UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

GEORGE III AND THE CIVIL LIST CONTROVERSY 1760-1782

BY

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Edmonton, Alberta

SPRING 1993

ISBN 0-315-82018-7

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: Janet Harvey

TITLE OF THESIS: George III and the Civil List Controversy 1760-1782

DEGREE: Master of Arts in History

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1993

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ABSTRACT

The eighteenth century in Britain witnessed a great number of political fluctuations and developments, most of which have been dealt with extensively and well-documented by historians. In their diligence in this area however, Hanoverian scholars have largely neglected a topic which holds the key to many insights into the worlds both of the politicians and of the monarch himself--the royal court.

The boundary between the realms of court and parliament was an extremely hazy one in this era, and the jurisdiction of one world often overlapped into that of the other. The Civil List, as a financial provision for both the personal needs of the monarch and for some of his political dealings, such as secret service and election funds, represented one example of such a crossover between the not so separate worlds of court and parliament. Control of the Civil List also represented a symbolic constitutional victory to both crown and parliament, another example of how the topic overlapped between court and politics in this period. The battle for control of the Civil List controversy came to a head between 1760 and 1782 in three different aspects. These issues not only demonstrate the importance of the Civil List as a topic but also attempt to reintroduce the royal court to the study of eighteenth century Britain.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many thanks to my family, friends, and fellow graduate students for their support and encouragement in the completion of this thesis. I would especially like to thank my supervisor, Professor Philip Lawson, for his insights and encouraging words, and for making the entire process very easy and enjoyable.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The [illegible]raphy of eighteenth century Britain demonstrates a consistent neglect of the role of the court in political life. "It is not clear," wrote Joanna Innes in 1991, "that we can properly understand the character of the political crises associated with the early years of George III's reign without a proper grasp of the role of the court as a political and social institution."[1] With this in mind, a study of the financial provision for the court--the Civil List--seems rather appropriate and represents something of an initial attempt to remedy this situation. The Civil List, from its fifteenth century origins through the adjustments in the era of the Glorious Revolution and reaching a climax with the push for economic reform in the eighteenth century, has remained a source of tension between crown and parliament. The fact that the controversy over royal income inhabits a narrow undefined area between the respective domains of crown and parliament makes it an ideal focus for a study which attempts to make some inroads into the largely unknown world of the Georgian court, and its place in the general course of eighteenth century British history.

The need for a financial provision for the royal court first became apparent with the rise of the king's household, a development which may be traced to the rule of the Plantagenets in the early fifteenth century. The 1430s and 40s saw a shift away from the warband style of royal household to an establishment with a more political role, a role for which the language of the 'court' was developed to accentuate.[2] The counting house headed by the cofferer was the centre of this early court, and was responsible for listings of the household's personnel and for inventories of its plate and jewels. In November 1447, the necessity for an appropriate financial provision for this new style of household was acknowledged when the Privy Council agreed that the household should have absolute priority over all other claims on the 'ordinary' revenues of the crown, stating "the king willing as well the estate and honour of his household to be performed and kept in all things as it ought as the good and sure contentation of his debts to his people."[3] While the Council accepted that precedence must be given to the support of the court, it did not prevent their feelings of foreboding that "importune labour and pursuit made unto the king", for which sake he would overrule the Exchequer, would undermine efforts to balance the claims on the revenues. These fears foreshadowed something of the difficulties to come in relation to support for the royal establishment.

Although the support of the king's household was acknowledged to be of primary importance, it did come to be somewhat restricted. After 1471 the accountants or auditors of the domus providencie saw to it that the household stayed within its pay-as-you-go cash boundaries.[4] Under Henry VIII this fund was split into two, with wages and other routine charges remaining with the Treasurer of the Privy Chamber and the King's personal and political expenditure being placed with the Privy Purse, an establishment which reached a peak in this period and was equal in status to the Treasury.[5] Where Henry VII's chamber finance had accumulated from the exploitation of crown lands, Henry VIII's Privy Purse had become a limited though substantial spending department which was dependent on windfalls and the liquidation of capital.[6]

By the reign of James I there was no doubt about the predominant position of the Privy Purse. Its scale had increased dramatically from the small spendings of Elizabeth and its control had slipped from the Secretary and Lord Treasurer, ceasing to even be subordinated to the Exchequer in 1605.[7] A system illustrating this preeminence was in place by 1610 in which the Exchequer constantly had to fend off the King's creditors while revenue from titles and sales of office went to the king's Privy Purse, now an independent treasury providing funds for, what a leading scholar on this topic termed the crown's "important services and urgent affairs."[8]

Under Charles I, administrative steps were taken to protect the reputation of the developing household institution. He became parsimonious in the realm of household expenditures to guard against problems of finance, corruption, and waste. Methods were employed in his court which he also used in the government of his kingdom, such as making household officers answerable for arrears arising in their departments and insisting that they keep efficient accounts. The king's attempts were not very successful but did demonstrate a desire to establish some efficiency and integrity in financial affairs at the court.[9] By 1660 however, the actual links between court and government were deteriorating as the establishment of boards and departments removed the government further from the household and ministers became accountable to parliament as well as to the king.[10]

This trend accelerated in the era of the Glorious Revolution as the idea of separating the king's person from his office came to the fore. In its wake also came the desire to curtail the monarch's power by limiting his revenue and his access to it. The House of Commons debates of 1688 demonstrate a concern over the absolute power the monarch could wield over his people through the employment of their own generously granted revenue. In the debate over whether King William should inherit the revenue of James II, Sir

Edward Seymour expressed the opinion that what was settled on the crown should support but not enable it to go to excess:

> We may date our misery from our bounty here. If king Charles 2 had not had that bounty from you, he had never attempted what he had done. In his time it was only, ask and have, carried on to that attempt as to hazard our ruin.[11]

Colonel Birch's solution was to grant the prince's revenue over a shorter period of time such that he would have to depend on the good will of his people to have the grant renewed.[12] Sir William Williams made another case for granting a smaller, periodically renewable sum to the king by arguing that if the crown were given too little money, it could be added to at any time but give it too much once and it could never be recovered.[13]

Comments such as these illustrated a new more cautious attitude of the MPs towards their king and to the revenue they would grant him. In the past the king had always retained a large revenue which was, nevertheless, seldom equal to the expenses of the court, thus forcing him to solicit his people for more, in return for which he would grant redress of their grievances. In the years preceding the Glorious Revolution however, this bargain had not been kept--the concerns of the king's subjects had remained unanswered and their influence diminished while the king took advantage of their generosity. A reformation of the revenue thus seemed to be the solution and the granting of a fund subject to periodic expirations, the means to reestablish the sovereign's dependence on the

good will of his people. To achieve this end, it was necessary that the revenue be granted anew rather than inherited from James II. In this way it would revert to the House of Commons, which could then regulate it and bestow it "with respect to quantity and duration, as the circumstances and interests of the nation required."[14] The constitutional changes made after the Revolution in terms of the state and management of the public revenue thus forced the king to depend on the grant of parliament rather than his royal prerogative for the crown dues-- a subjection which truly appalled King William. The independent financial position of the crown was somewhat preserved however, by granting the sum for life at the beginning of each reign, after which it was completely beyond parliamentary control.[15]

The Civil List as it was understood in the eighteenth century, had its birth with the Civil List Act of 1697-8-- another fruit of the Revolution. This legislation divided public finance between parliament, which would control the armed forces and the debt, and the crown, which received Civil List revenues equal to 700 000 pounds per annum for the royal establishment and civil government.[16] The necessity of resolving this prolonged conflict between crown and parliament for financial control had been expressed in earlier debates as well. Until the Revolution there had been no difference between what was assigned to support the royal household and what was appropriated for public service. As Mr. Finch stated

in 1689 "the law allows no distinction of capacity in the king, as [to] his political and natural capacity."[17] In 1690, Sir Robert Cotton demanded that parliament settle a fund on the king distinguishable from the hereditary revenue, which, according to the North Briton, at that time included the support of the queen's court, the royal mistresses, the royal progeny, the army and navy, and a sum to bribe the majority in both houses.[18] This lack of distinction between public and private use allowed the king to reserve as much as he liked for his own purposes and no more than he thought proper for the nation; an arrangement which resulted in constant embezzlement under Charles II and James II.[19] To solve these problems it was thus decided that the crown would be granted a Civil List to cover all expenses of civil government in return for which parliament would take over the expenses of the army, navy, and ordnance.

Although the separation of the Civil List from the extraordinary government demands and its reversion to parliamentary control at the beginning of each reign seriously impaired the independence of the crown, the king nevertheless retained a great deal of financial power. The amount of the Civil List was indeed fixed at the beginning of each reign through a type of parliamentary bargaining but this timing actually worked to the crown's advantage, as the MPs would still be trying to ingratiate themselves with the new sovereign at this point while also distracted by their

election preparations.[20] After this initial granting process, the Civil List was regarded as entirely the property of the crown and the civil service as the king's civil service.[21] The king could create, determine, limit, or dismantle any of the Civil List establishments and could increase or decrease the number or status of any of the heads of Civil List expenditure at his own discretion.[22] The various establishments were beyond the power of the Treasury and the cofferer of the household, in turn, was responsible only to the king in his expenditure and the keeping of his accounts. One illustration of the crown's absolute power over Civil List expenditure was the result of the appointment of a secret committee in 1741 to investigate Robert Walpole's administration during the reign of George II. The king refused to allow the details of his secret service expenditure (which came out of the Civil List) to be revealed, stating that it was his right to employ those revenues as he wished up to the limit of his granted income.[23] The committee could not challenge this claim and the entire inquiry fell through.[24] In another instance George II took it upon himself to pay the establishment of servants and pensions of his late queen, as well as of her household at Richmond Lodge, from his Civil List revenues, acting on his own will and entirely without the approval of the Treasury.[25]

This latter example reflects the court aspect of Civil List expenditure. Court expenses included allowances to the royal family, the king's Privy Purse, the salaries and

maintenance of the courtiers, and the maintenance of royal palaces and parks. These allowances were no mere pleasantry or formality to conciliate the crown however. Maintenance of the king and his household in a manner befitting his position was a serious matter to both crown and parliament as evidenced in the seminal revenue debates of 1688-9. Mr. Love for example, urged the Commons to "consent to such a Revenue as may make the king great to all the world," demonstrating the desire to grant the court the means to shine before all of Europe in its splendour.[26] Sir Francis Drake also commented on the need for a generous revenue using the phrases, "the honour of the nation" and "what is necessary to support the honour and dignity of the crown," the latter of which was to become a catch phrase in the struggle between crown independence and parliamentary supremacy.[27]

There was, of course, further evolution to the Civil List after the post-Revolution changes. During the reign of William III, Civil List income was equal to approximately 700 000 pounds per annum and any surpluses were appropriated by parliament. Under Queen Anne however, Civil List revenue was much less than 700 000 and a loan of 500 000 pounds became necessary to pay debts. When George I succeeded to the throne, parliament made up the deficiency to give him a guaranteed 700 000 per annum, providing that any surplus of the hereditary revenues from the customs and post office went to the public. In 1727, due to the skilful bargaining of

Robert Walpole, George II obtained a very generous Civil List equal to the full sum of the hereditary revenues (approximately 800 000 pounds per annum), along with the promise not only that parliament would make up any deficiencies but also that the king could keep any surpluses. This Civil List, which amounted to 876 988 pounds in the last year of George II's reign, grew in relation to the prosperity of the nation and by maintaining this ratio helped preserve the independence of the crown from parliamentary control.[28] Frederick, Prince of Wales, in an attack on his father's ministry, promised to accept a Civil List of no more than 800 000 pound per annum when he succeeded to the throne, a pledge which George III fulfilled upon his own succession.[29] This was an extremely bad bargain on the part of the king, as it caused him to relinquish the surplus of the hereditary revenues in a misguided spirit of loyalty to what was, most likely, a purely political move by his late father to win supporters.

