his Majestys Service and...the interest of the Province" required a meeting of the General Assembly, and that furthermore "the Law that authorizes Towns to Assemble, does not make [these matters] the business of a Town Meeting." This was strong language, and provoked a reaction which may well have been Adams' goal all along. The town had attempted to use all legal means of political opposition but had been blocked by the governor; this justified the use of extralegal means. And the governor, by challenging the town's right to deal with questions
outside the immediate concern of a town government, had a-roused anger of which Adams took quick advantage. The meeting immediately voted the governor's reply to be unsatisfactory, and resolved that they had "a right to Petition the King or his Representatives for the Redress of such Grievances...." On this wave of feeling, Adams moved the appointment of a Committee of Correspondence, which passed nemine contradicente according to the town records.31

The purpose of the committee, according to the motion which created it, was "to state the Rights of the Colonists...; to communicate and publish the same to the several Towns in this Province and to the World as the sense of this Town, with the Infringements and Violations thereof that have been, or from time to time may be made -- Also requesting of each Town a free communication of their Sentiments on this Subject...."32 The committee thus had very flexible instructions; it was not restricted to dealing with any particular issue but was a standing committee which could communicate with anyone about practically anything, past, present, or future.

The membership of the committee was entirely radical. John Hancock, who had served as moderator of the meetings since October, declined his election, as did Thomas Cushing and William Phillips. All three pleaded business as an excuse, but in fact they feared the consequences of what the
committee might do. The failure of these wealthy, prominent, and highly influential moderates to join the committee had important results; indeed, it determined in large measure the nature of the political revolution in Massachusetts. The committee was unchecked by any moderating influences from within; its policy would thus be undiluted radicalism. The lack of moderate participation made failure more likely, of course; and it was generally agreed that a failure would be disastrous to the cause of Liberty. The moderate hesitation was based partly on these grounds. But the absence of the moderates also meant that the revolution, if the committee system succeeded, would be more radical than it otherwise might have been. The moderates, by opting out at this early stage, deprived themselves of any chance of influencing events in the future. The eventual success of the committees of correspondence, and the crisis they provoked, swept the middle ground from beneath the moderates' feet. Forced to choose between the extreme parties, most of the moderates joined the radicals.
NOTES - CHAPTER I

1 Josiah Quincy, Memoir of Josiah Quincy, Junior, 1744-1775 (Boston, 1874), 164.

2 John C. Miller, Sam Adams; Pioneer in Propaganda (Boston, 1936).


4 R. W. Harlow, Samuel Adams; Promoter of the Revolution (New York, 1923).

5 Philip Davidson, Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783 (Chapel Hill, 1941), 5.

6 Adams to Elbridge Gerry, March 25, 1774, in Cushing, Writings of Samuel Adams, III, 82.

7 Davidson, Propaganda, 10.

8 John Cary, Joseph Warren; Physician, Politician, Patriot (Urbana, Ill., 1961), 223.


12 Edes, "Dr. Young," 49.

14 Miller, Sam Adams, 161


17 Ibid., 365.

18 Schlesinger, Colonial Merchants, 211-12.

19 Ibid., 240.

20 Ibid., 244.

21 Cary, Warren, 103-5.


23 Ibid., 293.

24 Boston, A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston Containing the Boston Town Records, 1630 Through 1777 (Boston, 1887), 80.

25 Ibid., 81-3

26 Cary, Warren, 111.

27 Boston, Town Records, 89-90

29 Boston, Town Records, 90-1.

30 Adams to Gerry, October 27 and 29, 1772, in Cushing, Writings of Samuel Adams, II, 346, 349.

31 Boston, Town Records, 92-3.

32 Ibid., 93.

33 Ibid., 93; Cary, Warren, 112; Miller, Sam Adams, 265.
CHAPTER 2

THE COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE SYSTEM DEVELOPES:

NOVEMBER, 1772 -- MAY, 1774

The success of the Boston radicals in creating the Committee of Correspondence was not in itself decisive. Correspondence is a process requiring two parties; if the Boston committee was to be effective it needed the cooperation of towns outside the metropolis. The first action of the committee was the preparation of a "Statement of the Rights of the Colonists," a list of infringements of those rights by Great Britain, and a covering letter to the other towns of Massachusetts. The "statement of rights" was an effective and well-written piece of radical propaganda -- it complained of infringements of liberties that many Massachusetts farmers had never before heard of -- but the heart of the radical program lay in the covering letter. In it the Boston town-meeting requested of the other towns "a free communication of your sentiments" and suggested that if the rights of the colonists were felt to have been stated properly, the towns should instruct their Representatives to support Boston in the next General Court.

The letter and its accompanying statement of rights was sent out during the last week of November, 1772, and Samuel Adams and the other radical leaders must have waited with considerable apprehension to see how the other towns
would react. Astute politicians in both camps were con-
vinced that the reaction would be unfavorable to the radi-
cals. Governor Hutchinson wrote to Lord Dartmouth on Novem-
ber 13 that a system of committees of correspondence was
such a foolish scheme that its supporters "must necessarily
make themselves ridiculous." And James Warren, writing
from Plymouth on December 8, told Samuel Adams that "I
shall not fail to exert myself to have as many towns as pos-
sible meet, but fear the bigger part of them will not. They
are dead, and the dead can't be raised without a miracle. I
am sensible that the Tories spare no pains (as you say) to
disparage the measures; which, with their other conduct,
shows their apprehension. They are nettled much." "All
are not dead:" came Adams' quick reply, "and, where there is
a spark of patriotic fire, we will rekindle it. Say you
that the Tories spare no pains to disparage our measures? I
knew they would, and should have greatly doubted of the im-
portance of the measures, if they had not been nettled." Re-
kindling a dying fire is a slow process, but if the com-
mittees of correspondence scheme produced initially only a
slight increase in flame, it did produce a great deal of
smoke, which for Adams' purpose served about as well. His-
torians have generally considered the response to the Boston
letter "quick and decisive," but a close examination of the
nature of the first responses shows that any decisiveness
came through the manipulation of Boston radicals. By mid-
February, 1773, seventy-eight out of approximately 240 Mas-
sachusetts towns, including most of the principal ones, had replied favorably. Many of the remaining communities were actually not towns but groups of scattered farmers who for sound reasons of economy and convenience were delaying action on the Boston circular until their regular spring business-meeting. Seventy-eight favorable responses was impressive — it certainly impressed Thomas Hutchinson — but the governor's concern might have been reduced somewhat had he examined the replies more closely.

The Boston letter had requested a general expression of the towns' sentiments, but it had also asked or implied that two particular actions should be taken by each town; each local Representative was to be instructed to support Boston in the next General Court, and by implication a standing committee of correspondence was to be appointed to maintain a steady communication with Boston. It is interesting that the letter did not explicitly request appointment of such committees. A network of standing committees of correspondence was not unknown to Massachusetts, having been used in earlier controversies with England. Towns habitually worked through committees; most towns appointed one to draft a reply to the Boston letter. Adams may have deliberately failed to ask that these committees be given permanent status, knowing that a number of them would be given such status anyway, and that a specific request might bring an equally specific negative reply. If the Boston committee maintained
a steady flow of correspondence to the other towns, as Adams certainly intended it would, simple convenience might lead eventually to a standing committee to deal with it in each town.

Adams must have been privately disappointed with the response of the other towns. Of a group of forty-nine towns, including the largest ones after Boston, who replied in a generally favorable manner, only eighteen had appointed a standing committee of correspondence by June of 1773. Six of these had also given their representative instructions relative to the grievances itemized in the Boston circular, as had eight towns who had not appointed committees. Twenty-three of the forty-nine towns took no action beyond vaguely agreeing in principle with the Boston Statement of Rights.

The eighteen towns who appointed committees of correspondence were clearly moving towards political revolution, although they still were a long way from it. The most hopeful sign from the radical viewpoint was the four towns whose committee of correspondence developed out of committees of grievances. In Marblehead, a town-meeting on December 8, 1772, appointed a Committee of Grievances which quickly assumed the functions and later the title of a committee of correspondence. Newbury met on December 29 and chose a committee "to take under consideration our publick griev-
ances" and "the infringements of our rights and liberties." The committee presented its report on January 4, 1773, and was authorized to act as a standing committee of correspondence for the town. Clinton did not choose a committee of correspondence until September 5, 1774, but it chose "a Committee to Draw up our Grievances" in January of 1773. This committee functioned as a committee of correspondence, apparently with the knowledge but without the formal authorization of the town, throughout the nineteen months of its existence, even attending the convention of the committees of correspondence of Worcester County in August of 1774.

In Dedham, a town-meeting on January 4, 1773, resolved simply to join the other towns in measures to obtain a redress of grievances. This was the first time Dedham had met with reference to political matters since 1770, and they were obviously out of practice. The Boston circular reawakened their interest in politics, however, and by June 4, 1773, they had recovered themselves sufficiently to instruct their Representatives to support Boston and to appoint a Committee of Correspondence.

A few other towns were equally prepared to support Boston fully. James Warren was able to bring Plymouth wholeheartedly into the radical camp; despite his fears of widespread apathy, the town on November 24, 1772, chose a Standing Committee of Communication and Correspondence, and on December 14, 1772, instructed its Representatives to support
Boston in the salary controversy. The responses of Essex and Leicester were similarly encouraging to the Boston radicals. But many towns — perhaps as many as one-half of those replying — were no better than lukewarm in their support of the radical program. Newton instructed its Representative to use his influence against the judicial salaries, but also encouraged Boston to persevere "in all legal, loyal, regular, and constitutional methods for redress of the grievances we feel," and regretted "the odium cast on the respectable town of Boston as being of a factious spirit...." Newton's idea of what was "factious" and what was "legal, loyal, regular, and constitutional" was no doubt different from that held by Thomas Hutchinson, to say nothing of George III, but nevertheless the town was obviously not yet ready for revolutionary measures. It appointed no committee of correspondence until January 6, 1774. Framington, which had no committee until May 18, 1774, replied to Boston on March 1, 1773, that Massachusetts should "defend by every constitutional measure" its "privileges," and "prudently endeavor to preserve our character as freemen and not lose that of good and loyal subjects." The large and influential town of Salem was very slow in responding — Adams wrote that he feared they had had an opiate administered to them — and when they finally did reply it was in moderate language. Salem did not choose a committee of correspondence "because we see no immediate necessity for one," although the town-meeting did direct the Selectmen to act in that capacity.
if the necessity developed. Compounding the radicals' problem was the failure of many towns to send even moderate replies to the circular. In a few cases a town actually voted against opening communication with Boston. Weston refused to appoint a committee of correspondence by a large vote. Chelsea voted on May 24, 1773, "not to act, regarding choosing a committee of correspondence with Boston;" the town ignored subsequent letters from the metropolis until news of the Port Bill arrived in July of 1774, and even after that moderate counsel prevailed. Many prominent citizens of Chelsea who later became very staunch Patriots remained moderate until the actual outbreak of hostilities on April 19, 1775. Dr. Payson, for instance, became one of the first heroes of the War for Independence by leading the twelve "old men of Menotomy" who captured a straggling British supply train during the retreat from Concord; yet Payson was "extremely moderate" before April 19, and as one of Chelsea's most influential citizens must have been instrumental in blocking participation by the town in the radical movement.

