

PROVINCIAL PARTISANSHIP: Internal Colonial Politics and the Coming of the American Revolution in New York

BY PETER BRODKIN

Mr. Brodtkin is a graduate student in history at Rutgers University

DURING the fall and winter of 1765 New York City was one of the hotbeds of colonial resistance against Parliamentary legislation. New York's merchants became the first in the North American colonies to enter into a non-impòrtation agreement as a means of opposing the Stamp Tax. Hoping to spread their ideas of resistance, the New York Sons of Liberty, or Liberty Boys as they were often called, established one of the first committees of correspondence.¹ Even Boston seemed to be lagging behind New York's leadership in the boycott movement. The Boston radicals had a formidable foe in a number of wealthy merchants, whereas the New Yorkers had no such adversary. This is not to say that there were no royal supporters in New York. But, the leading families of the province and the city, while not all backing the radical methods of the Sons of Liberty, at least moderately supported or participated in attempts to do away with the Stamp Tax. Some of the colony's elite, like the DeLancey family, took the more radical approach of supporting the extra-legal mob activities of the Sons of Liberty. Others, primarily the Livingstons, took more moderate steps attempting to work within the legal process using petitions to Parliament and whatever other influence they had on the English merchants. The Livingstons hoped that these merchants would then call for repeal of the Stamp Tax.²

¹ Isaac Q. Leake, *Memoirs of the Life and Times of General John Lamb* (Glendale, N.Y.: Benchmark Publishing Company, Inc., 1970), p. 14.

Henry B. Dawson, *The Sons of Liberty in New York* (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Platt and Schram, printers, 1859), pp. 60-61, 85-86.

Staughton Lynd and Alfred Young, "After Carl Becker," *Labor History*, V (1964), 227.

² "Act of Congress, N.Y., Oct. 19, 1769," McDougall Papers, New York Historical Society.

"To the Printer, June 21," *New York Journal or General Advertiser*, June 21, 1770.

William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Establishment of the Independence of the United States of America* (New York: Hodge, Allen and Cambell, 1789), Vol. I, p. 141.

Roger Champagne, "Liberty Boys and Mechanics of New York City, 1764-1774," *Labor History*, VIII (Spring, 1967), 118, 121.

Yet, despite early signs of leadership, New York did not remain in the forefront of colonial resistance. In only four short years the radicals and moderates of the province found themselves mired in internal conflict that defused and dissipated their insurgent impulse. New York's radicals had not lost their interest in opposing British actions that they viewed as infringements on their rights. However, other more immediate intra-provincial interests took precedence over colonial-British friction. What these other interests were and the place of importance they held for both the colony's leading families and the leadership of its radical movement are essential questions for an understanding of the nature of the American struggle for independence. When asking the question—how revolutionary was the American Revolution—we cannot stop with discussions about Whig ideology, resistance to English mercantilism, and middle-class democracy. These factors only set the stage. They all may be important but they are certainly not sufficient explanations for the coming Revolution in America, because they do not deal with at least one important problem. Given two similar seaports, New York and Boston (each leaders in the resistance against the reawakened British interest in colonial affairs after 1763), why did one remain a leader, and the other not? While Boston's radical activity in time made it the target of special repressive Parliamentary legislation, the New York Assembly by comparison became more obsequious and voted money for the funding of the Quartering Act in 1769. While the Boston area saw the first military action of the war and was the first region abandoned by the British men-in-arms, New York became England's military capital during the War for Independence. The intent of this study is to begin to deal with New York City during the years leading up to the Revolution and to suggest some of the factors which moved New York from a center of Stamp Tax radicalism to a Loyalist stronghold.