The eighteenth century Civil List accumulated from several sources to cover a wide variety of expenses. The Civil List of England and Wales was the main source of income for the Crown as the separate civil lists of Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, as well as the Hanoverian revenues were employed in the areas in which they were raised.[30] Thus, it was the Civil List of England and Wales, bolstered by incomes from the Duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall, which provided for the expenses of the royal

household and the civil establishment. The latter was the greater part of the expenditure and included the salaries of ministers, civil servants, ambassadors, judges, and all other government servants; pensions and allowances, charities, the maintenance of buildings, and secret service disbursements. More specifically there were seventeen branches of the civil administration which were supported by the Civil List: 1) the cofferer of the household 2) the treasurer of the chamber 3) the wardrobe 4) the robes 5) the works 6) the royal stables 7) foreign ministers (i.e. the entire ambassadorial service) 8) fees and salaries payable at the Exchequer (including salaries of the Secretaries of State and their officers, ordinaries and extraordinaries of ambassadors, and salaries of all levels of Treasury and Exchequer officials such as Customs, Excise, landtax, house duties, post office, judges, and also the Lord High Treasurer and the Chancellor of the Exchequer) 9) pensions and annuities as well as the royal bounty payable to the French Protestants 10) petty bounties 11) the establishments of the Duke of Cumberland, the Prince of Wales, and the other royal children 12) the gentlemen pensioners 13) secret service of the Secretaries of State and the Secretary of the Treasury 14) the Privy Purse 15) the purchase of crown jewels 16) royal gifts of plate and 17) contingencies.[31]

The Privy Purse was exempt from providing capital for political purposes and remained a fund purely for the king's personal needs until 1777 when George III decided to relegate

12 000 pounds per annum from it for elections, a sum which did not actually subtract from the Privy Purse allowance but rather was added to the 48 000 previously designated for it.[32] In the mid- eighteenth century then, government funds for political purposes came from four sources: 1) the Civil List, which provided for the secret service, pensions, and the Privy Purse 2) the crown's hereditary revenues from the excise and post office, and the duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall (all of which no longer contributed to the Civil List after 1760 when George III gave up his rights to them and accepted a lump sum instead), fines from the alienation and wine offices, four and a half percent duties in the Leeward Islands and Barbados, and the various quit-rents and forfeitures in both Britain and the colonies 3) the pension list of Ireland and 4) the pension list and annual surplus of the Scottish government.[33]

The Civil List difficulties which George III experienced between 1760 and 1782 were thus the product of over one hundred years of dispute and alterations regarding financial control. The questions arise however, of why this aged and persistent controversy came to such a climax in this period and why the Civil List rather than other seemingly more serious contemporary issues became such a target for opposition criticism and a source of public concern? These are questions which will be dealt with in the following pages through the examination of three distinct issues within this controversy: the misuse and abuses relating to the Civil List;

the constitutional struggle for which the Civil List became a focal point, and the manner in which the public became involved with the macro-economic concerns which the controversy raised.

Endnotes

1. Joanna Innes, "Representative Histories: Recent Studies of Popular Politics and Political Culture in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century England," Journal of Historical Sociology 4.2 (1991), p. 205.

2. D.A.L. Morgan, "The House of Policy: the Political Role of the late Plantagenet Household, 1422-1485," The English Court, ed. David Starkey, (London: Longman, 1987) p. 35.

3. memorandum of 28 November 1447, with the king's sign-manual as cited in Morgan p. 44.

4. Morgan p. 59.

5. David Starkey, "Intimacy and Innovation: the Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547," The English Court, p. 95.

6. St[illegible] 96.

7. Ne[illegible]day, "The Revival of the Entourage: the Bedchamber of James I, [illegible]03-1625," The English Court, p. 200.

8. Cuddy p. 201.

9. Kevin Sharpe, "The Image of Virtue: the Court and Household of Charles I, 1625-1642," The English Court, p. 237.

10. Sharpe p. 260.

11. Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803 V (London: T.C. Hansard, 1814) col. 147.

12. Parliamentary History V, col. 143.

13. Parliamentary History V, col. 191.

14. Parliamentary History V, col. 151 (note).

15. Parliamentary History V, col. 149-152 (note); Dora Mae Clark, The Rise of the Treasury: Colonial Administration in the Eighteenth Century, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960) p. 23; E.A. Reitan, "The Civil List in Eighteenth-Century British Politics: Parliamentary Supremacy versus the Independence of the Crown," Historical Journal IX, 3 (1966): p. 319.

16. Reitan p. 318.

17. Parliamentary History V, col. 149.

18. Parliamentary History V, col. 553; North Briton XCV, 11 March 1769.

19. North Briton XCV, 11 March 1769.

20. Reitan p. 321.

21. Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers V, 1741, p. xxix.

22. Calendar V, p. xli & xlii.

23. According to A.S. Foord, disbursement for secret service was divided among the two secretaries of state, ostensibly for political purposes, with another portion to the secretaries of the treasury to maintain ministerial majorities. Under the first two Georges another part was given to the disburser of 'the king's money' for charity, spies, and the government press. A.S. Foord, "The Waning of the Influence of the Crown," English Historical Review (1947), p. 489.

24. Calendar V, p. xliii, xlliv, xl.

25. Calendar V, p. xliv.

26. Parliamentary History V, col. 146.

27. Parliamentary History V, col. 147.

28. Reitan p. 320.

29. The History, Debates, and Proceedings of Both Houses of Parliament of Great Britain from the Year 1743 to the Year 1774 Volume III (London: Printed for J. Debrett, 1792) p. 455.

30. John Brooke, King George III, (London: Constable & Company, Ltd., 1972) p. 206.

31. Calendar V, P. xl, xli.

32. Foord p. 490; This allocation for elections led to some serious difficulties between North and George III beteen 1780 and 1784 when the King refused to take responsibility for the election debt North had accumulated in his service.

33. Foord p. 490-491.

Chapter 2

Misuse, Abuse, Corruption, and the Civil List Debate

Between 1760 and 1782 the Civil List became a symbol of corruption to opposition MPs and a focal point both to their criticism of the king's ministry and in their own campaign for office. The abuse and misapplication of this revenue seemed to come to a head in this period, spurring the Rockingham Whigs to cry out for reform and to use the Civil List as a weapon against the administration. The following pages will define Civil List corruption as the opposition saw it, describe how it became such a cause for concern, and examine the Rockinghams' involvement with Civil List reform.

One of the factors which made the Civil List such an increasing cause for concern in this period as compared to the hundred years preceding it was an escalation of simple suspicion and paranoia on the part of opposition MPs. In 1769 George III made his first application to parliament in relation to the Civil List, requesting payment for the debt of 513 000 pounds which had been accumulated on the grant for the following year. The question on everyone's mind in the Commons was how such a debt had been incurred by a king so economically minded that he was called mean, overseeing a court reputed to be the dullest in Europe. It was said that

no meals were served at the palace for anyone but their Majesties, the maids of honour, and the chaplains, and these repasts were very plain and sparse. Cabinet ministers who had to attend the king were forced to sup at a nearby inn and the aristocracy had begun to avoid the court as much as possible.[1] Horace Walpole provided an explanation for this apparent discrepancy however, which voiced the opinion of many:

> Even the King's virtues had a mischivous tendency...His economy, such as it was, for great sums he wasted childishly, was the forced result of the expense he was at to corrupt the Parliament, and maintain a very unwilling majority.[2]

More specifically, it was assumed that the debt had arisen from patronage appointments made to buy the votes necessary for this majority. As it was expressed in the Middlesex Journal, corrupt measures were expensive--the instruments of oppression had to be bought and kept in order as "the price of faithfulness is seldom included in the sale of honour."[3] Parliamentarians however, were initially not quite so eager to voice such serious allegations and in 1770 the most stringent opposition criticism amounted merely to Grenville's warning that if the Civil List monies were misapplied, maintaining the dignity of the crown would be difficult. The whole edifice would be besieged with parasites ready to subvert the freedom of the people. Colonel Barre meanwhile, went so far as to express the suspicion that much of the revenue was spent debauching the House of Commons, but

protected his own interests by crediting these concerns to "the people!"[4]

By 1777 however, when the king made a similar application to parliament, this time with a request for an increase of the Civil List to 900 000 per year, opposition members were far less reluctant to express their concerns. John Wilkes wondered:

> Is the nature of the Civil List in the body politic analagous to what lord Bacon says of the spleen, that it increases in proportion to the waste, decay, and rapid consumption of the human body?

and finished by demanding whether or not the crown had purchased a majority in the Commons with its Civil List money.[5] Governor Johnstone contributed to this condemnation by hinting that Lord North, the Prime Minister, was fully aware of the effect an additional 100 000 to the Civil List would have on "the understandings of some idle or sceptical members; and how effectually it would serve to oil the wheels of government, now and then apt to run heavy."[6] Nevertheless members could only go so far in making accusations against the crown for fear of appearing disloyal to the king. Later in the same session, for example, Alderman Sawbridge declared outright that the Civil List debt had been accumulated in corrupting both houses of parliament. The pronouncement caused the Commons to erupt in chaos with some calling to order, others to take down his words, and still others to hear him.[7]

Much of the suspicion of misuse of the Civil List on the part of the opposition members arose from the fact that there was no clear distinction at this time between public property and the private property of the king, thus making it possible for the ministry to employ monies from the Civil List for political purposes. One example of this public/private ambiguity was the secret service fund, which the ministry did not have to account for due to this lack of distinction. This fund included a portion of money divided between the two secretaries of state for what may have been political purposes, with another part going to the secretaries of the treasury, who put some of it towards maintaining ministerial majorities. Other charges included bribing foreign politicians, paying for spies, and deciphering diplomatic correspondence.[8] In addition, government funds subsidized the ministerial press, purchased closed boroughs, and provided for such electioneering devices as parades, free beer for electors, and the patronising of local tradesmen.[9] Many of these practices were accepted as legitimate in the eighteenth century but the very confidential nature of the disbursements led to public conjecture that the secret service fund was entirely spent in "the sordid amassment of royal avarice" including bribery, persecution, the alteration of records, the subversion of freedom, and the obtaining of a majority to maintain "the mandates of tyranny."[10]

Since public speculation was giving rise to such dissatisfaction over the Civil List expenditure, the answer seemed to be to initiate a public inquiry as to what had caused the debt. The Earl of Chatham declared in 1770 that such an investigation was proper before paying a debt of this size for, as he put it, in words borrowed from Robert Walpole, "those who gave the means of corruption gave corruption" and to refuse such an inquiry would convince the people that "we are governed by a set of Abjects."[11] Other voices were added to this cry--the North Briton stated that the debt on the Civil List could not be revealed as it would disgrace those who contracted it and hinted at similarities to the embezzlement which had occurred under Charles II and James II.[12] In the Commons, Sir George Savile argued that if debts were contracted without proper examination, an arbitrary and unlimited revenue could be established at the will of the prince, providing an inexhaustible source for an evil minister. He went on to state that the people should know how the monies were laid out lest they were employed in the destruction of liberties and the subversion of the constitution.[13] In this critical manner parliamentarians began to convince themselves of the necessity of having proper accounts of Civil List expenditure.

Naturally the opposition's suspicion regarding this expenditure was aimed at the king's ministry. The requested increase to the Civil List seemed destined for sinister

purposes. Here was a fund for the ministry to draw on in order to increase the influence of the crown by providing it with an even larger source for its 'corrupt' politics. In the North Briton it was actually predicted eight years before the requested increase in 1777 that the king's ministers were hatching clandestine schemes to make the crown revenue larger by first purposely running it into arrears and then demanding an enlargement.[14] This accusation was further reinforced when the same source later pointed out that the ministry had paid the arrears in 1770 without inquiring how they had been contracted and with as much alacrity as if they had shared the money among themselves, which the paper went on to say, the Lord Mayor actually believed.[15] It was this type of allegation which led Chatham to assert that the king's minister was actually culpable for arrears and unique expense on the Civil List; a statement which may have been somewhat premature in 1770 but which foreshadowed some impending changes in the matter of ministerial responsibility.[16]

Another factor relating to the Civil List which caused debate in this period and has done so since was the matter of crown patronage. David Hume wrote in 1741:

> The crown has so many offices at its disposal that, when assisted by the honest and disinterested part of the house, it will always command the resolutions of the whole...we may call it by the invidious appellations of 'corruption' and 'dependence'; but some degree and some kind of it are inseparable from the very nature of the constitution, and necessary to the preservation of our mixed government.[17]

A.S. Foord, in a more contemporary analysis, isolated patronage along with money, honours, and 'imperceptible influence' as the resources of crown influence in the eighteenth century-- a fact recognised by the likes of Edmund Burke, John Dunning, and Charles James Fox, who equated all patronage with political influence.[18] Fox argued that because there had been an increase in patronage in general, there had also been a strengthening of the influence of the crown. The uncontrolled expenditure of the Civil List represented an almost endless fountain of patronage benefits and the essence of this royal influence which Hume, and many after him, believed necessary for the effective control of executive power. Others, however, were increasingly denouncing this same influence as corrupting to the independence of parliament and thus in need of reduction.[19] Fox, for example, stated that the American War had led to an increase in armed forces patronage by providing the king with a new and plentiful source of appointments, and therefore that patronage which came from the Civil List must be decreased.[20]

Placemen and sinecures were perhaps the most detectable form of patronage supplied by the Civil List. As Ian Christie points out however, the number of these placemen in the Commons was not on the increase as the opposition believed in 1780, but actually peaked in 1761 due to the merging of the courts of George II and the new king and, even more so, because of the attempts of the Duke of Newcastle to find

places for all of his supporters.[21] In 1762 the 'Massacre of the Pelhamite Innocents' destroyed much of this connection as George III dismissed many of Newcastle's followers, attempting to retain only the competent administrators--a sign of the emerging compromise between political patronage and administrative efficiency.[22] Other reasons for the faltering numbers of placemen included Newcastle's retirement, the king's concern for economy in his household appointments, and his refusal to remove old servants such as lords and grooms of the bedchamber when they lost their place in the Commons. All of these forces contributed to the levelling off of the number of sinecures after 1770.[23] Horace Walpole may have been convinced that "from Lord North's entrance into power, the Court found all their facilities of governing by corruption and influence return" but in reality his administration was characterized by a more cautious approach to patronage.[24] Dora Mae Clark argues that North's years in power demonstrated a "high degree of professionalism in political management" with both Grafton and North displaying a certain reluctance to indulge too freely in the appointment of relations or in buying offices.[25] Clark's statement represents a reasonable and fair summary of the events from the available evidence.