In Barnstable, Colonel Edward Bacon, the town's Representative, made a virulent attack on the characters of William Molineux and Thomas Young, both members of the Boston committee. Terming them "men of no Principles and Infamous Characters," he persuaded the town not to open correspon-
dence with Boston. Somewhat imprudently, he then went himself to the metropolis, was promptly hailed before the committee, and departed leaving behind a written retraction, which was printed and sent to the towns in his district. Despite their success in intimidating Bacon, however, the Boston radicals never did succeed in bringing Barnstable into the radical camp; the town later had the distinction of being the only one in Massachusetts not to instruct its Representative to vote for independence. 23

In general, opposition — as opposed to indifference — to the radical movement centered in two particular areas of the colony, the western counties of Hampshire and Berkshire, and the coast around Cape Cod Bay and just north of Boston. Coastal towns such as Scituate and Marshfield depended primarily on fishing for their livelihood and thus were particularly vulnerable to British power in the shape of the Royal Navy. This vulnerability helped make them loyal supporters of Royal authority; their loyalty was rewarded in 1775 when Parliament exempted them from provisions of the "Bill for Restraining the Trade of the Northern Colonies" which forbade colonial fishing off Newfoundland. 24

Western Massachusetts was not as exposed as the fishing villages along the coast, but throughout 1773 the area was almost equally steady in its support of the Royal government. The west was isolated from the rest of Massachusetts
by distance and poor roads and by its distinctiveness as an economic region. The principle towns in the region were located along the Connecticut River and its tributaries, and were controlled in both economic and political matters by the "River Gods." These men -- John Worthington, Oliver Partridge, Israel Williams, John Stoddard and his sons -- were closely allied to Governor Hutchinson and received patronage which aided them in keeping a tight rein on local affairs. Williams and Worthington commanded the two Hampshire militia regiments.  

The leadership of the River Gods was an important factor in the reluctance of the west to support Boston, but the majority of the western farmers were politically conservative anyway. The River Gods held many elective as well as appointive offices, and the west had a history of political conservatism. The entire Stamp Act crisis had been virtually ignored in the region, and most towns had failed to send representatives to the Convention of 1768. Moderate as the convention turned out to be, three western towns passed resolutions condemning it. Communications from Boston were usually ignored, or occasionally prompted a tart reply.  

Nevertheless there were radicals in the west, including one among the River Gods. Joseph Hawley of Northampton was the nephew of John Stoddard and a cousin of Israel Williams. (All the River Gods were tied by marriage.) In his
legal practice Hawley often argued against John Worthington, and this opposition carried over into politics; Hawley also reacted against the domineering ways of Israel Williams, the ranking River God. Although his political opponents charged him with "violent and changeable passions," Hawley was one of the more cautious of the radical leaders outside Boston. His greatest fear throughout the years before the Continental Congress, often expressed in letters to other radicals, was that Massachusetts would go too far too fast towards revolution and find herself isolated from the other colonies.27

Other less prominent radicals could be found in western towns. Hatfield was won to the radical cause by the Reverend Joseph Lyman, who moved there in 1772 and immediately declared that "there is one man here now he [Israel Williams] cannot rule." Preaching resistance to British tyranny from the pulpit and in town-meetings, he was able to persuade the town at least to acknowledge and reply to the Boston circular, although no Committee of Correspondence was formed. Lyman finally triumphed over Williams during the winter of 1774-1775 by charging that he had been in secret correspondence with General Gage, the Royal Governor who replaced Hutchinson. A mob seized Williams and his son, locked them all night in a smoke-house, and then forced them to sign a condemnation of the Intolerable Acts for publication.27 Extortion of such statements and their prompt publication became standard radical tactics in dealing with prominent
conservatives during 1774; the smoke-house was an imaginative touch added by the particular mob dealing with Williams, and was probably inspired by his haughty manner.

In Pittsfield another fiery minister led a group of radicals whose characters, if typical, may explain much of the distaste for the radical program felt by moderate Whigs. The Reverend Thomas Allen was "an excellent hater of foes of his country," a category, one gathers, in which he included most of his political opponents. Each Sunday Allen "preached a mixture of athletic Christianity and rebellious patriotism." Elder Valentine Rathburn, a Baptist lay preacher, was "fiery, vehement, and nervous" with "extremely radical principles and passion for ultra, not to say violent, measures...." Charles Goodrich, Pittsfield's Representative, was a militia captain and large property owner who was "prompt, even to a proneness to litigation, in maintaining his personal rights" and "disposed occasionally to differ in detail from those with whom he agreed in principle...." James Easton, a tavern-keeper and deacon in Allen's church, and John Brown, a young lawyer, later became important Continental officers in the northern theatre of operations, where they demonstrated a conspicuous lack of military ability. Kenneth Roberts' character Cap Huff called them "pig-nut officers -- all rind and a little meat, and that worthless." All in all, the Pittsfield radicals seem to have been a rather unappealing lot, which may ex-
plain their relative lack of influence until news of the Intolerable Acts arrived in June of 1774. Before that date control of the town-meeting rested in a coalition of Tories and conservative Whigs. The leader of this coalition was Colonel William Williams, a famous Indian-fighter and judge of the Berkshire County Probate Court. Williams was thoroughly a Whig in principle, but had a deep aversion to mobs; he termed the Tea Party "the late wretched doings at Boston." 33

Such dual attachment to the radicals' general principles and distaste for many of their methods was typical of western Massachusetts. Indeed, once the revolution was actually under way, the west proved to be more radical from principle than the east. Maintaining judicial responsibility to the local voters was particularly important to the western farmers, perhaps because a developing region depended so much on the courts for a fair settlement of boundary disputes, conflicting land titles, and so forth. Once it had been won to the radical cause, Berkshire County took the lead in dismantling the Royal court system during the late summer and fall of 1774, and later struggled to maintain courts independent of the provincial government in Boston during the war years. Samuel Adams was fortunate in having the judicial salaries as an issue, for western concern about the point allowed the radicals to make real progress for the first time in the west. A half-dozen
towns replied favorably to the Boston circular, although they did not appoint committees of correspondence. But most western towns took no action whatever, and for the time being the conservative hold on the region remained firm. 34

The lack of enthusiasm which characterized the general reaction to the Boston letter makes the importance of Samuel Adams' abilities as a manipulator of public opinion all the more evident. As each town responded to the "Statement of Rights," its resolves were promptly broadcast by the Boston Gazette. During the two months following the creation of the Boston Committee of Correspondence the paper was filled with such resolutions. By mid-January of 1773, however, the flood of replies had slowed to a trickle, with many towns obviously holding back. Consequently the Boston committee announced in the Gazette that the number of responses had grown to the point that they could not all be printed, and rather than show partiality, none would be printed "unless by particular request." 35 The qualification allowed the radicals to print whatever additional responses did come in, while masking the over-all failure of the committee system to continue to spread. Each town which had yet to climb on the radical bandwagon was made to feel that it was almost alone, and the participating towns, in the absence of contrary information, could feel that near-unanimity had been attained.
Although it was probably not evident at the time to anyone except possibly Samuel Adams, the committee of correspondence system was ideally suited as a mechanism for spreading the radicals' influence throughout Massachusetts. The radicals could make repeated efforts to extend the committees of correspondence network, and as the number of towns where they had triumphed grew, so grew the pressure on those towns still controlled by the conservative forces. It was by no means sufficient for the Tories to defeat the initial attempt to form a committee; they had to defeat every attempt, in the face of ever-growing radical success in other areas. The genius of the committee system was that it could not be blocked by opposition at any one point, but flowed around areas of tough resistance, isolating them until they could be worn away. It was the political equivalent of the exploitive penetration found in modern warfare; a political Blitzkrieg, if you will, following the path of least resistance. The radical successes during 1773, like the German success in France in 1940, came not because of any superiority of numbers but because of a superiority of technique. In each case the opposing side had the strength to defeat the attack if it had been able to use it effectively, but was prevented from doing so by a lack of coordination of effort based on a failure to understand precisely what was happening.

The apparent success of the radicals in developing a
correspondence network and in securing resolutions supporting Boston on the judicial salary question put Governor Hutchinson in a dilemma. Up until January of 1773, he had hoped and believed, with some justification, that the colonies could be returned "to their former state of submission...by lenient measures, without discussing points of right." For this reason he had refused to allow the General Assembly to meet and discuss the judicial salaries. But now, he feared that the radical plans, if allowed to proceed unhampered, might result in a complete breakdown of Parliamentary authority. "By sitting still, and suffering the assembly to be precluded by the votes of their constituents, he had reason to think he would bring upon himself a charge of conniving at proceedings, the unwarrantableness whereof he ought to have exposed, and the progress whereof to have checked, by every means in his power." The committees of correspondence were bypassing the Royal government, and when the Assembly met, as it eventually must by law, they would be prepared to put direct pressure on a large number of representatives. To forestall this, he took the initiative himself, called up the Assembly, and opened the session of January 1773, with a strong attack on the Boston Committee of Correspondence. 36

Hutchinson's attack struck at the political legitimacy of the committee; he asserted that it was illegitimate in origin, illegal in its actions, and most important, working
toward a goal which few colonists were ready to accept, full independence. This attack could have been effective. The committees of correspondence are usually termed "extralegal," which they certainly were. But it is important to understand the nature of that extralegality. They existed outside the Royal government, of course; it was the inability of the radicals to attain their goals within the government that brought them into existence. But the committees were always responsible, in theory if not in fact, to the people of the towns which created them; they were not, in the strictly American context, illegal or even extralegal. The importance to the radicals of retaining the appearance of legitimacy cannot be overemphasized. In the original letter to the other towns of November 20, 1772, the Boston town-meeting included copies of the application and petition to the governor, with his answers, as proof that Boston was taking what might be regarded as an extraordinary step only after exhausting the usual means of protest. Now, a lengthy rebuttal of Hutchinson's charges was prepared by Adams, read in the Boston town-meeting of March 23, 1773, and sent to the newspapers and the other towns which corresponded with Boston.