The initial step toward an understanding of the pre-Revolutionary War chronology in New York is to understand a few basic concepts that shaped the province's politics. First and foremost, it must be understood that all political activity during the last two decades preceding the War for Independence reflected the partisan split and leadership of the DeLancey and Livingston families. The Livingston faction represented the interests of the landed gentry seated north of New York City along the Hudson River, as well as the Presbyterian Church. The DeLancey's strength was among the merchants of New York City and the Anglican

Church. This is not to say that there were no DeLancey landholders or that no Livingstons were involved in trade. What is important is that the DeLancey landholders and land speculators viewed such operations as secondary to their mercantile interests, while the Livingston merchants and lawyers still felt a strong attachment to Livingston Manor and the interests of the landed class. Especially important were the religious affiliations because they were central to each faction's orientation. The Livingstons were, by and large, the representatives of Presbyterian Dutch interests and the old Dutch families who were still very powerful in the Hudson Valley. The DeLancey's Anglicanism was part of their representation of the English interests in New York City.³

During most of the 1750s the DeLancey family was the more powerful faction in the colony's politics because of the leadership of James DeLancey, Sr., who was the Lieutenant Governor. His faction benefited through patronage from his influence with the Royal Governor and the Home Office.⁴ These circumstances were drastically altered in 1760 with the death of James DeLancey, Sr. and the accession of Cadwallader Colden to the vacant position, after which the Livingstons, through their majority in the Colonial Assembly, became the dominant party.⁵ For the next nine years the DeLanceys, through the leadership of James DeLancey, Jr., left no political stone unturned in their attempt to regain their supremacy in New York's provincial politics.

An attempt to discuss the composition of an urban "mob," whose activities seemed to have had political overtones, is the next important prerequisite in understanding New York's provincial politics in the 1760s. Unfortunately, this is quite difficult. Carl Becker, in *The History*

³ Roger Champagne, "Family Politics Versus Constitutional Principles," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XX (January, 1963), 58.

Virginia D. Harrington, *The New York Merchants on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), pp. 39-41.

Richard B. Morris, *James DeLancey of New York* (New York: privately printed by the Columbia University Library, 1937), p. 1.

Alfred F. Young, *The Democratic Republicans of New York* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 10.

⁴ Patricia U. Bonomi, *A Factious People* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 143-148, 173.

Harrington, *New York Merchants*, pp. 39-40.

⁵ Robert Jay Christen, "King Sears: Politician and Patriot in a Decade of Revolution" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1968), p. 59.

Charles Z. Lincoln, ed., *Messages From the Governors* (Albany, N.Y.: J. B. Lyon Company, State Printers, 1909), v. I, p. x.

Morris, *James DeLancey*, pp. 2, 5.

E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *The Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1850), V. III, p. 531.

of *Political Parties in the Province of New York*, calls them mechanics, which is almost a nondefinition because mechanics could be members of almost every trade and some could even be moderately wealthy.⁶ Pauline Maier's middle-class mob, in "Popular Uprisings and Civil Authority in Eighteenth Century America," is also an unsatisfactory picture of the New York rioters. Not only are her own examples of middle-class and well-to-do rioters actually only a small part of the membership of the mobs she discusses, but the people she describes are the kinds of individuals who could be expected to leave written records.⁷ No such materials are available from the participants in New York's mob; and unless those documents have been lost, we must assume that these kinds of individuals do not accurately represent the mob's membership. Only Jesse Lemisch, in "Jack Tar in the Streets," seems willing to use the one piece of evidence left to us. In two letters to the Home Office, General Gage, the British military commander in New York, described the mob's membership as being largely composed of sailors.⁸ Although there is little other hard evidence, these sailors were probably also joined by other day laborers in the city, most of whom were involved in economic pursuits related to shipping, trade, and the production of craft goods.

Unfortunately Lemisch seems to have read only the first part of the Gage letters when he asserts that these sailors led themselves in a kind of "Marxian proletarian" uprising.

This Insurrection is composed of great Numbers of Sailors headed by Captains of Privateers and other Ships.

The Sailors who are the only People who may be stiled Mob, are entirely at the Command of the Merchants who employ them.⁹

These ship captains, the most important of whom were Isaac Sears and Alexander McDougall, represented a distinct, important, emerging group in the New York political arena. They were newly wealthy, hav-

⁶ Carl Lotus Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 11.

⁷ Pauline Maier, "Popular Uprisings and Civil Authority in Eighteenth Century America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXVII (January, 1970), 12-14, notes 15, 16.

⁸ Gage to Conway, Nov. 4, 1765 and Gage to Conway, Dec. 21, 1765 in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Correspondences of General Thomas Gage* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1931), pp. 71, 79.

Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in The Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXV (1968), 369.