The royal household itself was also a bountiful source of patronage. G.R. Elton wrote in his seminal article on the Tudor court that the household provided the largest single establishment of salaried and fee-earning posts in the realm

and therefore was the most concentrated area for seekers of patronage.[26] In 1780, in the presentation of his plan for the reform of the civil establishment, Burke explained the tradition of aristocracy in positions of servitude to the king. He claimed that the royal household had been formed on feudal principles for reason of protection such that even the lowest offices were held by persons of high rank, unsuited as they might be for that position.[27] By 1782 this source of patronage had almost been removed from the king's hands altogether, as an increasing portion of his household had been converted into a set of offices for rewarding political supporters. Even outwardly frivolous posts such as the Lord Steward and the Master of the Buckhounds ceased to be appointments for the king.[28] This trend seemed to confirm to the opposition that the debt on the Civil List was at least partly due to an increasing number of salaries going into the pockets of political placemen in the household.

The Treasury was another important source of patronage to reward political supporters, both in terms of the patronage control and the potential for sinecures within the department itself. Robert Walpole was the first head of the Treasury to use his patronage powers to full advantage, ignoring the question of qualification and training in bestowing honours, pensions, and places.[29] Newcastle assumed even more extensive powers of nomination when he became First Lord of the Treasury, and his over-riding concern with political patronage

threatened the permanent tenure of his personnel, led to an increase in sinecures, and the retention in office of men unfit for their positions, yet caused no expansion in Civil List expenditure. In 1763 Grenville asserted his right to all patronage in order to sustain his leadership in the House of Commons, obtaining it with the help of George III. In consequence, the Treasury became recognised as the main dispenser of the places necessary for management of parliament. Ultimately however, the king remained the chief limitation on the First Lord's bestowal of places, a fact which played a crucial role in Grenville's dismissal of July 1765.[30]

While the Treasury retained control over patronage in all areas of government, positions within the Revenue itself became some of the most lucrative and sought after. Provision was made in this department, not only for the ministry's political supporters but also for members of the political nation who were in need.[31] Several revenue commissioners were royal servants or sons of peers such that the aristocracy and the king himself had personal interests within the department. The more important professional civil officials received places on the revenue boards as profitable retirement pensions, with the Customs and Excise boards being the best paid and therefore attracting men of more social and political standing.

A final brand of crown patronage which drew on the Civil List was the granting of pensions, another area which opposition members believed had caused undue strain on the crown revenues. Pensions were monetary rewards usually given to court officers or ministers who represented a need upon their retirement, or to their widows upon their deaths, but were also often given to literary figures and officers of some standing still in public service.[32] The pension list usually contained at least a few members of parliament, leading the opposition to the assumption that all such pensioners were in receipt of payment for their votes. The acceptance of a pension came to represent a public acknowledgement of subservience to the government with the result that real merit could not be rewarded at all without attaching stigma to the person honoured.[33] The enormous public outcry in 1761 over the granting even of such a well-deserved reward as Pitt's three thousand pounds and the peerage for his wife, provides one illustration of this paranoia. An even more extreme example of this negative public reaction can be found in the memoirs of a certain Mrs. Delany who, in 1785 was given a house and the means to maintain it by the king, and to whom the money was delivered in a pocket book by the Queen to prevent the appearance of a pension.[34]

The above mentioned means of uniting members of parliament with the crown through ties of loyalty and finance and inducing them to vote with the government were not as

widespread as the Rockingham opposition group believed. According to Ian Christie, the temptation to be too cynical about the motives of eighteenth century politicians should be avoided. The crown did not make full use of it patronage powers or owe its majorities simply to such placemen. While some members were undoubtedly motivated by their pockets, personal desires and incentives such as ambition, an eagerness to serve in public affairs, political attachments and aversions, and actual support for certain policies were all important factors producing North's majorities.[35] As already discussed, the numbers of placemen, pensioners, and office holders in general had actually fallen since the accession of George III.

Since Civil List abuses such as patronage were apparently not as rampant as Rockingham and his followers believed, it would appear necessary to examine their involvement with the issue and their own motives for promoting it. Opposition concern with the Civil List dated to the early part of George II's reign and came to be a standard issue for opposition groups to unite on. In that period, William Pulteney (later Lord Bath) had attacked the Civil List as a dangerous source of power which could be employed "no man knows how." It was just this "'pecuniary influence'" and not the royal prerogative which the opposition truly feared and which made the Civil List a persistent opposition issue throughout the eighteenth century.[36] The Prince of Wales often found himself

in the middle of this dispute as the figure around whom opposition groups would ccalesce in order to seek favour and make connections for the next reign. His association with the opposition and the Hanoverian tradition of hostile father-son relationships usually resulted in the Prince of Wales' support for all opposition criticism of his father's government. Yet the Civil List was a very delicate subject for him as a large Civil List would be in his own best interests both as Prince and upon his own succession.[37] George III, although he did not actually enter into the dispute himself as Prince of Wales, was, nevertheless, the only eighteenth century monarch to bear the consequences of this opposition tactic when he chose to honour the promise his father had made and accept a fixed Civil List.

The potential for the Civil List to be exploited as an opposition issue greatly expanded in 1769 when the ministry was forced to apply to parliament to pay the debts on the revenue. Members of the various opposition alignments spoke up in the Commons, demanding accounts of the expenditure and making accusations about how the debt had been contracted. In 1770, Edmund Burke's Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents expressed what had become the position of the Rockinghams-- that with the payment of the Civil List debt without account, the perfect weapon had been found for the crown to maintain a corrupt control over parliament:

> Thus they [the ministers] established an arbitrary standard for that dignity which parliament had

> defined and limited to a legal standard. They gave themselves, under the lax and indeterminate idea of the honour of the crown, a full loose for all manner of dissipation, and all manner of corruption.[38]

This may have been an issue which the Rockinghams had championed but it also represented a collective concern which the Grenville and Chatham opposition groups could unite with them on. When in 1777 the issue proved enduring with the application for a Civil List increase, it meant that the opposition had found a popular issue with "power to inflame sentiment within and without Parliament."[39]

The appeal of this issue out of doors was apparent with the involvement of the Reverend Christopher Wyvill in what came to be known as economical reform. In November 1779, Wyvill initiated a large-scale intervention of public opinion into politics by circulating a letter to the Yorkshire gentry proposing a county meeting to petition the House of Commons.[40] His aim was to petition for an inquiry into the Civil List, leading eventually to the abolition of all sinecures, exorbitant salaries for efficient places, and pensions undeserved by public service. Wyvill saw the movement he began to effect for economical reform as a first step towards reducing the corrupt element of crown influence in the House of Commons but to him the elimination of placemen and the reduction of sinecures was not drastic enough. He hoped that reducing this opportunity for corruption would open the way

for more radical reforms, ultimately shortening the length of parliaments and increasing county representation.[41]

Rockingham meanwhile, was quick to capitalize on this public involvement and on December 7, 1779 attacked the Civil List in the Lords as a source of corruption, supported by Richmond and Shelburne, with Burke's voice added later in the Commons.[42] Rockingham used his racing connections and his standing in the 'horsey set' to further promote the petitioning movement at race meetings but made little progress. By 1780 he and his followers had become disenchanted with Wyvill's more radical objectives and settled on economical reform as a sufficient goal and an alternative to parliamentary reform.[43] Shelburne later recommended dealing with public expenditure in a broader manner but was overruled by a group of Whigs who had become focused, even obsessed, with the Civil List to the exclusion of all the larger parts of the revenues.[44]

An official launching of the Rockinghams' opposition campaign for economical reform came with the introduction of Burke's establishment bill on February 11, 1780. Burke began by dismissing the points of the Yorkshire petition, stating that an examination of existing pensions was impracticable and proposing instead to limit the annual fund for pensions, protect its use with various oaths and safeguards, and grant no further pensions until the expenditure had been reduced to a set limit.[45] The plan itself had two main purposes: to save

money by curtailing useless offices in the king's Civil List and other departments, and to provide against the revenues voted for the provision of the king and his family being diverted to the corrupting of parliament. Of these, it was the latter which Burke acknowledged as his foremost concern.[46] He identified seven fundamental goals in his plan: 1) that all jurisdictions furnishing more expense and means of corruption than advantage be abolished 2) that all public estates of little benefit to the revenue be disposed of 3) that all offices bringing more charge than benefit to the state be abolished and all which may be engrafted upon others to simplify duties be consolidated 4) that all offices which obstruct the general superintendent of finance be abolished 5) that an order be established in which to make payments according to the rank of their utility 6) that every establishment be reduced to preserve good management and 7) that all subordinate treasuries be dissolved.[47] Burke claimed that at least half of the royal household establishment was retained for nothing more than influence and he therefore recommended that a great many offices be abolished--the Treasurer, the Comptroller, the Cofferer of the Household, the Treasurer of the Chamber, the Master of the Household, the Board of Green Cloth, many subordinates to the Steward of the Household, the Great Wardrobe, the Removing Wardrobe, the Jewel Office, the Robes, the Board of Works, the Board of Ordnance, and the Keepers of the various Hounds. The only two

state offices which he wished to reform were the Third Secretary of State and the Board of Trade.[48]

To guard against the accumulation of Civil List debt Burke suggested division of Civil List payment into nine classes according to the importance of their demand, with the salaries of the Treasury commissioners to be paid last so that if expenditure exceeded income these officers would be forced to come to parliament immediately in order to obtain their own salaries.[49] Ultimately however, Burke's proposals must have been too radical for the majority of MPs as the clauses to abolish the offices of the Treasurer of the Chamber, the Board of Green Cloth, and the Cofferer of the Household were rejected in March of 1780. The remainder of the bill was defeated bit by bit at the end of the session, and reintroduced unsuccessfully in 1781.[50]

In 1782 with the fall of the North ministry the path was almost clear for the Rockinghams to seize power. Surprisingly, one of the main obstacles was Burke's Civil Establishment Bill, which Adam, Dundas and the majority of the independent members had found too radical and unjust to the crown to support.[51] Rockingham refused to back down from the economical reform creed however, stipulating the acceptance of Burke's bill as one of the conditions of his taking office. He was prepared to make concessions but that was all. The act which was eventually passed greatly moderated the reforms of 1780 and abolished only those offices which could be used to

serve the interests of the ministry. These included the offices of the Third Secretary of State (the Colonial Secretary), the Board of Trade, the Lords of Police in Scotland, the Board of Works, the Great Wardrobe, the Jewel Office, the Treasurer of the Chamber, the Cofferer of the Household, the Board of Green Cloth, the Paymaster of the Pensions, and all but one Master of the Hounds--one hundred and thirty-four offices in household and ministry in total. The pension list was limited to 90 000 pounds rather than the 60 000 per annum suggested by Burke and had to be paid publicly at the Exchequer. The payments schedule was introduced but with payment of the royal family first instead of fifth. These modifications represented a large concession to the privacy and dignity of the king as well as a self-protective ministerial retreat on the part of the Rockinghams from the more radical measures of what had been an opposition bill in 1780.

