

**UCLA**

**UCLA Historical Journal**

**Title**

The Artisans' Battle Against Political Subordination in Colonial New York City

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1sc776n5>

**Journal**

UCLA Historical Journal, 2(0)

**Author**

Collins, Charles Fredrick

**Publication Date**

1981

**Copyright Information**

Copyright 1981 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

## The Artisans' Battle Against Political Subordination in Colonial New York City

Charles Frederick Collins

For New York City's artisanry, the period 1765-1770 was one of unprecedented political activity. During this period the artisans developed organizational methods which differed significantly from the traditional politics of colonial New York. Their activities ranged from organizing mass street demonstrations and large public meetings to participating actively in New York's electoral politics.<sup>1</sup>

This phenomenal rise in the political activity of the artisanry has sparked a continuing debate among colonial historians. Carl Becker began this debate in *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776*, by arguing that New York's politics in the 1760s were characterized not only by a struggle for independence from Britain, but also by a conflict between the lower and upper classes over who would benefit from independence.

Charles Frederick Collins received his B.A. in History from the University of California, Berkeley, and his M.A. in American History from the University of California, Los Angeles. He is currently working on a law degree at the University of Santa Clara Law School.

Becker's critics have attacked his thesis of class struggle. Some historians, such as Roger Champagne and Milton Klein, do not so much contest Becker's claim that colonial society was divided into an upper and lower class as much as they maintain that these class differences had no political meaning. They suggest that the lower class, like the upper class, actually supported either the DeLanceys or the Livingstons, New York's two ruling political families. Other historians, such as Patricia Bonomi, deny that New York was a class society and instead assert that New York's colonial society was pluralistic and consisted of myriad opposing interest groups based on religious, economic, regional, and ethnic differences. These historians' arguments largely discredit Becker's thesis regarding New York's colonial politics. Yet the success of Becker's critics should be attributed more to his weaknesses than to their strengths. Becker views New York's class conflict as a struggle between an unfranchised lower class and an upper class of merchant-landlords who held a monopoly on the politics of the colony. He characterizes the struggle as a battle for democracy. But as Becker's critics correctly observe, New York's lower class enjoyed one of the most liberal franchises among the colonies and had used it for many years before the revolutionary period.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of Becker's emphasis on the control of political power, the conflict between New York's lower class artisanry and the upper class merchant-landlords was just as much a struggle over differing economic perspectives. The merchant-landlords were part of an Atlantic economy, and their interests were best served by maintaining that economy. Artisans were linked to the Atlantic economy by their dependence on the merchants who both employed their services and acted as middlemen facilitating a smooth flow of raw materials and services between the various artisanal crafts. Yet artisans had fewer direct ties overseas because their production was largely for local and regional markets.

These differing economic interests were reflected in political conceptions. The merchant-landlords favored a government by the upper class. They supported democracy only as a method of deciding differences among themselves. To realize their conception of democracy, however, the merchant-landlords did not need to limit the franchise or discourage the artisans from voting. Instead, they used their transoceanic economic position to control the voting behavior of the artisanry.

Where the merchant-landlords preferred an oligarchy, the artisans' ideal was a community-based democracy of small producers, none of whom would be economically powerful enough to control other artisans' votes. This conception reflected the artisans' stronger local and regional connections. The destruction of the traditional system of

patronage and clientage, which bound the artisanry to the political desires of the merchant-landlords, was the prerequisite for the political freedom the artisans sought.

The struggle between the artisans and the merchant-landlords grew out of specific events in New York City during the period 1761-1770. The period was one of economic decline both in New York and in the Atlantic economy in general. Depression initially strengthened the client-patron relationship. Prolonged depression, however, such as that experienced in New York in the 1760s, forced many artisans living close to the margin of survival to reevaluate their position vis-à-vis the ruling class. This was compounded by the fact that the artisanry was not only under economic pressure, it was also involved in the colonies' struggle with Great Britain. Through this struggle the artisans not only developed organizational skills, they also adapted the ideology of the colonial struggle to their own economic conflict with the merchant-landlords. This ideology was based on two major concepts. The first was that decision-making should involve the entire community and not just the elite. The second was the belief that individual artisans had inalienable democratic rights as "Free Born Englishmen" as much as did the merchant-landlords.

As a result of the economy and the struggle with England, the period witnessed a constant process of polarization between the two classes, especially during the Stamp Act crisis, the 1768 and 1769 assembly elections, and the struggles over non-importation and the secret ballot in late 1769 and early 1770. It was during this period that New York City's artisanry awoke to their own interests and caused the burst of political activity which has interested so many historians.<sup>3</sup>

The system of political subordination, or deference, in colonial New York City enabled the merchant-landlords to control the political behavior of the artisanry. This system worked through a combination of patronage, or sponsorship, and economic clientage, or coercion. The potential success of the system was limited by both the economic position of individual artisans and the general economic situation of New York society. The greater economic independence of the more prosperous and skilled craftsmen probably enabled them to avoid clientage, although they could have opted to accept patronage, which was more condoned by colonial society. Less skilled and more dependent artisans would have been the most likely victims of coercion. Economic conditions within the colony limited the system, however. Although an expanding economy increased the system's potential for patronage, it also presented more options to artisans. Simultaneously, expansion increased employment and protected the lower artisans from economic coercion. Likewise, a declining economy increased the potential for coercion since

artisans were in a more marginal position, and it also decreased the availability of patronage positions. Although depression reinforced the power of economic coercion, a prolonged depression limited this effect because individual artisans, when threatened with unemployment or even starvation, broke the long-term chains of economic clientage in the interests of immediate survival.

Virtually all historians who have studied New York's colonial politics have commented on the bribery and intimidation which characterized the colony's general electoral practices. They have attributed this corruption to the primitive nature of colonial democracy.<sup>4</sup> But few have noted that the system of political subordination was more developed in the urban areas. In New York City the foundation of this political subordination was clientage, and it functioned through the most sophisticated methods of information gathering and dissemination known during the period. Not only was voting by voice (*viva voce*), and closely monitored, but the results were published and sold. Thus, the merchant-landlords had easy access to the voting records of the entire artisanry.<sup>5</sup> This coercive side of political subordination, although little publicized, was a mass phenomenon because patronage was limited in scope by the availability of official positions and party funds. There were, however, a multiplicity of economic connections between the merchant-landlords and the artisanry and it was these connections which facilitated the economic coercion of the artisans.

The system of control was relatively simple. During elections, "Candidates, their Friends, Agents, Attornies, Solicitors or Acquaintances" canvassed the artisans. Once the artisan-clients were informed of their patrons' interests, they were monitored to insure that they voted in the prescribed manner. This monitoring was done by the candidates or their agents who stood near the polling area to insure that artisan-clients realized they were being watched.<sup>6</sup> Naturally, the monitoring process was made easier after the election of 1761 when the poll lists began to be published.