⁹ *Ibid.*

ing been very successful both as privateers and smugglers during the final colonial war with France.¹⁰ Prior to their meteoric rise into the ranks of the wealthy these men were possibly as poor as those rioters they later led. The ship captains, or "street leaders" as they were sometimes called, must be viewed as highly motivated men with strong desires for personal upward mobility.¹¹ During the middle of the 1760s the energies they used to acquire their wealth were transferred into a desire to improve themselves politically.

Finally, we must discuss the Sons of Liberty, an organization which took shape during the early days of the Stamp Act crisis. Two elements of this group were the crowd and their street leaders. The third element consisted of members of both political factions. The most prominent of these individuals were James DeLancey, Jr. and the so-called Livingston Triumvirate, William Livingston, John Morin Scott, and William Smith, Jr.¹² Both families had reasons to favor the Liberty Boys' resistance against the Stamp Act. British Parliamentary action was hurting trade and commerce (see pages 9-10). It, therefore, affected the main basis for the DeLanceys' wealth. The Livingstons' financial base was in less jeopardy. This probably explains their more moderate actions. However, they were still interested in opposing the Stamp Tax since some members did have shipping investments. One might also assume that their Dutch background would make them somewhat hostile to English action on general principles. It is also interesting to note that the family in political power in the Provincial Assembly took the more moderate stance, while the faction out of power was the more radical. The strong DeLancey support of the Sons of Liberty could have

¹⁰ Roger Champagne, *Alexander McDougall and the American Revolution in New York* (Schenectady, N.Y.: Union College Press, 1975), pp. 5-10.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 15, 22-23.

James Gavin Lydon, "The Role of New York in Privateering Down to 1763" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1956), pp. 14, 192, 319, 345.

¹¹ Champagne, *McDougall*, p. 11.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 15, 36.

Leake, *Memoirs of John Lamb*, pp. 8-9.

¹² Champagne, "Liberty Boys," p. 118.

Golden to Conway, Oct. 26, 1765 in *The Golden Letter Books*, II, Vol. X of *New York Historical Society Collections* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1877), p. 49.

Gage to Conway, Dec. 21, 1765 in Carter, *Correspondence of General Gage*, p. 79.

Dorothy Rita Dillon, *The New York Triumvirate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 96.

Herbert M. Morais, "The Sons of Liberty in New York," in *The Era of the American Revolution*, ed. by Richard B. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 273.

been prompted by their need for a constituency and an issue to regain the political leadership they lost in 1760.¹³ In his essay, "Liberty Boys and Mechanics of New York City," Roger Champagne states, "The result was an alliance to defeat British policies and to serve the needs of local politics."¹⁴

Even before Parliament considered a stamp tax, the city of New York held strong undercurrents of dissatisfaction with British imperial policies. The early 1760s witnessed a drastic economic decline after much prosperity during the French and Indian War. This business slump, although mostly the result of an economy that had been crippled by the close of the war with France, was heightened by English legislation concerning taxes and currency. Because of this, many inhabitants of New York viewed their plight as resulting from British action rather than from natural peacetime decline after wartime prosperity.

During the last colonial war with France the merchants of New York were playing both ends against the middle. On the one hand, they were trading illegally with the French, ostensibly their enemy. This trade was so intense that Lieutenant Governor DeLancey could write:

The French at Louisbourgh, are furnished with provisions from this and some other northern Colonies, where they supply Canada and their Forces on the Ohio, and are thereby in a Condition to support themselves in their Encroachments on his Majesty's Territories.¹⁵

Needless to say, supplying a war machine was a very profitable enterprise for the New York merchants.¹⁶ However, their prosperity was

¹³ William H. W. Sabine, ed., *Historical Memoirs of William Smith* (New York: Colburn and Tegg, 1956), pp. 59-60.

Gordon, *History of the Independence of the United States*, p. 141.

Bonomi, *A Factious People*, p. 177.

Champagne, "Family Politics," p. 59.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 57-59.

¹⁴ Champagne, "Liberty Boys," p. 119.

¹⁵ Lincoln, *Messages From the Governors*, I, p. 564. Also see:

Amherst to Colden, April 16, 1762 in *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden*, Vol. IV of *New York Historical Society Collections* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1922), p. 139.