In fact, Hutchinson's attack may have been effective to some extent. At least Hutchinson himself thought so, for he wrote that the controversy "seems to have stopped the progress of the resolves of the town of Boston, very few towns
or districts assembling after the governor's speech." In the last he was correct; the newspaper blackout on the progress of committee system came within two weeks of the governor's speech to the General Assembly. Probably most of the towns who were disposed to appoint committees of correspondence had already done so before the governor decided to act, but Hutchinson was popular in many areas of Massachusetts and his attack on the Boston radicals may well have influenced some towns not to open correspondence with them. Responses to the Boston circular continued to arrive sporadically through the spring and early summer of 1773, but despite this very slow spread the correspondence network remained limited through most of 1773 to no more than a quarter of the towns in Massachusetts.

The weakness of the radical party outside Boston -- a weakness of which few people were aware due to the effectiveness of radical news management -- explains the lack of radical activity during the middle months of 1773. The controversy over the judicial salaries largely died out by February of that year because no action was taken by the British government on the subject. The succeeding eight months were marked by one skirmish between the radicals and the Royal government in Massachusetts. At the summer session of the General Assembly, Samuel Adams used the Hutchinson letters which Benjamin Franklin had sent him from England in a successful attempt to discredit the governor. By cleverly
building up suspense both within the House of Representa-
tives and among the population, Adams raised great excite-
ment and apprehension concerning the content of the letters. 
Hutchinson was convicted of plotting against colonial rights 
not so much by the letters themselves as by Adams' inter-
pretation of them. Hutchinson had written that "there must 
be an abridgment of what is called English Liberty" and had 
urged that Parliament take vigorous measures to assert its 
sovereignty over the colonies. The House voted that its 
clerk, who was Samuel Adams, should prepare the letters for 
publication. Adams did so, quoting out of context and mix-
ing his own words with the governor's so as to prove that 
Hutchinson was responsible for virtually every grievance 
Massachusetts had suffered since the Stamp Act. The House 
subsequently petitioned the King to remove Hutchinson from 
office; the petition was denied, but the affair had des-
troyed Hutchinson's popularity and removed a major obstacle 
to further radical progress. 39

In early November of 1773, the news of the Tea Act 
brought the tranquility of the preceding months to a close. 
The events leading up to the Tea Party have been described 
fully by numerous writers; it is not necessary to repeat the 
narrative here. Several aspects of the crisis are particu-
larly significant in understanding the activities of the 
radical party, however. In the first place, it is note-
worthy that New York and Philadelphia rather than Boston in-
itiated opposition to the tea. New Englanders were particularly addicted to this beverage, and Boston merchants had been importing it -- and paying the duty -- for some time. John Adams wrote years later that had not resistance been initiated elsewhere, Boston would probably have accepted the tea, duty and all. The tea issue was certainly not one which Samuel Adams would have chosen as ideal for a test of colonial determination to resist Parliamentary authority; the Boston radicals were to some degree forced into action by the necessity of maintaining unity with radicals in other colonies. "Our credit is at stake," Adams wrote; "we must venture, and unless we do, we shall be discarded by the sons of liberty in the other colonies." 40

The "venture" must have been regarded with some apprehension among the more astute radicals, for it was clear almost from the beginning of the crisis that a major act of violence might be necessary, and no one could have been certain in advance how such an act would be received outside of Boston. The Townshend Act provided that once arrived, a ship could not sail again until the duty had been paid on its goods; if the duty was not paid "within twenty days after the first entry of the ship," the goods were liable to seizure. Some historians have believed, based on Thomas Hutchinson's testimony, that the ship bearing the tea originally anchored "below the castle," and had thus not officially arrived at the harbor. According to Hutchinson, the
Committee of Correspondence ordered the ship's master, at his peril, to enter the harbor, thus creating the legal dilemma which necessitated destruction of the tea.\footnote{41}

The most recent work on the Tea Party, however, shows this view to be mistaken. The ship was legally within the harbor before its master came ashore, and no contemporary evidence exists supporting Hutchinson’s statement. The evidence which does exist suggests that Hutchinson, not Adams, forced the showdown, since he could have given the vessel a pass allowing it to sail with the tea still aboard. The governor probably felt that he had found a way to discredit the radicals, both within Massachusetts and among the radicals of the other colonies. Everyone who could legally send the tea back was either within Castle William or ready to flee there if threatened by the mob. The Castle's guns barred the way if the ship sailed illegally. When the twenty days expired, the customs officers, supported by the Royal Navy if necessary, would seize and land the tea. Once landed, Hutchinson confidently — and probably correctly — believed the tea could be sold. The sale of the tea might destroy the prestige of the radicals, and would in any case provide a valuable precedent for colonial acceptance of a Parliamentary-imposed tax.\footnote{42}

The word "crisis" in the Mandarin language is said to be a combination of roots meaning "danger" and "opportuni-
ty." If this is so, then "crisis" is certainly the word to describe the series of events leading to the Tea Party from the point of view of the radical party. Danger there certainly was; Samuel Adams and his associates showed great courage in pursuing a course of action which they knew would almost certainly result in violent measures of a most serious nature, for the assurances of support they had received in advance of the event were meager indeed. In November of 1773, when news arrived of the British scheme to sell cheap but dutied tea in America, and the Boston Committee of Correspondence was approaching the first anniversary of its existence, the network of committees of correspondence outside Boston was limited to no more than one-third of the towns in Massachusetts. The number was probably closer to one-fourth; approximately one-half of the towns had responded to the original circular of November, 1772, but it is doubtful if more than half of those had appointed permanent committees.

Even the one-fourth to one-third estimate is deceptive, for while it seems to have been generally understood in the colony that appointment of a committee was an expression of active support for Bostonian radicalism, it is equally apparent that this was not understood by all towns which created committees. The apathy which hampered the spread of the committee system must also have existed within that system; of the existing committees -- surely thirty or more -- only
thirteen sent expressions of support to Boston between November 5 and December 16, 1773. With the exception of tiny Groton near the New Hampshire border, the thirteen were either coastal towns or were within ten miles of Boston. Of course the support of the other port towns was essential for effective opposition to the importation of dutied tea, and the thirteen did include all the major Massachusetts ports with the exception of Salem. Then too, the active cooperation of the towns nearest Boston enabled the Boston Committee of Correspondence to achieve the appearance of unanimity within Boston; the Boston town-meetings between November 5, 1773, and the Tea Party on December 16 were opened to inhabitants of other towns, and apparently a number did attend from neighboring communities. In addition, the Boston committee invited the four nearest committees to join its deliberations during the crisis. If the Boston radicals were not acting in behalf of the rest of Massachusetts during the tea crisis, they were at least acting as representatives of a "greater Boston."

The crisis did lead to a slight expansion of the committee of correspondence system and of radicalism in general. Brookline held a three-day town-meeting to discuss the matter between November 26 and 29, 1773; either sentiment in the town was divided or else its citizens were simply long-winded. The second alternative is not inconceivable, for one of the first actions taken, on November 26, was the
expansion of the town's Committee of Correspondence from seven to eleven members; all four of the new members were militia officers. If there was a serious debate the radicals won it, for the meeting finally resolved that the dutied tea had "a direct tendency to bring the Americans into Slavery, and is therefore an Intolerable Grievance," and that anyone holding a different view was an enemy of his country.

At this same time Charlestown, just across the harbor from Boston, was joining the radical movement. At a town-meeting on November 27 a committee of correspondence was appointed, and a week later it reported to the town with a statement firmly supporting Boston in its determination not to permit a landing of the tea. The Charlestown committee was one of those which met with the Boston committee before the Tea Party, and soon after it, on December 22, it petitioned the Charlestown town-meeting to appoint a Committee of Inspection to insure that all abided by the town's agreement for nonconsumption of tea. The town of Beverly also appointed a committee of correspondence during the weeks before the Tea Party, although Beverly seems to have been well disposed towards the Boston radicals throughout 1773. The town responded warmly to the Boston circular in January of 1773, instructed their Representative to attempt to obtain a redress of grievances, and, while not appointing a standing committee of correspondence, did expressly request that
the Boston committee continue to send whatever news they might receive (or invent) concerning further evidence of British tyranny. 46

Despite these gains the radical party remained quite limited in strength outside Boston. Close examination of the committee of correspondence network as it existed at the beginning of the tea crisis shows that Schlesinger was at least partially correct in stating that "the effort to foster a continuous discontent throughout the province had failed of success because it lacked a substantial issue and the backing of the business classes." 47 The tea crisis, in spite of the danger it represented, gave the radicals an opportunity to gain that backing. They had had the support of many individual merchants on the salary question, of course; otherwise committees of correspondence would not have been created in Marblehead and Newburyport. But the tea crisis brought the merchants as a class back into alliance with the radicals; those who had been more concerned with the preservation of peace, order, and prosperity than with who should pay the judges became very much concerned at the prospect of losing a profitable trade in tea to a British monopoly.

But while the fact that only thirteen towns, half of them seaports, wrote their support to Boston before the Tea Party indicates that the assistance of the merchants was essential for the success of the radical program, the fact
that the new unity of the radicals and merchants was developed through the committee of correspondence network is equally significant. In earlier crises the merchants had led colonial resistance; they had permitted the radicals to assist in the struggle but had tried — not always with success — to restrain them from going too far. But now it became a case of the merchants joining the radicals rather than the reverse — from a psychological standpoint an entirely different relationship. While the Tea Party undoubtedly appalled many merchants as an unnecessary act of violence, in practical terms most of them had already gone on record in support of the measure. The method used by Newburyport in dealing with its share of the tea — it was destroyed by the agreement of its consignees without violence or publicity — was undoubtedly more to the taste of most merchants, but such a method was impossible in Boston and the merchants had no real choice except to cooperate with the radicals in preventing the landing of the tea. The committee of correspondence network was the only existing organization through which united resistance could be coordinated; Governor Hutchinson would certainly have blocked any attempt to use the General Assembly for that purpose. The merchants could only join the radical organization and try to exert a moderating influence from within.

While the tea crisis was significant in bringing an important element of Massachusetts society into alliance
with the radicals, it did not in itself lead to a broad ex-
pansion of the radical organization throughout the colony.
Response to the Tea Party was favorable for the most part;
a number of towns resolved on nonconsumption of tea, some
expressed specific approval of the Tea Party, and at least
one, Newton, appointed a committee of correspondence in
January of 1774. Littleton, on the other hand, discharged
its committee, and Pittsfield instructed its Representa-
tive to oppose any move by the General Assembly to pay for
the tea, and to attempt to cause the punishment of those
responsible for the Tea Party. In general, disapproval of
the Tea Party centered in those areas most resistant to the
original attempt to set-up a correspondence system -- that
is, in the west and along the coast around Marshfield,
Scituate, and Barnstable. Even in areas where the reaction
was favorable, however, no immediate growth of radicalism
was evident; the spate of new committees of correspondence
did not come until early May of 1774 after news of the In-
tolerable Acts arrived in Massachusetts.