The Rockingham programme of economical reform was completed in 1782 by two other pieces of legislation, both of which also aimed principally at reducing the influence of the crown. Crewe's Act disqualified revenue officers (primarily in the Customs and Excise) from voting in parliamentary elections on the assumption that a large proportion of these office holders were placemen and would vote as the ministry desired. This was the only measure directed against the influence of the crown 'out of doors' and had a longer history

than the other aspects of economical reform as suspicion of revenue officers was quite a tradition in Britain.[52] Clerke's Act prevented government contractors from sitting in the House of Commons so that merchants connected to the ministry by business ties could not add to the influence of the crown by voting as their client wished. Both measures proved relatively unsuccessful and ill-conceived. Crewe's Act had little effect except in those boroughs where a large proportion of the electorate held revenue officers and the Rockinghams' calculations of the number of officers who would be affected proved enormously overestimated.[53] Clerke's Act meanwhile was even less effectual and justified as the number of merchants connected by business ties to the ministry in 1780 was already much reduced from what it had been in Newcastle's time.[54]

All told, economical reform did not achieve the objectives of the Rockinghams. According to D.L. Keir, the Civil Establishment Act abolished some offices unwisely and was wholly unsuccessful in preventing the accumulation of debts on the Civil List, one of the bill's original main objectives.[55] The act did manage to deplete several sources of political funds however. It successfully limited Civil List payments to 10 000 pounds per annum for home secret service and special service, ordering that accounts of this expenditure be kept and presented to parliament if required. The clauses requiring the pension list be presented to

parliament annually and the pensions themselves to be paid publicly at the exchequer were likewise successful in preventing pensioners from sitting in the House of Commons.[56] Overall, Burke's act left Civil List abuses largely undisturbed and was more important for its constitutional effects in view of policy and precedent. Burke had wished to eliminate 'corrupt' parliamentary influence but leave the constitutional form intact by allowing the Civil List to remain largely independent of parliament. In reality, the debate and controversy surrounding the act firmly established the right of parliament to inquire into the Civil List when the Commons agreed without a division to Mr. Dunning's motion

> that it is competent to this House to examine into, and to correct abuses in the expenditure of the civil list revenues, as well as in every other branch of the public revenue, whenever it shall seem expedient to the wisdom of this House so to do.[57]

This resolution removed an important aspect of the independence of the crown and led to a division of its finance from that of government. The reform represented a visible distinction which actually freed George III somewhat from suspicion of political corruption such that his personal image and authority improved from the 1780s onward.[58]

This type of effect was more of a gradual consequence than a direct and immediate result of the Rockingham economical reform programme. A.S. Foord argues that the destruction of the influence of the crown ocurred in the fifty odd years following the economical reform measures of 1782.

In this period, he points out, the granting of offices in reversion was eliminated, the monetary influence of the crown used to maintain ministerial majorities was destroyed, and administrative modifications and legislation chipped away at the patronage system, all of which helped open the way for the development of the cabinet and the modern two-party system.[59] This view has been revised of late however, for most long term reforms in this period came not from the opposition Whigs but from officials within the administration. It was this group that looked beyond the theoretical, narrow Whig principles to the more practical task of instituting a reform that would alter and improve the relationship between the executive and legislative bodies of the constitution.[60]

In view of this impression of the Whigs as idealists, it is worth examining some of their own track record while in office to determine just how committed they were to the reform principles they championed. Rockingham himself, it is interesting to note, left more responsibility to his commissioners while in charge of the Treasury in 1765-66 than had his predecessor. The only exception came in matters of patronage, in which he required weekly lists of vacancies, no doubt in order to fill them immediately with whomever would benefit him the most.[61] In addition, Rockingham's great love of horse racing and his affinity with the racing world led him to turn down Newcastle's requests for places for friends if the competitors were horsemen.[62] Other Whigs provided an

equally uninspiring example upon taking office after the reforms of 1782, as Keir points out.[63] Fox was the supporter of sinecures (with which Burke also agreed) and of large blocks of land remaining under the control of the paymasters. Burke was guilty of changing the terms of the bill of 1783 without authorization and newly regulating his own office. He later claimed that with the Duke of Richmond in charge of the Ordnance office, reform was no longer needed in that department. Dunning meanwhile was the beneficiary of the resurrection of the Duchy of Lancaster which had been condemned in 1780 and of which he was made chancellor in 1782. Barre, as Treasurer of the Navy, also turned his back on the Whig platform by protecting that department from the threat of reform. Such examples not only emphasize the Rockinghams' retreat from their previous ideals but also suggest that the entire economical reform programme may have been less idealistic than part of a self-interested plan to help them obtain power.

Civil List 'corruption' was thus a complicated matter and a perpetual matter for opposition concern throughout the century. A perceived increase in this period in the use of the revenue to expand the influence of the crown, as well as the simple luck of finding such an opportune issue, help explain why the opposition became so focused on it in these years, but not necessarily why it became such a contentious issue. The fact that the realities of Civil List employment

and expenditure were the exact opposite of the claims made by the opposition requires further examination in terms of the context and mentality of this period. The key to this question lies partially in the constitutional struggle which arose over the matter, and will be addressed in the next chapter.

Endnotes

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4. Parliamentary History XVI, col. 843, 848.

5. Parliamentary History XIX, col. 111, 115.

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8. A.S. Foord, "The Waning ofthe Influence of the Crown," English Historical Review (1949) p. 489.

9. Foord p. 489.

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12. North Briton XCV, 11 March 1769.

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29. The following passage is indebted tothe research of Clark pp 60, 85-114, 148.

30. W.R. Ward, "Some Eighteenth Century Civil Servants: the English Revenue Commissioners, 1749-98," English Historical Review 70 (1955) p. 29.

31. This passage is indebted to the research of Ward p. 27-29.

32. Parliamentary History XIX, 118-120; XXI, 85.

33. Alice Drayton Greenwood, Horace Walpole's World, a Sketch of Whig Society Under George III, (London: G. Bell, 1913) p. 118.

34. The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany, edited by the Right Honourable Lady Llanover, vol. III, (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1862) p. 273.

35. Ian R. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform: the Parliamentary Reform Movementin British Politics, 1760-1785, (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1962) p. 152.

36. Parliamentary History IX, col. 1442.

37. Reitan p. 322.

38. "Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents," The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke (8 vols., London: George Bell & Sons, 1906) I, p. 364.

39. Reitan p. 325 and p. 329.

40. Reitan mistakenly terms this an "unprecedented intervention" whereas the petitioning movement of 1769 was no less novel for the time; see Parliamentary History XVI, col. 546-547.

41. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform p.72.

42. Parliamentary History XX, col. 1255-66, 1293-1305.

43. Carl B. Cone, "Parliamenteering and Racing," Historian 37 (1975) p. 419; Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform p. 100.

44. D.L. Keir, "Economical Reform,1779-1787," Law Quarterly Review 50 (1934) p. 375.

45. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform p. 87.

46. Parliamentary History XXI,col. 137, 2.

47. Parliamentary History XXI, col. 17, 18.

48. Parliamentary History XXI, col. 39, 55.

49. The proposed order of payment: 1) judges 2) ambassadors 3) tradesmen 4) domestic servants 5) pensions of the royal family 6) offices with salaries exceeding 200 pounds per annum 7) pensions 8) offices of honour 9) Treasury commissioners

50. Parliamentary History XXI, col. 538-551, 616-622, 714; 1223-1291.

51. Reitan p. 334.

52. Betty Kemp, "Crewe's Act, 1782," English Historical Review 68 (1953) p. 259.

53. Kemp p. 262 and p. 260.

54. Christie, "Economical Reform," p. 147.

55. Keir p. 271.

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57. Parliamentary History XXI, col. 367.

58. Reitan p. 337; John Brooke, King George III (London: Constable & Company, Ltd., 1972) p. 231; Linda Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820," Past and Present 102 (1984) p. 111-113.

59. Foord p. 500, 493, 499, 488; A reversion was the promise of an office upon the death or removal of its incumbent for times when patronage demands exceeded supply. An act of 1808 extended through 1814 prohibited this, after which the practice died out.

60. Brewer p. 86; Keir p. 373.

61. Clark p. 158.

62. Cone p. 415.

63. Keir p. 372, 373.

Chapter 3

Constitutionalism and the Civil List

While the king's revenue was a topic of great concern in the period between 1760 and 1782, the issue at the heart of the contention was not mere jealousy over the abuse of Civil List power. Beneath these concrete yet superficial concerns lay the more theoretical constitutional questions about the balance of power. The eighteenth century was a time of flux in the British constitution and of conflict between crown and parliament in determining their particular places under this constitution. At issue was the question of the correct balance between parliamentary supremacy and the traditional independence of the crown, a controversy which manifested itself, with regards to the Civil List, in terms of fiscal accountability, crown influence, and deference to the king.

The evolution of the British constitutional form was often in crisis throughout the eighteenth century in terms of establishing an appropriate balance between King, Lords, and Commons--the legislative and executive branches of its mixed government. Although the supremacy of parliament over matters of money and the succession had been conceded in seventeenth century constitutional conflicts, the crown still played an important role in the balance of power between executive and

legislature. The independence of the crown was thus seen and acknowledged as a vital aspect of the mixed constitution.[1] Due to the unwritten nature of the workings of the British constitution, this independence was naturally open to a certain amount of interpretation-- some perceiving it necessary to retain an effective amount of executive power while others saw crown independence as a threat to the supremacy of the legislature.

The Civil List presented a double-edged sword to those advocates of parliamentary supremacy. As a source of royal finance independent of parliamentary control, the Civil List was a symbol of crown influence and independence in an age when the balance of power was increasingly shifting towards the legislature. The Civil List also represented a more concrete threat to the doctrine of parliamentary supremacy, as the number of places and pensions it funded provided much of the crown influence which opposition Members came to see as corrupt and dangerous to the constitutional balance. According to Ian Christie, however, it was, in fact, the very cooperation between executive and legislature which developed after 1689 that led to such distortion and suspicion, and the belief that the executive was establishing undue influence over parliament.[2]

While the opposition perceived a dangerous strengthening of crown influence in this period, the conditions which slowly evolved after the Glorious Revolution actually demonstrated an

increasing amount of parliamentary control being exercised in what had previously been crown affairs. Under William III, the Commons exhibited the rather schizophrenic desire both to regulate crown revenue and to grant the king unprecedented amounts of money.[3] In the reign of Queen Anne, the tenure of the Lord High Treasurer remained in her hands but his success became increasingly dependent upon his relations with parliament as public officials began to look there for matters once left entirely to the crown.[4] In addition, the lack of precise definitions of crown and parliamentary authority further confused the boundaries between crown and parliamentary revenues. Under Robert Walpole's administration in the reign of George II, increased parliamentary investment in the colonies developed, giving birth to even more interference in an aspect of government previously under crown control. The establishment of this pattern later allowed Grenville to assume an unprecedented authority in these fields. George III's relinquishing of control over many of his colonial revenues in 1764 was thus consistent with both Grenville's opinion of the crown's place in government and the general shift from crown to parliamentary control over colonial affairs in this period.

John Brewer has argued that the extremely erratic nature of seventeenth and early eighteenth century crown politics diminished attachment to individual monarchs (as discussed above), yet strengthened the allegiance to royal, mixed

government.[5] Evidence for this latter point can be found in various contemporary clues. A letter in the Middlesex Journal in 1770, for example, reinforced the view that in a mixed government each branch possessed a carefully balanced amount of power, allowing it to fulfil a specific role and that therefore "when a King violates the constitution... every subject has the right to withdraw his obedience."[6] In a similar vein it was reported that the Marquis of Rockingham's support for economical reform plans, arose not from a wish to disrupt the constitutional balance of power but only to "render more distinct the Powers of the Crown and of Parliament."[7] Even Dunning's famous resolution in 1780 argued only that the influence of the crown ought to be reduced, not that it should be completely removed.[8] It is evident from such examples that although the concepts of parliamentary supremacy and the independence of the crown might be at odds with each other, the monarch still played a very important role in the mixed constitution of Britain.

One of the central tenets in the opposition campaign to assert parliamentary supremacy over these years was the notion of a Civil List expenditure which was accountable to parliament. It was not a new matter for oppositions to claim parliament had a right to inquire into the debts of the Civil List--Sir William Wyndham had made such a motion in 1720--but it was not until the later eighteenth century that such demands began to be perceived with any legitimacy.[9] In 1769

when George III first applied to parliament to pay the arrears on the Civil List, opposition Members again raised the issue of accountability. In a debate on the 28th of February, Dowdeswell remarked upon the strangeness of first giving the money to the crown and then inquiring how it became necessary to give so much. He then went on to move for the presentation of papers demonstrating the debts and the precise time they were incurred, reminding the House, no doubt in an attempt to exonerate himself, that there had been five administrations since the king's accession, each of whom were partly responsible for such an increase in the demands of the crown. The motion was opposed on a technicality however.[10] In the Lords the following year, Chatham pronounced that the Civil List was first for civil government, then for the honour and dignity of the crown, but that "in every other respect the particulars were open to parliamentary inspection."[11]

It was this assertion which seemed to carry weight and in 1777 Lord North laid accounts of the expenditures before parliament when making the request for the 100 000 pound increase to the Civil List. These accounts were vague at best however, with records of lump sums but no particulars as to whom they were paid, or for what services. Lord John Cavendish objected to the king's request, complaining that the accounts were defective in explaining the authenticity of the debts and hinting that the excess expenditure must have risen from causes which "would not bear the light."[12] John Wilkes

argued that the proposal to augment the Civil List was a violation of public faith and, designating the Commons "the guardians of the public purse," claimed that it was their duty to put an end to this squandering of money.[13] Thomas Townshend took up the debate, stating that it did not show a want of respect to the crown to examine into the causes of the debt.[14] Finally, in a later session, George Dempster expressed the opinions of many opposition Members, implying that it was a matter of "etiquette" for parliament to know the particulars of Civil List expenditure and proposed a committee of inquiry to produce a better account than that of the ministry, of the manner and means of the debt's acquisition.[15]

The entire concept of fiscal accountability was an eighteenth century phenomenon. According to Brewer, the concept of public accountability was the main reason the British financial system was so successful in this period.[16] Any controversy over a tax measure in Britain resulted in the presentation of accounts, reports, and papers to the House of Commons. These documents represented public information produced by government departments and were accepted by MPs as relatively accurate. Contemporaries were convinced that England owed the sucess of her fiscal system to its visibility. Public accounting it was believed, led to public confidence, whereas the French financial system of this period failed, due in part to the lack of such public accountability. Accountability then, allowed the British government to cope

with the pressures of war and to retain its integrity by avoiding a large degree of venality. This was accomplished through the presence of a House of Commons which restrained fiscal misbehaviour and which was reluctant to disburse moneys without legitimate cause, thus creating a means of accountability which could limit malpractice in the administration.

