

English authorities, when they had granted certain privileges to a straggling settlement, could not seem to understand how that settlement could exercise those very same rights after it had attained to a full-grown colony.

Although Rhode Island had emerged from all these dangers unimpaired, she can scarcely be said to have become invulnerable to her enemies. Her independence, her unusual privileges accorded by charter, and her persistence in maintaining what she believed to be her rights, led her into further controversies with the royal governors, and rendered her future still a matter of considerable uncertainty. She had entered upon the beginning of a new century, but she had by no means finished her struggle for existence.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNOR CRANSTON.

The death of Bellomont, although warding off for the time being the almost sure revocation of Rhode Island's charter, did not entirely free the colony from possible danger. The person chosen to succeed that aggressive official was the able and energetic Joseph Dudley, who, now that he had the royal authority behind him, could make atonement for some of the indignities that he had suffered under the Andros revolution ten years before. There was one point in his commission that was of vital interest to Rhode Island—that clause which made him Captain-General of her forces and Vice-Admiral of her whole territory. One of his first duties, in September, 1702, was to visit Newport, accompanied by several members of his council, to assume his command. Governor Cranston referred him to the charter of 1663, which made the power over the militia one of the privileges of the colony, and further said that nothing would be done about yielding those privileges until the advice of the assembly had been asked. Angered at this refusal to obey his commands, he went over to the Narragansett Country, where the inhabitants cordially welcomed him and accepted his commission. A few days afterward, the assembly wrote Dudley that since there were no express orders from the Queen demanding the surrender of the militia, they considered it their duty

to continue the same as formerly. Dudley, like the other royal governors before him, could not conceive how so small a colony could offer such bold resistance, and quickly wrote home his opinion of that government, thus again imitating his predecessors. His assertion that the Quakers "raved indecently" at the publication of his commission, and his pleasant allusion to the Narragansett welcome, show that the anti-Quaker element was not backward in volunteering information. The peroration of his report reminds us strongly of some of Lord Bellomont's documents. "My Lords", he says, "I am humbly of opinion that I do my duty to acquaint your Lordships that the government of Rhode Island in the present hands is a scandal to her Majesty's government. It is a very good settlement with about two thousand armed men in it. And no man in the government of any estate or education, though in the province there be men of very good estates, ability and loyalty; but the Quakers will by no means admit them to any trust, nor would they now accept it, in hopes of a dissolution of that misrule, and that they may be brought under Her Majesty's immediate government in all things which the major part by much of the whole people would pray for, but dare not for fear of the oppression and affront of the Quakers' party making a noise of their charter".<sup>1</sup>

Thus did Rhode Island obtain the enmity of Dudley at the very beginning of his administration. It was not long before another test was to be made of their respective powers. In September, 1702, the Massachusetts Governor, by virtue of his position as Vice-Admiral, attempted to interfere with the proceedings of the admiralty court at Newport, which had been established by a colony law of 1695. Rhode Island's resistance brought forth the usual condemnatory letter to the Board of Trade. A year later Dudley's efforts induced the Board of Trade to ask the attorney-general's official opinion as to whether Rhode Island's exercise of admiralty jurisdiction did not furnish sufficient cause for the repeal of the charter. That officer replied that since the act was limited in its terms "until His Majesty's pleasure be further known", it did not warrant a forfeiture of the charter, but advised that the colony should be ordered to repeal the act. This was accordingly done and all admiralty affairs were placed in the hands of Dudley. Since the reasons for the annulling of the act included several serious charges against Rhode Island, the Governor took occasion to write a letter of explanation to the Board of Trade,

<sup>1</sup>R. I. C. R., III, 463.

showing that the absence of any English constituted court made the creation of a local court for the judging of prizes a necessity.<sup>1</sup> But even valid excuses could not make much headway against Dudley's charges, and when the New York Governor reported that Rhode Island had refused to help him in his war against the French and Indians, the colony's name was regarded with added disfavor. Little could she do when such powerful enemies at home and abroad were striving to bring all the chartered colonies into a general colonial government. She, at least, was not the only colony under a cloud, as Connecticut was visited with much similar denunciation with the same end in view.