It is difficult to explain why the committee system
grew precisely as it did during 1773. The failure of the
system to spread over the entire colony may be explained by
the general apathy which plagued the Patriot cause through-
out the revolution and war for independence. The causes of
the resistance to the radical movement in certain areas
such as the west are also clear, at least in broad outline.
The real difficulty lies in explaining why in the eastern counties certain towns joined the radical movement while others held back -- why Dedham was more willing to support the Boston radicals than Braintree only ten miles away -- why Marblehead was more radical than its close neighbor Salem -- why, for that matter, Marblehead was radical while Scituate was conservative. One was as exposed to the Royal Navy as the other. The only answer which suggests itself from available evidence is the role played by a few prominent individuals in each town.

In almost every town that appointed a committee during 1773 the action involved no significant shift of political power or leadership within the town itself. For the most part, committees appointed during this year were composed of men who had been serving as selectmen, town clerks, or Representatives for years. Towns followed their existing leadership whether it was radical or conservative. The cases of Salem and Marblehead illustrate this point quite well. These two towns are separated only by a narrow inlet; they are separate port towns more or less sharing a common harbor. With such proximity and identity of interests, the only available explanation for Salem's conservatism and Marblehead's radicalism is, to oversimplify slightly, that Timothy Pickering lived in Salem and Elbridge Gerry lived in Marblehead. Neither was his town's undisputed leader, of course, but both were astute and ambitious young politicians.
whose views were accurate reflections of those held by older members of their town's political aristocracy. Both were active Patriots after 1774, and both had highly successful political careers at the national level. But in 1773, Gerry corresponded frequently with Samuel Adams, developing, according to his biographer, "an even keener scent than his master for tyranny," and leading other Marblehead radicals in a series of victorious encounters with conservatives in town-meetings. At the same time, Pickering "remained cautious and used his position as a Whig to check the more violent among his colleagues." Pickering had been a Tory until 1770; his conversion "was in all likelihood based upon consideration of the local political situation...." He was as much an expert in the theory of military matters as the colony possessed at that time, and a sharp critic of existing militia units; this awareness of colonial inefficiency in such matters accounts for his reluctance to accept the inevitability of armed conflict with England. Few political leaders even among the radicals were democrats in a social sense, but Pickering was "a passionate defender of social and political order." He would never, while any chance of compromise remained, have voluntarily embarked on anything as dangerous in every sense as a political revolution and war with England; he only did so after the radicals had forced matters to the point where compromise was unacceptable as a political alternative. One might say that the existence of Timothy Pickering justified the radicalism of
Elbridge Gerry.
NOTES - CHAPTER 2

1 Townsend Scudder, *Concord: American Town* (Boston, 1947), 73.


3 P. O. Hutchinson, ed., *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, Esq.* (London, 1886), II


5 Adams to Warren, in Cushing, *Writings of Samuel Adams*, II.

6 Brown, *Middle-Class Democracy*.

7 Davidson, *Propaganda*, 58.

8 Detailed information was not available on the responses of all seventy-eight towns who replied to the initial circular from Boston. Forty-nine out of seventy-eight, however, is certainly a statistically significant sample. The eighteen towns appointing committees were Bedford, Roxford, Brookline, Cambridge, Clinton, Danvers, Dedham, Gloucester, Ipswich, Leicester, Littleton, Lynn, Marblehead, Newbury, Newburyport, Plymouth, Westford, and Woburn.

9 Danvers, Dedham, Ipswich, Leicester, Newbury, and Plymouth.

10 Beverly, Bradford, Charlestown, Chelmsford, Newton, Reading, Salisbury, and Sudbury.

11 Acton, Brimfield, Braintree, Coleraine, Concord, Duxbury, Gardnerstown, Hatfield, Holliston, Lincoln, Littleton, Montague, Northampton, Rowley, Rutland District, Salem, South Hadley, Stoneham, Stow, Watertown, Wenham, and Weymouth.

13 Joshua Coffin, A Sketch of the History of Newbury, Newburnport, and West Newbury... (Boston, 1845), 240.

14 Andrew E. Ford, History of Dedham... (Dedham, 1936), 438.

15 Frank Smith, History of the Origins of the Town of Clinton... (Clinton, 1896), 92-4.

16 Plymouth, Records of the Town of Plymouth (Plymouth, 1903), III, 262.

17 Francis Jackson, History of the Early Settlement of Newton... (Boston, 1854), 179.

18 William Barry, A History of Framingham... (Boston, 1847), 90.

19 Adams to Elbridge Gerry, November, 1772, in Cushing, Writings of Samuel Adams, II, 350.

20 James D. Phillips, Salem in the Eighteenth Century (Boston, 1937), 312. As a matter of fact, the Selectmen did act in that capacity throughout 1773; the Pickering Papers contain several items addressed both to and from the Salem Committee of Correspondence during that year, although the Committee as a distinct body was not appointed until May 17, 1774. Timothy Pickering, Papers, L756-L829 [Microfilm Edition] Frederick S. Allis, Jr., ed., (Boston, 1966), reel 39, items 25, 38, 47. Hereafter cited as Pickering, followed by reel and item numbers, as Pickering, 39; 25, 38, 47.

21 Schlesinger, Colonial Merchants, 260n.

22 Mellan Chamberlain, A Documentary History of Chelsea (Boston, 1908), II, 420.

23 Francis T. Bowles, "The Loyalty of Barnstable in the

24 Billias, Glover, 57.


26 Ibid., 33, 55-9.

27 Ibid., 24, 69-70

28 Ibid., 66-7.

29 M.E.A. Smith, The History of Pittsfield... (Boston, 1869), 177.

30 Sarah C. Sedgewick, Stockbridge, 1739-1939, a Chronical (Great Barrington, Mass., 1939), 127.

31 Smith, Pittsfield, 177-81.

32 Kenneth Roberts, Rabble in Arms (Greenwich, Conn., 1947), 145. "It takes a sledge-hammer to crack a pig-nut, and when you get inside it, there ain't nothing you care to use." Ibid., 132.

33 Smith, Pittsfield, 182; Shepton, New England Life, 310.

34 Taylor, Western Massachusetts, 62-3.

35 Richard Frothingham, Life and Times of Joseph Warren (Boston, 1865), 236n.

36 Hutchinson, History, III, 266.

37 Boston, Town Records, 121.
Littleton had experienced considerable controversy in the creation of its committee. In a series of town-meetings between December, 1772, and March, 1773, a vocal radical minority eventually overcame a Tory minority and convinced the moderate majority to appoint the committee. The apparent success of the committee system in other towns, as reflected in the Gazette, was probably an element contributing to the radical victory.
in March. The Tea Party deprived the radicals of their moderate support until news of the Coercive Acts arrived.

51 Smith, Pittsfield, 185.

52 Billias, Glover, 35.

53 Gerard H. Clarfield, Timothy Pickering... (Columbus, Mo., 1969), 3-5.
CHAPTER 3

THE LOCAL COMMITTEES IN THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION:
MAY, 1774 -- APRIL, 1775

News of the Coercive or Intolerable Acts, Parliament's response to the Tea Party, arrived in America in the early weeks of May, 1774. These acts included the Port Bill, which closed Boston's harbor to all shipping until the tea was paid for, and several measures intended to reorganize Massachusetts' government from top to bottom. Town-meetings were forbidden except for one each year for the election of town officials, and the Governor's Council, the upper-house of the General Court which had been elected by the House of Representatives, was replaced by Counsellors appointed by Royal mandamus and responsible only to the governor and the Crown. Governor Hutchinson was called to England and replaced by Major-General Thomas Gage, the Commander-in-Chief in America; Gage's meager forces were scattered across the continent from Georgia to Canada, but he was promised substantial reinforcements of soldiers and the cooperation of a large fleet for enforcement of the Port Bill and other Coercive Acts.

These developments caused great changes in all aspects of the political situation within Massachusetts, and particularly in the position of the radical party within and without Boston. The prospect of having their government taken
out of their hands united the people of Massachusetts in active opposition to Parliamentary authority, and since what had been done to one colony could be done to all, the rest of the continent was prompt in declaring its support for Massachusetts. Yet while the Coercive Acts destroyed the greatest obstacle to the radical program by all but eliminating moderation and compromise as politically acceptable alternatives in Massachusetts, the Acts also placed the Boston radicals in a rather precarious position. The Port Act made Boston the martyr and rallying-point for Massachusetts and the other colonies, but at the same time it made the continued existence there of a radical command-post dangerous indeed.

The radical strength in Boston had been based on the twin pillars of a town-meeting controlled by the caucus clubs and a disciplined mob led by the same groups in their capacity as Sons of Liberty. The radicals had held the balance of power in the physical as well as the political sense; no sheriff, constable, or customs-officer could or would perform any duty of his office if it conflicted with the wishes of the Sons of Liberty.¹ Events in 1770 leading up to and following the so-called Boston Massacre had proved the willingness and ability of the mob to function even when confronted with small numbers of British troops. But now the Royal governor was a military officer backed by numbers of troops many times greater than those available in 1770.
Moreover, the geography of Boston aided Gage tremendously; the town was almost an island, connected with the mainland only by a narrow Neck easily sealed by a few soldiers. The Royal Navy controlled the surrounding waters, of course, and enforced the Port Bill so strictly that the ferry was not even permitted to cross the harbor to Charlestown on the opposite bank. Finally, Gage had discretionary orders, of which the radicals were aware, to arrest the radical leaders such as Adams and Warren and send them to England for trial. Boston thus became in a practical sense a Royal instead of a radical stronghold, a situation which increased as Patriot activity in the countryside led more and more Loyalists to flee to Boston and the protection of the British troops.  

All of this did not develop immediately, of course; the Boston Committee of Correspondence functioned within the town throughout the summer of 1774, and even expanded its activities to include supervision of the Committee of Donations which administered aid to Boston inhabitants put out of work by the closure of the port. This relief work was motivated by political as well as by humanitarian concern; the radicals were able, by means of the substantial economic aid given Boston by the rest of the continent, to maintain their control over the lower classes of the town, with the result that even after months of widespread unemployment the British Army was unable to hire carpenters to construct badly-needed barracks.
The radical leaders did not leave Boston permanently until the winter of 1774-1775 when both the British command and the Massachusetts countryside were displaying a truculence which made open warfare imminent. Even then the radicals maintained an intelligence system among the artisans and workingmen of the town, a system which proved itself by providing advance warning of the British march to Concord in April of 1775. Nevertheless, throughout the eleven months between the closure of Boston harbor and the outbreak of war the decisive political decisions were being made outside Boston and indeed, as will be seen, without particularly attentive regard for Boston as a political entity. Although the committee of correspondence system continued to develop until it covered practically every town not only in Massachusetts but throughout New England, the relative position of Samuel Adams' Boston committee declined sharply.