The desire of opposition MPs for parliamentary regulation of Civil List expenditure may be seen as a wish to extend this practice of accountability. As Reitan expressed it, parliament was "understandably jealous" of the Civil List as the one area of public expenditure not under its control, coming under inspection as it did only at the accession of a new sovereign or at times when the crown was forced to request parliament to pay the Civil List debts.[17] The concept of crown accountability was thus a natural development of post-1688 politics just as the notion of parliamentary supremacy had its origins there. It is not surprising then that the two ideas would combine in the minds of the members of the opposition, leading them to demand accounts of what had traditionally been the private domain of the monarch. Parliamentary supremacy could not coexist with an independent Civil List unless the crown's provision was limited to a fixed amount by parliament, a solution which had already proved unworkable. By 1777 the opposition believed accountability to be the answer.

Ultimately the opposition wanted to force the Treasury to take responsibility for Civil List debt. George Grenville seemed to be behind this notion in 1770--the result, no doubt, of his own stint in office in the early 1760s and his ensuing bad relations with the king. Once again, however, it was Chatham's pronouncement on March 14 of that year that the king's ministers were as culpable for incurring undue expense in the Civil List department as in any other, that seemed to carry weight.[18] By 1777 North, as first Lord of the Treasury, felt compelled to assume some sort of reponsibility both for the debt and the adequacy of the 100 000 pound increase.

This evolution towards the legitimate right of parliament to regulate the Civil List was the result of a hard fought battle and brought the opposition up against centuries of constitutional tradition. As late as the beginning of the eighteenth century, payments were made from the Civil List at the discretion of Queen Anne without parliamentary interference and on the advice only of the Lord High Treasurer, who could be overruled.[19] Throughout the 1700s various attempts were made by parliamentary oppositions to inquire into the reasons for Civil List debts, all of which were easily swept aside through a simple exercise of the royal prerogative.[20] By the period in question however, even that ancient right could not deter the opposition. J.M. Beattie argues that the reforms of the 1780s finally became possible due to the "widespread and widely felt breakdown" of the

financial and administrative system following the American War yet, as one can see, this analysis merely scratches the surface of the many issues prefiguring the Rockingham programme.[21]

The ministry's response to the increasing demands of the opposition for accountability was based on the traditional belief that an inviolable Civil List was necessary to retain the crown's place in Britain's mixed and balanced constitution. Parliament had no right to either accounts of the Civil List or to control of its expenditure. In the present form of government, the administration argued, only ministers themselves were responsible to the king in these matters. On the 28th of February 1770, in a debate in the Commons on the state of the Civil List, North tried to dimiss the entire topic, stating that it was untimely and improper to examine the royal expenses until an application was before the House. Parliamentary inspection should only be occasioned by suspicion of abuse of funds he argued, and the king should otherwise be left to the economy of his own person and household. North left more of an impression however, that it was indecent to even speak of such things in that House. He went on to argue that granting the king's request to pay his debts in 1769 had represented parliament's acknowledgement of the rectitude of the debt and summed up with this statement: "At present you give the King 800,000 a year to spend as he pleases, and then ask him what he does with it, this is

neither decent to him, nor sensible to yourselves."[22] It was this latter argument which represented the crux of the administration's defence in the constitutional struggle over the accountability of the Civil List.

Nevertheless, the ministry was forced to concede that parliament was entitled to accounts of Civil List expenditure before voting its augmentation. In 1769 the debts were not paid until North promised that Civil List accounts would be presented at the next session. These accounts were, in fact, presented the following year, while in 1777 such accounts were drawn up and presented simultaneously with the request for an enlargement.[23] These concerns established a precedent which eventually led to the acceptance of Dunning's resolution in 1780 that the Commons was competent to examine and regulate the Civil List at its discretion.[24]

The Commons debates in 1777 illustrated something of a defensive reaction on the part of the administration towards the newly established doctrine of accountability. Not only were accounts of Civil List expenses now required but opposition Members were going so far as to criticize the accounts which were produced as defective and indecipherable. North responded to this attack by stating that the accounts had been produced as best as possible and that the minute accounts the opposition seemed to desire of bills from petty tradesmen, grocers, butchers, and bakers were completely unnecessary. He also redistributed some of the blame for the

"defective" reports to his predecessors (some of whom were now the opposition Members before whom he was defending himself) who, he claimed "had taken away all the papers, which contained the information now so earnestly sought."[25]

Other members of the administration also tried to rationalize the limited scope of the accounts in 1777. Richard Rigby drew once again on tradition in his violent attack on the opposition desire for accountability, arguing that no accounts had ever been given before and that they were not required now. Hans Stanley contributed by stating that it was not the duty of the cofferer, for example, to know what service the money paid for but only whether the orders for it were properly authenticated.[26] These comments suggest that North and other members of the ministry believed it was something of a privilege for the House to see Civil List accounts.

The fundamental issue behind the question of accountability was, of course, the control itself of the crown income. George II had possessed a Civil List which had grown with the prosperity of the country, a factor which Reitan points to as helping maintain the ratio between the income of the crown and the revenues under control of the parliament, therefore preserving some of the crown's independence.[27] William Adam tried to restore and legitimate this view of what should be the crown's position of independence by arguing that the increase of influence of the crown was to be measured by

the proportion the revenue of the crown bore to the revenue of the subject:

> if the first had increased more than the last, that revenue had rendered influence greater: but the direct reverse was true; the revenue of the crown remained stationary, or nearly so, while that of the people had increased tenfold since the Revolution and consequently rendered the people more independent.[28]

North and his supporters fought against the reforms which shattered this independence with arguments based on the antiquity and perfection of the constitution, and pleas that reform for its own sake should be avoided as it would decay the superior British constitutional structure.[29]

The Whigs in opposition however, were deaf to this kind of reasoning in their single-minded obsession with the reduction of crown influence. A precursor to this paranoia was found in John Wilkes' opposition journal the North Briton in 1769, which claimed that the power of the crown had been increased by taxes and the number of pensioners paid from the privy purse such that this power was greater even than in the reign of the Stuarts--a frightening thought indeed to the people of post Glorious Revolution Britain.[30] This type of fear was expressed in the Commons in 1777 as well by Lord John Cavendish, who warned of the "dangerous" consequences which would result from granting the augmentation to the Civil List. Such a consequence would be the increase of crown influence, which was

> already become much too powerful...would add to that depravity of morals which was known so much to

> prevail; it would have the same effect, that an uncontrolled revenue has upon the people in arbitrary countries, where they follow and attach themselves to the court, in order to procure places; which prevents them from directing their pursuits to industry and those liberal professions and occupations, which render men at once useful and ornamental to society.[31]

The opposition preoccupation with crown influence escalated from 1779 forward and peaked in the early 1780s with Burke's proposal for economical reform. The debates on the Duke of Richmond's motion for an economical reform of the Civil List establishment on December 7, 1779 witnessed the beginning of several outright declarations by the Rockingham Whigs against this influence. Rockingham himself gave an official launching to the attack that same day, claiming that he had observed the influence of the crown increasing for some years, as proven by the successful augmentation of the Civil List and continual crown majorities in the House of Commons.[32] The acknowledged main purpose of Burke's plan on December 15 was the reduction of this "overgrown" crown influence which "has insinuated itself into all crannies of the kingdom" and to which, he claimed, all of the country's grievances were owing.[33] George Dempster took this cry a step farther, claiming that the influence of the crown was the true cause of all the American war troubles.[34]

The desire to curtail this dangerous crown influence became very strong and proposals for reform soon extended into several aspects of government. The Earl of Shelburne proposed the formation of a committee in February 1780, whose aim would

be to "establish constitutional power in place of the unconstitutional influence in the navy, army, both Houses, and every department."[35] Such power robbed the crown of its proper influence, he claimed, and substituted an unconstitutional influence, such that the order of power was reversed and that authority which should lie solely with the prince began instead in parliament. His wish was therefore to restore the crown's constitutional power yet render parliament independent. Shelburne's accusations thus placed more emphasis on the abusive power of the king's ministry rather than the king himself.

Rockingham's words in the same debate however, redirected the suspicion back towards the sovereign himself, pointing out that "the power and influence of the crown alone was sufficient to support any set of men his Majesty might think proper to call to his councils." He recalled the example of Lord Bute and the fear of his secret influence but claimed that with or without this precedent, the crown's influence would have grown too powerful. This pattern of increase, he claimed, was evidenced in the recent plans obviously intended to extend the king's power, such as measures taken against America and those taken to vest the patronage of the East India Company in the crown.[36] These measures had been introduced by various ministers such that the king himself was the only common factor in these numerous plans and therefore the 'mastermind' of some great scheme in Rockingham's view.

Dunning's resolution in 1780 "that the influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished" expressed the Rockinghams' obsession in no uncertain terms and the carrying of the motion seemed an important precedent and victory for the Whigs.[37] As Ian Christie points out however, this was merely an illusory triumph as the traditional and conservative portion of the House soon reasserted itself with several defeats of the would-be reformers.[38] These defeats included Crewe's bill to disable revenue officers from voting at elections, a defeat in the Lords of the contractors' bill restraining any MP from involvement in a public service contract unless that contract was made at a public bidding, and another motion by Dunning for an address to the king not to dissolve or prorogue parliament until the petitions had been dealt with.[39] The much-reduced economical reform bills which were finally passed in 1782 represented a mere token Whig victory against crown influence. The Rockinghams were by then in office and would come to depend more on the crown than the people for the support necessary to remain there--an increased courtliness which would naturally prejudice their cause. In any event, Christie argues, after the Napoleonic Wars the controversy over the influence of the crown was even less relevant than it had been during the American Revolution, as the concern of the middle and lower classes for a political voice and for

protection from industrialization conditions became far more important.

The question remains, then, why such a relatively unimportant issue, or at least one which was not growing any more serious, would become such an important and consuming passion for the opposition Whigs. This passion for one issue is especially curious when one considers that the Whigs must have been aware of most court doings and therefore would have known that there had been no increase in crown influence in terms of the number of placemen since George III's accession. This is especially true of Rockingham himself, who as a peer and a former Lord of the Bedchamber would have possessed an insider's knowledge of the court.[40] The origins of this obsession then can perhaps be traced most accurately to 1688 itself and to Britain's post-revolution political principles. The Glorious Revolution had established the principle of king in parliament, a mixed form of government composed of King, Lords, and Commons, yet in which parliamentary supremacy remained the ultimate weapon.[41] This model provided the means with which the Commons (more specifically, the great Whig oligarchs) could whittle away at the crown's base of power, tilting the balance of authority increasingly towards parliament. Parliament possessed the means to curtail the influence of the crown but it was not until the 1760s, with Lord Bute and the cries of 'secret influence', that it received a real motive to do so. Bute, while only the king's

minister from 1760-63, was believed to be the minister behind the curtain for almost a decade afterwards. It was the extreme paranoia born from this unconstitutional influence which put the Whigs on their guard against a recurrence and established the germ of their obsession with reducing crown influence.

It was in response to this growing opposition determination to reduce crown influence that the king and his ministers began to take steps to restore and newly legitimize the crown's position by means over which the opposition had no control. Linda Colley traces an apparent transformation in the monarchy's public status which occurred between 1771 and 1809 and altered the crown's public presentation and reputation. One of the factors to which she traces this alteration, was the patriotism arising from the Seven Years War and the ensuing personification of the king in this national glorification. Another reason which Colley isolates as contributing to this new popularity was Britain's search for stability following her defeat at the hands of the Americans, and the emergence of the king as a suitable national symbol to fulfil this role.[42] One idea which Colley hints at, but does not develop however, is the possibility that this propaganda campaign, which successfully increased the king's popularity, was part of a calculated reaction on the part of the king and ministers to thwart the opposition attempts to reduce crown influence.