By February 12, 1705, the Board of Trade had prepared charges against both colonies and caused copies to be sent to the Royal Governor to collect evidence and to the colonial governors to make ready their defence. The indictment against Rhode Island was drawn up under thirteen heads, some of which were repetitions and only a few important. Dudley spent much time in obtaining proof to sustain each charge, and finally submitted a mass of forty-two documents, which must have looked formidable to any one unacquainted with the subject, but which were chiefly accusations against irresponsible individuals and not against the colony.<sup>2</sup> The charge that Rhode Island neglected the acts of navigation and countenanced piracy the colony denied, asserting that they not only detested such practices but had endeavored to suppress all such crimes. To the charge that Rhode Island harbored malefactors and also young men from other colonies who were induced to go there because the colony raised no taxes for the "support of her Majesty's Government and maintaining the war against the French", the colony replied, "this her Majesty's colony is free for any of her Majesty's subjects to come and inhabit there, nor is it in the respondents' power to hinder or prevent them therefrom, and further say that where one person or family hath removed out of other provinces or colonies into this, there hath five times the number gone out of this colony and settled in other provinces. The which we deem to be the privilege of every English subject; and we do deny that any considerable number of young men hath fled out of other provinces into this colony or have been anyways harbored or sheltered in the same; or that no rates or taxes are raised in this

<sup>1</sup>*R. I. C. R.*, III, 508. The admiralty act is in Arnold, II, 48.

<sup>2</sup>Dudley's "proofs" can be consulted in the copies of English records in the John Carter Brown Library. The charges and Rhode Island's answers are in *R. I. C. R.*, III, 543-549.

colony for the support of her Majesty's interest and government, but on the contrary say that they have been at more than six thousand pounds charge within this seven years in fortifying and other charges occasioned in maintaining and defending her Majesty's interest against the common enemy and support of the government.

"As to the fourth article that this colony will not furnish their quota, for answer we say that they are advised by counsel learned in the law that they are not obliged by law to furnish the other provinces or colonies with any quota, nor do they apprehend there is any necessity for the same. Notwithstanding which, obedient to her Majesty's commands, they have furnished the province of Massachusetts with a considerable quota of men to the considerable charge of the colony.

"As to the ninth article, that the government have refused to submit to her Majesty's commissions for commanding their militia of said colony, the respondents say that they are advised by counsel learned in the law that the militia of said colony, or the power of commanding thereof, is fully granted them by their charter, and that they have been in possession of the same above forty years: And as to the vice-admiralty these respondents further say, they have fully complied with Her Majesty's commands in that behalf, saving to themselves their right granted by charter for granting commissions to private men-of-war for the defense of Her Majesty's interest."

The remainder of the charges, which concerned denial of justice to strangers, rejection of the laws of England from their courts, refusal to allow appeals to the king, speaking disrespectfully of her Majesty, etc., they considered as frivolous. The replies have been given with some detail, since they show how clear was Rhode Island's defence, and how far her accusers had to go to trump up charges against her. Dudley had furtive hopes of becoming a second Andros, of ruling over a united New England, and when he found that the Lords of Trade did not look with disfavor upon his project, he redoubled his efforts. The great obstacles in his path were the colonial charters, and some pretext had to be found for their annulment.

The Board of Trade, their minds intent upon the "advantages and conveniences that may arise by reducing the chartered government", paid no attention to the colony's replies, but reported the gist of Dudley's charges to the Queen. The attorney and solicitor-general, furthermore, rendered it as their opinion that "upon an extraordinary exigency happening through the default or neglect of a proprietor or of those appointed by him, or their inability to protect or defend the province under their government and the inhabitants thereof in times

of war or imminent danger, your Majesty may constitute a governor of such province or colony". Finally, in February, 1706, a bill "for the better regulation of the charter governments and for the encouragement of the trade of the Plantations" was sent in to pave the way.<sup>1</sup> It passed the House of Commons, but failed to obtain the concurrence of the Lords. The presence of matters of greater national importance prevented the matter from again being brought to issue.