The system of political subordination was strained throughout the period 1761-1770, however, by the colony's steadily deteriorating economic conditions which began with the decline of Britain's military presence near the end of the Seven Years' War. With the British withdrawal, New York's economy slid into a declining cycle of recession and recovery from which it did not escape until the early 1770s. This economic decline was caused by a constant process of monetary shrinkage and the end of the economic expansion New York had experienced as a result of its strategic position as Britain's major supply depot in North America during the war and by changes in European food production.<sup>7</sup> It was these years of economic crisis that weakened the system of political deference.

The effects of the British withdrawal and the economic crisis were felt most by the artisans. Rising food prices caused by increasing European demand for flour drove many artisans into debt. The more marginal artisans faced starvation or poor relief. Simultaneously, as business declined, unemployment increased and wages for cartmen, laborers, mariners, and other unskilled artisans plummeted. To make matters worse, the artisans also faced competition for jobs from those British soldiers who remained stationed in New York. These soldiers were willing to work for wages which were far lower than those normally received by artisans. These problems became severe after 1763 and led to a partial breakdown in the traditional system of political deference.<sup>8</sup>

When the Seven Years' War ended in 1763, Britain was faced with the massive costs of garrisoning its new empire in North America. Led by Prime Minister George Grenville, the British government planned to defray some of the costs of this enterprise by increasing taxation in the colonies. To carry out this plan, Grenville's administration imposed three new colonial taxes: the Sugar Act of 1764, the Stamp Act of 1765, and the Quartering Act of 1765. Although the acts were to help British finances, the combined effect of these acts on the colonies was the further depression of trade and drainage of specie.<sup>9</sup>

These new taxes, like the depression, were felt the most by the artisans. Unemployment increased in distilling and shipping industries due to the effects of the Sugar Act. The Stamp Act's tax on legal documents also injured the artisanry by placing heavy duties on indenturing and apprenticeship agreements. The Quartering Act was the worst of the three taxes from the standpoint of the artisans. First, it taxed the artisans to billet the King's troops; and second, these same soldiers, who were willing to accept sub-standard wages, competed with the artisans for jobs.<sup>10</sup>

All classes of New York society united to oppose these taxes. Initially, they focused their efforts on the Stamp Act because the Stamp Act was an internal tax--one levied on goods and materials already in the colonies and not one, such as the Sugar tax, collected on products as they entered the colonies. The levying of an internal tax was viewed as a more severe threat to colonial rights. The unity of classes in their opposition to the Stamp Act was built around the commonly-held concepts of community, private property, and the inalienable rights of Englishmen. Colonial solidarity, however, was short-lived.

The artisans, who were the most threatened by the new taxes, were responsible for the break in unity. Having the most to lose from the Stamp Act, they responded to it so violently that they frightened the moderate section of the ruling class, the Livingston party, which controlled

the General Assembly at this time. The Livingston party believed that by petitioning Parliament they could obtain the repeal of the Stamp Act, and, to back this up, they hoped to lead a peaceful boycott of those transactions requiring stamps. The artisans, in contrast, supported tactics such as crowd actions and mass meetings which they thought would bring faster results. These tactics characterized their activities for the remainder of the decade, and forged strong links between the artisan community and the militant Sons of Liberty, an organization which had sprung to life in opposition to the Stamp Act.

It is unclear exactly how the Sons of Liberty were organized or led. Some of the emerging leaders of the new organization were ships' captains or merchants. One prominent leader was Captain James DeLancey, the head of the DeLancey party. Despite these upper class leaders of the Sons of Liberty, the majority of the rank and file members were artisans. Many of these artisans who were active in street demonstrations participated partly in deference to the Sons' non-artisan leaders. This was the case, for example, with the seamen Sons of Liberty who followed Alexander McDougall and Isaac Sears, both of whom were ships' captains.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of class distinctions within the Sons, their opposition to the Stamp Act was more active than the tactics of the Livingston party, and as such the group attracted the support of the artisanry as well as the attention of Parliament. As a result, the Stamp Act was repealed in March 1766.

The success of the anti-Stamp Act agitation demonstrated to the artisans the benefits of mass action and community organization. During the crisis the artisanry went beyond its traditional methods of agitation and crowd action based on occupational groupings responding to problems specific to their trades. Instead they began to organize their community as a whole. This organization was carried out by a small but militant minority, most of whom were enlisted in the Sons of Liberty, and it conflicted with the desires of the moderate Livingston party. Yet artisan actions were not completely class-based. The activity of the artisans was carried out both in the interests of some elements of the ruling class, such as James DeLancey's party, as well as for the artisan community itself. Even after the repeal of the Stamp Act, however, the artisans remained politically subordinate to the ruling class and its needs and ideology. New York City's artisans were political novices in 1765-1766, but the Stamp Act crisis taught them the value of organization. By 1769 the artisans were well-schooled in politics. They received this education during the bitter electoral contests of 1768 and 1769.

In the twelve months between February 1768 and January 1769, there were two Assembly elections in New York. These elections occurred in the lull between the Stamp Act

crisis and the coming battles over the Townshend Acts. Although these elections saw the further politicization of New York's artisans, they did not pit the artisans directly against the ruling class. As the Stamp Act crisis had presaged, the elections were contested between the parties of the DeLanceys and the Livingstons. For the artisanry, the choice was between these parties, for there were no candidates who reflected the class interests of the artisans.<sup>12</sup> The first of these elections took place in March 1768.

The politics of the 1768 election are elusive because, despite the Stamp Act crisis, there was not a complete polarization between the DeLanceys and the Livingstons. There were four Assembly seats available from New York City and seven candidates competing for these positions. Captain James DeLancey, Jacob Walton, and James Jauncey were nominated together by a large meeting of New York's freemen and freeholders. They ran on a ticket which claimed to have the interest of the mercantile community at heart. The Livingston party ran Phillip Livingston and John Morin Scott. The other candidates were William Bayard, a merchant, and Amos Dodge, a carpenter. Neither of these last two candidates was popular.<sup>13</sup>

The election's elusiveness flows from the decision of the DeLanceys to run only three candidates. This tactic had two results. First, it virtually assured the popular Phillip Livingston of a seat by placing Livingston in a position where his success was not linked to John Morin Scott. Second, the strategy also allowed the DeLancey supporters to concentrate their attacks on Scott who was a more vulnerable candidate than Livingston.

