

correspondence wherein Lord Baltimore's effort to restore the former table was cut short by passage of a, to him, still more objectionable law.

This act, in March, 1725/6, proposed to reduce again, by about a fourth, the fees of the Commissary General, Deputy Secretary, Examiner General, Clerk of the Council, Clerk of the High Court of Appeals, and county clerks. His Lordship promptly disallowed it, so that fees now went unregulated for two decades. Fee bills, though often introduced, were never passed, for the Lower House insisted on their table of 1725/6, and the Upper House as stubbornly on that of 1719. Baltimore's fee proclamation of 1733 merely served to heighten and turn against himself the mounting wrath of the delegates.

Meanwhile the decayed state of Maryland's tobacco trade, sinking ever lower since the Virginia law of 1730, compelled the attention of legislators, producing at last, in July, 1747, an inspection act modeled on that of Maryland's southern neighbor. Moreover its preparation had created enough good will to settle also the vexed fee question.

Both houses rightly apprehended that an inspection law would raise tobacco prices twenty-five percent or more, so that tobacco fees could be reduced without affecting the real value of officers' incomes. Accordingly all fees and salaries were fixed at a fifth or a fourth below the rates of 1719. To encourage production of flax and hemp persons making no tobacco were allowed to pay their fees in money at £ 0.12.6 currency per hundred pounds.

This law was a partial victory for the Upper House. It established tobacco fees which, in sterling value, were equal to or above those of 1719, and it greatly eased the problem of collection. Only the money provision troubled office holders. The face value of £ 0.12.6 currency was £ 0.9.4½ sterling; but it circulated at about £ 0.6.3, while tobacco now rose to twelve or sixteen shillings sterling per hundred pounds. So on fees paid in currency officers could lose as much as fifty percent.<sup>16</sup>

Subsequent inspection and fee acts were passed in 1753 and 1763. The former struck off certain fractions, for greater ease in

<sup>16</sup> Officers complained too that debtors swore they produced no tobacco, or had others swear for them, when actually they were planters. Cf. John Beale Bordley to Roger Boyce, July 13, 1761 (Fee Book of J. B. Bordley, 1759-61, Bordley Papers, Md. Historical Society).