One reason for this was the matter of scale. The committee system in 1773 was limited to a minority of the towns of Massachusetts and was not very active; by the fall of 1774 it extended to almost all towns and was engaged in a bewildering variety of activities. The orientation of the new committees was somewhat different from that of earlier ones, moreover; those of 1772 and 1773 had been created with the primary mission, often specifically stated by the creating town-meeting, of corresponding with the Boston Committee of Correspondence; the new ones were appointed with more gen-
eral reference to what the Chelsea town-meeting termed the "distressed circumstances" of the province. While the older committees had limited their correspondences almost entirely to Boston, with very little communication among themselves, old and new alike now began frequent and widespread intercourse. Even this, however, was not the primary activity of the committees, at least not in its entirety; the term "committee of correspondence" as applied to such bodies after May of 1774 is a misnomer, for the purpose of the committees was to act in numerous respects as emergency governments for the towns, performing executive and judicial functions appropriate to a revolutionary situation. The other committees now possessed freedom of action and initiative, with only a general responsibility to the town-meeting, which the Boston committee had exercised all along.

The former moderates who became revolutionaries after the Intolerable Acts did not do so because they had been converted by radical propaganda from Boston but because they had no other choice except complete submission to Parliamentary authority. They were converted by events rather than by the radicals although, to be sure, the radicals were to a large extent responsible for those events. The point is that local committees formed during 1774 and 1775 had no reason to look to Boston for guidance, and in fact did not do so. This new orientation of the committees became apparent in the affair of the Solemn League and Covenant.
The Covenant was an attempt made by the Boston radicals immediately after the Port Act to repeat their earlier successes in influencing events in the country outside Boston. It was drawn-up in June of 1774 by Joseph Warren, and called for nonimportation and nonexportation of British goods by the people. Anyone refusing to sign or abide by the agreement was to be boycotted and socially ostracized after his name was published as an enemy of American liberties. August 31 was made the deadline after which importation from Britain was forbidden. Copies were printed and sent, on June 8, with a covering letter throughout the colony. The Boston Committee, the letter confidently asserted, "have received such assurances from our brethren in every part of the province of their readiness to adopt such measures as may be likely to save our country, that we have not the least doubt of an almost universal agreement for this purpose...." Then in order "that we might not give our enemies time to counteract us," and probably also in order that the various towns might not have time to judge each others reactions, the letter announced that "we have endeavored that every town should be furnished with such a copy on or before the fourteenth day of this month, and we earnestly desire that you would use your utmost endeavors that the subscription paper may be filled up as soon as possible." 8


That the Covenant was written and adopted in haste is readily apparent from its provisions. The Covenant con-
tained very serious flaws of which the Committee, if not Warren should have been aware. The August 31 deadline was much too soon; it did not allow sufficient time for merchants to receive goods already ordered. No allowance was made for the importation of articles essential to the New England fishing industry which the colonies could not provide. The provisions for nonexportation were vague and ill-defined. 

The Boston radicals hoped to accomplish several things through the Covenant. In the first place, they were sincerely convinced that economic pressure could be effective in bringing Parliament to terms. Even Joseph Warren believed that "a suspension of trade will be the grand machine that will deliver us." Violence, he conceded, might be necessary as a last resort, but the colonies needed time to prepare for war and in the meantime economic measures should be tried.

The difficulty was that nonimportation depended upon the cooperation of the merchants, who as a class could not be relied upon to put political principle above economic self-interest. If, however, the general populace could be gotten to agree to nonconsumption of British goods, with social and economic sanctions against violators of the agreement, then the merchants would have little choice but to agree to nonimportation. Referring to a suspension of trade, Adams wrote to Silas Deane on May 31, 1774 that "although
the interested and disaffected Merchants should not come into it, great success may attend it -- Let the yeomanry ... break off all commercial Connection whatever with those who will not come into it." The Covenant was an attempt to by-pass the merchants and base radical action on the farmers of the inland towns.

The Covenant, or any measure confined to Massachusetts, would not suffice as an answer to the Coercive Acts, of course; the radicals recognized the necessity of a continental congress and began as early as anyone to recommend that one be held. Yet the radicals feared, as Josiah Quincy, Jr. wrote John Dickenson, "that timid or lukewarm counsels will be considered by our congress as prudent and politic." If an agreement such as the Covenant were already in existence, however, even a "timid" congress might be persuaded to ratify what it would not originate. Through the Covenant the radicals hoped to present the continental congress with a fait accompli in Massachusetts.

To accomplish all of these things the radicals relied on their proven method of a political coup de main. By sending the Covenant simultaneously to all towns in Massachusetts with a covering letter requesting immediate action, the radicals hoped that, as in the salary controversy and the formation of the committee of correspondence network, many towns would react favorably more or less by reflex, without
consulting other towns, in the belief that they were merely acting in conjunction with a general movement. To heighten the impression that the Covenant was sweeping irresistibly across the province, the covering letter implied that the Covenant had already been approved by the Boston town-meeting and generally adopted in the town. As a matter of fact the Boston Committee of Correspondence had acted entirely on its own initiative in sending out the Covenant, and while it was not a matter of any particular secrecy in Boston, the document had never been officially approved or even discussed in town-meeting. When realization of this deception and of the high-handedness of the committee spread, considerable indignation was aroused among the more moderate residents of Boston. Joseph Warren wrote on June 15 to Samuel Adams, who was at Salem for the meeting of the General Court, that a meeting of tradesmen on that day had failed to come to any resolutions supporting the Covenant because "the party who are for paying for the tea, and by that making a way for every compliance, are too formidable." Opposition to the radicals was growing, although it was clearly unprepared for the June 17 town-meeting at which the Covenant was finally brought to the attention of the town. The meeting voted, "with only one Dissentient", that the Committee of Correspondence should write to the other colonies acquainting them, among other things, "that our Brethren the landed Interest of the Province, with an unexampled Spirit and Unanimity, are entering into a Non-Consumption agreement"! The meeting then voted
its thanks to the Committee for "their Faithfulness, in the Discharge of their Trust...their Vigilance and Activity in that Service." There is no doubt about who was in control of that meeting!

The next meeting on June 27 was a different story, however. The town called for the correspondence regarding the Covenant to be read; a motion was then made that the Committee be censured and abolished. The Tories were joined by many moderate Whigs, especially the merchants. John Rowe noted in his diary: "The debates very warm on both sides...I think are wrong. I mean the Committee are wrong in this matter. The merchants have taken up against them, they have in my opinion exceeded their authority...." John Andrews wrote that "our committee of correspondence, not content with the calamities already come upon us, have issued out letters to every town in the province (without consulting ye town in regard to the expediency of such a measure) accompanied with a Solemn League and Covenant....Such is the cursed zeal that now prevails." Andrews felt that paying for the tea was the only alternative to war, and was highly critical of "those who have governed the town for years past" as the authors of the present evils. Apparently, however the radicals' opponents overplayed their hand. Andrews, writing a month later, expressed surprise that the motion was to censure and dismiss the Committee rather than simply to suspend the Covenant until the Continental Congress met. When the
question was finally put, it "passed in the Negative by a great Majority." The meeting then resolved "by a Vast Majority" that it was "abundantly satisfied" with the intentions and zeal of the Committee, and desired them to "persevere with their usual Activity and Firmness...."18

All of this clamor did not pass unnoticed in the countryside, however. In Chelsea, for instance, the ostracism provision of the Covenant had already caused some unrest among moderate Whigs who did not believe such harsh measures to be necessary; this restiveness intensified when it appeared that the Covenant had been sent out without authorization of the Boston town-meeting.19 In Dover, New Hampshire, where the Covenant had also been sent out by the Portsmouth Committee of Correspondence acting on behalf of the Boston committee, Jeremy Belknap advised strongly against the Covenant. "Tyranny in one shape is as odious to me as Tyranny in another," he wrote; "This Covenant...originated with a Corresponding Committee...of Boston who were not chosen for this purpose and whose doings were not known to their Constituents...and is sent out from Portsmouth Committee in the same clandestine manner, without any legal authority..." Belknap discussed at some length the injustices and impracticalities inherent in the measure, concluding that it was "highly improper and assuming" to propose such an agreement before the Continental Congress had discussed the subject.20
The point about the Congress was a most persuasive one. The Solemn League and Covenant was finally adopted in about fifteen towns in Massachusetts and in a few more in other New England colonies, usually in an amended form to avoid bruising local sensibilities. The ostracism provision, surprisingly, was less objected to than the oath everyone was required to give. The descendents of the Puritans took such matters seriously, and evidently did not want to be tied to any single course of action by an oath they would consider binding. The form of the Covenant most often adopted was one drawn-up by the Worcester committee, identical to the original draft from Boston except for the omission of an oath. A few towns added the provision that any conflict between the Covenant and whatever the Congress might decide upon would be resolved in favor of the Congress.

The vast majority of towns, however, refused to take any action whatever on the Covenant before the Congress had met and deliberated on the subject. Among the towns which failed to follow Boston's lead were a number that had been faithful to the radical party since early 1773 -- Charlestown, Marblehead, and Newburyport, for instance. In part this reflected the very reluctance to enter such an agreement which the radicals had feared of the merchants, who still had great influence in the port-towns. The decline of Boston's political influence corresponded with an increased political consciousness at the county level, and in the eastern coun-
ties the largest and most influential towns were the ports. Moreover, the merchants were as accustomed as the radicals to communicating among themselves on political matters. The committee of Falmouth, for instance, wrote to the committees of Charlestown, Newburyport, Marblehead, Gloucester, Salem, and Boston that while the people there generally approved the Worcester Covenant, the committee thought it prudent to consult with the other ports before acting. (Evidently Falmouth was not aware that the Covenant had originated in Boston.) Boston, of course, heartily endorsed the plan, but Timothy Pickering replied for the Salem committee "that it is their opinion, and the opinion of the town in general... that it is expedient to suspend the measures...till we know the result of the deliberations of the grand american congress." Pickering pointed out that the southern colonies and perhaps even Boston itself were delaying until then; that nonimportation by only a few towns would be of little avail; and that a uniform plan for all was required and could only come from the congress. Isaac Foster replied for Charlestown — which was as hard-hit by the Port Bill as Boston and received 7% of the donations for relief — that "it had been thought that patient, silent suffering on their part, while they relied on...the active zeal of their pitying brethren in all the other towns, was most for the public good," but that nevertheless it appeared to Charlestown that the Covenant was premature. Marblehead and Newburyport concurred, and Falmouth accepted their recommendation to
The only real success the Covenant had was in the west, in Berkshire County, and the manner in which it was achieved was more significant than the success itself. The leading radical in the west, Joseph Hawley, was not enthusiastic about the Covenant; in a long letter to Thomas Allen at Pittsfield, he wrote that he had seen war coming for some time, but that the radicals should wait for public opinion throughout the colonies to catch up with Massachusetts. "Constant, and a sort of negative resistance will increase the heat and blow the fire," without the danger of Massachusetts becoming isolated from the other colonies. 25

Allen ignored Hawley's advice, however; two of his radical associates, James Easton and John Brown, were sent as delegates to the Berkshire County convention held at Stockbridge on July 6 and 11, and Easton sat on the five-man committee which proposed to the convention a Covenant. The radicals came to the convention fresh from a victory at Pittsfield; the previous week, on June 30, 1774, the town had finally appointed a standing Committee of Correspondence headed by Allen, Easton, and Brown, and had adopted the Worcester Covenant. 26 Yet the radicals by no means dominated the convention; all shades of Whig opinion were represented. Colonel William Williams was present, prestigious and determinedly moderate, and so were many other moderates, among
them Timothy Edwards of Stockbridge, who joined Easton on the committee to consider the Covenant. The outcome was a compromise; the convention committed the county to nonimportation and nonconsumption of British goods after October 1, 1774, "or other time agreed on by the American Congress," but promised that the county would "observe strick obedience to all...laws, and authority, and will at all times exert ourselves to the utmost for the discouragement of all licentiousness and suppression of all mobs and riots." The moderates were willing to join in radical measures at the provincial level if they could maintain law and order at home.