Thus again was Rhode Island's charter saved. One cause certainly of England's unwillingness to take such decided steps was the lack of unanimity among the high authorities over the methods of restraining the colonies. There was a certain class which regarded these colonies as contributors to British commercial supremacy, even again referred to their dangerous encouragement of woolen manufactures, and looked suspiciously on colonial attempts at independence. It was this class that considered the infringement of the Acts of Trade a sufficient cause for the revocation of the charters. There was another class, chiefly the conservatives, which thought that legal embarrassments stood in the way of annulling these charters, even if they had been issued by a former reign that was not now in the best of credit. Nor should the efforts of the agents be overlooked in this triumph of the rights of the chartered colonies. In 1702, Rhode Island, being without a regular colony agent, had intrusted her affairs into the hands of William Penn, the famous Quaker, who was now high in favor at the court of Queen Anne. Henceforth he lent his powerful influence to her cause, and at this particular time there were certain reasons why his aid was of especial value. Influential members of the Quaker sect were making common cause with the enemies of Connecticut, but through the light of Penn's eyes they speedily saw that the ruin of that colony meant the ruin of Rhode Island.<sup>2</sup> Thus did the much condemned liberality exercised in the time of Roger Williams receive its lasting reward.

Although this defeat did not render the colony charters secure from all future dangers, Rhode Island's enemies accepted the temporary issue and ceased their persecutions. Dudley acknowledged some slight military aid given him by the colony and reported that he henceforth hoped to maintain a good correspondence with the government. Brinley, discomfited by the failure of his hopes, was secretly striving

<sup>1</sup>Palfrey, iv, 369. The reports of the Board of Trade and the Attorney-General are in *R. I. C. R.*, iv, 12-16.

<sup>2</sup>This question of the Quaker influence in New England politics is more thoroughly discussed in Doyle's *Puritan Colonies*, II, 400.

to disengage himself from the jurisdiction which he despised. In 1709 he wrote to Sir Francis Nicholson, the former governor of Virginia: "I could exceedingly rejoice if your honor could unite us under a government whereof you were supreme next under Her Majesty. . . . It is all the hopes I have by your honor's means to have a release of our slavery and ill treatment". He then continues to justify his argument with uncomplimentary remarks about the government he desires to displace. "It is a Quaker mob government, the meanest sort rule their betters. I much question whether two persons in the ruling part of their government can write true English or frame a writing in any methodical way. I know them all well and know their abilities. Some of our highest rank in authority cannot write, and some in authority cannot read. We have now in our town of Newport three justices of three several trades; a shoemaker, a cooper and a carpenter, and each of them is a captain of a company, and the cooper is our general treasurer. We lie under great grievances and pressures and it is very hard upon us that we can have no remedy".<sup>1</sup> The old Narragansett settler realized that unless the Rhode Island government was supplanted by some friendly royal authority, he could never hope to get his numerous land titles confirmed in accordance with his wishes. But Rhode Island had weathered too many storms to be overthrown by the carpings of a few discontented men, and so Brinley's protest went for naught.

One reason at least why Rhode Island was now coming to be regarded with more favor was due to her evident exertion to take some part in the wars that were being waged against the French and Indians. Not being in immediate danger, she, in common with Connecticut, was not so eager to send volunteers to an unprofitable war as were the exposed colonies of New York and Massachusetts. True it was that she had plausible excuses in that she had already incurred serious charges in fortifying her own forts, and that her long water frontier required the maintenance of large bodies of men in her own territory. But it was the absence of necessity rather than inability that caused her backwardness in the matter. Dudley impatiently referred to Rhode Island when he said that the people of Massachusetts felt "very uneasy under their charge of service in the field, while others of her Majesty's subjects sleep in security and smile at our

<sup>1</sup>*R. I. H. S. Publ.*, viii, 95. Nicholson commanded the expedition upon Canada in the summer of 1709. He had been the principal patron in the founding of Trinity Church at Newport, and it was perhaps in this connection that Brinley could lay some claim to his acquaintance.