Perhaps a more useful means of restoring crown influence was the explosion in peerage creations in the late eighteenth century.[43] The size of the peerage had remained almost unchanged throughout the eighteenth century with an average of 180 hereditary English peers and forty Scottish or Irish peers.[44] By mid-century however, peerage creations had greatly increased. George III's further expansion of the honours system, enlarging the Order of the Bath in 1772 and the Order of the Garter in 1786 and 1805, and the creation of new orders of chivalry, such as the Order of St. Patrick in 1783, could be employed to re-establish some of what the opposition would believe his unconstitutional influence over MPs. Michael McCahill explains that there was a fear by the end of the eighteenth century that a continuation of such large scale creations would undermine the House of Commons, as Members would surrender part of their independence for such honours. While the king lost sole control over peerage creations after 1789 due to his failing health, the system of honours remained a means to reward servants of the crown well into the nineteenth century.

A final method which served to renew some of the monarchy's legitimacy in this period of attacks on crown influence was the creation of the Windsor uniform in 1778.[45] The adoption of uniforms had come to indicate rank in the service of state or monarch and the Windsor uniform began to be used as the political cartoonists' symbol of attachment.

The wearing of the uniform also came to be a sign of the power and prestige of the monarchy under George III, an important symbol to a king whose power seemed to be increasingly diminishing at the hands of the opposition Whigs.

The main obstacle however, which the Whigs encountered in their battle to establish accountability and to reduce crown influence can be described in a single phrase--'the dignity of the crown'--which was bandied about the Commons almost as much as the words 'corruption' and 'crown influence' in the 1770s and 80s. One of the forms which this dignity took was simple deference to the monarch. This sense of deference manifested itself in 1769 when the ministry was able to oppose Dowdeswell's motion that the causes of the Civil List debt be examined before payment was considered, on the grounds that "decency to the King" and the "necessity of the Crown" required the immediate (and unquestioned) relief of his wants.[46] In 1777 Lord Cardiff also expressed a suitable sense of deference to the crown when he argued that as "it was an act of generosity and parental tenderness towards his subjects which induced his Majesty to relinquish his claim to the whole of the appropriated duties", it was now incumbent on them (the Lords) to grant him a suitable revenue to support "the honour and dignity" of the crown.[47] In the Commons that same year, Mr. De Grey expressed concern that Mr. Speaker Norton's speech to the king on presenting the bill for the better support of his Majesty's household was disrespectful to the sovereign.[48]

Dunning's motion in 1780 that there be no dissolution or prorogation of parliament until the petitions had been dealt with offered a similar affront to the crown as it interfered with royal prerogative and it was subsequently defeated.[49]

Another aspect of this sense of deference was the reluctance of MPs, especially the independent country gentlemen, to enter into a reform of the king's household, as much as they approved of Civil List regulation.[50] The royal household and property were considered just as personal and private as that of a private citizen and therefore not suitably open to parliamentary intervention. North's chief contention against Burke's initial presentation of his plan for economical reform in 1780 was that it was a matter of decency and decorum to the king and the Prince of Wales to obtain their consent before attempting such a household regulation. This speech led Burke to withdraw his motion relative to the king and prince's property through "respect for the crown and royal family" although asserting his right to make them again if he chose. North's words also inspired Lord George Gordon to rise and claim that a more unconstitutional speech than Burke's had never been delivered in the Commons and that Burke had lost sight of his original intentions--the regulation of the Civil List.[51] By 1782 this obstacle appeared to have been removed however, when Lord John Cavendish pointed out that the king himself had proposed reform in his message respecting the Civil List debt, thus

eliminating the objections of some to reforms in the king's household principally from a sense of delicacy and a reluctance to meddle.[52]

The concern for 'the dignity of the crown' was also apparent in comments by various Members regarding the maintenance of the royal household in a manner demonstrating an appropriate amount of 'lustre.' George III himself was widely known for his simple tastes and economical habits, often causing him to be satirised as a miser, but parliamentarians were very concerned that the royal image be properly dignified and magnificent. In 1769 Sir George Savile stated that the people were always ready to support the lustre and the magnificence of the crown.[53] This concern was further demonstrated in Burke's comments in 1777 questioning where the Civil List money was being spent. He compared the style of living of George III to King William and pointed out that the latter had kept a more splendid court, almost praising William for his spendthrift ways in terms of articles to reflect his magnificence and the stateliness of his court. Burke asked whether in George III's case the object of royal dignity had been obtained equal to the consideration paid of 800 000 pounds per year. He concluded that the debt had not been accumulated in this way but left the impression that it would have been perfectly acceptable if it had.[54]

This inattention of George III to the matter of 'the lustre of the crown' seemed to be a common complaint among

opposition Members. In a speech in the same session as that of Burke, John Wilkes criticized the allowances made to the king's brothers as scanty and inadequate. He complained that the country had scarcely the appearance of a court, even in the capital, and also made a disparaging comparison to the grandeur and splendour of former kings of England whom, he stated, "live in palaces, not in houses."[55] This type of thinking not only demonstrated a readiness, even an eagerness on the part of the opposition to preserve an appearance of splendour, but, in some cases, a willingness to almost free the king from blame in contracting the debt. The latter point of view was illustrated a few days after Wilkes' speech when Sir James Lowther declared "that he would willingly contribute his share, when taxed for the purpose of adding to the happiness and real honour of his Majesty" but would not pay the debts of his ministers whose concealed expenditure it was "that alone kept [the] sovereign poor, his family shamefully distressed and exposed."[56]

Supporting the 'dignity of the crown' did not merely consist of upholding a traditional image of the sovereign however--the desire to project an appropriately affluent and stately impression to the rest of Europe was also an aspect of concern. Wilkes' comments on the royal brothers also contained a complaint that under George III

> no stately buildings, or proud palaces, no "imperial works, and worthy Kings," have excited the public wonder, or called foreigners from the

> continent to our island to admire the royal taste and magnificence.[57]

Lowther also exhibited concern regarding the brothers of the king, referring to the duke of Gloucester as

> banished, and exhibiting to the world a neglected, distressed prince of England; drawing pity and compassion from foreigners, rather than respect and attention due to the rank he must ever hold, however persecuted, that of being brother to the King of Great Britain.[58]

Not only were Members concerned with impressing Europeans with the royal splendour however, there was also a desire to demonstrate the wealth of the nation itself. In the same debates, Mr. Adam suggested that paying the arrears upon the Civil List

> must give an idea of the vigour and resources of this country, which could not fail to have tendency to prevent hostile attempts upon the part of our enemies, and strike the minds of our revolted colonies with terror.[59]

Regard for the 'dignity of the crown' thus also demonstrated something of a spirit of national pride and a rather defensive sense of national competitiveness with the rest of Europe and America. In any event, the eventual division of household and government expenditure within the Civil List must have proven an immense relief to those who encouraged extravagance in the former and jealously guarded the latter from it.

The constitutional struggle behind the Civil List issue was thus a confrontation between centuries of British monarchical tradition and the development of more modern concepts of government and kingship. On one front was the

struggle between parliamentary supremacy and the age-old perception of crown independence, with the Whigs supporting the former and king and ministers defending the latter. Ironically however, when it came to the controversy over where Civil List expenditure should go, it was the Whigs who desired a traditionally splendid and magnificent royal court while the king wished to set an example of practicality and careful spending more befitting the times. It was, in fact, this latter sense of economy which was becoming increasingly apparent in the people of England as well and which made Civil List expenditure a matter of public concern in this period, thus extending the issue into yet another area--the public eye.

Endnotes

1. Reitan p. 318.

2. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform, p. 2.

3. Brewer p. 152.

4. The remainder of this section is indebted to the work of Dora Mae Clark, The Rise of the Treasury, pp. 5, 15, 74, 108, 144.

5. Brewer p. 84.

6. Middlesex Journal, 1-3 March 1770.

7. St. James' Chronicle, 6-9 July 1782.

8. Parliamentary History XXI, 347.

9. Parliamentary History VIII, 455, 459-60.

10. Parliamentary History XVI, 600.

11. ibid. 850.

12. Parliamentary History XIX, 104.

13. ibid. 110.

14. ibid. 131.

15. ibid. 142.

16. This section is indebted to the work of John Brewer, The Sinews of Power, pp. 70, 130-139.

17. Reitan pp. 321, 328.

18. Parliamentary History XVI, 849.

19.Clark p. 10.

20. Parliamentary History VIII, 455, 459-60, 601-604; Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers V, 1741, pp. xxxix, xl.

21. J.M. Beattie, The English Court in the Reign of George I, (Cambridge, University Press, 1967), pp. 130-131.

22. Parliamentary History XVI, 845-47.

23. Parliamentary History XIX, 103-187.

24. Parliamentary History XXI, 367.

25. ibid. XIX, 123-125, 153-154.

26. ibid. 155,144.

27. Reitan p. 320.

28. ibid. XXI, 254.

29. For further information on these themes see Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform, p. 183.

30. North Briton XCV,11 March 1769.

31. Parliamentary History XIX, 105.

32. ibid. XX, 1260.

33. ibid., 1297.

34. ibid., 1302.

35. ibid., 1346, 1347.

36. ibid., 1346, 1347.

37. ibid. XXI, 347.

38. Part of this section is indebted to the work of Ian R. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform, pp. 97, 143, 230-231.

39. Parliamentary History XXI, 403-457, 494-533.

40. Clark p. 146.

41. Reitan p. 318.

42. Linda Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820," Past and Present 102 (1984) pp. 96, 99.

43. This section is indebted to the work of Michael W. McCahill, "Peerage Creations and the Changing Character of the Nobility, 1750-1830," English Historical Review XCVI (1981), p. 259.

44. W.A. Speck, Stability and Strife: England 1714-1760, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 35.

45. This section is indebted to the work of Philip Mansel, "Monarchy, Uniform and the Rise of the Frac, 1760-1830," Past and Present 96 (1982), pp. 110, 115, 125.

46. Parliamentary History XVI, 601.

47. ibid. XIX, 169.

48. ibid., 229.

49. ibid. XXI, 494-503; Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform p. 98.

50. Reitan p. 333.

51. Parliamentary History XXI, 72-73.

52. ibid. XX, 1395.

53. ibid. XVI, 599, 601.

54. ibid. XIX, 125-126.

55. ibid., 116.

56. ibid., 160.

57. ibid., 116.

58. ibid., 159.

59. ibid., 128.

Chapter 4

The Civil List in the Public Domain

While the controversy surrounding the Civil List between 1760 and 1782 gave birth to such issues as the corruption and abuse involving the fund and the underlying constitutional struggle over who would possess control over the revenue, it also brought out matters which were much more concrete in nature. These included such macro-economic concerns as the growing public interest in matters of crown finance and spending, an increasing tendency in parliamentarians to produce financial data to support their arguments, and the escalation of cries for economy in times of war by a parliament and a public which had both become more prepared to express themselves in such matters.

The second half of the eighteenth century saw an unprecedented level of public access to government information. The Journals of the House of Commons were put into print in the 1740s and were augmented by a set of back numbers in the late 1760s. After 1767, collected parliamentary committee reports were published while parliament was still in session and in 1771 the House of Commons finally allowed the publication of a record of its proceedings.

This gradual increasing availability of parliamentary information was a product of the growing post-1688 desire for knowledge of government activity, so well-documented in the recent work by John Brewer. The permanence of parliament, its increased activity, and the greater length of its sessions all made it a more important legislative body than before the Glorious Revolution. Ministers of the crown, parliament itself, occupational and special interest groups, and the general public all combined to press for greater access to the records for government departments. This interest on the part of the public was also due in part to an increased demand for 'useful knowledge.' Brewer attributes this desire to greater interest in mathematical techniques leading to changes in the public's manner of understanding and classifying the world.[1]

While there was an increasing public demand in the late eighteenth century for knowledge of the workings of the government, the public's interest in its financial workings was particularly slow to develop. Early this century, for example, Alice Drayton Greenwood characterized the people of eighteenth century Britain as being so contemptuous of business affairs that they were not likely to pay any more attention to the financial dealings of their country than to their own, a somewhat exaggerated picture. While there was a widespread feeling of dignity about the vastness of the nation's fortune, the manner of its accumulation was believed to be best kept in obscurity. Even at the end of the century,

when Pitt's efficient management of the Exchequer had begun to teach politicians the importance of finance, there were still lamentations that such a great minister had to burden himself with such a low subject.[2] While this analysis may have been accurate in terms of the public's attitude towards general money matters, it is deficient in explaining the explosion of public involvement and expression regarding crown finance in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

One of the primary means by which public opinion was expressed on fiscal matters was through the flourishing newspaper press. The size of the reading public was on the increase in this period and, in 1760, London alone was kept abreast of events by eighty-six newspapers.[3] The press held a vital position in both voicing and influencing public opinion. In 1777, the St. James's Chronicle printed a letter which demonstrated public concern regarding Civil List debt through one woman's recommendation that if every commissioned officer would contribute as much as a certain officer of her acquaintance, it would not be necessary to ask parliament to augment the Civil List.[4] February of 1781 witnessed several more letters depicting the public engagement with the matter of public revenue. The February 10 to 13 issue published a letter stating that the national debt was accumulating at the rate of twelve million per year because "our Treasure is squandered among the Americans." The following issue took the matter further with criticism of the people's taste for luxury

as a cause of poverty. A week later a letter appeared extolling the virtues of a particular elderly lady's economical ways and suggesting that if the circumstances were deemed worthy of record the letter should be "inserted in Mr. Burke's intended Motion."[5] All of these examples illustrate a growing public involvement on a personal level with the matter of revenue, and the increasing employment of newspapers as a forum in which to express popular opinion about the Civil List.

