

INTRODUCTION.

During the period of nearly four years covered by these General Assembly records, relations between the Governor and the Upper House representing the Proprietary interest on the one hand, and the Lower House reflecting the feelings of the majority of the people on the other, continued to be under great strain. The struggle which began at the September–December 1757 session between the two houses over the passage of a Supply bill for His Majesty's Service, or Assessment bill as it was popularly called, which had been three times rejected by the Upper House in the preceding Assembly as a measure directed against the Proprietary prerogative, became intensified, and the bill, again passed five times by the Lower House in this new Assembly, was to be as often rejected in the upper chamber. Not only this bill, which was the most important legislation of a controversial character to be considered, failed of passage, but on the same ground, as threats to the Proprietary prerogative, other measures of a controversial nature were also rejected, such as the support for a provincial agent in Great Britain, the message of condolence to the King, the Naturalization bill, the printing of Bacon's Collection of Laws, the adoption of the Journal of Accounts, and various measures designed to simplify the administration of the law. All these questions, and other matters of especial interest, which came before the Assembly at these six sessions are discussed in some detail under their several headings in this introduction. It is to be noted that there is no direct reference in these proceedings to the long standing Maryland-Pennsylvania boundary dispute then in process of settlement. Indian affairs were also quiescent. The main events of the six sessions will first be summarized.

SESSION OF OCTOBER–NOVEMBER, 1758.

Governor Sharpe had suddenly on May 13, 1758, prorogued the session of the Assembly that had met on March 28, after the Lower House had refused to enact a Supply bill for His Majesty's Service which was satisfactory to the Upper House, with the announcement by the Governor that it would be called together again on June 26. But this Assembly, which had been elected in the autumn of 1757 and had held three fruitless sessions, was destined not to meet again, for after two further postponements, the Governor, convinced of the hopelessness of winning over a majority of the members to any method of taxation other than an income tax on earnings and an assessment on the value of estates, upon the advice of his Council on August 31, 1758, issued writs for the election of a new Assembly, although not over sanguine that the electorate would choose a Lower House that would be less difficult to handle. The first meeting of the new Assembly was held on October 23, 1758, and although the popular or anti-Proprietary majority was slightly reduced, it was able during a life of over three years to thwart the wishes of the Proprietary, the Governor,