Colden to Pitt, Oct. 27, 1760 in *Colden Letter Book*, I, p. 27.

Watts to George and John Riddell, Sept. 18, 1764 in *Letter Book of John Watts*, Vol. XI of *New York Historical Society Collections* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1928), p. 286.

Act to End Trade at Oswego, (1755?), Livingston Papers, Museum of the City of New York.

¹⁶ Lydon, "New York Privateering," p. 315.

based on more than just smuggling. Side by side with the illegal French trade the merchants were sending privateers to interfere with supplies going to the French armies. This is not to say that New Yorkers' sentiments were divided between the two warring parties. Many of the same merchants, captains, and crews who were involved in privateering were also smuggling. The result of these circumstances was a high level of prosperity for the merchants and seamen (who were often paid a percentage of the prize that the privateers had captured). And "it offered employment, directly or indirectly, to thousands of New Yorkers."¹⁷ Among the privateering captains were Isaac Sears and Alexander McDougall. Sears was in fact both a smuggler and a privateer.¹⁸ Both men were not only acquiring personal fortunes but they were also winning the allegiance of their crews. It was this alliance between captains and loyal crews that was to become the strength behind the union of the rioters and their street leaders during the Stamp Act crisis.¹⁹

A second kind of alliance was also developing during this period. Not only were the sailors' and captains' interests being united, but the interests of the ships' captains were also beginning to be tied to specific factions in New York politics. Isaac Sears's link with the DeLanceys was economic. In fact his fortune was made with their patronage. It was Lieutenant Governor Delancey who commissioned Captain Sears as a privateer in 1757. Most of the rest of Isaac Sears's commands came on ships owned by Gerard Beekman, a Delancey ally.²⁰ Meanwhile, Alexander McDougall was moving toward the Livingston faction. Here the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 192, 319, 320, 345.

¹⁸ Commission From the New York Vice Admiralty Court to Alexander McDougall, June 28, 1757, McDougall Papers, New York Historical Society.

DeLancey to the Lords of Trade, July 30, 1757 in E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. VII (Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1961), p. 273.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 22-23.

¹⁹ Gage to Conway, Nov. 4, 1765 and Gage to Conway, Dec. 21, 1765 in Carter, *Correspondence of General Gage*, pp. 71, 79.

Robert R. Livingston to Monckton, Nov. 8, 1765 in Larry R. Gerlach, *The American Revolution: New York as a Case Study* (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), p. 11.

Champagne, *McDougall*, p. 13.

Christen, "King Sears," p. 38.

Lydon, "New York Privateering," p. 355.

²⁰ Philip L. White, ed., *The Beekman Mercantile Papers* (Baltimore, Md.: Waverly Press, Inc., 1956), Vol. I, pp. 141, 155, 209, 210, 215, 240, 247, 347, 506, 513, 521. DeLancey to Lords of Trade, July 30, 1757 in O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to Colonial New York*, Vol. VII, p. 273.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 22-23.

link is more difficult to find, but it may rest on his religious background. Roger Champagne, in his book about McDougall, argues that he, "Imbibed his parent's habits of piety, which lasted throughout his life," and "McDougall undoubtedly came to know all four [Robert R. Livingston, William Livingston, John Morin Scott, and William Smith, Jr.] by way of a common interest in the affairs of the Wall Street Presbyterian Church, to which they all belonged."²¹

Unfortunately for all concerned, peace came in 1763. Following the end of fighting and the withdrawal of the French from the American Continent the highly lucrative trade which had helped to supply the French colonial army ceased. Profits from privateering also fell off, all adding to the depressed economy.²² The end of the war also led to a reawakening of England's interest in mercantilism and colonial trade. One sign of this new interest was the Sugar Act of 1764. This legislation was actually a restatement of earlier laws; both the tax on sugar and the illegality of paying the tax with paper money were drawn from past regulations. Still the act came at a bad time since New Yorkers had almost none of the specie needed, by law, to pay these duties. Besides, any new duty during a period of declining economic opportunity was an added burden which most of the city's inhabitants would not bear.²³ All sectors of the city were affected. Many sailors found themselves out of work as the level of commercial activity fell. This also affected all those working in related industries, a good portion of the city's population. The captains and merchants were also hurt as their profits declined and their debts increased.