The convention's adoption of the Covenant was not very significant except as it represented a partial victory for the Berkshire radicals; reception of the Covenant elsewhere was so unfavorable that Warren's plan was plainly a failure. The county convention itself was significant, however, as the first in a series of such conventions which played a very important role in the political revolution in Massachusetts. While the new government which would take Massachusetts through the war for independence was forged in a series of Provincial Congresses, the dismantling of the Royal government was largely done in convention county by county.

In one sense to speak of the Provincial Congresses as the constructive and the county conventions as the destruc-
tive side of the revolution is absurd; many men were present at both, and besides an overlapping of personnel there was a considerable cross-exchange of ideas, with one county recommending a measure to the next congress which would in turn recommend it to the other counties. Yet two types of public institutions did exist which needed to be dealt with at a county level; the court system and the militia were both organized on a county basis, and both were inimical, in different ways, to the Patriot cause. The militia officers were appointed by the governor, and many of them, especially at the higher levels, were simply not reliable politically. The threat presented by the courts, on the other hand, had nothing to do with the loyalty of the judges, although some of them were Tories. The existing courts were part of the Royal government; that government was being altered by Parliamentary authority against the wishes of Massachusetts. The courts, if they remained open, must either comply with the Intolerable Acts -- which was intolerable -- or must act on the authority of a Charter which had been revoked by Great Britain. In that case the legality of their judgments, and of their very existence, would be open to question. The answer to the dilemma, of course, was that the courts must not open at all; local committees would enforce a rough justice in criminal cases, and lawsuits involving questions of property and equity must simply be suspended for the duration of the emergency.
Another institution of Royal government also required attention at the local level. The Governor's Council, newly appointed by Royal mandamus, had no real powers beyond advising General Gage, but the Council was composed of a number of the most prominent citizens of Massachusetts. Even with the General Assembly meeting as a Provincial Congress in defiance of the governor's dissolution, and the courts closed, the governor plus such a Council equalled an administration which could claim to be the legal government. Without the Council Gage was merely the commander of an occupying army. The Council could not be prevented from meeting since Gage would undoubtedly support it with troops, and no one was ready for an open clash just yet -- though a good many were already considering it as a possibility in the near future. But the individual Counsellors could be persuaded to resign, and this was best done by their neighbors.

Through such resignations, the Council was effectively destroyed as a body by October of 1774, although a few individual Counsellors retained their commissions by placing themselves under Gage's protection in Boston. The process of exacting a resignation from a Counsellor was carried out in much of the same fashion on a number of occasions across the province, with the degree of violence exhibited depending primarily on the degree of recalcitrance of the Counsellor involved. A description of one such occasion will suffice, and perhaps illustrate something of the nature of the
revolution as well.

This particular affair was an impromptu one, occasioned by the seizure of colonial gunpowder stocks at Quarry Hill by Gage's troops. Quarry Hill is near Boston, between Cambridge and Charlestown, and during the pre-dawn hours of September 1, 1774, troops crossed Boston harbor in boats, landed near Quarry Hill, and carried 250 barrels of powder belonging to the towns back to Castle William. By evening the news had spread, magnified in the telling into a bloody raid by British troops on peaceful villages, and several thousand angry farmers had gathered in Cambridge. Nothing could be done short of attacking Gage's army, but the huge crowd assembled again the next morning and the Cambridge committee seized the opportunity to accomplish certain things unrelated to the powder. The committees of Charlestown and of Boston were notified, and upon hastening to the scene found the "Body," as the mass of people termed themselves, confronting Mandamus Counsellors Samuel Danford and Joseph Lee. The two resigned without much hesitation, whereupon the Body declared, on motion, its abhorrence of mobs and of the destruction of private property. The Body then marched to the house of Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Oliver, who, being forewarned, had prepared an address to the people. He was heard, thanked, and assured that the Body was "no mob, but sober, orderly people." Oliver had advised the three committees that his position as President of the
Council seemed to be linked with the position of Lieutenant-Governor, and he did not wish to resign the latter post at the instance of one county; if the entire province agreed, he would cooperate. This explanation satisfied the committees, who were preparing a report to the Body to that effect when Customs Commissioner Hallowell imprudently rode past. This sight, according to Ezra Stiles, "so inflamed the people, that in a few minutes about one-hundred and sixty horsemen were...proceeding in pursuit of him on the full gallop." Captain James Gardner of the Cambridge committee and Dr. Young of Boston followed and succeeded in calling off the pursuit, explaining that the Body was that day dealing with resignations of unconstitutional Counsellors and it might introduce confusion if other matters were "brought upon the carpet." The Body now found Oliver's explanation unacceptable, and pressing into his yard made "marks of earnestness and importunity which...became irresistible." Oliver resigned "in compliance with the demands of about four thousand people;" his resignation was read by the committees along the lines of people at intervals, and the Body dissolved.31

The Mandamus Counsellors were generally dealt with by mass action and the courts and militia by solemn resolutions in convention, but the controlling bodies, in both cases, were the local committees. The county conventions were for the most part conventions of these committees rather than of
delegates chosen by the town. It is interesting that the prohibition against town-meetings was not simply ignored, as it could have been; Gage had no way to enforce the prohibition in 200 towns across the province. Rather it was evaded in a number of ways; towns met by adjournment so that the one annual legal meeting was stretched into numerous meetings; county meetings were held, which were not mentioned in the prohibiting acts; or the Selectmen and/or Committee of Correspondence simply acted for the town. In some counties the conventions were explicitly meetings of the local committees; in others the committees chose delegates from among themselves or the Selectmen chose them from among the committees. In all cases the result was the same.

The first convention of this type (the Stockbridge convention had been too early to fit this model) was held on August 9 when fifty-two representatives of the local committees of Worcester county met at the town of Worcester. The convention reconvened on August 30, this time with much greater attendance. On September 6 the convention declared the royal courts to be dissolved within the county. Rumor had spread that General Gage would attempt to protect the courts with troops, and 6000 militia had gathered under their leaders to resist the move if it came. On September 21 the convention compelled all of the county's militia officers to resign in order that new ones might be elected from among the revolutionary party. The convention also issued
several policy statements intended for the guidance of the forthcoming General Assembly. When the governor pro-
rogued the Assembly, it refused to disband and became the first Provincial Congress.

The work of the Worcester convention was roughly paralleled in the other counties. Some overall coordination was provided by a meeting sponsored by the Boston Committee of Correspondence on August 26. The committees of the larger towns of Suffolk, Worcester, Essex, and Middlesex counties sent representatives at Boston's request to decide on a joint plan of operations. The meeting adopted a general policy statement authored by Joseph Warren as a guide for future county conventions.

Warren has been credited with first suggesting county conventions as a means of evading the act prohibiting town-meetings. The conventions would have occurred anyway, of course; the revolution had simply reached a stage when action at the county level was necessary. The August 26 meeting should not be taken as causative with respect to later county conventions; there is no evidence that Warren and his Boston colleagues attempted to dictate a plan of action to the other committees, and there is ample evidence that the others would have resisted or ignored such an attempt. The meeting was simply a convenient way to coordinate parallel efforts.
The August 26 meeting does indicate, however, that the Boston radicals had recognized the ineffectiveness of their old methods, as demonstrated in the failure of the Covenant, and with the flexibility of true revolutionaries had adapted to the new political situation. If local action was being taken through county conventions, then the Bostonians would hold a convention.

As a matter of fact, by August 26 the Suffolk County convention was already underway. It had first convened on August 16 in Stroughton. No business beyond procedural matters was transacted, however, for some of the towns had failed to instruct their delegates and these were uncertain of their powers. The convention accordingly adjourned until September 6, when it reconvened at Dedham. More than seventy delegates of nineteen Suffolk towns were present. The Boston radicals had planned carefully for the meeting, drawing up a proposed agenda to cover the points upon which they wished the convention to act. The Bostonians proposed that unit-voting by towns be utilized to achieve the appearance of unanimity. Warren headed a committee to propose a set of county resolutions, and the convention adjourned until September 9.36

Although the Suffolk Revolves were written in about the same length of time as the Solemn League and Covenant, Warren had been considering their content for some time previ-
ously and produced a creditable piece of work. The Resolves were based on the premise that reconciliation would not occur and that war was an imminent possibility. The machinery of Royal government was declared abolished; the county would "support and bear harmless all sheriffs and...other officers, who shall refuse to carry into execution the orders of (the Royal) courts." As in Worcester county, the Suffolk militia officers were relieved of their commands and politically reliable replacements chosen. Warren recommended that the inhabitants appear under arms at least once a week, in order "to acquaint themselves with the art of war as soon as possible." The non-consumption agreement of the Covenant was revived, although it was declared subject to any additions, alterations, or exceptions the Continental Congress might propose. A courier system was established. The county pledged "to act merely upon the defensive, so long as such conduct may be vindicated by reason and the principles of self-preservation, but no longer."\textsuperscript{37}

While the Suffolk Resolves went beyond the resolutions of previous county conventions in their frank acceptance of the possibility of open warfare, they were not, unlike the Solemn League and Covenant, really pushing the pace of the revolution to an unacceptable degree. Warren had simply made explicit what a great many people had already begun to believe, and what had been implicit in earlier measures such as the reorganization of the militia. Moreover, the Re-
solves were the work of a county meeting, and even if the careful preparation and political expertise of the Boston radicals made the convention's outcome easily predictable, its resolutions carried much more weight than would have anything coming directly out of the Boston Committee of Correspondence. This political respectability was important, for the Suffolk Resolves were intended to have, and had, far-reaching influence outside Suffolk County and Massachusetts itself.