Some decried the involvement of newspapers as damaging and libellous however. In 1770, for example, Lord North blamed much of the public discontent on the press:

> We are told, Sir, that it is the misconduct of the ministry that has wrought the people into this bad humour, which makes them oppose all law and order...But it is the credulity of the people, wrought upon by flagitious libellous, that has excited this outrageous opposition to government...Can any man recollect a period, when the press groaned with such a variety of wicked and desperate libels?[6]

This self-righteous ministerial attitude towards the press did not necessarily mean however that the administration was above using periodicals to further it own ends. A portion of the home secret service money was commonly spent subsidizing or bribing various newspapers in the eighteenth century. In administrations from that of Sir Robert Walpole in 1742 to that of the Earl of Shelburne in 1783 this (mis)use of the press was commonplace.[7] The St. James's Chronicle, for example, received a government subsidy of 100 to 200 pounds

per year from approximately 1784 to 1793. As Robert Rea states however, while every ministry of George III tried to influence the press, none controlled it.[8] For this reason it is therefore necessary to regard contemporary newspaper sources in terms of the particular purpose each journal served, whether as agent of the administration or as voice of a radical opposition.

The sharpest attacks by both ministry and opposition propagandists against their opponents however, were saved for the pamphlet form of expression. This process of pamphleteering developed because newspaper columns were too short to permit the full development of a writer's argument.[9] The widespread interest in the matter of the Civil List and public revenue in general was evident from the very onset of the reign of George III through a number of such pamphlets. George Bubb Dodington, later Baron Melcombe, a supporter of Lord Bute, produced one of the first of these pamphlets in 1761--a work intended to erase public misconceptions regarding the Civil List, in particular the belief that the present king had a greater revenue than had George II.[10] Several other pamphlets dealing with the Civil List of George III in comparison with those of other reigns were printed in the next four years.[11] Although many of these pamphlets were printed anonymously, the identity of the writer was often easy to determine through writing style and the particular side of the

question he supported. This public expertise was a testimony in itself to how widely read the pamphlets were.

The petitioning movement initiated by Christopher Wyvill in 1779 to effect economical reform was another important example of public involvement with the issue of the Civil List. The roots of Wyvill's concerns could actually be found in the Middlesex petition a decade earlier which claimed that the unconstitutional power introduced by the administration had resulted in the misuse of public funds to support an oligarchy intent on perverting the constitution. It stated that public loans had been employed for wicked ministerial purposes, as exemplified by the reluctance to deal with Henry Fox's outstanding paymaster balances of 1757 to 1761, and that these financial abuses were part of a plan to subordinate parliament to the executive.[2]

Wyvill's petition in 1779 was a more specific expression of the public unease with crown spending. In December 1779, a group of independent Yorkshire gentlemen set out to inflame the popular belief that the North ministry was throwing away public funds in an effort to keep themselves in power. The ensuing petition proposed by Wyvill demanded an inquiry into the Civil List leading to the removal of all sinecures and public spending extravagances. The number of other counties which agreed to associate for economical reform in 1780 illustrated the widespread popular appeal and concern over the issue. Even a county like Gloucestershire, known for its

loyalty and deference to the crown, was compelled to agree to Wyvill's declaration that the Civil List should be subject to parliamentary control.[13] Such was the effectiveness of this spreading association movement, that by June 1780 the Earl of Shelburne was convinced that this type of mass demonstration for reform was the only means by which North's ministry could be destroyed. In 1780 twenty-six English counties submitted petitions for economical reform, allowing the Earl of Coventry to proclaim as early as February 8, 1780, that the public desired an economical expenditure of public money.[14]

The growing public involvement with the issue of public revenue and the Civil List was not confined to mere opinion but also consisted of the publication of actual figures and estimates of the spending. In March of 1769, the North Briton pointed out that the entire revenue of Charles II had been less than 1 200 000 pounds and James II less than 1 800 000, sums which had to provide for the Queen's court, mistresses, progeny, a sum to bribe the majority in both houses, and, unlike the present king's obligations, the army and navy. The article went on to say that while King William, Queen Anne, and the first two Georges had all received smaller Civil Lists and had had more to maintain than George III, they rarely incurred such a debt as he. This piece represented a radical criticism of the king's spending so early in the Civil List controversy.[15]

An excerpt from the 1769 Annual Register printed in Parliamentary History provided a more weighted analysis and explanation of the Civil List controversy. It explained that on the one hand the opposition argued that besides the king's guaranteed Civil List of 800 000 pounds, he also received considerable revenues from several other sources, such as that arising from the principality of Wales and the duchy of Cornwall, and recent duties from the West India islands, which were not part of the national supply and therefore never inquired into. The administration's defence, on the other hand, was that George III had strengthened the freedom of the subject by establishing the independency of the judges, had given up over 700 000 pounds to the nation of his share of captures from the Seven Years' War, and was therefore beyond reproach.[16] In this instance then, the newspaper played a role not only in providing commentary on the issue but also in giving an impartial account of both sides of the controversy.

An issue of the Middlesex Journal, another radical newspaper, was not so heavy-handed with the criticism a year later as the North Briton had been, but related the facts with a minimum of commentary. The newspaper reported that there had not been so great a contention in the House of Lords for many years as on March 14, 1770. A list of pensions for the last three reigns was produced, which, the report stated, showed several hundreds of thousands of pounds more of disbursements under George III than former monarchs. It went

on to describe the courtiers defending the king's increased spending by arguing that there had been many capital expenses such as marriages, coronations, and royal burials since his accession. In response, such considerations were dismissed and it was argued that his grandfather and great grandfather had had two rebellions.[17]

By 1777, periodicals were beginning to go beyond simple estimates and vaguely accusatory statements regarding actual Civil List figures and were printing accounts of the royal revenue containing lists and tables of amounts disbursed. The General Evening Post for April 1777, for example, printed a breakdown of the royal expenditures from January 6, 1776 to January 5, 1777. Included were the allowances paid to the members of the royal family, the amounts given to the heads of each of the household departments, and the 48 000 pounds of the privy purse. Other charges included foreign ministers, judges' and officers' fees and salaries, pensions and annuities, royal bounties, gentlemen pensioners, presents to foreign ministers, secret service, the goldsmith, and law charges, the total of which amounted to 984 100 pounds.[18] The publication of such a complete report of the accounts produced by the ministry demonstrates not only the extent of the press' access to parliamentary proceedings in 1777, but also the publisher's confidence that the public not only had a right to know but would, indeed, be interested in such matters.

The St. James's Chronicle also published several breakdowns of crown income soon after the presentation of the Civil List accounts in the House of Commons on April 9, 1777. The newspaper declared that it was mistaken to suppose that the king received no revenue but the 800 000 pounds from his Civil List and published a list of the average of his receipts from the West Indies, Hanover, the duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster, the [illegible] lands, and the quit rents, amounting to an additional 214 000 pounds.[19] This account was not in complete agreement with one published in the Parliamentary Register and reprinted in the same issue of the Chronicle. This breakdown included additional revenues from Ireland, Wales, the coal pits at Louisbourg, and the interest on debts due to George II. None of the items which it shared with the St. James's Chronicle accounts were in agreement however. The Parliamentary Register described the revenue of Hanover when the establishment was paid as bringing in at least 100 000 pounds while the Chronicle listed receipts from Hanover at 72 000. In the latter account, the duchy of Lancaster was said to produce 37 000, Cornwall 26 000, and the West Indies 40 000 while the Parliamentary Register reported 20 000, 70 000, and 50 000 for the same headings, amounting to a total (not including the Civil List) of 502 000 pounds.[20] The lack of consensus on these figures makes for an even more confusing issue. John Brooke has asserted that revenues from Scotland, Ireland, the Isle of Man, and Hanover were entirely spent in

those areas in which they were raised and thus would not serve to augment the crown income but this question remains unresolved.[21] The same issue of the St. James's Chronicle also published an account of further savings which should have increased the royal income since the accession of George III. These included the deaths of the princess of Wales, the dukes of York and Cumberland, and prince Frederick and princess Louisa, the marriages of princesses Augusta and Matilda, the sale of Somerset House and presents from eastern princes, amounting to a total of 1 400 000 pounds.[22] The printing of these various accounts illustrates the growing involvement and concern of the press, and therefore the public, in matters revenue with the result that there was more knowledge of private royal finances in this period than is enjoyed today. In addition, one can see how more radical newspapers tended to print accounts composed mainly of estimates and censuring commentary while other periodicals often left the conclusions to the public itself.

The lack of agreement of Civil List figures published in the newspapers also extended to the Houses of Parliament. The opposition was quick to supply figures demonstrating that the king ought to be financially better off than his predecessors. In 1770, George Grenville pointed out that the 1764 Civil List disbursements had been 870 000 pounds but that since that time there should have been an annual saving of over 30 000 due to the deaths of the dukes of Cumberland and York. This factor,

he stated, would have been expected to lessen crown expenses somewhat, yet in 1768 they had equalled 900 000 pounds and had possibly grown further since. Grenville went on to employ what was a favourite opposition tactic of comparing the reign of George III to those of former monarchs. Under George II, he stated, magnificence was better maintained, the crown always found its fund sufficient (in spite of the more considerable expenses occasioned by a grown royal family and frequent journeys to the continent) and the sovereign even managed to leave 170 000 pounds to George III.[23]

The opposition took the criticism of crown spending much farther in 1777 after the king's request for an augmentation of the Civil List. Lord John Cavendish began the onslaught on April 16 with a comparison between sixteen years of the present reign and sixteen years under George II and stated that an average of the expenditures of both reigns clearly proved that, making every allowance for a larger royal family and an increase in the price of life's necessities, George III's expenditure ought to be some thousand pounds a year less than his grandfather's. Cavendish went on to assert that there should have been a saving rather than a deficiency over the last eight years as the revenue of the princess dowager had ceased while the new expenses of the prince of Wales and the bishop of Osnaburgh had not amounted to a fourth of her allowance.[24] The princess dowager's allowance was already a touchy point with the public, the common belief being that

since she had received 64 000 pounds a year and had only left 27 000 behind at her death, she must have given the rest to Bute, who had purchased an estate for 114 000 pounds.[79]

The remainder of the April 16 debate featured several other opposition Members speaking out against crown spending in equally specific terms. John Wilkes, observing that "this is peculiarly a day of dry calculation", contributed to the confusion by determining a gain of above 6 576 pounds a year from the amount the late king had received in addition to 100 000 pounds from the sale of Somerset House. He also employed the method of comparing the present state of the Civil List with that of previous reigns, pointing out the many generous deductions that Queen Anne had made from her own Civil List and the comfortable situations of both previous Georges on much less revenue than George III, yet rarely incurring such debts. Wilkes also spoke of additional revenues such as those from the duchy of Cornwall and Gibraltar (the latter of which had not been mentioned in the periodicals as a source of income), which carried the royal income to above one million a year. Burke and Grenville also made use of figures to present their arguments against an increase to the Civil List. In the Lords that same day, the Earl of Shelburne questioned the very basis by which the crown received a portion of its money, stating that the increase on hereditary revenue amounting to more than 30 000 pounds a year in the accounts actually arose from the increase of the Post-Office fund.

This fund had been created by the Post-Office Act of 1765, he explained, and the king had no rights to it at all.[26]

The growing opposition tendency for direct analysis of actual Civil List figures came to a climax with Burke's proposal for economical reform in 1780. With the presentation of his plan Burke contradicted most of the assertions made to date about sources of crown revenue and stated that the five principalities in England--Wales, Chester, the duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster, and the county palatine of Lancaster--areas which had been reported at various times as contributing from 63 000 to 100 000 pounds to the king, actually contributed nothing.[27] A debate on the bill of reform in the Commons in May 1782 (by which time the Rockinghams were in office) boasted a complete breakdown of the savings which would result from the abolition of each office, to the amount of 72 368 per annum.[28] This extremely comprehensive analysis represents the zenith of the opposition Whigs' tactic of financial dissection --a tactic which had won them credibility and therefore eventually helped get them into office.

The administration supplied their own calculations of course, in an attempt to counter those of the opposition. In 1770, Lord North responded to Grenville's criticisms of specific Civil List disbursements with the accusation that it was only those gentlemen who were benefitting by the munificence of the crown and hourly pocketing the public money

who were making so strict an examination of the Civil List and weeping over the oppressions of the country."[29] In 1777 however, North felt compelled to respond with a more specific defence and to provide figures to fight the opposition with its own weapon, "in answer to the excess of expenditure so much dwelt upon."[30] He argued that in the last four years the expenditure had actually decreased to the amount of 100 000 pounds per annum. He sought to rationalize the increase of the previous year (1776-77) by pointing out that several loyal friends to the crown and parliament had lately been driven to seek relief i.. in, totalling 27 000 pounds. He countered Cavendish's assertion that the death of the princess dowager should have augmented the royal revenue with the fact that the revenues of the prince of Wales, the bishop of Osnaburgh, and prince William, amounted to 12 000 pounds per year while pensions to judges had increased to more than 4 000 pounds a year. North also predicted that in future the Civil List would not exceed 900 000 pounds due to the four and a half percent duties from the Leeward Islands and the recovery of the American quit rents "after the present unnatural rebellion." He concluded his speech by claiming that the expense of the ambassadors had actually diminished and "entered into several computations which controverted the facts laid down by the noble lord (Cavendish) who spoke first."[31]

Later that same day, North attempted a rebuttal of Wilkes' arguments and pointed out that the late king's revenue had actually exceeded that of George III for, if the increased value of life's luxuries and necessaries over thirty-five years were taken into account, 900 000 pounds at present would still not be as much as 800 000 in 1742.[32] This marked only the second time in the entire Civil List controversy in which inflation was even mentioned as a possible factor in the increased expenditure, and the only time it was isolated as an actual cause. As it happened, inflation was not a factor in the growth of public spending in this period, as prices were relatively stable between the late 1600s and the accession of George III. But after 1760 there was a marked price increase and prices were some twenty-five percent higher by the 1780s. While this fact would negate North's argument of inflation since the time of George II, it does help explain the increased expenditure since the beginning of George III's reign. In any event, contentious though the matter was, civil expenditure actually remained remarkably stable from 1688 to 1783, experiencing a slow rise from just under one million to one and a half million per annum, a disbursement which accounted for less than fifteen percent of total government costs.[33]

In an analysis of the controversy over Civil List expenditure from 1760 to 1782, it is important to consider the particular effects on the public consciousness of the war time

circumstances at the beginning and end of this period--the Seven Years War from 1756 to 1763 and the American War of Independence from 1775 to 1783. As Brewer points out, of all of the eighteenth century financial crises, "only one (1772) had no connection with the workings of the fiscal-military state, and only one other, that of 1720, was not in part attributable to military hostilities and the conditions of war."[34] Since Britain was at war for ten of the twenty-two years dealt with in this study, the reduced economic war conditions can help explain much of the opposition and public concern over public spending. The fact that the most heated and extensive debates over the Civil List took place after 1777, in the midst of the American war, is also a telling factor.

The parliamentary debates of the year 1779 best exemplify the sensitivity of MPs on economic matters and spending in general. Of particular concern were the army estimates and extraordinaries, and every other detail of annual public expenditures. In a debate on the army estimates in December 1779, Sir Charles Bunbury expressed concerns regarding whether the remaining resources of the country could support the immense army described by the secretary at war while the people groaned under the weight of every sort of taxes imaginable. Thomas Townshend demanded an explanation of how the charge of the staff and general officers for 1780 so greatly exceeded the same charge in 1762, "the most expensive

of any year of the last war." Charles James Fox also spoke on the impropriety of voting so large and expensive an army in a precipitate manner when ministers refused to answer questions on the matter, claiming they had not brought their papers to the House.[35] These comments thus give a sense of the manner in which fiscal accountability, which came to be seen by MPs as a matter of etiquette regarding crown spending, was viewed as a parliamentary right and necessity in relation to war time finances.

Fox was one of the more outspoken of the opposition Whigs on the matter of army funding and the army extraordinaries. These extraordinaries represented a lump sum voted to defray additional costs of the army without account of how it would be spent, and Fox viewed this practice as constitutionally provocative. In March 1779, he opposed and reprobated the manner in which such an enormous sum as 2 026 000 pounds had been voted for army extraordinaries the previous evening "in the lump, hastily, of a sudden, and at a late hour of the night." The Earl of Shelburne took up the attack on army extraordinaries in the Lords in December of that year. He began by comparing the increased cost of extraordinaries with those of all of the wars of the century and finally moved "that the alarming Addition annually making to the present enormous National Debt, under the head of Extraordinaries required immediate check and controul [sic]." Shelburne concluded by saying that increasing the public expense beyond

the grants of parliament was, at all times, an invasion of the fundamental rights of parliament but was especially so in "the present reduced and deplorable state." The Earl of Effingham gave his support to the motion and opened a new controversy by stating that he believed the extraordinaries were, in fact, the Civil List of Lord North, an accusation which was received in shocked silence.[36]

There was a definite link, therefore, in the minds of opposition Members between the matters of army funding and the revenue of the Civil List. The Duke of Richmond underlined this fact with his motion on December 7, 1779 for an economical reform of the Civil List establishment. Richmond began with a review of the state of the kingdom and the appeal that

> in such a moment of difficulty and danger it was a duty on their lordships to enquire, what means the nation had left, what internal resources she had to bear her out in so unequal a struggle?

Economy had become absolutely necessary and this economy, he argued, would be best received if it came as an example from the sovereign. Lord Stormont, one of the secretaries of state, argued that the want of economy was not peculiar to the present administration but, rather incidental to a state of war. Earl Bathurst supported this opinion in a similar vein, claiming that a system of economy should not begin with sacrifices by the crown. But their voices were lost in the almost panic-stricken call for economy. The Earl of Derby stated that although he had moved for an addition to the

Civil List in 1777, he now thought retrenchment necessary, as "the times were changed; the situation of the country was different; our revenue was lessened; our resources were on the decline." The Duke of Grafton concluded that the only possible objection which could arise to the motion then was that it did not originate from the throne.[37] The motion was in fact, defeated easily but it represented a linking of the king's own income to the dire economical straits of the entire nation and, with that, Civil List reform could not be far off.

The period between 1760 and 1782 thus witnessed an important transition in British politics in terms of public and parliamentary involvement in the crown's fiscal concerns. In these twenty-two years, the Civil List was transformed from an issue open to limited discussion or criticism to one about which MPs and the public alike began to make it their business to remain informed. This change was a crucial aspect of the evolution in eighteenth century British politics of public accountability and was an important step in the gradual trend towards a British monarchy with a limited income and power to use money for political ends.

Endnotes

1. This section is indebted to the work of John Brewer, The Sinews of Power pp. 223-243.

2. Alice Drayton Greenwood, Horace Walpole's World, a Sketch of Whig Society Under George III, (London: G. Bell, 1913) pp. 114, 98.

3. Robert R. Rea, The English Press in Politics, 1760-1774, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963) p. 7.

4. St. James's Chronicle, 8-10 May 1777.

5. ibid., 10-13, 13-15, 20-22 February, 1781.

6. Parliamentary History XVI, 1165.

7. A. Aspinall, Politics and the Press c. 1780-1850, (London: Home & Van Thal Ltd., 1949) pp. 67-70.

8. Rea p. 9.

9. Rea p. 10.

10. George Bubb Dodington, Baron Melcombe, Occasional observations on a double-titled paper, about the produce of the civil-list revenue, from midsummer 1727 to midsummer last, London, 1761.

11. Such pamphlets include: Sir Richard Cox, 2nd Bart., The present state of His Majesty's revenue, compared of some late years, Dublin, 1762; David Hartley, M.P., The Budget: inscribed to the man who thinks himself minister, London, 1764; A letter to the public containing some important hints relating to the revenue, London, 1765; A parallel drawn between the administration in the four last years of Queen Anne, and the first four of George III, by a country genleman, London: J. Almon, 1765.

12. See Lucy S. Sutherland and J. Binney, "Henry Fox as paymaster of the Forces," English Historical Review 70 (1955) pp. 229-256; Ian Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform p. 35.

13. This section is indebted to the work of Ian Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform pp. 70, 74, 101, 112, 169.

14. Parliamentary History XX, 1333.

15. North Briton XCV, 11 March 1769.

16. Annual Register 1769 as printed in Parliamentary History XVI, 598-600.

17. Middlesex Journal, 15-17 March 1770.

18. General Evening Post, 10-12 April 1777.

19. St. James's Chronicle, 12-15 April 1777.

20. Parliamentary Register # 35 as printed in St. James's Chronicle, 12-15 April 1777.

21. John Brooke, King George III, (London: Constable & Company, Ltd., 1972) p. 206.

22. St. James's Chronicle, 12-15 April 1777.

23. Parliamentary History XVI, 844.

24. ibid. XIX, 104, 105.

25. J.F. Molloy, Court Life Below Stairs or London Under the Last Georges 1760-1830, (London: Downey & Co. Ltd., 1897) p. 97.

26. Parliamentary History XIX, 109, 111, 112, 114, 126, 150, 182.

27. ibid. XXI, 23.

28. ibid. XXII, 1412.

29. ibid. XVI, 845.

30. ibid. XIX, 106.

31. ibid., 107; North did not respond to Cavendish's assertion however, that the new expenses of the bishop and the prince of Wales did not amount to a fourth of that of the late princess dowager.

32. Parliamentary History XIX, 123.

33. This section is largely indebted to the work of John Brewer, The Sinews of Power, pp. 38-40.

34. Brewer p. 191.

35. Parliamentary History XX, 1243-1255.

36. ibid., 359, 1285-1293.

37. ibid., 1255-1266.

Postscript

The Civil List was a topic that embodied many contentious issues in the history of eighteenth century Britain and, in turn became a symbol of the constitutional fluctuations of the period. It represented a bone of contention between the king and his ministers, who were struggling to retain their traditional powers, and the opposition who were trying to limit them.

Misuse and corruption involving the Civil List was one of the concerns which manifested itself as a facet of this symbolic struggle. The various abuses, both real and imagined (or at least exaggerated) provided an issue on which the Rockingham Whigs could focus through their economical reform programme in an attempt to obtain power.

At the very heart of the conflict however, was a more theoretical concern--the matter of the constitution. The question of the appropriate balance between parliamentary supremacy and the more traditional independence of the crown was another matter which arose from the Civil List controversy and revealed itself more specifically in issues such as fiscal accountability and the desire to preserve a suitably dignified and magnificent image of the monarch. Ultimately, this aspect of the controversy was a conflict between hundreds of years of

traditional kingship in Britain and newly evolving concepts of government and monarchy.

Finally, the Civil List controversy caused a reaction which was very concrete in its concerns--the growing interest of the public in financial matters. This developing financial preoccupation was illustrated by an increasing level of public access to and incorporation of such information, the tendency of newspapers, opposition, and administration to produce piles of figures and calculations in support of their arguments, and the increasingly urgent cries for economy during times of war by public and opposition.

Interestingly, the issues raised by the Civil List controversy between 1760 and 1782 are still apparent today in debate over the size of the Queen's income and whether she should pay taxes. It was reported that in July 1992 Queen Elizabeth II offered to pay income tax and pick up the taxpayers' financial responsibilities for most members of the Royal Family.[1] This offer was in response to the prolonged outcry against the exorbitant amounts paid to the Queen, Queen Mother, Prince Philip, Prince Andrew, Princess Anne, Princess Margaret, Prince Edward, and Princess Alice from the Civil List. The fact that the Queen came foward with this request demonstrates her acknowledgement of the diminished role of the monarch in Britain today in terms of independence and financial accountability. Finally, the fact that the Queen felt compelled to respond to such an outcry by the recession-

weary public and that such figures would be published in a newspaper article, attests to the legacy of public interest in such royal financial matters that has developed since the eighteenth century.

It is this type of enduring interest in the Civil List and all that it entails which suggests that this topic has much yet to recommend its study. In the two decades following Burke's Establishment Act alone, the Civil List, the matter of an establishment for the Prince of Wales, and other subjects of royal finance were raised many times in parliament.[2] It is unreasonable to assume that in the two hundred odd years from the late eighteenth century to the present such matters would not surface again. The nature of monarchy is such that it invites public scrutiny and fascination. As Linda Colley writes: "The shift in criticism of the monarchy...from anger at the institution to mockery of individual royals and their foibles, helped--as it still helps--to preserve it."[3] Crown finance is a topic which is especially strong in attracting such criticism and, as such, should make the Civil List a subject of enduring interest to historians.

Endnotes

1. Anon., "Queen Volunteers to Pay Income Tax," Star Phoenix (Saskatoon) 27 Nov. 1992; _____, "A Monarchy out of Touch," Manchester Guardian (London) 29 Nov. 1992; _____, "A Changing Monarchy for Changing Times," Manchester Guardian (London) 6 Dec. 1992.

2. Parliamentary History XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXVI.

3. Linda Colley, Britons, (Yale University Press, 1992) p. 209.

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