losses and charge''; and he frequently alludes to the matter in his report, as passages already quoted have shown. When the colony observed, however, that her defect in this regard was being used as an argument for the revocation of her charter, she became more attentive to military operations. The assembly had occasionally ordered some slight assistance after continued urging by the royal governors, but now, in February, 1707, when Dudley asked for aid in his proposed expedition against Nova Scotia, it quickly voted eighty volunteers and a vessel equipped to convey them. Again in the unsuccessful expedition upon Canada in the summer of 1709, Rhode Island levied a war tax of £1,000, equipped two hundred soldiers, purchased two war vessels and fitted out several transports. Undismayed by this failure, which had put the colony to heavy expense, Rhode Island contributed an equal number of men and transports to the expedition of July, 1710, and also to that of the following May.<sup>1</sup>

Her services so far had been most creditable, but in common with the other colonies she had suffered greatly both through loss of men and outlay of money. To meet these heavy expenses she had been compelled to imitate the neighboring colonies in issuing paper money.<sup>2</sup> The soldiers needed money, the treasury was empty and the supply of silver coin was practically exhausted. Some temporary move, at least, had to be made, and so this apparently harmless little wedge was lightly driven in, destined in the end to almost split the colony in twain. The act ordered that £5,000 in bills of credit should be printed with different denominations, each bill to have the value of current silver money of New England. They were to be redeemed in specie by the treasurer at the end of five years, the sum to be secured by an annual tax levied solely for the purpose. As Arnold says, "Thus commenced in Rhode Island a system of paper money issues fraught with disaster to the commercial interests of the colony, whose baleful influence was to extend over nearly a century, distracting alike the political, financial and even the social condition of the people, and which was to be the occasion of most bitter partisan strife long after the Revolutionary war had left us an independent state. If we except the principles upon which the colony was founded, and which from their intrinsic truth have since become universal, this

<sup>1</sup>The details of military appointments are in *R. I. C. R.*, iv, 70-82, 93-98, 120-124. The subject is gone into more thoroughly in the chapter on military history.

<sup>2</sup>Bills of credit were first emitted by Mass. in 1690, by N. Y. in 1709, and by N. J. in 1709. See Potter and Rider's *Account of Bills of Credit of R. I.*, p. 7.

adoption of the paper money system is perhaps the first act of our colonial legislation whose influence extends beyond the period of independence".<sup>1</sup>

This wasting war, known to the colonies as Queen Anne's War, was rapidly drawing to a close, and the Peace of Utrecht, in April, 1713, finally brought a most welcome end to the conflict. Rhode Island took early opportunity to lay aside her trappings of war. The military stores and the powder were given over into the treasurer's charge for safe keeping, and the cannon were tarred and laid on logs on the Governor's wharf. She now found time to give more attention to her internal affairs. Questions of town boundaries, of the long delayed Digest of the laws, and of the improvement of ways of travel came up for discussion, that never would have been possible before. The records teem with allusions to the construction of highways and bridges, the erection of ferries, and the paving of streets. Various kinds of manufactures, as of hemp, duck, cordage and nails, were granted legislative encouragement. The laws regulating trade began to receive much necessary revision, for Rhode Island was slowly but surely becoming a maritime colony. Whereas in 1690 there were scarcely five vessels belonging to the colony, when Governor Cranston made his report to the Board of Trade, in 1708, there were twenty-nine; and during the ten years preceding this latter date the colony had built for the merchants of other colonies nearly seventy-five vessels. As Cranston stated in regard to this increasing interest in shipping, "It is chiefly to be attributed to the inclination the youth of Rhode Island have to the sea. The land on said island, being all taken up and improved in small farms, so that the farmers, as their families increase, are compelled to put or place their children to trades or callings; but their inclinations being mostly to navigation, the greater part betake themselves to that employment, so that such as are industrious and thrifty, as they get a small stock beforehand, improve it in getting part of a vessel, as many of the tradesmen in the town of Newport also do, for the benefit of their children that are bred to navigation, in which town consists the chiefest of our navigation: not above two or three vessels belong to all the colony besides."<sup>2</sup>

This interest in commerce continued to increase after the Peace of Utrecht, almost doubling the tonnage of the colony within the following ten years. Her vessels carried rum, sugar, molasses, lumber,

<sup>1</sup>*Hist. of R. I.*, ii, 39.

