

politics of his time, retained office through his native tact, for Charles, Lord Baltimore, left him reasonable freedom of action. Horatio Sharpe, though he encountered less opposition, was so handicapped by the meddling of Frederick and Cecilius that it was with difficulty he retained his post for sixteen years.

In sum then, offices of profit were numerous in Maryland, and many of them were valuable. What was the effect of such an arrangement? The answer, though it lies outside the scope of this work, may at least be here suggested. The system made government expensive. It produced envy and political controversy. It drew His Lordship into constantly less effectual efforts to purchase friends and buy off opponents. It provided a handy grievance for the discontented and a ready argument for those who opposed proprietary government. It was a bad system: bad for the people because it cost them money; bad for the proprietary because it taught the people to despise him. It benefitted no one but the members of an inner circle who for several generations were well paid for doing very little.

And yet in a way the system was defensible. They were well paid for doing very little. And so they got their fingers into every pie, put out their money where it would do them good, and built substantial fortunes. Which meant they could also put up fine houses, gather libraries, and improve their leisure. It meant they could handily civilize what had been a wilderness. It meant they could create in Annapolis one of the loveliest and most urbane little cities in His Majesty's dominions. For culturally speaking Maryland reached an early and graceful maturity, which could not so readily have been attained had not a few people been well paid for doing very little.

So, like most schemes of our devising, the system was a bad one and yet a good one: it all depends on values and on the point of view.