Isolating Scott was an important strategy, and it reveals the deference the artisans accorded the upper classes. The attacks of DeLancey's supporters on Scott struck a responsive chord in the artisan community. The artisans had two grievances against Scott: he was a lawyer, and he had betrayed the community by opposing the artisans' tactics during the Stamp Act crisis. The hostility toward Scott for his betrayal during the Stamp Act crisis needs no explanation, but the reasons behind the artisans' hatred for lawyers are not immediately clear.<sup>14</sup>

Many artisans thought that lawyers were parasitic non-producers and generally unscrupulous individuals. The artisans' broadsides regarding lawyers show the beginnings of class consciousness in that they often compared lawyers' qualities to those of the merchants:

Jack Bowline and Tom Hatchway send their services (damn compliments) to the Freeholders and Freemen of the City of New York and beg they would in order to try how the land lies, take an Observation and they will find, 1st, That the good people of



this City are supported by trade and the Merchants.  
2nd, That the Lawyers are supported by the people.<sup>15</sup>

Bowline and Hatchway were answered by Mr. Axe and Mr. Hammer, two cordwainers, who affirmed "that the Leather-Aprons (a very respectable Body) are clearly of their Opinion, That it is Trade and not Law supports our Families . . ." Coupled to the artisans' belief that lawyers were parasites was the popular feeling "that our happy constitution has found more betrayers in that practice [law] than in any other profession whatsoever."<sup>16</sup>

The artisans' distrust of lawyers, nonetheless, was based on more than general impressions of unscrupulousness. They believed that Scott in particular, and lawyers in general, opposed a bill which would set up a small claims court where claimants could litigate before a justice of the peace without the aid of lawyers. This law clearly would benefit the lower classes at the expense of the legal profession. The artisans believed that:

The Reformation of the Proceedings in the Recovery of Debts, and lessening their fees is absolutely necessary, but if you choose Lawyers to represent you, they will never suffer any effectual Law to pass for this Purpose . . .<sup>17</sup>

Since this bill would hinder lawyers in one important aspect of their work, the recovery of debts, it also would have had an effect on the system of economic clientage. Thus, the bill was class-biased, and Scott's opposition to it gained him few friends among the artisans and strengthened the potential for class issues to influence the election.

Scott and his supporters in the Livingston party attempted to defuse the class issue and to downplay Scott's role during the Stamp Act crisis. They did this by introducing religious issues into the election debates (the DeLanceys were Anglicans, and the Livingstons were Presbyterians). In earlier days, this tactic might have been successful, but it was such an obvious device that many artisans realized it was merely a smokescreen behind which lay the real class-related issues of Scott's professional and political loyalties. Artisans were advised in "The Voters New Catechism" that "He [Scott] here literally uses Religion as a cloak to hide his Faults."<sup>18</sup>

The strategy of making religion an issue failed, and Scott was decisively rejected by the voters. Over 47% (1924 voters) of the possible electorate of 4023 white males participated in the election of 1768.<sup>19</sup> Phillip Livingston commanded the most votes (1320), but the DeLancey slate swept into office behind him. James DeLancey received 1204 votes, Walton 1175, and Jauncey 1052. Scott, perhaps due to his lukewarm Livingston support,

received only 870 votes. Bayard and Dodge together could not equal even Scott's total.<sup>20</sup>

By analyzing data provided by the poll lists, kept so carefully in the interests of the merchant-landlords, it is possible to distinguish the outlines of economic clientage in this election. To do this, all the voters identifiable by occupation (1151 out of 1924 or 60% of the total voters) were compiled into a sample. The voters were classified by separate trades and then grouped under larger occupational headings. Of the 1151 occupationally identified voters, 996 were identified as artisans, 83 were merchants, and the remaining 72 were gentlemen, attorneys, and farmers.

Table I shows the outcome of the election. The results are organized first by candidate and then by slate voting, where a voter either chose all three DeLancey candidates or voted for both of the two Livingston candidates. Since voters had four possible candidates, they could not vote both slates.

The outcome of the election indicates that slate voting among artisans was linked to economic clientage.<sup>21</sup> The artisans' voting patterns mirrored those of their merchant-landlord patrons. The merchants' vote was split between the DeLanceys and the Livingstons, and, similarly, this division was reflected in the artisanry's voting patterns.

Despite the DeLanceys' claim to represent the mercantile community, they won only because of the combined total of split ballots. Slate voters among the merchants favored the Livingstons. Of the 60 merchants (72% of the total) who voted by slate, 37 (62% of the slate voters) cast their ballots for the Livingston ticket. Only 23 (38% of the slate voters) voted for the DeLancey candidates in a block.

The artisans' voting patterns closely paralleled those of the merchants. The total number of artisan slate voters was 712 or 71% of the total artisan sample. Of the artisan slate voters, 388 (54% of the slate voters) voted for the Livingston ticket; 324 (46% of the slate voters) voted DeLancey. Most of the individual artisanal trades were split as to their affiliation. Many trades, which largely supported one or the other of the two contesting parties, were too small to be meaningful, and their voting probably was influenced by family affiliation. In the larger trades, kinship was not statistically important. The Livingston party benefitted most from the few instances of craft-specific slate voting, but even the most militant artisans, members of the Sons of Liberty, were divided in their political affiliation. The division shows the split over political tactics seen during the Stamp Act crisis. The majority of the Sons, led by Isaac

TABLE I

## ARTISAN VOTING BEHAVIOR IN 1768 ELECTION

## LEGEND:

A - DELANCEY  
B - WALTON  
C - LIVINGSTON

D - JAUNCEY  
E - SCOTT  
F - BAYARD

G - DODGE  
H - DELANCEY SLATE VOTERS  
I - LIVINGSTON SLATE VOTERS

	TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
<u>MERCHANTS</u>	83	57	56	72	31	43	31	0	23	37
<u>ARTISANS</u>										
GENERAL SERVICES:										
Laborer	142	85	80	85	90	64	41	31	43	47
Shopkeeper	35	20	26	32	13	19	11	0	8	18
Cartman	21	14	10	16	14	15	6	4	6	13
Butcher	16	12	10	9	11	6	1	5	7	4
Innkeeper	9	9	7	7	6	2	3	1	4	2
TOTAL	223	140	133	149	134	106	62	41	68	84
LEATHER GOODS:										
Cordwainer	121	64	60	89	63	75	36	17	29	62
Sadler	12	8	5	10	5	8	4	1	3	8
Currier	5	5	5	3	4	0	1	2	4	0
Tanner	6	4	5	4	4	3	3	1	3	2
Leather Dresser	3	1	2	2	3	1	1	0	1	1
TOTAL	147	82	77	108	79	87	45	21	40	73
BUILDING TRADES:										
Carpenter	75	48	49	53	49	35	25	25	28	29
Bricklayer	31	17	15	16	14	12	9	3	9	11
Painter	7	5	5	5	4	1	4	1	1	0
Mason	6	6	6	4	2	2	3	0	2	1
Plasterer	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	120	76	76	78	70	50	42	29	40	42
METAL WORKING:										
Blacksmith	26	20	22	15	19	13	8	4	13	9
Gunsmith	13	9	11	8	8	8	8	2	7	7
Brass Founder	3	3	1	2	0	3	1	0	0	2
Tinman	6	3	3	5	2	4	2	0	2	3
Brazier	5	2	4	3	5	3	0	0	2	1
Wheelwright	4	3	3	4	1	3	1	1	1	3
TOTAL	57	40	44	37	35	34	20	7	25	25