<sup>2</sup>*R. I. C. R.*, iv, 56-60.



horses and provisions to both the British and Dutch West Indies, to Bermuda, the Bahamas, Surinam, Madeira, the Azores and the southern colonies, and brought back salt, rice, sugar, molasses, wines, peltry, cotton, and English woolen and linen goods. Such an increase in commerce meant a corresponding increase in population. In 1708 the first official census showed that the colony contained 7,181 inhabitants, with Newport, "the metropolis of the government", possessing 2,203, Providence 1,446, Kingston 1,200, and the remaining six towns from 200 to 600 each. Dudley in 1712 reported that Rhode Island had about 2,500 fighting men, and when after the peace this force had time to settle down and make provisions for their own social and economic betterment, the results must have been indeed striking.

But in it all there lurked the shadow of the paper money question. Since the first issue in 1710 the assembly had emitted four other issues before the end of the following year, amounting in all to £8,300. The influx of all this paper had placed what silver there was in the colony at a decided premium, and the necessity of furnishing some medium of exchange was rapidly becoming an all-absorbing question. It was but a short while before the matter assumed political significance. As money continued to be scarce, there arose a considerable party which favored the further issue of paper money by the public bank system—that is, the emission of a large sum to be loaned at interest to any one who would give mortgage security on his estate. This party was chiefly composed of those who owned a great deal of land and thus hoped to turn it into cash, and also of those who were actively engaged in commercial pursuits, the success of which depended upon the ready money in the colony.

The specie or "hard money" party foresaw nothing but evil in the continuance of such a medium of exchange. In February, 1714, the order of the general assembly that £2,000 of the outstanding bills should be put out of circulation by being burnt was not obeyed. This aroused much protest, and at the succeeding May election the specie party won a complete triumph, scarcely a member of the lower house being returned to his office. The paper money party evidently used the following year to advantage, since, in May, 1715, they thoroughly reversed the former success of their opponents. The deputy governor, all but one of his assistants, and nearly every deputy were displaced. The popularity and perhaps the neutrality of Governor Cranston, however, kept him in office. With the control of affairs in its hands, the party carried out its policy as it wished. In July, 1715, the assembly, giving as reasons for their act the heavy expenses of the

late war, the decay of trade and of farming, and the necessity of repairing the colony fort and the Newport jail, issued a bank of £30,000, to be loaned at 5 per cent. interest for ten years. The colony was thus committed to a course of action which it took many decades to change. The specie party made frequent protests, but when some expenditure of money was required, another lot of bills of credit was issued, and the necessary medium of exchange was provided. There is not space here to note the many successive issues of this currency.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that although it rapidly depreciated, ruining many individuals in the process, it usually served the purpose for which it was originally emitted. Its depreciation was due to the inability of the government, beset with constantly increasing expenses, to maintain it. The evils of the system were visited heavily upon many individuals and resulted in tarnishing the colony's good name, but those who were committed to the policy, testified heartily in its favor. Gov. Richard Ward in a general survey of the subject, in 1740, referred to the absolute necessity of some kind of currency, if only of paper, and then remarked, "We never should have enjoyed this advantage had not the government emitted bills of credit to supply the merchants with a medium of exchange. In short, if this colony be in any respect happy and flourishing, it is paper money and a right application of it that hath rendered us so".<sup>2</sup>

Outside of the question of paper money, there was very little public business transacted in the colony between 1713 and 1719. Changes in other governments, like the death of Queen Anne and the succession of George I in 1714, and the appointment of Shute as Governor of Massachusetts in 1716, were not fraught with such momentous consequences as were similar changes a few years before. There was so little of public interest to be attended to, that a September meeting of the assembly at Newport in 1717 could not obtain a quorum, and an October meeting of the following year was held at Providence with the Governor and nearly one-half of the members absent.<sup>3</sup>

By 1719 the old question of boundaries was again coming to the

<sup>1</sup>The subject is more thoroughly discussed in H. K. Stokes's chapter on financial history. It has been treated in monograph form in Potter and Rider's *Account of Bills of Credit of Rhode Island*. (Rider's *Hist. Tract*, no. 8.)

<sup>2</sup>Rider's *Hist. Tract*, viii, 158. Ward's statement, however, should be considered only as that of a strong partisan.

<sup>3</sup>One item of interest, however, was the long delayed publication of the colony laws in 1719. For a history of the various attempts to secure a compilation of the laws in force, see Rider's introductions to the reprints of 1705 and 1719.

front. The improvement in the state of society and the increase of Rhode Island's stability prevented border frays from being as frequent as in the early days; but the occasional conflicts that did happen, brought the matter of jurisdiction to the attention of Rhode Island and her neighbors. The northern line was the first to be settled. Ever since some Mendon people had complained, in 1706, that Rhode Island claimed land far beyond the Massachusetts line, there had been constant attempts on the part of both colonies to survey the proper boundary. Although the Massachusetts south line had been carefully laid out by Woodward and Saffery in 1642, the inability of the commissioners to arrange details delayed the final adjustment until 1719. In May of that year two committees reported that they had started from Wrentham Plain, and had run the line west across the Pawtucket River to a point two miles west of Alum Pond. This report was accepted by both colonies and entered upon the records.<sup>1</sup> Although the northern line of Rhode Island was thus established, the controversy over the eastern line, formerly waged with Plymouth, but now to be contested for with the more powerful Massachusetts, was still open and was even now causing considerable dispute between the inhabitants living near the border.

In the same year as the fixing of the northern boundary the old question of the Connecticut boundary was again revived, this time for final settlement. A request of the Board of Trade that a map of the colony should be drawn up reminded the assembly that nothing had as yet been done toward fixing the line with Connecticut. The two colonies in 1703 had agreed that the boundary should be the Pawcatuck as far as the mouth of the Ashaway River, then straight to the southwest corner of the Warwick purchase, and then due north to the Massachusetts line. But nothing decisive had been done in the matter of surveying it.<sup>2</sup> In 1719 both the Connecticut and Rhode Island assemblies appointed commissioners to negotiate the matter, although those of Connecticut were ordered only to survey the twenty mile line from Warwick Neck. When the committees met in April, 1720, Rhode Island refused to allow any joint survey unless all the boundary lines between the two colonies were run. This angered the Connecticut assembly greatly and they immediately wrote a letter to

<sup>1</sup>The various attempts at establishing this line are well summed up in foot notes in Arnold, II, 27, 42, 62. An account of the Woodward-Saffery survey of 1642 is in *N. E. Hist. and Gen. Rep.*, IV, 165.

<sup>2</sup>Arnold, II, 65, gives a summary of the attempt to survey the line.

Rhode Island saying, "We had no thought, at that time, of settling the line between our colonies, which has too often been fruitlessly endeavored; nor is there any word in our act referring to it; so that the rejecting of our commissioners upon the special business they were appointed to assist in, because they would not proceed to another which was foreign to it and about which there was no concert between us, is a matter which we believe you will think needs some explanation."<sup>1</sup>