The convention had no sooner approved the Resolves on September 9, 1774, than Paul Revere started for Philadelphia and the Continental Congress with a copy. There Samuel Adams and the other Massachusetts delegates had been fighting against proponents of reconciliation with Britain at almost any price, and encountering serious difficulties. The worst hurdle they faced was a fear that Massachusetts might provoke a war without sufficient grounds, dragging the other colonies into the conflict willy-nilly. The Suffolk Resolves brought this debate to the front, of course; if the Congress approved the Resolves, as Adams proposed that it do, then the other colonies were committed to the support of a war which could be started on the judgement of a single county within Massachusetts. No one except the men on the spot could tell when "the principles of self-preservation" would make defensive action alone insufficient, and their decision was not likely to be a deliberate one. The issue was clear-
ly between peaceful and violent resistance, and the debate within the Congress was heated. Massachusetts possessed something of a reputation for being "intemperate and rash," although Adams and his fellow delegates were doing their best to develop the colony's image as "cool and judicious, as well as spirited and brave." Warren had been warned by Adams about these fears, and he was careful to include within the Resolves a pledge that "this county, confiding in the wisdom and integrity of the Continental Congress...will pay all due respect and submission to such measures as may be recommended by them..."39

The amount of confidence this inspired within the Congress is a mute point, but the radicals did win the debate. Congress finally revolved "that this assembly deeply feels the sufferings of their countrymen in the Massachusetts-Bay....that they most thoroughly approve the wisdom and fortitude, with which opposition...has hitherto been conducted, and they earnestly recommend...a perseverance in the same firm and temperate conduct...." This resolution was printed with the Suffolk Resolves and distributed by order of the Congress."40

Five days later the Congress began deliberations which resulted in the Continental Association. The Association's content was almost identical to the Solemn League and Covenant, including a provision for ostracism of violators. The
agreement also directed "that a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town...whose business it shall be atten-
vively to observe the conduct of all persons touching on this association." In Massachusetts, the committees of corres-
pondence, or subcommittees under their control, undertook this task; in other colonies, such as Virginia, a network of local and county committees emerged for the first time in response to the Congress' call.

The Association and Congressional approval of the Suffolk Resolves made possible the completion of the revolution at the local level within Massachusetts. Before the Congress met a number of towns had remained outside the Patriot organization; not even the Intolerable Acts or the activities of the county conventions during the summer of 1774 had led to the appointment of committees of correspondence in Chelsea and Scituate, for instance. The Congressional di-
rective to appoint a committee to enforce the Association was respected, however; Scituate chose a Committee of In-
spection on October 3, 1774, and directed it to act as a Committee of Correspondence as well. Similarly, Chelsea appointed, on November 21, "a committee to see that the re-
solves of both the Continental and Provincial Congresses be strictly observed. Also to act as a Committee of Correspondence for Chelsea." The appointment of committees of cor-
respondence in both cases was clearly an afterthought; the towns would not have acted except on the recommendation of
the Congress.

Some towns did not even meet on that basis, although the reason appears to have been more a matter of apathy than antipathy for the Patriot cause. Northfield appointed no committee of correspondence until April 20, 1775; Bradford, in Essex County, until May 23, 1775, "at the recommendation of the Provincial Congress"; and Watertown remained unorganized until May 20, 1776. Northfield may have held back due to conservative sentiment within the town, which disappeared once fighting had actually begun, but both Bradford and Watertown had reacted in a favorable manner to the Boston circular of November, 1772, and both had resolved on nonconsumption of tea following the Tea Party. Their sluggishness in organizing for revolution was simply due to inertia; some towns, like some people, just never get the word.

While local organization of towns with a Whig majority (about 99% of them) was completed at the instance first of the Continental Congress and then of the Provincial Congress, a very few towns remained outside Whig control. Freetown, in Bristol County, and Marshfield, the fishing village which had discharged its Committee of Correspondence after the Tea Party, possessed sufficient numbers of Tories with energetic leadership to retain control of the town. In Freetown Colonel Thomas Gilbert refused to cooperate in the reorganiza-
tion of the militia officer corps, and even attempted to use his regiment against the Whigs. Most of his troops came from other towns and refused to obey his orders, so Gilbert enrolled, according to his report to Gage, 300 Tories whom the general armed with British muskets. With this force he "maintained order" in Freetown until April 9, 1775, when he went to Newport to meet troops Gage was sending to his aid. By this time he had been outlawed by the Provincial Congress, and during his absence several thousand armed Whigs from neighboring towns descended upon Freetown and disarmed his men. 47

This tactic had already been used against Tories in Marshfield and Scituate. As Gage explained in a letter to Lord Dartmouth on January 27, 1775;

"Where the Majority in a Township has been averse to their Measures, the Faction has employed their Adherents in Neighboring Towns to join and form Body's sufficient to force them by Numbers to sign Recantations, which has been attended generally with Violence and ill Usage. The Town of Marshfield with part of that of Scituate having been lately under Terror of the Kind... appealed to me for Protection; and I have sent a Detachment of one hundred Men to their Relief." 48

The Terror of which Gage wrote was under the direction of the committees of correspondence of Scituate, Plymouth, Kingston, Duxbury, Pembroke, and Hanover, although the committees applied for and received approval of their conduct from the Provincial Congress. 49 By this date the activities
of the local committees had become largely subordinate to the Provincial Congress and its Committee of Safety, who were providing a positive direction of the revolution.
Conclusion

The importance of the role played by the Boston radicals becomes clear once the development of the committee of correspondence system is traced. The radicals were almost solely responsible for the decisive political events of 1773; whether they could have weathered the tea crisis without the support of the merchants is debatable, but that support was predictable and when it came it was on the radicals' terms. To the extent that it was anything at all, the committee network before May of 1774 was the creature of the Boston committee. Local committees outside Boston were neither particularly active nor willing to act on their own initiative without reference to their town-meeting; the entire network, in fact, existed mostly on paper or rather in a paper; the Boston Gazette to be exact. A credulous reader of the Gazette might well believe the committee system to be both extensive and politically formidable when in fact it was neither. The essential point about the tea crisis is that during it both merchants and radicals acted as if the appearance were reality, the merchants from ignorance and the radicals from calculation. Because they were believed by the merchants and by the general population of Boston to be in a position of leadership over a system of corresponding committees spread throughout Massachusetts, the radicals were able to act as if they had the enthusiastic backing of the entire province. The merchants and the mob had no way of
knowing how meagre the expressions of support from the countryside had been; the Committee of Correspondence said they were very numerous. The result was that both groups followed the radicals into action which led to a direct challenge of British authority and thus eventually to revolution.

The radicals may thus be credited with provoking the political revolution which led to the Declaration of Independence. The committee of correspondence system played an important role in the creation of this revolution, not only as a vehicle for radical propaganda but also, at another level, as an object of radical propaganda. The system was a conveyor of propaganda about the radical cause through such means as the "Statement of the Rights of the Colonists" which accompanied the original request for the formation of committees. The system was also the most important element in propaganda about the strength of the radical party which did much to minimize moderate opposition to the radicals. There was substantial latent disapproval of the radicals among the moderate majority of Massachusetts folk, but most of it remained latent because the radicals appeared to be so influential. Unaware of their own strength or of the radicals' weakness, the moderates permitted the radicals to direct events until moderation itself became impossible.

With the Coercive Acts the radicals' program to create
revolution was assured of success. Their aim then became the control of that which they had created. In this they were at length successful, though not without a serious initial setback. Historians writing of this period have been somewhat at a loss in knowing how to deal with the Solemn League and Covenant. Nothing within the Covenant itself suffices to explain the failure of the measure within Massachusetts. That failure can only be explained adequately in terms of the internal organization and orientation of the committee system. The Boston radicals had failed to adapt to the changed situation for which they themselves were responsible. The Covenant was slightly premature, but was not unsuitable to the overall situation of the colonies; what was unsuitable was the method the radicals chose to disseminate it. The measure had obviously originated in Boston, and the rest of Massachusetts was no longer willing to follow Boston's lead without question. Their prompt recognition of this and the resulting change in tactics are clear indications of the political skill of the Boston radicals. Through the Suffolk county convention and its Resolves the radicals were able to influence the Continental Congress and thus, through the Congress' actions, insure the completion of the political revolution within Massachusetts.
1. "There was not a justice of the peace, sheriff, constable, or peace officer in the province, who would venture to take any cognizance of any breach of the law, against the general bent of the people." Hutchinson, History, III, 314.

2. Frothingham, Charlestown, 300.

3. The strength of Gage's position in Boston encouraged some early optimism among Massachusetts Tories, at least until his inability to influence events outside the metropolis became evident. Writing on May 30, 1774, Richard Lechmere observed that "we promise ourselves under the protection of General Gage we shall be able to speak our minds freely, and open the eyes of a deluded people, who have hitherto been deceived by a set of designing villains and bankrupts who have supported themselves at the expense of almost ruining the town and province." The events of the next three months destroyed this confidence, however, and on September 1 Lechmere wrote that "the Act (curtailing town-meetings) is so very imperfect, it is very easily evaded in several parts of it...so that upon the whole our Governor is exceedingly embarrassed and knows not how to conduct the matter." "Letters of Richard Lechmere," Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, Second Series, XVI (1902-3), 286. Lechmere was one of the Mandamus Councillors who refused to resign.

4. Gage to Dartmouth, October 3, 1774, in Gage Correspondence, I, 377.

5. This applied to the Boston committee as well. In September of 1774, the Marblehead committee wrote to Boston requesting advice regarding a tea ship about to land there. The Boston committee, which had never previously neglected any opportunity to advise anyone on anything, could only reply that most of its members were either attending the Provincial Congress or the Suffolk County convention, so the Marblehead committee would have to handle the matter themselves. Pickering, 39, 76.


7. There is an excellent discussion of the activities of the local committees in their relation to other parts of the


9 Cary Warren, 141.


11 Warren to the Committee of East Haddam, September 1, 1774, in Ibid., 354.

12 Cushing, *Writings of Samuel Adams*, III, 125.

13 Quincy to Dickinson, August 20, 1774, in Josiah Quincy, *Memoir of Josiah Quincy, Junior, 1744-1775* (Boston, 1874), 149.