When the news of the Stamp Tax arrived in New York, in 1765, these underlying hostilities surfaced. The Sons of Liberty came into existence and an all-out effort to rid the colony of this latest Parliamen-

²¹ Champagne, *McDougall*, pp. 7, 14.

²² Harrington, *New York Merchants*, p. 316.

Lydon, "New York Privateering," pp. 192, 354.

Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution* (New York: Facsimile Library, Inc., 1939), pp. 56-57.

²³ Lincoln, *Messages From the Governors*, I, pp. 683-684.

New York Gazette, December 10, 1764.

Champagne, *McDougall*, p. 12.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 29-31, 85.

Thomas C. Barrow, *Trade and Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 183.

Harrington, *New York Merchants*, pp. 320-321.

Elmer Beecher Russell, *The Review of American Colonial Legislation by the King and Council* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1915), p. 124.

Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants*, pp. 21, 43, 53.

tary action began. Yet even during this high mark of radical activity the New York resisters began to show signs of the divisiveness that would later stall their radicalism. Near the end of the year the Liberty Boys split into two distinct factions, one following Alexander McDougall and the Livingstons, and the other following James DeLancey, Jr., and the street leadership of Isaac Sears, John Lamb, Joseph Allicocke, and others. This split was ostensibly caused by friction between radical and moderate elements within the organization.²⁴ Yet, given the earlier attachment of crews to captains and captains to the leadership of the political factions, this split becomes less of a surprise. The unusual situation was the union of these forces rather than their later division. With the strong partisanship and its accompanying hostilities, the alliance of both factions at the beginning of the Stamp Act crisis must have been the result of the very special circumstances caused by deep economic decline. But, because of that strong factionalism it was a union that could not be expected to last long.

With the repeal of the Stamp Tax, New York's partisan feuding came into full bloom. "Sears moved almost immediately . . . to use his influence with the Sons of Liberty locally on behalf of the politically ambitious James DeLancey, who coveted election to the Assembly."²⁵ The DeLanceys were intent on winning control of the Assembly through the electoral process when the inhabitants voted in 1768. Toward this end they employed the connections they had made in 1765 and 1766. The major issue of the election quickly became the DeLanceys' support of the radical Sons of Liberty during the Stamp Act controversy against the more moderate approach of the Livingstons, which seemed like nonsupport. The street leaders with their influence over the general populace became the key individuals in this debate.²⁶ The Livingstons

²⁴ Champagne, "Liberty Boys," p. 121.

²⁵ Christen, "King Sears," pp. 74-75.

²⁶ *New York Journal or General Advertiser*, April 5, 12, 19; May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; June 14, 21, 28; Sept. 13, 1770.

New York Mercury, December 23, 1765.

New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury, Feb. 20, 1769, Jan. 8, 1770.

For information about the campaign language see Champagne, "Family Politics," pp. 74-75:

On an even lower level, the divided Sons of Liberty smeared each other and some of the candidates with charges of deceit, perfidy, fraud, and perversion. The Livingston Liberty boys were led by Alexander McDougall, Abraham Brasher, and Robert Murray, while the DeLancey group was headed by Isaac Sears, John Lamb, and Isaac Corsa. Sears and Corsa publically declared that Robert Murray had called Philip Livingston "a snake in the grass" which of course, brought immediate and heated denials from Murray. The Livingston Sons of Liberty spread rumors that the

were well aware of the great liability this new issue was to their own political success. As early as the middle of 1766, William Smith, Jr., a Livingston lawyer, conceded: "James DeLancey would probably get into the Assembly now as he was among the Sons of Liberty."²⁷ Because they feared a resurgence of the DeLanceys' power in the Assembly resulting from this new popular support, the Livingston party began to use their own street leader, Alexander McDougall, in hopes of winning back some of the support they had lost. McDougall billed himself as a "Son of Liberty" and began to look for support among his friends and followers.²⁸ However, his efforts were to little avail as the DeLanceys cut deeply into the Livingston's Assembly majority, greatly decreasing it.²⁹ Isaac Sears was rewarded for his efforts by being appointed Potash Inspector, a lucrative position created especially for him.³⁰

