

Resource Sheet #6

A Furious Mob

Governor Thomas Hutchinson's account of the events of August 26th, 1765

In the evening, whilst I was at supper and my children round me, somebody ran in and said the mob were coming. I directed my children to fly to a secure place, and shut up my house as I had done before, intending not to quit it; but my eldest daughter repented her leaving me, hastened back, and protested she would not quit the house unless I did. I couldn't stand against this, and withdrew with her to a neighboring house, where I had been but a few minutes before the hellish crew fell upon my house with the rage of devils, and in a moment ...axes split down the doors and [the mob] entered.

Messages soon came one after another to the house where I was, to inform me the mob were coming in pursuit of me, and I was obliged to retire through yards and gardens to a house more remote, where I remained until four o'clock, by which time one of the best finished houses in the Province had nothing remaining but the bare walls and floors.

Not contented with tearing off all the wainscot and hangings, and splitting the doors to pieces... They began to take the slate and boards from the roof, and were prevented only by the approaching daylight from a total demolition of the building. The garden-house was laid flat, and all my trees, etc., broken down to the ground.

Such ruin was never seen in America. Besides my plate and family pictures, household furniture of every kind, my own, my children's, and servants' apparel, they carried off about £900 sterling in money, and emptied the house of everything whatsoever, except a part of the kitchen furniture. They did not leave a single book or paper in it, and have scattered or destroyed all the manuscripts and other papers I had been collecting for thirty years together, besides a great number of public papers in my custody.

Such is the resentment of the people against the Stamp-Duty, that there can be no dependence upon the General Court to take any steps to enforce... the payment of it. On the other hand, such will be the effects of not submitting to it, that all trade must cease, all courts fall, and all authority be at an end.

...On the one hand, it will be said, if concessions are made, the Parliament endanger the loss of their authority over the Colony: on the other hand, if external force should be used, there seems to be danger of a total lasting alienation of affection. Is there no alternative? May the infinitely wise God direct you...

Glossary:

fly – flee	custody - possession
quit – leave	resentment - anger
repented – changed her mind	submit – agree to
withdrew – left	concessions - compromise
retire – leave	external - outside
remote – far away	alienation – moving away
plate – expensive silverware	affection - friendship
apparel – clothing	alternative - choice
£900 sterling – about \$5000	infinitely – never ending

From a letter written by Thomas Hutchinson to Richard Jackson on 30 August, accessed on January 11, 2011 from <http://www.historyhome.co.uk/c-eight/america/bosriot.htm>