The letter then went on to state that the boundary at most could not extend beyond a line running south from the Massachusetts line to the head waters of the Pawcatuck River, a large pond in South Kingstown.<sup>2</sup> If the boundary was to be finally decided according to this interpretation, it would have resulted in a great loss of territory to Rhode Island. It meant that the straight line running north, instead of beginning at the junction of the Ashaway River where the Pawcatuck turns abruptly south, began at Worden's Pond over ten miles further east, thus reducing Rhode Island to a small strip of land bordering on Narragansett Bay and on the ocean. Rhode Island claimed that it was the intent of the patent of 1644 to grant territory as far west as twenty-five miles, that according to her charter of 1663 the line followed the Pawcatuck River only as long as that river ran north, and that this specific boundary had been agreed upon by the commissioners of both colonies in 1703. She naturally made a vigorous protest and replied to Connecticut: "We perceive the whole scope and drift of your said remonstrance is to give us to understand that you will not comply with the agreement of the line between the two colonies made at Stonington in the year 1703, but wholly decline and reject that agreement. . . . But as you have rejected that as well as all other endeavors for an accommodation, and will not be satisfied without swallowing up the greatest part of our small colony, and that as your colony is on the west, without bounds or limits, you covet the same on the east, we are therefore resolved no longer to be thus imposed upon by you; but are determined, with the blessing of God, with all expedition to make our appeal to the King in council for his determination and decree of our westerly bounds."<sup>3</sup>

Both colonies now prepared voluminous reports for their London

<sup>1</sup>*R. I. C. R.*, iv, 275.

<sup>2</sup>This pond is known to-day as Worden's Pond. The Pawcatuck river runs from the ocean northeast until it is joined by the Ashaway River. It then abruptly turns south, and after a long course east, finds its head in Worden's Pond. The location of these points is well shown in a map in Bowen's *Boundary Disputes*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>These letters, dated June 1 and July 7, 1720, are in *R. I. C. R.*, iv, 275, 276.

agents.<sup>1</sup> In February, 1723, a hearing was held before the Board of Trade, which, on March 22, made its report to the Privy Council. This report, easily the best and most careful decision ever rendered on the subject, stated briefly the most important arguments of both sides and came to the following conclusions: "Upon the whole, it seems probable to us, as well as from the pretended grant of the Earl of Warwick and others to the colony of Rhode Island, as from the submission of the boundaries to arbitration by the agents of Connecticut and Rhode Island so soon after the charter of Connecticut had been obtained, that King Charles the Second was surprised in his grant to Connecticut; and that His Majesty intended to redress the grievance complained of by Rhode Island by his subsequent charter to them; but the former charter to Connecticut being still in force and never made void by scire facias or otherwise, it is certain that the relief intended for Rhode Island is of no force in law. However, in justice to Rhode Island, it must be observed that the transactions of the commissioners appointed by the respective colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island [in 1703] are a strong proof that those of Connecticut did apprehend that the pretensions of Rhode Island were just and equitable".<sup>2</sup>

Thus after all these years of struggle and controversy this impartial tribunal arrived at what was undoubtedly the most just decision possible—that Rhode Island's claim to the Narragansett country, although not vindicated in point of law, was certainly justified by right and equity. The report concluded, however, with the wish that both colonies should submit themselves to His Majesty and be annexed to New Hampshire. When this proposal was submitted to the colonies, it met with immediate protest. Connecticut in a brief reply declined to surrender her charter, and asserted her perfect willingness to abide forever by the King's decision upon the disputed lands. Rhode Island addressed a lengthy answer to Partridge, her London agent, in which she likewise refused to be annexed to New Hampshire, arguing that such a course would neither be for the best interests of Great Britain, nor tend to quiet the dispute, nor aid the defence of the country, nor promote trade. They further showed the impracticability of joining the southern colonies to New Hampshire by reason of the distance between those two portions of New England, a point which the Board of Trade seem to have been ignorant of.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>These reports are in *R. I. C. R.*, iv, 282-284, Ext. from Conn. MSS. II, 73-113 in R. I. H. S. Library.

<sup>2</sup>*R. I. C. R.*, iv, 307.

<sup>3</sup>Connecticut's reply is dated October 28, 1723, and that of Rhode Island Nov. 26, 1723. *R. I. C. R.*, iv, 334.

Unable to make the colonies see the wisdom of giving up their charters, the Board of Trade decided to put an end to the Narragansett controversy by making the decision on grounds of equity and right. On January 25, 1726, they rendered a second report, recommending that the line be run according to the agreement of 1703. This was a complete justification of Rhode Island's claim. The Privy Council adopted the recommendation and reported accordingly to the King, who, on February 8, 1727, issued the final decree on the subject. It ordered that a line, "drawn from the mouth of Ashaway River where it falls into the Pawtucket River, and thence extending north to the south line of Massachusetts Bay, may forever hereafter be the settled boundary between the two colonies".<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island might well rejoice that this controversy, so long and bitterly contested, had been settled with the preservation of her territory as granted by the King in her charter. Her persistent efforts in defence of her rights were at last rewarded.

The death of Gov. Samuel Cranston, on April 26, 1727, forms a fitting close to the long period of danger and trouble. It was fortunate indeed for Rhode Island that during the last quarter century she had been under the wise and efficient administration of such a governor. Firm and courageous in character, tactful to an extraordinary degree in his correspondence with the English authorities, and thoroughly patriotic to the interests of his colony, he was exactly the man to preserve Rhode Island from the machinations of her enemies. Few rulers subjected to the test of annual election have ever remained in office as long as he. For thirty successive years his calm neutrality on such disturbing subjects as the paper money question and the importance of one or another religious sect,<sup>2</sup> his tendency to avoid extremes, and his personal popularity caused him to be elected to the highest position in the colony. He had taken up his task of administration at a time when the colony's existence was threatened both from abroad and at home. He had warded off the powerful attacks of Lord Bellomont, had guided the government through the long and exhausting srench war, had aided in bringing about a favorable settlement of two important boundary disputes, and now with the

<sup>1</sup>*R. I. C. R.*, iv, 373. The line was finally surveyed by joint commissioners Sept. 27, 1728. For an account of this survey and the subsequent straightening of the line in 1840, see Bowen's *Boundary Disputes*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>It was said that "he did not assemble with any sect nor attend any public meeting. The charter granted a universal liberty of conscience, and he was a keep-at-home Protestant. He was an impartial and good man". (H. E. Turner, *The Two Governors Cranston*, p. 50.)

approach of death could witness a colony whose present stability and future promise was largely due to his own efforts.

Under the lengthy administration of Governor Cranston the colony had experienced notable growth and progress. The population during this period of thirty years had trebled itself; and commerce, manufactures and agriculture had increased in proportion. There was furthermore considerable attention now given by the colonists to the improvement of their social condition. Schools were deemed a more necessary part of a child's life; there were some attempts to check such social evils as drunkenness and slavery; and the year 1727 witnessed the establishment of a printing press at Newport. Another favorable sign was the growth of religious sentiment. The absolute liberty of conscience which was established by the founders as the basis of the colony had often been regarded by the religious bigots of the neighboring colonies as a step towards disorder and anarchy. Cotton Mather, writing in 1695, describes Rhode Island as a "colluvies of Anti-nomians, Familists, Anabaptists, Anti-Sabbatarians, Arminians, Socinians, Quakers, Ranters, everything in the world but Roman Catholics and real Christians". But during the next quarter century many more churches were built. New and strong sects, like the Episcopalians, established themselves in the colony, and there was a general growth of religious thought, proportionate with the increase in population. The proof thus more clearly shown that religion could flourish where people were allowed to worship God according to their conscience, caused Mather to admit in 1718 that "Calvinists with Lutherans, Presbyterians with Episcopalians, Pedobaptists with Anabaptists, beholding one another to fear God and work righteousness, do with delight sit down together at the same table of the Lord".<sup>1</sup> And the worthy John Callender, writing a few years later,<sup>2</sup> said that the colony had "proved that the terrible fears that barbarity would break in where no particular forms of worship and discipline are established by the civil powers, are really vain and groundless". All faiths indeed, whether Protestant or Catholic,<sup>3</sup> Mohammedan or Pagan, were permitted to worship as they saw fit. The triumph of toleration in religion had certainly been achieved.

<sup>1</sup>Mather's two utterances are in his *Magnalia*, bk. vii, p. 20, and in *1 Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 1, 105.

<sup>2</sup>*Hist. Discourse*, p. 108.

<sup>3</sup>A clause in the Digest of 1719 debarring Roman Catholics from all political rights and asserted to have been passed in 1664, has often been held up as