TABLE I - CONTINUED

	TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
WOODWORKING:										
Cooper	51	27	26	36	37	23	13	8	22	18
Joiner	26	18	17	17	10	13	13	6	6	8
Blockmaker	12	9	7	8	5	6	2	2	3	4
Turner	10	7	9	5	7	2	4	1	6	1
Cabinetmaker	4	2	4	3	1	2	1	0	0	1
Chairmaker	5	2	2	4	2	3	2	0	2	3
Upholster	3	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Coachmaker	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
TOTAL	113	68	69	76	65	51	37	18	42	36
WEARING APPAREL:										
Tailor	35	25	27	20	23	12	13	3	16	10
Wigmaker	22	14	14	13	12	13	7	3	6	9
Feltmaker	7	4	4	6	1	5	1	1	1	4
Hatter	9	6	6	8	6	4	1	1	4	4
Staymaker	2	1	2	2	0	2	1	0	0	2
Pantsmaker	4	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	2
Weaver	23	16	16	18	15	10	6	3	9	9
Hosier	2	2	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	104	70	74	71	60	49	31	12	38	40
SHIPPING:										
Mariner	42	27	29	32	22	18	10	51	16	16
Shipwright	28	19	18	17	13	91	8	11	9	8
Sailmaker	6	3	4	6	3	2	4	0	0	2
Ropemaker	6	5	5	4	5	1	1	0	5	1
Instrument Maker	3	2	2	2	3	1	1	0	2	1
Boatman	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Rigger	2	2	2	2	0	1	1	0	1	0
TOTAL	88	59	61	64	47	32	25	16	34	28
BAKERS:										
Baker	64	49	37	49	21	40	25	8	12	37
Boalter	2	2	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	1
Measurer	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
Miller	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	69	53	40	53	22	43	26	8	13	39
SPECIAL SERVICES*	75	57	57	57	38	23	25	7	24	21
<u>ARTISAN TOTAL</u>	996	645	631	693	550	475	313	159	324	388

\*Special Services include trades which had so few artisans in their ranks that figures showing their voting patterns as a trade are meaningless. The majority of these artisans produced luxury goods.

Sears and John Lamb, supported the DeLanceys. The minority, under Alexander McDougall, supported the more moderate Livingstons.

Thus, patronage and clientage seem likely to have played a role in the outcome of the 1768 Assembly election. Merchants and artisans voted by slate in similar proportions (72% and 71% respectively). Likewise, the breakdown of slate voters is comparable between merchants and artisans. The Livingston ticket received 62% of the merchant slate voters and 54% of the artisan slate voters. The DeLanceys attracted only 38% of the merchant slate voters and 46% of the artisan slate voters. The stronger showing of the DeLancey ticket among artisan slate voters probably reflects a bias among independent artisans in favor of the more radical policies of the Sons of Liberty and their DeLancey supporters.

Although the outcome of the 1768 election certainly suggests that clientage played a role, the results of the 1769 election are more compelling, if only because non-slate voters played such an important role in determining the 1768 outcome. This was less the case in 1769.

On January 2, 1769, Governor Moore again dissolved the General Assembly and called for new elections. Moore's action was caused by the Assembly's discussion of the Massachusetts Circular Letter protesting the Townshend Acts. The Assembly discussed and answered the letter due to the promptings of the DeLancey party and the Sons of Liberty. Both the contending parties realized that by discussing the Circular Letter they were assuring the Assembly's dissolution because they knew that Governor Moore had instructions to this effect. Yet both sides believed that they would profit by a new election.<sup>22</sup>

The election differed significantly from the 1768 election in that there was a complete polarization between the parties. After some initial attempts to compromise, each party nominated four candidates for the four seats. The Livingston party put forward Phillip Livingston, John Morin Scott, Peter Brugh Livingston, and Theodore Van Wyck. Against these four, the DeLanceys matched their three incumbents and a former Assemblyman: Captain James DeLancey, Jacob Walton, James Jauncey, and John Cruger.

The DeLancey party won a stunning victory. All of the DeLancey candidates out-pollled all the Livingston candidates, even Phillip Livingston. The total vote for Phillip Livingston dropped from 1320 in 1768 to 666 in 1769.<sup>23</sup> At first glance, the decline in the Livingston party's support is difficult to explain. The issues in the 1769 election were largely the same as in 1768. Once again, the Livingstons attempted to polarize New York society over a religious question. They accused James DeLancey of bringing an Anglican bishop from England to

implement a religious tyranny. The DeLanceys, on the other hand, again attacked lawyers and the Livingstons' more moderate stand on the Stamp Act. Regardless of their best efforts, however, the issues raised by the DeLanceys and the Livingstons were unimportant.

The decisive issue of the 1769 election had been raised in London in 1767 when Parliament passed the Townshend Acts. These acts increased import duties on many items and provided for stricter enforcement of anti-smuggling laws. They cut into the profits of merchants and set precedents for further import taxes. They also adversely affected the artisanry by decreasing employment. The Townshend Acts further increased the artisans' fear of employment competition from British soldiers because they contained provisions which threatened New York's Assembly with dissolution unless it passed the allocation bills necessary to support the Quartering Act. Thus, although the Townshend Acts were originally conceived by British policy-makers as uncontroversial to Americans, they were bitterly opposed by both New York City's merchants and artisanry and became the major focal point for the 1769 election.<sup>24</sup>

The manner in which the merchants and artisans had initially dealt with the Townshend Acts helped determine the outcome of the election. On August 27, 1768, while the Massachusetts Circular Letter was being discussed in the Assembly, the merchants organized against the Townshend Acts and agreed to cease importing British goods. The merchants immediately formed a committee to monitor the waterfront and to organize boycotts against those importers who defied the non-importation agreement. Similarly, on September 5, the artisans' signed a tradesmen's non-importation agreement, yet the tactics by which they proposed to enforce the agreement were quite different than those of the merchants.<sup>25</sup> While the merchants planned to enforce non-importation by peaceful boycotts, the artisans revived the mass action tactics they had used to oppose the Stamp Act. They circulated threatening handbills, burned effigies, and gathered signatures on petitions demanding that New York's Assembly respond favorably to the Circular Letter. The DeLancey party, aware of the Livingstons' more moderate approach and in an attempt to court artisan support, championed the struggle against the Townshend Acts, even though they did not endorse the artisans' tactics. As a result, the artisans' swing to the support of the DeLanceys in the 1769 election reflected the DeLanceys' opportunistic and temporary acceptance of the artisans' politics, if not their methods.<sup>26</sup>

Table II measures the change in slate voting patterns between the two elections. The data reveals the artisans' shift to the support of the DeLanceys. It also shows the strength of slate voting and again suggests clientage.<sup>27</sup>

TABLE II

ARTISAN VOTING BEHAVIOR IN 1769 ELECTION  
COMPARED TO 1768 TOTALS

## LEGEND:

D--DELANCEY SLATE      D-68--1769 VOTING RECORD OF 1768 DELANCEY SLATE VOTERS  
 L--LIVINGSTON SLATE    L-68--1769 VOTING RECORD OF 1768 LIVINGSTON SLATE VOTERS  
 S--SPLIT-BALLOT VOTERS S-68--1769 VOTING RECORD OF 1768 SPLIT-BALLOT VOTERS

	1769 TOTAL	1769 SUBTOTALS			L-68			D-68			S-68		
		D	S	L	L	D	S	D	L	S	D	L	S
<u>MERCHANTS</u>	66	33	12	21	20	3	4	19	0	2	11	1	6
<u>ARTISANS</u>													
GENERAL SERVICES:													
Laborer	98	53	13	32	24	5	4	30	2	1	18	7	7
Shopkeeper	27	11	4	12	11	1	3	5	0	0	5	1	1
Cartmen	15	5	4	6	5	1	2	2	0	1	2	1	1
Butcher	12	7	4	1	1	0	2	4	0	1	3	0	1
Innkeeper	6	1	1	4	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	158	77	26	55	43	7	11	42	4	4	28	9	10
LEATHER GOODS:													
Cordwainer	97	36	9	52	43	4	4	17	2	2	15	7	3
Sadler	8	3	2	3	3	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
Currier	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0
Tanner	5	3	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0
Leather Dresser	3	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	117	47	13	57	48	5	7	23	2	3	19	7	3
BUILDING TRADES:													
Carpenter	53	33	5	15	14	3	3	19	0	1	11	1	1
Bricklayer	21	13	0	8	6	2	0	7	1	0	4	1	0
Painter	6	4	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0
Mason	4	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Plasterer	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	85	50	9	26	23	5	3	26	1	3	19	2	3
METAL WORKING:													
Blacksmith	26	15	3	8	5	1	0	11	2	1	3	1	2
Gunsmith	13	5	2	6	5	0	2	4	1	0	1	0	0
Brass Founder	3	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Tinman	4	1	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Brazier	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Wheelwright	3	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	52	27	7	18	13	3	3	16	3	2	8	1	3

TABLE II - CONTINUED

	1769	1769 SUBTOTALS			L-68			D-68			S-68		
	TOTAL	D	S	L	L	D	S	D	L	S	D	L	S
<b>WOODWORKING:</b>													
Cooper	35	22	5	8	6	1	2	6	2	0	15	1	2
Joiner	20	9	4	7	3	1	1	3	1	9	5	3	1
Blockmaker	10	5	3	2	2	1	0	2	0	1	2	0	2
Turner	10	8	1	1	1	0	0	5	0	1	3	0	0
Cabinetmaker	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Chairmaker	5	2	0	3	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Upholster	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Coachmaker	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	86	49	14	23	15	3	6	20	4	2	26	5	5
<b>WEARING APPAREL:</b>													
Tailor	28	16	6	6	4	1	3	11	1	1	4	1	2
Wigmaker	13	6	4	3	3	0	0	4	0	2	2	1	1
Feltmaker	6	2	1	3	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Hatter	7	4	0	3	3	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Staymaker	2	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pantsmaker	3	2	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Weaver	17	10	5	2	2	0	3	7	0	0	3	0	2
Hosier	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	78	41	18	19	16	2	8	28	1	3	11	3	6
<b>SHIPPING:</b>													
Mariner	28	14	3	11	9	0	2	13	0	1	1	2	0
Shipwright	21	12	4	5	4	3	0	4	0	3	5	1	1
Sailmaker	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Ropemaker	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Instrument Maker	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Boatman	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Rigger	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL	63	38	9	16	13	4	3	25	0	4	9	3	2
<b>BAKERS:</b>													
Baker	41	11	11	19	18	0	10	4	0	1	7	0	1
Boalter	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Measurer	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Miller	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	45	13	12	20	19	0	10	4	0	1	9	0	1
SPECIAL SERVICES*	61	34	7	20	14	3	2	20	3	1	11	3	3
<b>ARTISAN TOTAL</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>

\*Special Services include trades which had so few artisans in their ranks that figures showing their voting patterns as a trade are meaningless. The majority of these artisans produced luxury goods.



As in the 1768 election, the artisans' voting patterns closely paralleled those of the merchants. Out of 66 total merchants, 54 or 82% voted by slate. Of these, 33 (61% of the slate voters) opted for the DeLancey slate, while only 21 (39% of the slate voters) chose the Livingston ticket. This is almost an exact reversal of the 1768 election. The DeLancey candidates gathered part of their new support from merchants who had split their vote in 1768. Eighteen merchants had split their votes in 1768. Of these, 12 voted by slate in 1769, with 11 or 61% going for the DeLanceys in 1769. Only one merchant, or 6%, voted Livingston. The relative decline of the Livingstons' strength among slate voters can be explained by an increase in those who did not vote.

The 1769 data from the artisanry is similar to that of the merchants. Of 745 total artisan voters, 630 (85%) voted by slate. Of these, 376 (60% of the slate voters) voted the DeLancey ticket while 254 (40% of the slate voters) favored the Livingston slate. Of the 210 artisan voters in the sample who had split their votes in 1768, like the merchants, a large proportion (139 or 66%) voted the DeLancey ticket in 1769. In contrast, only 33 or 16% supported the Livingston ticket. The shift of the former split-ballot artisan voters to the DeLanceys gave that party a large majority among most of the more numerous crafts.

Although both the merchant and artisan split-ballot voters from 1768 swung to the support of the DeLanceys, for the most part, the slate voters from 1768 maintained their party affiliation. The 1769 sample contains 535 voters who were slate voters in 1768. Of these, 409 or 76% remained consistent to the party they had previously supported. The DeLanceys kept 80% of their 1768 slate voters while the Livingstons held on to 59% of their 1768 slate voters.

The 1769 election offers stronger evidence of patronage and clientage than does the 1768 election. Merchants and artisans both voted in nearly identical proportions for the DeLancey slate (61% and 60% respectively). They also had like showings in slate voting patterns for the Livingston ticket (39% and 40%). Furthermore, of those 1768 split ballot voters who shifted to slate voting in 1769, there are additional similarities between the merchants and artisans. Sixty-one percent of the 1768 split ballot merchants chose the DeLancey ticket in 1769. Sixty-six percent of the 1768 split ballot artisans went for the DeLancey ticket. The slate votes for the Livingstons among 1768 split ballot merchants and artisans again show a similar trend with 6% and 16% respectively voting Livingston in 1769.<sup>28</sup>

From the results of the 1768 and 1769 elections, it is possible to discern some general outlines of the

clientage system in colonial New York City. With few exceptions, clientage cut across occupational groups. It reflected the relation between individual merchants and their artisan clients. Although the evidence is circumstantial, slate voting strongly suggests that the majority of New York artisans stood in a client relation to merchant patrons. Also, the consistency of slate voters through both elections indicates that clientage survived the divisive election of 1769. The elections had posed the vital issues of economic and political rights to the artisanry but only in an indirect fashion. When these issues were posed more concretely after the elections, during the last half of 1769 and early 1770, the artisans broke with their former merchant allies, the DeLanceys, and struggled against clientage.

Political deference was able to withstand the pressure of the heated electoral campaigns of 1768 and 1769 because it was based on strong patron-client relations rooted in economics and political tradition. This structure, however, was weakening in the late 1760s, and by 1769 it was no longer able to provide the conditions under which New York's ruling class effectively could maintain its hold on the artisanry. Ironically, it was the struggle with Britain over the Townshend Acts, in which the merchants and artisans had originally found a common cause, that led to the final break between these two groups.

The DeLancey party may have exploited the Townshend Acts crisis to gain artisan political support in the 1769 election, but the DeLanceys did not completely endorse artisan tactics. Rather, the DeLanceys preferred the more conservative, traditional methods of opposition to the British law: non-importation and a boycott of violators of the non-importation agreement. In fact, the merchants' committee organized to monitor the non-importation agreement was not only composed of DeLancey supporters, it was chaired by Isaac Low, a politically active merchant and strong supporter of James DeLancey. The DeLanceys thus sided with the prevailing merchant desire to keep the artisans from developing the clout they had wielded in the Stamp Act crisis.<sup>29</sup>

The DeLanceys, like other merchants, truly may have believed their method of opposing the Townshend Acts to be the best. Many artisans, however, held a more cynical view of the concerns motivating New York's merchants. One satire of the merchants' motives, written in 1770, recalled the early days of non-importation:

Posterity will scarcely believe that their predecessors embarked in a scheme to defeat the machinations of their political enemies, when they are told that this scheme though evidently calculated to attain the desired end, would, if persevered

in, be highly injurious to their private concerns. To lessen their surprise it will be necessary to inform them that the parties engaged in it were merchants, that for a considerable time it proved highly advantageous to them, by enabling them to collect their debts, to vend their moth eaten fragments, and to clear at least fifteen percent by the course of exchange.<sup>30</sup>

Artisans, then, did not fail to note that non-importation was not only patriotic, it was a profitable method of clearing merchants' inventories.

Non-importation did not help just the merchants, however. It also contained potential economic benefits for the artisanry because non-importation gave impetus to plans to improve the general domestic economy. Soon after the adoption of the Townshend Acts, colonial New York began to prepare itself for the inevitable shortages by taking steps toward self-sufficiency. A committee was appointed by the city government "to consider the Expediency of entering into Measures to encourage Industry and Frugality, and employ the Poor." This committee recommended establishing new manufactures, such as a linen works, as well as the comprehensive boycott of British goods. The program appealed to the artisanry because it provided more business for colonial craftsmen and jobs for their unemployed brethren. Ideologically, the committee's recommendations were compatible with most artisans' views of their situation. The recommendations explained the colony's "Poverty and Distress" in terms of the importation of luxury goods from Britain. This not only put the blame for New York's economic problems on the luxury-buying merchants, it also appealed to the artisans' desires for an economy insulated from the fluctuations of the British mercantile system.<sup>31</sup>

Regardless of who would benefit most by opposing the Townshend Acts, neither the merchants' strategy of boycotting nor the artisans' plans for mass actions could be implemented immediately. The battle to enforce non-importation did not begin until March 1769 when goods ordered the previous summer arrived from Britain. It was during the interim prior to the arrival of British goods that the two Assembly elections of 1768 and 1769 took place. This lull in the battle allowed the DeLancey party and its merchant supporters to parade as patriots sharing a mutuality of interests with the artisanry. This mutuality proved to be a myth, and was exposed after the merchants had received the first benefits from non-importation and had begun to reconsider their relationship with the artisans.

Throughout the last half of 1769 and well into 1770, a struggle took place over the tactics to be used to enforce non-importation. The merchants favored boycotting violators. The artisans, who had revived the Sons of

Liberty, supported mass public meetings at which violators would be publicly humiliated and forced to apologize to the community.<sup>32</sup> It was difficult to reconcile the two points of view. The merchants did not want the artisans disciplining merchants who violated the non-importation agreement, and this was at least partly because the public disciplining of merchants by the artisan community strained the traditional system of political deference. But the artisans felt the system needed straining to protect their interests. When the artisans discovered violators, they not only held public meetings, they also published the results of these meetings and the issues involved so that the whole community could condemn the violator. This had the indirect effect of weakening the deference system. For example, when Simeon Cooley, "a Haberdasher, Jeweller and Silversmith" violated the agreement, the artisans advertised their opinions of this merchant:

Shall then so contemptible a Reptile and Miscreant as the said Simeon Cooley, be suffered to baffle or defeat the united virtuous Efforts, in the Support of so righteous a cause, not only of this City, but of the whole Continent? --God Forbid!-- "Better that all such miserable depraved Wretches were crushed to Atoms, than the Safety of the most inconsiderable Town endangered."<sup>33</sup>

Such community action as the publication of this broadside unified the artisanry under the leadership of the Sons of Liberty and widened the growing breach between the artisans and merchants.

It was not just merchants in general that the artisans came to oppose. Even the DeLanceys, who previously had enjoyed greater artisanal support than the Livingstons, now fell from grace. As early as October 1769, the DeLancey-controlled merchants' committee to enforce non-importation came under attack from the artisan community. One broadside, entitled "A Pill for the Committee of Non-Importation," went so far as to accuse the committee of camouflaging continuing trade with Britain:

If you really never entertained a single Idea of doing any Thing more than endeavoring to make the Public believe, that you were willing to sacrifice your private Interests to the Good of Society: It is now quite Time to change the scene, as they are become to flimsy to screen your Actions from the Eyes of the Community.<sup>34</sup>

The DeLanceys' support declined even more when the DeLancey-controlled Assembly passed a special tax to raise funds to implement the Quartering Act. The DeLanceys were aware that by passing the tax they would probably lose their earlier artisan support, but trade had declined to an alarming point and there was little available cur-

rency.<sup>35</sup> The currency problem was further complicated by the need to obtain British consent for any new colonial emission of paper. Thus, the DeLanceys and Lieutenant-Governor Cadwallader Colden reached an agreement satisfying both the British government and the economic needs of New York's mercantile community. The agreement stipulated that the Assembly would pass an allocation bill providing funds for the Quartering Act and in return Colden would sign the emission bill. Implicit within the agreement was the merchants' consent to end non-importation as the price of British approval of the paper emission.<sup>36</sup>

The agreement satisfied everyone but the artisanry. Alexander McDougall, the early leader of the Sons of Liberty who had supported the Livingstons, led the attack on the DeLanceys. With the support of the Sons, he issued his famous broadside, "To the Betrayed Inhabitants of New York." In this attack, McDougall censured the Assembly for voting the allocation for billeting British troops. He pointed out that this meant that New York was breaking ranks with Massachusetts and South Carolina in the struggle with Britain.<sup>37</sup>

Another broadside, issued by "A Son of Liberty," firmed up McDougall's more rhetorical statement by describing the effect that the allocation would have on New York's economy. This writer claimed that billeting would increase taxes because the British headquarters and its staff would be in the city. At the same time, billeted troops would increase the prices of necessities because the demand for essentials would rise but the supply would remain the same. Lastly, the inclination of officers and soldiers to buy luxury goods would bring more British imports, and colonial money would be shipped to Britain to pay for these, causing less currency. In addition to all the above, the broadside confirmed the artisanry's resentment of job competition from off-duty soldiers.

Most important were the closing remarks of this broadside, which called for a meeting and recorded the artisans' need to make community decisions without the interference of deference:

As the design of this meeting is to get the free and unbiased Sentiments of the People, on this important head, all such who are contending for power, are desired to stay at Home, that the People be uninfluenced in their Deliberations: therefore the DeLanceys, Livingstons and Waltons, are hereby requested not to give the People any uneasiness by their appearance, lest they should be insulted.<sup>38</sup>

The meeting took place on December 18, 1769. Although over fourteen hundred people came and listened to speakers denouncing the bill providing billeting funds,

few merchants attended. The sense of the audience was taken, and it was decided that a committee should be appointed to convey the crowd's sentiments to the Assembly. In reply to this uncharacteristic artisan assertion of power, the Assembly retaliated and ordered McDougall's immediate arrest for seditious libel.<sup>39</sup>

The jailing of McDougall intensified the artisans' anger, and it also pointed out the major weakness in the artisans' position: they lacked any concrete method of binding the Assembly to accept their point of view. Both in elections and community meetings, the artisans were powerless as long as the system of clientage existed. Thus, in answer to the arrest of McDougall, the Sons of Liberty began a petition campaign in late December to place a bill mandating the secret ballot before the Assembly.

The concept of the secret ballot had received widespread publicity during the two previous elections. The idea was popular and made sense within the ideological context of the rights of the free-born Englishman. It had also been used for years in neighboring colonies. Yet the artisanry was not interested in just an abstract democracy. They were fighting against quartering British soldiers, for non-importation, and, by necessity, against those who opposed these goals. The Sons of Liberty justified the campaign for the secret ballot on the grounds that it would end corruption and free the poor from the political bonds of clientage:

The method of taking the Suffrages of the People, for Places of Truth, by Ballot is so manifestly conducive to the Preservation of Liberty, that its Opposer must necessarily be eyed with Jealousy: unless it be excusable on the Score of his Folly and then his Opinion deserves only our contempt . . . . It is not in Human Power to devise a more effectual Antidote to Corruption than a Law of Elections by Ballot; by which, no man of Opulence will be able to procure a Seat in the Assembly, by an undue Influence upon the Fears of the Electors . . . . Every Patriotic Heart, must therefore exult on hearing of the late motion on a Balloting-Law. A Law which may be properly titled "An Act for the Redemption of the Poor, and the Establishment of the Liberties of the Colony."<sup>40</sup>

Although to modern ears the artisans' arguments may seem obvious, they were controversial at the time. Voice voting was traditional in New York society, and the DeLancey party hoped to capitalize on this by emphasizing that secret balloting was undemocratic because voters were unable to come forward and openly state their preference. This view was published in a broadside under the signa-

tures of many of the DeLanceys' supporters:

It having been industriously propagated that Numbers of the Voters of this City and County, have been long intimidated at Elections, and are therefore desirous of voting for the future in a secret manner, by way of Ballot; which report being by many surmised to be void of a Proper Foundation, and only intended to answer the particular private purposes of certain Persons; it is therefore requested that the independent Freeholders and Freemen of the City, will meet at the Merchant's Coffee House Tommorrow, at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon, to convey their Sentiments respecting this matter to their Representatives and to convince them that they are not to be diverted by any Motives whatever, from daring and chusing to speak their Minds freely and openly, to do which at all times, is their birthright as Englishmen and their glory as Americans.<sup>41</sup>

It was not coincidental that almost half of those who signed this broadside were members of the merchants' non-importation committee. This reflected the close interconnection between the issues of non-importation and secret balloting.<sup>42</sup>

The meeting called for by the DeLancey broadside was an attempt to reverse the decision of the artisans' public meeting of December 18, 1769, which, in addition to protesting the approval of funds for the Quartering Act, had voted to support secret balloting. The artisans graphically described the DeLancey meeting as one "to try how far commercial Influence would induce the common artificers to acquiesce in the present Deprivation of this most inestimable Privilege."<sup>43</sup> With tensions high, violence erupted at the meeting when Isaac Low attacked one of the Sons of Liberty. After the tumult quieted, a sense of the meeting was taken by literally dividing the house and, much to the dismay of the DeLanceys, the secret ballot won handily.<sup>44</sup>

Undaunted by their defeat at the Coffee House meeting, the merchants' committee conducted a house-to-house poll of the city's inhabitants to ask their opinion of secret balloting. The merchants' committee planned this poll to offset the petitions, sponsored by the Sons of Liberty, in favor of secret balloting. The Sons of Liberty opposed this house-to-house polling because it was more easily manipulable by patron-client relations. Not surprisingly, when the poll was completed, over a thousand voters had expressed their disapproval of the secret ballot.<sup>45</sup> The artisanry had yielded to the power of deference. They were willing to vote in their own interest when gathered in large public meetings, but individual artisans by themselves were unable to stand up to the ruling

class economic pressure.