The tenure of this Assembly was to be a short one. Soon after they were seated they "entered a set of constitutional Resolves on their Minutes asserting their Rights in Pritty full but clear terms." This action resulted in Royal Governor Moore dissolving the Assembly and calling for a new election.³¹ The second campaign was much the same as the first. It resulted in an even stronger DeLancey victory, displacing a number of Livingston supporters and gaining for the DeLanceys the Assembly control they had strived for. This electoral success was the culmination of the DeLanceys' well planned strategy for uniting their interests with those of the radicals to achieve a specific goal—Assembly control.³² Immediately following this victory the DeLanceys began to

benevolence of James Jauncey, a DeLancey candidate, was a fiction; Jauncey's friends attempted to counter the charge with a series of public affidavits. Isaac Sears was charged with coercing a Livingston voter to change parties, but Sears insisted that he only gave a warning of possible economic consequences of opposing the DeLancey ticket. On the other hand, John Morin Scott was accused of being a homosexual.

²⁷ Sabine, *Memoirs of William Smith*, p. 33.

²⁸ Champagne, *McDougall*, p. 16.

²⁹ L.F.S. Upton, *The Loyal Whig* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 64.

³⁰ *New York Journal or General Advertiser*, May 10, 1770.

Champagne, "Liberty Boys," p. 131.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 216-217.

³¹ Peter R. Livingston to Oliver Wendell, Jan. 2, 1769, Livingston Papers, Museum of the City of New York.

Champagne, "Family Politics," p. 69.

³² "Letter Concerning Capt. McDougall to be Printed in Philadelphia," July 21, 1770, William Smith Papers, New York Public Library.

Peter R. Livingston to [Oliver Wendell], Jan. 30, 1769, Livingston Papers, Museum of the City of New York.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 101, 109.

seek the benefits of such control. The Livingston lawyer William Smith, Jr. observed that: "They [the DeLanceys] deserted the cause of Liberty and aimed to make fair Weather by gradually listing on the Side of Prerogative."³³ They had returned to the place of political prestige and patronage which the DeLanceys had lost in 1760.

The DeLanceys' apparent shift away from the Sons of Liberty to a more loyalist posture reached its culmination in late 1769. The Assembly, under James DeLancey, Jr.'s control, voted funds to pay for the quartering of British troops in America in compliance with Parliament's Quartering Act. The Livingston controlled Assembly had failed to deal with the Quartering Act since 1765 when Parliament enacted it. It was, in fact, this reluctance to support British troops that led to the suspension of the Assembly in 1767.³⁴

But did the Assembly's funding bill actually represent a change in attitude by the DeLanceys or were there other reasons which caused that faction to favor such legislation? If one approaches this question from the perspective of political expediency, that is the desire of the DeLancey faction to maintain control of New York's politics, some answers begin to appear.³⁵ It has already been noted that the election of 1769 returned the DeLancey faction to power, which it had lost when James, Sr. died in 1760. In the intervening years the major force behind the factional activities was the DeLanceys' attempt to regain their eminence. They were the first to use the political power controlled by the street leaders, which emerged from the activities of the Sons of Liberty during the Stamp Act crisis. The cultivation of the power eventually gave them enough popular support to control the provincial Assembly. Even the passage of the resolves which led to the dissolution of the Assembly in early 1769 can be viewed from this perspective. It

³³ Sabine, *Memoirs of William Smith*, p. 60.

³⁴ "Argument over Militia Bill," 1769, Robert R. Livingston Papers, New York Historical Society.

Peter R. Livingston to [Oliver Wendell], Feb. 19, 1770, Livingston Papers, Museum of the City of New York.

"Draft of Letter to Boston . . ." Feb. 5, 1770, William Smith Papers, New York Public Library.

Colden to Hillsborough, Jan. 6, 1770 in O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to Colonial New York*, Vol. VIII, p. 199.

Champagne, *McDougall*, pp. 17, 225 note 19.

³⁵ Sabine, *Memoirs of William Smith*, pp. 59-60, 66-67.

Bonomi, *A Factious People*, p. 236.

Champagne, "Family Politics," p. 59.

Christen, "King Sears," p. 165.

has been noted earlier that, despite gains in the election of 1768, the DeLanceys were still the minority party. They could have backed the resolves hoping that Governor Moore would indeed call for new elections. These second elections became the final step in the DeLancey's struggle for ascendancy. The result of that ballot put the DeLancey party in firm control of the colonial Assembly and with it came the provincial political leadership they had sought.

What then of the funding of the Quartering Act? Did the DeLanceys not realize that this would probably result in the loss of some of the popular support gained over the previous five years? One observer, Peter van Schaank, suggested that such considerations were not as important as an effort to keep this assembly from also being dissolved.³⁶ This would seem to be a natural concern for a faction which has just spent nine years trying to regain political leadership.

The interests of the Livingstons also centered around provincial political control. However, as the party in power in 1765 they had little need to seek new constituents. Only after they realized the power that their opponents had won did they begin to use their street leader, Alexander McDougall, in hopes of building a popular base for themselves. It was not until 1770 that the Livingstons started to receive some of that popular support, as the result of the funding of the Quartering Act and the arrest, trial, and imprisonment of McDougall resulting from his journalistic attacks on the DeLancey controlled Assembly's action.³⁷

The events of late 1769 and early 1770 had a cataclysmic effect on the Sons of Liberty. Immediately after the funding of the Quartering Act the Livingstons began trying to attract the street leaders who had

³⁶ Peter van Schaank to Henry van Schaank, Dec. 20, 1769 in Christen, "King Sears," p. 139.

Also see: "To the Betrayed Inhabitants of the City and Colony on New York," in O'Callaghan, *Documentary History*, Vol. III, p. 531:

The Assembly . . . are equally careful to preserve their Seats, expecting that if they can do it at this critical Juncture, as it is imagined the great Controversy will be settled this Winter, they will serve for seven Years; in which time they hope the People will forget the present Injuries done to them. To secure these several Objects, the DeLancey Family, like true Politicians, although they were to all Appearances at mortal odds with Mr. Colden, and represented him in all Companies as an Enemy to his Country, yet a Coalition is now formed in order to secure to them the sovereign Lordship of this Colony.

³⁷ O'Callaghan, *Documentary History*, Vol. III, pp. 530-531.

Peter R. Livingston to Oliver Wendell, Feb. 15, 1770, Livingston Papers, Museum of the City of New York.

Smith to Schuyler, April 29, 1770 in Sabine, *Memoirs of William Smith*, p. 81. Christen, "King Sears," pp. 161-162.

formerly been allied with the DeLanceys.³⁸ While most of the best known of these street leaders did shift their loyalties, others did not. Isaac Sears vowed that he would resist the Assembly's action and in conjunction with John Lamb turned his back on the DeLanceys. However, other less known leaders, such as Joseph Allicocke and James Jauncey stayed with the DeLancey faction. In fact, "most of those who had supported the DeLanceys in 1768 and 1769 apparently continued to do so in 1770."³⁹ Again jockeying for power and provincial political alliances seemed to be stronger than ideological disputes over imperial policy. It was difficult for many of the DeLancey backers to identify with the Livingstons. One must remember that the DeLancey party had always been the party of the merchants and, specifically, New York City's interests. More important, a break with the DeLanceys represented, for most of their backers, a break with the faction of their religious faith, a step most found themselves unable to take.⁴⁰ Isaac Sears was again "rewarded" by the DeLancey party for his politics. This time he was forced out of his job as Potash Inspector. He was quickly replaced by Abraham De La Montagne, a DeLancey supporter. Mr. De La Montagne was given an assistant, Joseph Allicocke.⁴¹

This realignment of factional loyalty completely stymied the New York Sons of Liberty. The street leaders remained bogged down in efforts either to shift or to prevent the shift of popular support from the DeLanceys to the Livingstons. There is some indication that Sears, Lamb, and McDougall showed mild success in their efforts.⁴² However, provincial New York never had another colonial Assembly election so it is difficult to say how successful those efforts really were.⁴³

³⁸ Peter R. Livingston to Robert Livingston, Dec. 23, 1769 in Christen, "King Sears," p. 146. See also, Christen, "King Sears," p. 158.

Bonomi, *A Factious People*, p. 275.

Champagne, "Liberty Boys," p. 134.

³⁹ Letter to Mr. Holt from Isaac Sears, May 5, 1770, *New York Journal or General Advertiser*, May 10, 1770.

Champagne, *McDougall*, pp. 35-39.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 165-166.

⁴⁰ Christen, "King Sears," p. 166.

⁴¹ Sabine, *Memoirs of William Smith*, pp. 102-103.

Christen, "King Sears," p. 220.

⁴² Robert R. Livingston to Robert R. Livingston, Jr., March 5, 1772, Robert R. Livingston Papers, New York Historical Society.

Christen, "King Sears," pp. 227-229.

⁴³ Following the Revolution the Tory DeLanceys were no longer a threat. Street leaders Lamb and Sears were successful candidates to the State Assembly. See: Lynd and Young, "After Carl Becker," notes on pages 235, 239.

There existed in Boston before 1765 two street organizations known as the North and South End Mobs. Their main function seems to have been an annual brawl held on Popes Day (November 5). After the news of the passage of a Stamp Tax, a group known as the Loyal Nine seems to have been instrumental in organizing these two feuding gangs into a single unit headed by Ebenezer Mackintosh, formerly leader of the South End Mob.⁴⁴ From that time to the outbreak of open war with England the Boston Mob functioned as the extra-legal arm of Boston's radical faction.

While Boston's radicals were organizing the Boston Mob, their counterparts in New York were forming the New York Sons of Liberty. The major message of New York historiography dealing with the 1760's was "division." Patricia Bonomi, in *A Factionous People*, traces the province's political divisiveness back to the founding of the colony with two different population centers that were separated not only by many miles but also by totally different interests and ethno-cultural backgrounds.⁴⁵ Issues and interests were constantly changing through the colony's history, but one thing remained the same. New Yorkers were always involved in political factional conflict. Carl Becker in *The History of Political Parties in Provincial New York* and Roger Champagne in *Alexander McDougall* and a number of related essays also stress the strong partisanship that existed in New York. In spite of these hostilities, in the fall of 1765 the economic and ideological challenge of the Stamp Act briefly united these feuding factions into a single group.

Unlike in the Boston experience, however, this unity was short lived. By December of 1765 New York had already shown that it would not remain with Boston in the vanguard of colonial insurgency. Having a rich and powerful group of merchant Loyalists in Boston was probably an asset to that city's radicals. Along with a transatlantic target for

⁴⁴ George P. Anderson, "Ebenezer Mackintosh; Stamp Act Rioter and Patriot," *Colonial Society of Massachusetts Publications*, XXVI (1927), p. 31.

George P. Anderson, "A Note on Ebenezer Mackintosh," *Colonial Society of Massachusetts Publications*, XXVI (1927), pp. 352, 357-360.

Annie Haven Thwing, *The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston* (Boston: Charles E. Lauriat, Co., 1930), pp. 78-79.

Hiller B. Zobel, *The Boston Massacre* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 27, 37-38.

Wesley S. Griswold, *The Night the Revolution Began* (Battlesboro, Vermont: The Stephen Greene Press, 1972), p. 20.

Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1953), pp. 122-123.

⁴⁵ Bonomi, *A Factionous People*, pp. 17-56.

popular hostilities, the Loyalists supplied a more immediate adversary, their words and actions being a personification of the interests and values the radicals were at odds with. The Presence of British troops in Boston after 1768 and the Boston Massacre probably served a similar purpose.⁴⁶ New Yorkers had no such groups or events, save a single riot in 1770,⁴⁷ to keep the insurgent impulse active. Without these constant reminders, New Yorkers quickly reverted to their factious ways and the radical movement disintegrated into disputes over how to best oppose the British and into the local political rivalries. These internal forces were so strong that many of the same people who fought the hardest against the Stamp Tax were by 1770 allied with the DeLancey faction, who generally became Tories during the Revolution. It was, in fact, that faction that most strongly protested against the stamps. New Yorkers became so embroiled in their local partisanship that they were unable to remain with Boston in the forefront of the growing conflict with England.

⁴⁶ For information about the Boston Massacre and the hostilities between the local inhabitants and the English troops in Boston see: Zobel, *Boston Massacre*.

⁴⁷ Champagne, *McDougall*, pp. 24-25.