15 Boston, Town Records, 176.


18 Boston, Town Records, 177-8

19 Chamberlain, *Chelsea*, 421.

20 Jeremy Belknap, "Reasons Against Subscribing the Cove-

21 Mathews, "Solemn League," 109. John Cary asserts that the main differences were "the lack of an oath to sign and no mention of social ostracism." (Warren, 141.) Cary apparently did not read the two forms, for the Worcester text repeats the Boston form word for word on this point, and even goes further to vow "never to renew any commerce or trade" with non-signers.

22 Falmouth Committee of Correspondence to Salem committee, July 1, 1774, in Pickering, 39, 57.

23 Salem committee to Falmouth committee, July 12, 1774, in Pickering, 33, 96.

24 Framingham, Charlestown, 299.

25 Hawley to Allen, June 26, 1774, in Francis E. Brown, Joseph Hawley (New York, 1931), 139.

26 Smith, Pittsfield, 189-90.

27 William, Lincoln, ed., The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts (Boston, 1838), 601-2. This volume includes the proceedings of each of the county conventions as well.

28 I estimate about one-half of the members of the first Provincial Congress served on their town's Committee of Correspondence.

29 Coffin, Newbury, 243, has a good account of a thief, convicted by a local committee, being forced to march through town behind the town-crier, proclaiming his crime and exhibiting the evidence. In Hampshire County, an appeal of the decision of one committee to another committee within the county was allowed. Cushing, Transition, 91n.

30 The Provincial Congress on March 15, 1775, listed fifteen men who had refused to resign, and termed them "im-placable enemies of their country." Thirty-six Mandamus Counsellors had originally been appointed. Peter Force, A-

Gage did make one abortive attempt to enforce the prohibition at Salem on August 23, 1774, even going so far as to arrest the Salem committeemen who had called the town-meeting. They were soon released, as Gage recognized that he had no legal basis for holding them. Gage to Dartmouth, August 27, 1774, in Gage, *Correspondence*, 367.

A county committee of correspondence was also appointed from among the town committees "to prepare matter to lay before this body at their several meetings; to give the earliest intelligence to the several committees of any new attack upon the liberties of the people, and to call a county congressional convention at any time, as occasion may require."

The initial request actually came from the Worcester committee to the Boston committee, who invited the committees of Salem and Marblehead as well, so that four counties would be represented. Thomas Young to Samuel Adams, August 19, 1774, in Cushing, *Transition*, 102n. See also Boston committee to Salem committee, August 19, 1774, in Pickering, 39, 67.

The complete text of the Resolves is in Frothingham, *Warren*, 529-34.

366-7.


42 Samuel Deane, *History of Scituate...* (Boston, 1831), 133.

43 Chamberlain, *Chelsea*, 420.


45 Hurd, *Essex County*, II, 2094.


47 Entries for March 30, April 12, April 14, 1775, in Ezra Stiles, *Diary*, 529,533.

48 Gage, *Correspondence*, 391.

When one is developing a bibliography covering any aspect of the causes of early stages of the American Revolution, Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The Coming of the Revolution, 1763-1775* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954) provides an excellent basic bibliography from which to begin. Charles Evans, ed., *American Bibliography: A Chronological Dictionary of All Books, Pamphlets and Periodical Publications Printed in the United States...1637...1820* (12 vols.; Chicago: the Blakely Press, 1907) provides both a chronological check-list and an index to microfilm collections. R. R. Bowker, ed., *State Publications; A Provisional List of the Official Publications of the Several States of the United States from Their Organization (4 pts; New York: Office of the Publishers' Weekly, 1899)* is helpful, but Adelaide R. Hasse, "Materials for a Bibliography of the Public Archives of the Thirteen Original States," *American Historical Association Annual Report, 1906, II, 239-561*, provides a similar checklist with the additional aid of indicating where items can be found in commonly available sources such as *American Archives*. The "Historical Index to the Pickering Papers," *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, Sixth Series, VIII* is useful as these papers are on microfilm and contain a number of valuable items.

For periodicals, Grace Gardner Griffin *et al*, comps.,
Writings in American History ([Washington] 1902-40, 1948-58) provides a convenient guide. The gap between 1940 and 1948 and after 1958 can be filled by use of the American Historical Review or the Journal of American History, which carry lists of recent articles in each issue. In addition, one should use the "General Index to Papers and Reports of the American Historical Association, "Annual Report, 1914, which covers 1884-1914; and A. P. C. Griffin, "Bibliography of American Historical Societies," American Historical Society Annual Report, 1905, II, which gives tables of contents for all publications of each society. The Essex Institute, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the American Antiquarian Society, and the Colonial Society of Massachusetts all have publications which contain material relevant to this period.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The two single most important sources, containing material covering the entire period, are Peter Force, ed., American Archives, Fourth Series (6 vols; Washington: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1837-1846) and Clifford K. Shipton, ed., Early American Imprints, 1639-1800, First Series (Worcester, Massachusetts: American Antiquarian Society, 1955-1964) which contains microcard reprints of items listed in Evans, filed under the Evans number. Colonial newspapers are included. Although it is much less comprehensive, Alden T. Vaughan, ed., Chronicles of the American
*Revolution* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1965) is also valuable. This is a re-editing of Hezekiah Miles, *Principles and Acts of the Revolution in America*... (Baltimore: published by the editor, 1822), and contains a table of contents, which Miles lacked, and a better index. William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independence of the United States of America*... (4 vols.; London: published by the author, 1788) is interesting as a contemporary narrative but has little use as a source.


For the attitudes and activities of the Royal government during this period, the principal sources are Clarence E. Carter, ed., The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage (2 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931-1933); Thomas Hutchinson, The History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, From the Year 1750 to June 1774... (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936); and P. O. Hutchinson, ed., Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, Esq. (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1884-1866). Peter Oliver, Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1961) has little material on the committees of correspondence, but Oliver was Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts and his retrospective view of the period is interesting. "The Letters of Richard Lechmere,"Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, Second Series, XVI (1902), 285-290, reveal the attitude of a prominent Tory towards the Boston radicals.
Primary material on the Committees of Correspondence outside Boston is very scarce. The Records of the Town of Plymouth (Plymouth: Memorial Press, 1903) are available; Volume III covers the years in question. William Bell Clark, ed., Naval Documents of the American Revolution, (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), I, has some material pertaining to the Loyalists' efforts to control towns along the coast such as Marshfield and Scituate in late 1774 and 1775. "Dr. Belknap's Reasons Against Subscribing the Covenant," Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, Second Series, II (1888) 478-486 is relevant to the Solemn League and Covenant. Ezra Stiles' Literary Diary (3 vols.; New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1901) has some fine descriptions of revolutionary activities. The journals of the county conventions are in William Lincoln, ed., Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775...and other Documents (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838).

LOCAL HISTORIES

For any detailed study of the local committees from printed sources, one must rely on local histories. These vary widely in the depth of their treatment of political and revolutionary history. The best works are Robert J. Taylor, Western Massachusetts in the Revolution (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1954); J. E. A. Smith, The
History of Pittsfield...(Boston: Lee and Shepherd, 1869); Richard Frothingham, The History of Charlestown (Boston: Little and Brown, 1845); George A. Billias, General John Glover and His Marblehead Mariners (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960); Joshua Coffin, A Sketch of the History of Newbury, Newburyport, and West Newbury, from 1635 to 1845 (Boston: Samuel G. Drake, 1845); Emory Washburn, Historical Sketches of the Town of Leicester...(Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1860); and Mellen Chamberlain, A Documentary History of Chelsea (2 vols.; Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1908). Another recent work, Benjamin W. Laboree, Patriots and Partisans: The Merchants of Newburyport, 1764-1825 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) demonstrates the problem of dealing with committees whose members achieved only local prominence. Labaree's work is thorough but casts little light on the role played by the Newburyport committee because, as his bibliography makes clear, its members were never sufficiently important that any particular effort was made to preserve their papers. Labaree does give a good general analysis of the town's attitude toward the revolutionary movement.

Local histories which offer an adequate treatment of the revolutionary period include John G. Curtis, History of the Town of Brookline...(Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933); Andrew E. Ford, History of the Town of Clinton... (Clinton: W. J. Coulter, 1896); Frank Smith, A History of

Finally, two county histories and one periodical offer information on local activities in the revolution. D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Essex County* (2 Vols.; Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Company, 1888), and S. G. Drake, *History of Middlesex County* (2 Vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1880) contain separate articles on each town within the county. Some articles are useful, others are not. Francis T. Bowles, "The Loyalty of Barnstable in the Revolution", Colonial Society of Massachusetts *Publications*, XXV (1933), 265-348, is quite useful, as Barnstable was very reluctant in supporting the revolution.

SECONDARY SOURCES


For general background and for information on certain aspects of the committee system, I have relied on Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis* (Chapel

The most thorough and comprehensive treatment of the local committees and county conventions in Massachusetts remains, after seventy-five years, Harry A. Cushing, History of the Transition from Province to Commonwealth in Massachusetts (New York: Columbia University Press, 1896). Cushing's work includes chapters on "Local Action in the Summer of 1774" and "Extra-legal Bodies" which are especially valuable. The treatment of committees of correspondence, however, concentrates on their relation to the overall transition of government without describing how the committees developed over time. Cushing did make extensive use of
George Bancroft's collection of "revolutionary Correspondence", which includes the papers of many local committees and has never been printed. (The collection is now in the New York Public Library.) Many of these papers are quoted at length in Cushing's notes.

After Cushing, the best treatment of committees of correspondence is E. D. Collins, "Committees of Correspondence in the American Revolution," American Historical Society Report, I (1901), 243-271. Collins gives a good account of earlier colonial experience in such committees, describes the origin of the Boston committee, and analyzes the several distinct types of committees which developed at the town, county, and provincial levels. He gives considerable but by no means exclusive attention to Massachusetts. The only real faults of the article are, as with Cushing, its failure to trace development over time and to consider the different roles of moderates and radicals within the committees.

More recent writing on the committee system has come almost entirely from biographers of Samuel Adams and Joseph Warren. The difficulties in these studies are several. Adams was of course responsible for creation of the committee system, and Warren was his chief lieutenant, but both men were also engaged in numerous other political activities. Biographies of Adams, for instance, usually deal with the Boston committee in some detail at the time of its creation,
and perhaps discuss briefly the other local committees while dealing with the tea crisis. After May of 1774, however, when the committee system was changing in fundamental ways, Adams was busy at General Courts and Continental Congresses, and his biographers follow him there. Warren continued to work with the Boston committee through the summer of 1774, and then he too became involved in Provincial Congresses and Provincial Committees of Safety. Thomas Young, who replaced Warren as head of the Boston committee, has had no biographer. The best of the biographies with reference to the committee system is John Cary, *Joseph Warren: Physician, Politician, Patriot* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961).


There are three works on Paul Revere: Charles C. Farrington, *Paul Revere and His Famous Ride* (Bedford, Mass.: The Bedford Printshop, 1823); Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere and