

The Hidden Battles of the American Revolution

Russ Getchell

2002

I: Introduction

A superficial understanding of the Revolutionary War may lead to believe that it was struggle in which the purpose of the colonists was to rid themselves of the cruelty and tyranny associated with the British colonial regime. This is simply not true, or at the very least, it is not the whole truth. For the most part, the inhabitants of the colonies took pride in calling themselves Englishmen, and under the so-called tyrannical regime, enjoyed rights and privileges to a degree that would be considered exceptional in other parts of the 18th century world.

The problem that some colonists had with British monarchical rule is that it obligated its subjects to live in a society that adhered to British political understandings, one of them being the need for leaders to demonstrate classical virtue. Originating in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, classical virtue had justified the class system in Europe for centuries. However, as time passed, it became apparent that the ideologies of the Old World were not compatible with the conditions of the New World. One principle that some members of colonial society chafed under was the apparent contradiction between self-interest and republicanism. The proponents of classical virtue put forth the belief that only an individual who was able to rise above all interests could ascend to the moral level at which one could make decisions for the good of the community. Decisions made by a man with interests, especially in the market, would be marred by his own proclivities overriding those of the population whom he was entrusted to represent.

Some prominent individuals within the colonies however, particularly members of the merchant class, did not adhere to this definition of virtue. In the years that preceded the Revolution, these men began to flock to the new ideology of liberalism, which created a new understanding of virtue. Unlike its classical counterpart, liberal virtue accepted self-interest into the fold of republicanism with the idea that in advancing one's own economic interests, those of the community would benefit as well.

Both of these definitions of virtue had factions within the colonies that supported them, and believed that its particular notion should be the foundation for the New Republic. The controversy over the conflicting definitions raged within several different forums of debate, beginning with the private correspondence of delegates within the Continental Congress, then moving to the floor of the Congress itself, and finally being thrust into the public sphere through addresses from the delegates. The focal point of this conflict was Robert Morris, a prominent Philadelphia merchant who would later become known as the "Financier of the American Revolution." Besides having interests in the market, Morris also had ambitions of

attaining a leadership position that would allow him to play an active role in creating the policies that would define the new government. He was perhaps the most well known backer of liberal virtue in the debate between Richard Henry Lee and himself. Unlike Morris, whose success as a merchant had elevated him into the class of the colonial elite, Lee was born into a wealthy Virginian planter family, which dominated the political affairs of the region. In addition to his participating in his own controversy, Morris also played an important role in the congressional debate that took place between Lee and Deane, the latter being a business partner of Morris as well as a fellow proponent of liberal virtue.

In a sense these debates were a part of the Revolutionary War, but this battle was fought by orators with their speeches rather than soldiers with their muskets. Although no blood was shed in determining which definition of virtue would be championed in the New Republic, the end result was as important as any battle in establishing what kind of nation that the colonies were to become.

II: Defining the Different Perspectives of Virtue

The definitions of virtue and self-interest that this paper utilizes in its discussion have been derived from the works of other authors. Among recent historians, two stand above all others in their level of influence to this paper's perception of the topic: Timothy Breen and Gordon Wood. The perspectives of Joyce Appleby and Pauline Maier augment their works.

Breen's Tobacco Culture addresses the mentality of the great Virginia Tidewater planters on the eve of the Revolution. This small group of individuals defined independence as having enough wealth to be free from any reliance upon the market. Only by rising above the trappings of interest could one hope to obtain the unbiased perspective that would allow him to make decisions based solely upon their implications for the populace as a whole. Therefore, in the minds of these planters, only economically self-sufficient and publicly oriented individuals such as themselves possessed the proper faculties to perform public service in an unbiased manner. The belief that the administration of the government should be left in the hands of disinterested members of society's elite is the basis of classical virtue.

Breen notes that the planters saw their relationships with their economic inferiors as being much more than simply one in which the former would provide the latter with political leadership.[1] The men of the Tidewater fancied themselves to be the colonial contemporaries of the landed English aristocracy, an association that was based on the principles of paternalism in which the wealthy planter would look after the interests of a poorer one, similar to the way in which a father would attend to issues that were too complex for his child. To some extent they were correct, since the complex culture of debt linked all levels of planters together, thereby aligning the interests of the one with those of the many, and forming something of a familial relationship that crossed class lines.[2]

Breen sees the planters' decision to advocate the Revolution as one that was essentially embedded in the principles of this definition of virtue. Their war was not fought with the intention of achieving economic gain, but rather the last course of action that could save their way of life from the parasitic relationship that they shared with Great Britain.[3] The fact that their economic interests would also be advanced by independence was of little consequence in their decision to push for the Revolution, or so the planters claimed.

The rationale that the planters did use to justify their treason was based on Lockean principles, meaning that it is the monarch's duty to protect the property of those whom it rules over. In allowing the English trading houses to prosper at the expense of Tidewater culture, the King was failing to uphold his end of the bargain. The planter's way of life, that of living in isolation on large tracts of land, was being threatened by their growing dependence on European credit. That the British government, despite the requests of the planters, failed to intervene and protect their property gave the planters a measure of justification in their decision to revolt. However, in contrast to their motivation to secede from the empire was their idea of government, which was a much closer representation of Rousseau's doctrine. Men like Richard Henry Lee saw themselves as the colonial equivalents of Cincinnatus, but instead of laying down a plow to lead the legions of Rome, the Tidewater planters dropped their bullwhips, gave the slaves a break, and headed to Philadelphia to serve in the Continental Congress.

However, the scope of Tobacco Culture is limited in that Breen does not address self-interest outside the framework through which the Tidewater planters viewed their world. His explanation for the grudging acceptance of interest by these individuals is rooted in a set of circumstances that were unique to them alone. Breen's work is one that gives insight as to how a society that was headed by the most ardent supporters of classical virtue eventually, and perhaps unconsciously, begins to act in a self-interested manner. He does not address the overarching social changes within the colonies.

Gordon Wood attempts to do just this. He does not examine a single social group as Breen did, but rather steps back and analyzes the broader currents that slowly carried a self-interested group of individuals towards revolution. The Radicalism of the American Revolution is an examination of the profound ideological changes within the colonies that accompanied the conflict. However, it is important to note that Wood sees the Revolution in terms of social and cultural conflicts in addition to military ones. To this end he examines the gradual changes that are associated with the conflict both before and after the actual fighting took place.

Before the War of Independence, colonial society adhered to the principles of patronage, patriarchy, and kinship, the same bonds that held together Breen's Tidewater society.[4] These institutions were impressed upon the colonists by their monarchical masters, who in turn had acquired them from the feudal European past. Under this doctrine, self-interest was always problematic, since the limited

resources of Europe meant that one man's gain implied another man's loss. However, in the relatively unspoiled expanses of the New World, resources were abundant in quantities that were unheard of in Europe, which allowed an industrious man the opportunity to increase his fortune while at the same time benefiting the communal good through his success.[5]

The relative ease with which a free man could obtain land also helped to create a new idea of leadership. Most men in the colonies were landowners of one form or another, thus elevating the majority of Americans to an economical plateau that only a few of their European counterparts had ascended to. Working one's own land for one's own wages, as opposed to doing the same for a landlord, connected most colonists to the market, thus making them individuals who were inherently interested in commerce.

Coinciding with this was the rise of a merchant class, particularly within the port cities of Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. This class was the apex of the northern colonial economy, controlling the markets that connected the Americans to their European brethren. As colonial commerce expanded, the merchants began to exert some influence over their communities, but their power was a result of their own hard work rather than their bloodlines. Both of these developments suggest that the whole of colonial society was moving towards a system of capitalism, and that the majority of the population, and not just the elite, would play an active role in the market.

This, Wood argues, changed the colonial definition of what qualities constituted a good leader. Industry and ambition were the hallmarks of the elite in the colonies, where as in Europe the measure of a man was defined by the amount of time that he could spend in leisure. Self-interest could now be a virtue of a statesman, since by advancing his own interests, he also advanced those of whom he was elected to serve. This idea spawned liberal virtue and the belief that an honest man could unproblematically blend republicanism with his own self-interest. In this respect, the Revolution resulted in the creation of a society that would not only tolerate self-interest among its members, but also encourage its propagation.[6]

The role of certain individuals imbued with competing notions of virtue is explored in *The Old Revolutionaries* by Pauline Maier. Of the five individual mentalities analyzed in *The Old Revolutionaries*, two of them most vividly embody the opposing definitions of virtue. The first, Samuel Adams, is a near antithesis of liberal virtue. His participation in the Revolution was not prompted by any hope of attaining wealth or even compensation as a result of his service.[7] In Adams' opinion, his primary duty was to serve the colonies, and if his interest were furthered in his service, so much the better. In stark contrast to Adams was Isaac Sears. As a privateer, Sears was commissioned with the purpose of raiding enemy merchant vessels. Any profits incurred from these raids were split between himself and the colonial government. Although his actions did benefit the colonial cause, the primary objective of Sears was to further his own interests. The fact that his career

had patriotic ramifications was nothing more than a pleasant windfall. While Adams saw the Revolution as a means through which he would serve the citizens of the colonies, a group to which he belonged, Sears saw it as a opportunity to seek his fortune in a manner that indirectly benefited the colonial cause. While both of their actions worked towards achieving the same end, Adams' motive was based in the principles of classical virtue while Sears' were rooted in the liberal definition.

Joyce Appleby's *Capitalism and a New Social Order* discusses the acceptance of the principles of liberal virtue by the lower and middle classes. She provides not so much an inquiry into the origins of liberal virtue as she does an explanation of how an ideology that began within the ruling class spread to those beneath it.

In the aftermath of the Revolution, the faction that fought for the acceptance of self-interest was also successful in establishing a governing document through which their interests would be protected. However, this development was accompanied by a resurgence of classical virtue in which the delegates of the Constitutional Convention began to see men such as themselves as the only ones capable of serving the state. The document that they produced was designed to ensure the propagation of their own interests, assuming that they were aligned with those of American society as a whole.[8] Not only were these individuals beginning to adhere to the doctrine against which they had fought to replace with their own, but they were also acting in a manner that would reinforce the positions of the elite with respect to the lower classes.[9] The distinction between rich and poor began to grow, leading the New Republic down the social path that the kingdoms of Europe had treaded long ago.[10] The ensuing Jeffersonian backlash signified that the lower and middle classes, while in favor of creating a government that would celebrate self-interest, were not willing to replace one form of aristocracy for another. Living in a capitalist-oriented society that provided its inhabitants with an unparalleled level of freedom and opportunity, the average man had developed into a self-autonomous institution, thereby negating the need for a self-perpetuating class of political and economic elites to guide them.[11] Hence, the colonial conditions primed the citizenry to ensure that the articulation of liberal virtue by merchants like Robert Morris would have momentous historical consequences.

In the waning years of Britain's influence over the Americas, their old world principles were becoming too constrictive to the expanding commercial interests of the colonies, and an increasing number of individuals found that the rule of the monarchy was no longer consistent with their own self-interests. This prompted a response that would allow for the emergence of a new government that would redefine the relationship of virtue and republicanism. The War of Independence led to the cessation of intervention on the part of the monarchical government. The establishment of the Continental Congress provided the forum for such a decision to be held. The two opposing factions supplied the metal from which the new definition of virtue would be hammered.

III: Lee and Morris

The emergence of self-interest among the merchants of Philadelphia occurred well before there was any talk of a revolution within the colonies. The Stamp Act crisis of 1765 led to the first serious signs of a growing discrepancy between the interest of the merchants and those of the general population. The colonial trading ports of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia came together with the decision to embark on a system of non-importation, knowing full well that a cessation of trade would be injurious to the entirety of Great Britain's economy. However some, though certainly not all, of the enterprising Philadelphia merchants were unwilling to put aside their own interests for those of colonial society. These individuals, aware of the opportunities to be had in a market that was suffering from a lack of fine British products, engaged in foreign trade despite the warnings of their countrymen. Those who were caught in the act of profiteering were humiliated by their peers in private, and mocked by broadsides that depicted their deeds in public.[12] Their actions, which began nearly a decade before the creation of the Continental Congress, laid the groundwork for the formation of a class that was able to join seamlessly the interests of the individual with the promotion of the American desire for independence. These same individuals who were willing to forsake the good of the community in order to turn a profit were the harbingers of a self-conscious social group that was among the first to recognize that the interests of the community could be furthered by the pursuit of personal gain.

The fact that the colonists were able to use trade as a weapon against their oppressors shows that the merchant elite were becoming conscious of their own commercial worth. Indeed, despite the restrictions that their English masters had set against their commerce, the city of Philadelphia had continued to thrive. Even visitors to the city, such as John Adams, an ardent supporter of the Bostonian populace and its more Puritan social atmosphere, were reluctantly forced to concede that Philadelphia, for all of its faults, led the Americas with its degree of commercial influence.[13] Since Philadelphia was the leading colonial center of commerce during the revolutionary era, it was likewise the home of the wealthiest merchants, those individuals whose commercial fates were most closely tied to the current trading policies dictated by Great Britain. They were also the first group within colonial society to accept a new definition of virtue by discarding the classical version, which entailed serving one's community by rising above self-interest, and adopting an enlightened liberal notion, which permitted an individual to serve the community and one's self at the same time.

Whereas Boston and New York were both coastal ports, Philadelphia was unique among the prominent colonial trading centers in that it was located up the Chesapeake and on the Delaware River, making it somewhat removed from the Atlantic Ocean. Because of this, it offered the inhabitants some measure of protection against foreign threats, and its central location with respect to the other colonies made it the ideal place for the Continental Congress to convene in 1774. It was within this representative body that the important decisions that faced the colonies throughout the Revolution were made. Among these was the place where

individual interests would fit into republicanism, and which definition of virtue would be championed in the new republic, if indeed there was to be one.

Two men personified the contrasting views. On one hand there was Robert Morris, whom Charles Beard describes as the individual with “the most widely diversified economic interests” in the political scene of the Colonies.[14] Above all others, he and other elite merchants found self-interest to be a pursuit that was becoming increasingly compatible with republican virtue. He would play an important role in both the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention. In both forums he would use his political and economic clout to push for a government that would promote the expansion of the American economy, which was his primary concern. On the other hand there was Richard Henry Lee, the wealthy planter from Virginia and the champion of classical virtue. Throughout the debate he would attack the practices and the principles of the men who were endeavoring to combine self-interest with republicanism.

From the very conception of the Continental Congress, the interests of the merchants were well represented. James Duane notes that on Tuesday, September 6, 1774, the first day on which the delegates met, Congress “Resolved that a committee be appoint’d to State & Report the several Statutes respecting the Trade & Manufactures of the Colonies.”[15] Although the issue of trade was present in Congress from the very outset of its existence, Robert Morris was not. Thomas Willing was the first prominent Philadelphia merchant to enter Congress as a delegate. He brought a liberal definition of virtue. As a result of his doctrine, his social position, and his business connections, the interests of Thomas Willing and those of Robert Morris were nearly aligned with one another’s. Willing, after all, was a member of one of the elite merchant families of the city, and would later be Morris’s business partner in a number of lucrative commercial transactions during the war, some of which were realized at the expense of the colonial citizenry.

Although Willing acted in a manner that was consistent with the city’s merchant class, it would not be long before Robert Morris would replace him as the most commercially oriented member of the Continental Congress. In December of 1775, Thomas Willing resigned his seat as a delegate. No reason was given at the time, though the months preceding his resignation were marked with some suspicion as to the legitimacy of a contract that Congress had entered into with both Willing and Morris, in which the two merchants stood to make a profit of 12,000 pounds.[16] Willing attempted to deny his knowledge of any profits which he would have incurred as a result of the deal, but in the end, was only able to prevent Morris from sharing in any of the suspicion, claiming, “Mr. Morris’s character is such that he does not deserve it.”[17] Shortly after Willing left Congress, a committee voted to fill the vacancy by inviting Robert Morris to become a delegate.

From the moment that he took his place among the delegates of the Continental Congress, the actions and words of Robert Morris were those of a man adhering to the principles of liberal virtue, at least among his confidants. In the years that

preceded the Revolution, he, like the vast majority of the population, took pride in calling himself an Englishman. However, he was also a part of the population that would no longer allow their liberties to be infringed upon by the monarchy. The prosperity he had achieved through his own industry forbade him from having his future success governed by such a distant authority as Parliament, a body in which he had no say.[18] In his addresses to non-merchants, he re-affirmed his commitment to the crown and his European countrymen, but he also stated that he and a growing number of radical colonists would no longer be content to live in an empire where they would be treated as second-class citizens:

We love the people of England. We wanted no other friends, no other Allies, but alas if they cannot be content to Consider Us as Brothers entitled to the same freedom, the same priviledges themselves enjoy, they cannot long expect a people descended from their own flesh and blood, long Used to & well acquainted with freedom, to sit down tamely & see themselves stripd of all they hold dear.[19]

In this address, Morris's language is that of a subject, though clearly of one who is tired of suffering under, rather than living under, the rule of the British crown.

Morris also cultivated an image which he hoped would endear him to the people, but above all give him the reputation of being a man who was more concerned with the public's interest rather than his own. In his correspondence with the non-merchant community, he wrote numerous times about his "Being desirous of rendering the public every service in my power." [20] Indeed, the merchant wanted nothing more than to be viewed as a classically virtuous man, therefore making it easier to attend to his true interests without arousing suspicion. In addition to this, he made no secret that his involvement in the Continental Congress was coming at the expense of his own private interests. He often spoke of his desire to return to private life, claiming that he continued to serve only at the request of his Congressional peers:

Indeed I wish to be released from public business totally. I have had a long spell, my own affairs suffer amazingly the whole time & having no Ambition to gratify I wish to resign my honor & powers to somebody that may be better pleas'd with them. Whether I shall be permitted to retire or not I do not know....[21]

In attempting to depict his role in the government as one of personal sacrifice rather than one of personal gain, Morris hoped to reap the advantages inherent with both definitions of virtue in gaining personal wealth as well as public prestige.

However, there was a vast difference between the rhetoric found in Morris's addresses to the non-merchant population and that which he used in his dealings with his fellow merchants. His actions within the Continental Congress are a testament to this discrepancy. Within a year of entering Congress he became the Chairman of the Secret Committee. This powerful body was charged with overseeing the commercial transactions of the government during the war. Through his control of this committee, Morris was allowed to use his own discretion in matters of

commerce. It was here where he and Thomas Willing were able to capitalize on their access to the commercial information that passed through Congress, making them privy to the lucrative opportunities that were available to men who possessed both the means and ambition to achieve commercial success.[22] For example, Morris used his influence to advocate the expansion of the nascent colonial navy, not so much with the intention of protecting the coastline, but rather for protecting the ships of American traders, whose economic interests had been injured by the arrival of the powerful British fleet. To establish trading relations with other nations, the Secret Committee sent agents across the Atlantic for the purpose of "superintending and directing all the Commercial business of Congress in Europe." [23] One of the agents was Thomas Morris, Robert Morris's own brother, who was an individual of questionable character who was hardly qualified for the job. The merchant described his younger sibling as having "such a taste for pleasure that he cannot apply closely to business." [24] However, despite Thomas's shortcomings as a businessman, the Morris brothers kept in almost constant correspondence until 1777, during which time the younger made the older privy to the information that he obtained in the courts of Europe.

Robert Morris used his position and connections to secure commercial information that would benefit both him and the merchants with whom he had entered into partnerships. In his dealings with the merchant Jonathan Hudson, Morris advised him to "hurry them [the goods] back as soon as possible for I believe" that the scarcity of goods would "raise prices in Carolina." [25] His correspondence with Hudson lasted several months during which the two engaged in numerous enterprises, usually obtaining prices that worked out to their "mutual advantage." [26]

However, Morris was not simply trading with the intention of making a modest profit while at the same time providing the colonists with goods that were necessary for their survival. Even when dealing with commodities such as medicine, Morris continued to look out for his own interests, rather than those of the citizens, who, being in a war, probably needed the medicine more than he needed the money. In a letter to William Bingham, Morris stated: "I have agreed for the Medicines at prices that will yield us fine profits." [27] Moreover, he continued by boasting, "the profits on these adventures when they do arrive will equal ones most sanguine wishes." [28] Morris's choice of language is especially important here, as one of the derivations of the word sanguine is bloodthirsty.

Morris also created scarcities of manufactured goods to raise the prices of the commodities with which he dealt. In his letter to the merchant John Bradford, he advised him to hoard goods with the intention of making a profit off of them when they became scarce:

What think you of buying up in your State all such Prize Goods (not perishable) as sell cheap and laying them by awhile, this years Fares must be nearly over & it's a

long time to the next Crop of West India Produce, beside I suppose measures will be taken from our drawing so large a share of it.[29]

In addition to this, Morris was almost constantly concerned with making remittances on his commercial transactions, be they for the government or for his own business. According to the minutes of one meeting of the Secret Committee, it is recorded that Morris entered into a contract with a Mr. Gillon "in wch. the profits were very high." [30] His desire to achieve personal gain went even further in another letter addressed to Jonathan Hudson in which he stated that "we have therefore nothing to do but make money as fast as we can." [31] Clearly, the merchant's involvement in trade went beyond his desire to keep the lines of commerce open despite the presence of the British Navy.

Although some of Morris's classically virtuous contemporaries frowned upon his utilization of the Colonial struggle to line his own pockets, it seems likely that he was able to justify his own actions by arguing that although he was making a profit, in most cases he was also helping to further the revolutionary cause in some capacity. To this end he imported commodities that "if introduced here will sell for immense proffits and at the same time be most usefull to America." [32] In a 1776 letter to his business partner Silas Deane, he stated this sentiment in even less ambiguous terms:

Therefore it seems to me the present opportunity of Improving our fortunes ought not to be lost especially as the very means of doing it will contribute to the service of our Country at the same time.[33]

It is this passage that demonstrates that Robert Morris saw the combination of self-interest and duty to one's country as something that should not only be tolerated, but something that should be above reproach.

However, it was not the pursuit of his own interest that led to Morris's downfall in Congress. In 1777, this particular self-interested businessman took his desire to combine personal gain with public service a step too far. The notes of the Secret Committee reveal that Morris had been skimming money from the colonial coffers: "This was a mode of preventg. R. Morris from being chargd on the public books of the treasury, tho he pocketed the public Money.[34] In notes of another meeting, the same individual recorded that "Mr. Morris might have paid for all his private purchases out of the public treasury." [35] Significantly, the author of the preceding notes was Arthur Lee, a younger brother of Richard Henry Lee, the delegate who would become the most stalwart champion of classical virtue. Like his brother, Arthur believed that the pursuit of profit and service to one's country were incompatible, which prompted him to find the merchant's acts of subordinating the interests of the public to the interests of his own economic well being as deplorable. These developments coincided with the growing dissatisfaction with Thomas Morris's performance as the Continental Congress's agent of economic affairs to Europe. Robert Morris was forced to defend the actions of his brother even to some

of his most ardent supporters, namely Silas Deane, who in 1777 sent letters to Congress with respect to Thomas's unacceptable performance.[36]

Robert Morris remained in Congress until 1778, when he left claiming that his personal interests were taking too great a loss as a result of his selfless dedication to the public cause. However, the damage to his reputation was superficial and quickly forgotten. The influence that Robert Morris was to have in the formation of the United States government was far from complete. His role as a prominent political player would extend well into the next decade, during which he would win a number of concessions that promoted a government in which the interests of the private citizen could be sought after without the stigma that was once attached to such activities.

Morris and those who shared his new definition of liberal virtue were opposed by a faction in the Continental Congress that continued to adhere to the classical form of virtue. This faction was led Richard Henry Lee, a well respected delegate from the colony of Virginia. Lee was a member of the planter elite, and, like most other planters, prided himself on his self-autonomy. However, in the years that preceded the Revolution, the European tobacco market had worsened, causing Lee and many other planters to suffer financially and sometimes plunge into debt. This in turn limited their ability to display their independence in the traditional and opulent manner that the men of the Tidewater had come to both enjoy and expect. Like Morris, Lee continued to proclaim his devotion to Great Britain, but he felt that monarchical rule was becoming increasingly unbearable and he was no longer willing to allow the mother country to profit at his expense. As early as 1774, Lee claimed that ensuring the survival of his way of life justified the rebellious nature of the Colonies:

That their [the colonies'] conduct now results solely from overruling principles of self preservation, which demands the protection of their Liberty, the Security of their lives and property; against a lately adopted System of plantation government.[37]

Therefore, although Lee and Morris both desired to break away from England, Lee's motives were concerned with the perpetuation of his way of life, whereas Morris was primarily looking after his own interests. Where Morris viewed British subjugation as a barrier to the expansion of his trading empire, Lee saw crown rule as nothing less than the "Shackles of Slavery." [38]

Most of Lee's actions as a delegate were consistent with his view of classical virtue. He entered the Continental Congress as a man who would rise above the self-interest that he believed was holding back some of the morally weaker members of the legislature. In doing so, he alone would be able to act in the best interests of the people. In his letter to George Washington, Lee stated, "My wishes...correspond with the true interest of America." [39] In a separate address to the Congressional Commissioners in Paris, Lee encouraged his absent countrymen to "judge [what is]

best for the public good” when making commercial decisions for the Colonial government.[40]

It should come as no surprise, then, that Lee found many of Morris’s actions to be counter-productive to the Colonial cause. In his letter to Patrick Henry, Lee speaks out against Morris’s commercial dealings, namely the hoarding and profiteering that was enriching the merchant community at the public’s expense. Though he rarely directed his comments towards Morris himself, Lee was hardly ignorant of his fellow delegate’s actions:

No person living detests more than I do, the pernicious practice of engrossing, especially the necessities of life. Tis begotten by avarice or inhumanity, and deserves every kind of discouragement. I have spoken to Mr. Morris, and he declares, that so far as he has been concerned, his Agent was directed to purchase for him with view of foreign commerce solely.[41]

However, it seems unlikely that Lee grasped the breadth of Morris’s actions, as the merchant was savvy enough to have others act on his behalf.

The post-Revolutionary government that Lee envisioned for the colonies was one that would be based on the traditional definition of virtue. The planter was tired of the Colonial government, which existed to serve the narrow interests of a few individuals. What he wanted was a government that would be based on “the spirit, wisdom, and energy of her councils” which in turn would “rouse America from the fatal lethargy into which the feebleness, folly and interested views of the Proprietary government...have thrown her most unhappily.”[42] Lee saw self-interest as the force that was used by the few to oppress the many, and not as a means of making progress within the community as Morris believed. Lee believed that the path of the Revolution would lead to a government that was less apt to promote the interests of the individual. The establishment of any other kind of government would be an exercise in futility, as a state run by a small group of powerful and interested individuals would be “very near a tyranny,” as Lee knew from his encounters with his own colony’s legislature.[43] Escaping this sort of oppression was exactly how Lee had justified his treason, and he wanted his sacrifice to yield something that resembled his ideal government.

However, just because Lee spoke against self-interest does not mean that he was immune to it. He, like Morris, was guilty of acting in his own interests, although to a much lesser degree as his commitment to classical virtue and morality tempered his ambition. Nor did he ever go out of his way to profit from the misfortunes of the common citizen, as Morris did. The difference between the two of them was that Morris justified what he did as being consistent with his own definition of virtue, and Lee did not. In the merchant’s mind his actions, though questionable, were just in the sense that he was advancing his own interests, which in turn would eventually benefit colonial society as a whole. Lee was given no such luxury and was forced to justify his actions with the notion of self-preservation.

Richard Henry Lee was similar to many other members of Virginia's elite society of planters in that he was suffering under the British system of government. The collapse of the tobacco market led to the ruin of many of the tenant farmers to whom Lee had leased land. This had a negative impact upon the Lee family income, which he claimed was "barely sufficient with the greatest economy to maintain my family in the best of times." [44] During the War for Independence, the printing of paper money to stimulate trade made the situation even worse [45], obliging the desperate planter to find a means to "prevent [his] own ruin." [46]

Lee was in an excellent position to thwart his own financial demise. It so happened that Thomas Morris was only one of the agents that the Continental Congress had sent to Europe with the mission of acting in the commercial interests of the colonies. The other agent was none other than Arthur Lee, the brother of Richard Henry Lee. [47] Through his correspondence with his brother, Richard Henry Lee, like Morris, was able to obtain information about economic opportunities in Europe.

Furthermore, in June of 1776, in a letter to another great planter by the name of Landon Carter, Lee spoke of his desire to join with France, and have "their Ships to cover our trade, and open our Ports." [48] His intentions become even clearer in a letter to Robert Morris in which he stated:

That a plan is formed with France to supply that Country with Tobo. from America should this be the case, they, vizt. The Americans will no doubt take care to send it there, only such kind of Tobo. as the French have been accustomed to receive, otherwise the general trade in that Comodity will hereafter be much injured, if not totally ruined. [49]

Lee was not writing solely to promote the interests of the tobacco planters, but specifically to benefit those like Carter and himself, who dealt with the higher quality weed.

Despite the fact that both Lee and Morris were both acting in their own best interests, neither the Continental Congress nor the public were ready to accept Morris's actions as being consistent with the republicanism, which led to a decline of the merchant's influence in that particular area of colonial life. Nevertheless, the part that Morris was to play in the shaping the new nation was not over, as his liberally virtuous peers would take up his cause.

IV: Lee and Deane

The debate that took place between Robert Morris and Richard Henry Lee was one that manifested itself in the actions and personal correspondence between relatively small groups of individuals. Despite the limits of its scope with respect to colonial society as a whole, this altercation did lay the groundwork for the next exchange dealing with the role that self-interest would play in the production of

American republicanism. As Morris's role in the battle of virtue waned, his business partner Silas Deane, an individual with whom he had corresponded on a regular basis since 1775, filled the vacuum of influence that had previously been filled by the merchant. Like Morris, Deane also felt an inclination to combine the pursuit of his own self-interests with his service to the nation. Although liberal virtue had a new champion, Richard Henry Lee continued to be the most ardent supporter of the classical definition. He and his brothers held fast in their determination to form a republic that would be run by interest-free individuals. The escalating zeal of both sides led to the creation of political factions within the Continental Congress. This led to a sort of chain reaction in which the colonial citizens became aware of the existence of two self-conscious groups of legislators with diametrically opposed political doctrines, each of which was vying for their support. In essence, Deane's entrance into the debate marked a metamorphosis in the medium through which it was conducted as it moved away from the small circles of private correspondence and towards the halls of congress as well as the public sphere.

In 1776, Silas Deane, a delegate from the colony of Connecticut, left his country in order to serve the interests of the Continental Congress in the court of Versailles. He joined Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, and Arthur Lee of Virginia as a Commissioner of Commerce to Paris. Deane's actions, both public and private in nature, brought him into conflict with Lee, who cited the Connecticut native's conduct as being inconsistent with his own definition of public service.

The tenure of Silas Deane as a Commissioner of Commerce was marked by a rash of self-interested acts, some of which were of questionable legality. Like Morris, Deane formed trading partnerships with other delegates who were of a similar political persuasion. Given his relative proximity to the European marketplace, he was privy to knowledge of the prominent Parisian trading houses, thus allowing himself and his friends in the Continental Congress to enter into ventures with firms that were looking to engage in trans-Atlantic trade.[50] Such deals would benefit the American cause, as well as establish trading connections for after the war, but they would also serve as a lucrative source of income for Deane. In this sense, Deane's ability to combine self-interest with his service to the country was virtuous in the liberal sense, though certainly not in the classical one. In the mind of Arthur Lee, his fellow commissioner's inability to rise above his own well-being marked a fall from the pure faith, thus leading to what Henry Laurens, the classically virtuous president of Congress, described as "unhappy bickerings" between the two men.[51]

In addition to engaging in trade while in the service of the public, Deane expressed a version of statecraft that would further his own economic prospects. The Treaty of Alliance and Commerce, a document that Deane helped to write, was, as his critic cited, "bottomed on principles of the most liberal...policy." [52] Furthermore, the Committee of Foreign Affairs noted that the same treaty would give the French a good deal of power over American commerce; that, in turn, would benefit the firms with which Deane and his partners were aligned.[53]

The idea of one individual's self-interest playing so large a role in the affairs of the nation did not sit well with the Lee brothers, who were anxious to replace Deane with someone whose definition of virtue was more in line with their own. To this end Richard Henry Lee sent William Carmichael, a delegate from Maryland, to Paris to collect information that could be used to rationalize a reason for recalling Deane.[54] However, the agent of the Commissioner's destruction was ill fitted to this duty, as he found that his proclivities were much closer to those of the man he was sent to discredit than they were to those of whom had charged him with his mission. A rationale for the recall of the Deane did not emerge until some questionable accounting records came to the attention of Arthur Lee, who wasted little time in informing his brother of the monetary discrepancies. These records, which pertained to a business deal that Deane entered into with a Mr. Beaumachais, which suggested that the Commissioner had misappropriated public funds. Although Deane was acting as an agent of the government in the deal, he used the proceeds to outfit a number of merchant vessels that he intended to use in order to further his own interests.[55]

Thus, on the 17th of February in the year 1778, Congress sent a message of recall to Paris, which was to be delivered to Deane by John Adams, the man who was to be his replacement.[56] Richard Henry Lee considered this turn of events to be a great victory for his side in the conflict of virtue. He expressed his sentiments of the recall and replacement in a letter to his brother:

I hope the safe arrival and the recall of Deane will benefit extremely the public business. The latter is in every respect the reverse of Mr. Adams, and so you may form your judgment of the former. I have found ample cause to love and esteem Mr. Adams in our joint labors for the public good.[57]

In another letter he further stated that with the recall of Deane and the installation of Adams, a great burden would be lifted from the hunched shoulders of the public:

His [Deane's] {recall} which I now rejoice at will prevent all future {machinations} from him, at least in {Europe} and himself as well as others will be well attended to here. Our friend Mr. Adams who {succeeds Deane} is a wise and worthy Whig who will not {form cabals} for any private sinister purpose.[58]

On Deane's return to America, Lee intended to investigate the allegations of the former's corrupt business practices, with the hope of chastising both him and "the others" whom he referred to.

However, within the halls of congress, the anticipation of this debate led to the division of the legislature into two groups, one that would support the charges against the former commissioner, and another that would ardently defend him. Knowing that the support of his family alone would not suffice against the growing number of Deane supporters, Richard Henry Lee appealed to men of similar mindsets, imploring his fellow "Republican spirits who have so successfully labored

for the liberty of their Country, and whose sole objectivity is the security of public happiness, [to] esteem each other.”[59] However, even as the elder Lee sought to buttress his ideology with the backing of influential men, he bore witness to an opposing faction taking rise about Deane and his followers. In a letter to his brother Arthur, Lee noted that “{Deane’s} art has created a strange spirit among many,” and that a number of delegates were beginning to entertain the notion that self-interest was compatible with state service.[60] As the year drew to a close, it seemed that the cause of Silas Deane was far more appealing to the formerly neutral members of the congress than the classically virtuous alternative. As a founder of this party, Deane’s actions were described by his opponents in a particularly wicked manner, and his faction was seen as nothing less than an arm of British tyranny. In a letter to his brother Arthur, Francis Lightfoot Lee acknowledges the breadth of the opposing party, and his fear of what their interested actions may accomplish:

I was astonished to find that S. Deane had made so great progress in the Art of intriguing, as to have formed a very dangerous party who think it necessary to their designs, to remove all the old friends of Liberty and Independence, for which purpose every Lie their inventions can furnish, is circulated in the Air of certainty, and the blackest colorings given to Actions in themselves indifferent or accidental. This party is filled with Tories, all those who have robbed the public, are now doing it, and those who wish to do it, with many others....All these together form a very powerfull body.[61]

It seemed that in spite of the fact that Deane had not yet arrived to defend himself personally, some sympathetic delegates not only saw the charges against him as being false, but also perceived his motivation for combining the duties of his office with the advancement of his own interests as un-objectionable, and something that they would stake their reputations to sustain. The supporters of classical virtue found it disturbing that the delegates, who in theory were individuals with the ability to rise above self-interest, were taking sides in a manner that was opposed to the very essence of their beliefs.[62] However, despite the numerical advantage that the Deane faction held over the Lee faction, Henry Laurens, the president of the congress, was a member of the latter, thereby giving it an advantage in legislative protocol.

Even before Deane’s return to the colonies, the members of both sides were acutely aware of the importance of the outcome of the debate and the role which it would play in either establishing a new set of republican principles or preserving the old ones. Acknowledging the magnitude of the debate on the eve of the former Commissioner’s arrival, Gouverneur Morris, a delegate from New York who was a political ally, but not a relative, of Robert Morris, saw the conflict as the means to curb the role of classical virtue in colonial life: “The Storm increases and [I] think some of the tall Trees must be torn up by the roots.”[63] Believing in the principles of liberal virtue, Gouverneur Morris saw the Deane controversy as the culmination of the debate, and he hoped the inquisition into his colleague’s activities would be an opportunity to accelerate the acceptance of his own ideas while at the same time

injuring those of his enemies. Likewise, the Lee faction was highly conscious that Deane's coming before the congress would serve a purpose that went beyond simply punishing him for his crimes. The verdict would be of the utmost importance to the outcome of the debate. Richard Henry Lee saw the conflict not only in terms of the two factions, but also as one that pitted virtue against vice. For Lee, the only conceivable outcome would yield the former over the latter.[64] He was not alone among his peers in recognizing the importance of the debate. Laurens also distinguished this facet of the controversy from those that had come before it: "the subject is not minute, it is of the utmost importance to our Union." [65]

The stage was set for the debate within congress to begin, and the only thing left wanting was the arrival of Deane and, with him, his books holding the records of his transactions that would result in either his abdication or incrimination. On July 11 of 1778, Silas Deane arrived in the colonies. With him he brought a fleet of 13 French warships but absolutely no records of the business that he conducted while in the service of the state, a tenure during which one quarter of a million pounds passed through his fingers.[66] He claimed that he "had left his Papers and Vouchers in the Hands of a Friend in France lest by Accidents of the Sea or Enemy they might have been destroyed." [67] While his supporters saw this action as one of prudence and caution, his enemies wondered why being escorted by a fleet of 13 warships did not fall under Deane's definition of "safe."

Without concrete proof of any misconduct on the part of the former commissioner, the classically virtuous faction focused its attack on Deane's personal participation in the market, claiming that such actions were an inherent barrier that would prevent Deane from wholly dedicating himself to the public good. In his address to congress, Henry Laurens stated that a man such as Deane, one who would not put the citizenry before himself, had no right to represent the government in matters of diplomacy:

That his having been engaged in private Commercial Trade while he was acting in a Public Character in France his further & more extensive engagements of the same nature since his arrival in America...do not entitle him to that approbation...that his conduct in these respects particularly, is highly reprehensible, altogether inconsistent with his professions of disinterestedness in the Public service.[68]

Laurens was supported by others, among them Samuel Adams, who, in describing Deane's congressional career, noted that from his very inception as a delegate, his interests lay not with those of the public, but rather with those of his pocketbook. He found that Deane was, in fact, a very biased individual, and that his economic proclivities prevented him from embracing the true meaning of public service:

he very early attachd himself to Men of different Sentiments from those which most if not all of your Delegates brought with them from your country and strenuously maintained. This Difference of Sentiment was said to arise from local Attachments, but in Reality they arose from different Principles and Views. What Mr D[eane]'s

political Principles were if he had any I could never learn. His views always appeared to me commercial and interested.[69]

Of course, the strongest words against the actions of Deane and his supporters came from Richard Henry Lee, who saw the combination of interest and service as nothing less than “the folly and wickedness of mankind.”[70] He saw liberal virtue as more than simply a barrier to proper service; to him it was an evil that resided in men who were morally weaker than himself.

Despite the opposition of Lee and his allies, Deane was supported by a number of powerful men, and the strength of his faction was growing in both size and influence. His most stalwart and vocal supporter was Robert Morris. In his multiple written addresses to both the public and to congress, he strongly defended the individual’s right to serve two masters: self-interest and the community. He alleged that a man could achieve both ends without sacrificing either: “I believe the men who conduct the affairs of America incapable of being influenced by proper motives.”[71] This implied that a man, despite his interest in private commerce, could still give himself whole-heartedly to serving the state, thereby negating the classically virtuous claim that an individual must remain entirely aloof from the market in order to act in a manner that promoted the well-being of the many, rather than that of the few, or even the one. Morris further stated that as long as a delegate acted in a lawful manner, the congress had absolutely no authority to tell him whether or not he could engage in private trade. This served not only as a defense of Deane, but also of his own activities:

If Mr. Deane had any commerce that was inconsistent with his Public Station he must answer for it. But As I did not by becoming a Delegate for the State of Pensylva., relinquish my right to forming Mercantile Connections, I was unquestionably at Liberty to form such with Mr. Deane.[72]

Other supporters of liberal virtue felt that the best way to defend Deane was to discredit his opponents. To this end, William Duer, a delegate from New York, published a series of articles in the Pennsylvania Packet. John Dunlap, who was a political sympathizer of Deane’s, ran this publication. The Packet was to run a series of articles that defended Deane, making it a very biased source of information but one of critical importance in the campaign of the liberally virtuous party to bend the minds of the public to their cause. In addition to emphasizing “the essential propriety and decency” of liberal virtue in a defense of Deane, Duer also criticized the political power that was held by the Lee family, noting that each brother held not one office but several. He saw the concentration of such power in the hands of a few related individuals as an inherent source of corruption, despite the morality of those involved:

such various and incompatible offices being vested in one family, however great their abilities or pretensions of the public favor may be.... Gracious Heavens! Is it possible that in the infancy of the rising Republic, two brothers of one family should

represent the interests of the sovereignty of these United state at four of the principle courts in Europe; and that two others of the same family should exercise the highest acts of sovereignty in our great Council, and thereby possess the power of securing and protecting their connections.[73]

Despite the fact that the debate was growing increasingly violent both within the halls of Congress and in the delegates' addresses to the public, Silas Deane had only been allowed to appear before the legislative body once. Despite numerous requests from both himself and the members of his party for another appearance, he was continually denied the chance to justify his conduct as a Commissioner of Commerce. Tired of waiting, and feeling "that the ears of Congress were shut against him," Deane took his case to the public in his address "To the Free and Virtuous Citizens of America." [74] This article, like Duer's, was published in the Pennsylvania Packet.

Offended by Deane's decision to address the public before them, and resentful of "some very home accusations" that he made against some of his opponents, the classically virtuous faction embarked on a very verbose rebuttal, which resulted in further delaying the Commissioner's congressional appearance.[75] Francis Lightfoot Lee, aware that the citizenry was beginning to embrace the ideals of Deane and his friends as their own, implored a "candid and impartial PUBLIC" to "suspend [their] judgement" as to whether actions such as those conducted by the former Commissioner were appropriate, until "the matter is fully investigated by those whose immediate business it is." [76] Clearly F. Lee feared that an ignorant and self-interested public would be partial to Deane's ideas, which would allow an interested man to make decisions in a sphere that was previously restricted to disinterested individuals.

Despite the fact that Deane was denied permission to bring his case before the congress in person, he was allowed to submit a written account of the events in Paris as he remembered them. To the dismay of Lee and those who thought as he did, the majority of the delegates in attendance "sucked it in, as nectar & Ambrosia; & say that he has acquitted himself most honorably." [77] Not only was Deane supported by the members of his party, but also by those who thought themselves to be moderates. Francis Lightfoot Lee confided in his brother the opinion that the influence and benevolence of classical virtue was slowly giving way to the cold self-interested nature of liberal virtue:

The old whigs are something, benumbed, at the apparent greatness of the Party. I shall not be surprised at their success, for meanness and wickedness increase daily. If our brothers are not disgraced now, I am sure they will be before long, for they stand in the way of bad men.[78]

Despite the protests that Deane's opponents put forth regarding the total lack of evidence to support his story, the general sentiment among the delegates was that Deane had, in fact, done nothing wrong while in France.[79] Oliver Ellsworth, a

delegate of moderate inclinations, described both Deane's conduct and the acceptance of his actions in a letter to his minister:

His attention to the business he was sent upon & skill & success in the execution of it are very apparent: & and I will not say but every part of his conduct abroad is deserving of & will obtain the approbation of Congress and the publick.[80]

Facing a body that was beginning to support the notion that self-interest was compatible with public service, Henry Laurens asserted that his honor prevented him from continuing as his position as the President of the Continental Congress, and he resigned shortly after Deane's address turned the tide of delegates against his faction.[81] In his notes, he cited the changing nature of the congressional mentality as one of the reasons in his decision to abdicate the chair.[82] It would appear that after the balance of power shifted in the direction of self-interest, some members of the defeated faction could no longer serve in such a body while at the same time maintaining their definition of honor as gentlemen.

As the debate over which definition of virtue would prevail in the New Republic reached its fourth year as a topic of discussion in the Continental Congress, it appeared that the classical version was falling by the wayside. After all, the classical meaning entailed an adherence to social notions that were synonymous with a monarchical and aristocratic government, and these institutions were the very ones that the colonists were engaged in a struggle to overthrow. In the end, even Richard Henry Lee found himself conceding defeat to the principles of liberal virtue when he stated, "Provided America is free and happy, I am not solicitous about the agents that accomplish it." [83] The agents, of course, were those very opportunists who took advantage of the market conditions in order to further their own interests. In securing a French market for the tobacco produced by Virginian planters, Lee joined Robert Morris in the growing ranks of those who were able, though perhaps reluctantly, to combine self-interest with republican virtue.

Though they may have been shifting towards the principles of liberal virtue, the citizens of the colonies were becoming increasingly aware that some delegates were prospering at their expense. Despite the fact that the citizenry was moving towards supporting a definition of virtue that was accepting of self-interest, they were far from condoning the shameless profiteering in which some of the merchants were engaged, especially those who were delegates. As a result of this growing discontentment with the merchant class, the Virginia assembly began to require its delegates to take the following oath:

I Do Solemnly Swear, That I am not directly or indirectly engaged in any Merchandize by buying & selling for gain & that I will not directly or indirectly engage in any Merchandize by buying & selling for gain during the Time for which I am appointed a Delegate to Congress.[84]

Other colonies took similar measures to prevent overly self-interested individuals from becoming delegates. It would appear that although the colonists were fighting a war which would eventually result in the creation of a government that would celebrate self-interest, they were not willing to be governed by individuals who saw their positions as nothing more than opportunities to advance their own fortunes. The colonists, though finding that interest could, in fact, be a beneficial institution, did not want to be ruled by individuals who were totally unable to put aside their own needs when the situation called for it.

V: Conclusion

The triumph of Morris's and Deane's ideologies over those of the Lee brothers set the stage for the establishment of a government which would have its roots in the principles of liberalism. Following the conclusion of the debate, the power and influence of the liberally virtuous delegates grew within the congress, irrevocably shifting the balance of power in their favor. A citizenry that backed this notion solidified their definition as the dominant one in the colonies. Any ambiguity as to whether or not self-interest, when tempered with republicanism, would be accepted into the New Republic as a legitimate institution was swept away. Pursuing the commercial success of the individual had the ulterior consequence of benefiting the community to which the individual belonged. Whereas before a man's interest in the market was grounds for denying him a leadership role due to the principles of classical virtue, it was now a means by which he could legitimately enter the service of the state so as to benefit the citizenry while at the same time advancing his own affairs. The dominant view of self-interest had come full circle and was now a facet of American republicanism that was not only tolerated, but rather championed as a means of progress.

The authors of the Constitution had this in mind in drafting the document that would persist into modern times as the fundamental institution upon which our society is based. However, this also led to a second conflict over self-interest as the delegates who designed the document with the intent of furthering their own interests, and not those of the nation as a whole. This development could have led to a resurgence of classical virtue, but instead ignited a popular response from the lower and middle classes, a movement that came to be known as Jeffersonianism. The ensuing political battle yielded the principles of Jeffersonianism as the victor, thereby spreading the doctrine of liberalism to the majority of population, answering once and for all the question of virtue, and sealing America's fate as a land in which all individuals were free to pursue their own self-interests within an environment in which it was celebrated.

Endnotes:

[1] T.H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 95.

[2] Ibid., 95.

[3] Ibid., XIII.

[4] Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: A. Knopf Press, 1993), 229.

[5] Ibid., 10.

[6] Wood, 8.

[7] Pauline Maier, *The Old Revolutionaries* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1976), 34-35.

[8] Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 9.

[9] In *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, Charles Beard explains how the delegates to the Constitutional Convention used their power to both protect their livelihoods and make it difficult for anyone who did not possess a substantial fortune to become a member of the legislature. In attempting to create a system that would perpetuate the election of wealthy, perhaps even hereditary, representatives, the government that the delegates envisioned would be something similar to that found in colonial Virginia, where approximately 40 families controlled virtually the entire legislature. The difference was that the Virginians were strong backers of classical virtue who believed that they held their position in order to represent the general will of the people while the draftees of the Constitution acted in a manner that was designed to further their own interests, and not those of America as a whole.

[10] Appleby, 10.

[11] Ibid., IX, 10.

[12] Broadside, Philadelphia, June 30, 1770, *Early American Imprints*.

[13] Adams, John. *Works of John Adams*, Edited by Charles Francis Adams, 395. Boston: Little and Brown, 1850. Quoted by Russell Duane Palmer, *Philadelphia Merchants on the Eve of the Revolution* (Unpublished Masters of Arts Thesis, Tulane University, 1973), 39.

[14] Beard, 133.

[15] James Duane's *Notes of Debates*, September 6, 1774, ed. Paul H. Smith, vol. 1 of *Letters of the Continental Congress* (Washington D.C.: 1994), 30-32.

[16] John Adam's Notes of Debates, September 24, 1775, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 2, 52.

[17] Ibid., 53.

[18] Beard, 134.

[19] Robert Morris to Unknown, December 9, 1775, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 2, 470.

[20] Robert Morris to Thomas Wharton, November 30, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 8, 352.

[21] Robert Morris to William Whipple, September 4, 1777 Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 604.

[22] Willing, Morris, & Co. to Messrs. Wm. Baynes & Co., September 27, 1775, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 2, 75-76.

[23] Secret Committee to Robert Morris, January 13, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 6, 89.

[24] Robert Morris to William Bingham, June 20, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 237.

[25] Robert Morris to Jonathan Hudson, May 20, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 97.

[26] Robert Morris to Jonathan Hudson, June 17, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 206.

[27] Robert Morris to William Bingham, June 20, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 236.

[28] Ibid., 237.

[29] Robert Morris to John Bradford, October 8, 1776, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 5, 321.

[30] Secret Committee Minutes of Proceedings, August 8, 1776, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 4, 642.

[31] Robert Morris to Jonathan Hudson, August 19, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 516.

[32] Robert Morris to Silas Deane, June 6, 1776, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 4, 155.

[33] Robert Morris to Silas Deane, August 11, 1776, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 4, 657.

[34] Secret Committee Minutes of Proceedings, May 1, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 11.

[35] Secret Committee Minutes of Proceedings, April 24, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 6, 649.

[36] Robert Morris to Silas Deane, June 29, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 266-267.

[37] Richard Henry Lee's Draft Address to the People of Great Britain and Ireland, October 11-18, 1774, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 1, 174-179.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Richard Henry Lee to George Washington, April 10, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 6, 568.

[40] Secret Committee to the Commissioners at Paris, February 18, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 6, 316.

[41] Richard Henry Lee to Patrick Henry, April 15, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 6, 583.

[42] Richard Henry Lee to Patrick Henry, April 20, 1776, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 3, 563.

[43] Richard Henry Lee to Edmund Pendleton, May 12, 1776, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 3, 667.

[44] Richard Henry Lee to Patrick Henry, May 26, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 122.

[45] Since Lee's tenant farmers paid him in currency, the same money that was printed to encourage colonial trade also led to a reduction in the real value of his income from the rent.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Letter from the Secret Committee to Robert Morris, January 13, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 6, 93.

[48] Richard Henry Lee to Landon Carter, June 2, 1776, Letters to the Continental Congress, vol. 4, 118.

[49] Richard Henry Lee to Robert Morris, December 24, 1776, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 5, 657.

[50] John Banister to Theveneau de Francy, July 28, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 365.

[51] Henry Laurens to John Laurens, May 3, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 9, 582.

[52] Charles Carrol of Carrollton to Charles Carrol Senior, May 3, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 9, 94.

[53] Committee of Foreign Affairs to the Commissioners at Paris, May 15, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 9, 670-671.

[54] James Lovell to Samuel Adams, February 19, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 9, 134-136.

[55] Charles Thomson's Notes on William Carmichael's Examination, September 30, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 718.

[56] Committee of Foreign Affairs to William Bingham, April 16, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 9, 421.

[57] Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, May 27, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 9, 758-759.

[58] Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, May 12, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 9, 653.

[59] Richard Henry Lee to John Adams, June 20, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 154.

[60] Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, May 19, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 9, 720.

[61] Francis Lightfoot Lee to Arthur Lee, December 10, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 325.

[62] Henry Laurens to Rawlins Lowndes, August 18, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 474.

[63] Gouverneur Morris to John Jay, August 16, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 455.

[64] Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, September 16, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 652.

[65] Henry Laurens to Rawlins Lowndes, August 18, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 475.

[66] Henry Laurens' Notes on his Resignation, December 9, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 317.

[67] Gouverneur Morris' Amendment to John Witherspoon's Motion, September 18, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 660.

[68] Henry Laurens' Proposed Resolve on Silas Deane, December 31, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 393.

[69] Samuel Adams to Samuel Cooper, January 3, 1779, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 395-396.

[70] Richard Henry Lee to Francis Lightfoot Lee, July 27, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 362.

[71] William Henry Drayton to Carlisle Commissioners, July 18, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 10, 301.

[72] Robert Morris to the Public, January 7, 1779, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 430.

[73] Article by Sesex, Pennsylvania Packet, December 15, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 403.

[74] Henry Laurens to Rawlins Lowndes, December 16, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 352.

[75] Thomas Burke to Richard Caswell, December 20, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 361.

[76] Francis Lightfoot Lee to the Public, December 7, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 352.

[77] Francis Lightfoot Lee to Richard Henry Lee, December 25, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 383.

[78] Ibid., 384.

[79] Henry Lauren's Speech to Congress, December 9, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 312-315.

[80] Oliver Ellsworth to Theodore Hinsdale, January 26, 1779, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 519.

[81] Henry Lauren's Speech to Congress, December 9, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 312-315.

[82] Henry Lauren's Notes on his Resignation, December 9, 1778, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 11, 319.

[83] Richard Henry Lee to Patrick Henry, May 26, 1777, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 7, 121.

[84] George Frost to Josiah Bartlett, April 16, 1779, Letters of the Continental Congress, vol. 12, 340.