Soon after the Coffee House debate, a bill for secret balloting was placed before the Assembly. The bill had the support of the Livingston party which had realized this was an opportunity to gain artisan support at the expense of the DeLanceys, particularly after McDougall's arrest. Three of New York City's representatives initially supported the bill. Only James DeLancey opposed it. Much of the bill's early support can be attributed to the unfavorable response to the billeting allocations the DeLancey-controlled Assembly had received from the artisan community. Another factor generating support was New York's uproar over the many street battles between the artisanry and British soldiers.<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, on January 9, 1770, the secret balloting bill was defeated in the Assembly by a vote of thirteen to twelve. The vote was initially tied but the Speaker of the Assembly, John Cruger of New York City, voted against the bill. Despite earlier support, all the representatives from New York City, like Cruger, also voted against the bill. Perhaps the DeLancey supporters voted against the bill to oppose the Livingstons, or perhaps they were refusing to bow to artisan pressure.<sup>47</sup> The agitation for the secret ballot did not immediately end, but its thrust had been blunted in the Assembly. The defeat of the bill reinforced the political power of the merchants, and it also foreshadowed the outcome of the artisans' struggle for non-importation.

The final battle for non-importation took place during May, June, and July of 1770. Following on the heels of the defeat of the secret ballot bill, this struggle further intensified the antagonism between the artisans and the merchant-landlords. Yet the result of this struggle, like that for the secret ballot, left no tangible advantages to the artisans save an awareness that their interests differed from those of the merchant-landlords.

The sequence of events during the struggle for non-importation was basically the same as during the secret ballot agitation. The Sons of Liberty held large public meetings in support of non-importation, and the DeLanceys took house-to-house polls countering the results of the public meetings. Without the pressure secret balloting would have put on the Assembly representatives, the artisans were trapped within the system of clientage. The DeLanceys' polling campaigns isolated the Sons of Liberty from the artisan community. Finally, the Sons were driven to use force to stop the polling efforts, and, on July 7, 1770, they were defeated in a street battle by DeLancey supporters. The artisans' battle for non-importation was lost.

Although the artisans lost the battles over the



secret ballot and non-importation, these struggles both heightened awareness of their own interests and increased hostility toward the merchant-landlords. The artisanry had united in support of these political objectives and, in the process, they had overcome many of the craft divisions imposed by clientage. They also had learned political skills. Most importantly, the artisans had come firmly to identify their interests with the revolutionary tendencies in colonial society.

The artisanry did not play an independent role in the elections of 1768 and 1769. However, they gained valuable political insights through their experience in these elections. In the process of canvassing votes, the merchant-landlords tutored the artisanry in the ideology of independence emerging in the colonies. The elections also must have convinced many artisans of the need for a secret ballot if their independence were to be actual. The artisanry then adapted its growing experience in politics and the new ideology to its own purposes during the struggles over the secret ballot and non-importation. After 1770, the clientage system still dominated New York's politics but the artisans' automatic acceptance of political subordination was a thing of the past.

#### NOTES

The author thanks Professor Gary Nash, whose thoughts provided the foundation of this article. The author also thanks Jacquelyn S. Collins, without whose help New York's poll lists would have remained an insurmountable obstacle.

1. In this paper, the term "artisan" is defined in a similar manner to Staughton Lynd's and Alfred F. Young's definition of "mechanics." They define "mechanics" as those who work with their hands "below the rank of merchants or lawyers." According to their estimate about two-thirds of New York City's population were in the mechanic class. See: Staughton Lynd and Alfred F. Young, "After Carl Becker: The Mechanics and New York City Politics, 1774-1801," *Labor History* 5 (Fall 1964): 217-218.

2. The term "merchant-landlords" in this article denotes the ruling elite in New York society. Although there were probably economic differences among the ruling parties, these differences were not the classic landowner-merchant dichotomy pictured by some historians. See Patricia Bonomi, *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 96-97, 100-102, 279-288. As demonstrated later in this paper, New York City's merchants were divided as to political affiliation. Carl Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1909), pp. 11, 22; Roger Champagne, "Family Politics versus Constitutional Principles: The New York Assembly Elections of 1768 and 1769," *William And Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 20 (January 1963): 57-79; Roger Champagne, "Liberty Boys and Mechanics of New York City, 1764-1774," *Labor History* 8 (Spring 1967): 115-135; Milton M. Klein, "Democracy and Politics in Colonial New York," *New York History* 40 (July 1959): 221-246, and "Politics and Personalities in Colonial New York," *New York History* 47 (January 1966): 2-15. For an instructive critique of Champagne see: Bernard Friedman, "The New York Assembly Elections of 1768 and 1769: The Disruption of Family Politics," *New York History* 46 (January 1965): 3-24.

3. Class consciousness often has been a very ephemeral phenomenon. Once a class is conscious of its own interests, it may not always remain that way. Yet a class which is unaware of itself at one point in time remains a class and retains the potentiality of struggling in its own interests at another time.

4. Of these historians, only Carl Becker realized the systematic nature of the corruption. Becker argued that there was a system of economic intimidation in effect in the countryside which forced tenants to vote in their landlords' interests. Unfortunately, Becker did not extend this analysis to the

urban artisanry. Becker, *History of Political Parties*, p. 12.

5. There is little information available to explain why the New York Assembly chose to publish poll lists, but, nonetheless, publication clearly benefited the merchant-landlords and the political deference system.

6. For an example of this behavior see: Nicholas Vargas, "Election Procedures and Practices in Colonial New York," *New York History* 41 (1969): 267; also see Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 89.

7. For a good description of New York's economic woes, see: Joseph Albert Ernst, *Money and Politics in America, 1755-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), pp. 89, 90-91, 108.

8. For data on the cost per capita for food consumption see Ernst, *Money and Politics*, p. 108, and David Klingaman, "Food Surpluses and Deficits in the American Colonies, 1768-1772," *Journal of Economic History* 31 (Sept. 1971): 566-569; Nash, *Urban Crucible*, p. 371.

9. For a discussion of the impact of these taxes on the colonies, see Phillip S. Foner, *Labor and the American Revolution* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), pp. 46-47.

10. Foner, *Labor and the American Revolution*, p. 83.

11. The largely artisanal composition of the Sons of Liberty is accepted by most historians. For example see: *ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

12. In the 1768 election, Amos Dodge, a carpenter, ran but he received the lowest total vote and little support from the artisanry. This lack of artisan candidates mirrored New York's class structure. Artisans were believed to "have too confined an education and sphere of action to qualify them for such a trust. Nor have they their minds enlarged by the science of general commerce." *The Occasionalist* (New York, 1768), p. 3, available, as are all subsequently cited broadsides and colonial newspapers, in the Readex Microprint edition of *Early American Imprints* published by the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

13. Robert J. Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America: A Study of Elections in the Thirteen Colonies, 1689-1776* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 153.

14. *To the Freeholders and Freemen of the City and County of New York . . . New Jersey . . .* (New York, 1768).

15. *A Card. Jack Bowline and Tom Hatchway . . .* (New York, 1768).

16. *The Occasionalist* (New York, 1768), p. 2.

17. *To the Freeholders and Freemen of the City and County of New York . . . New Jersey . . .* (New York, 1768).

18. *The Voters' New Catechism* (New York, 1768).

19. Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America*, p. 156.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

21. Table I was constructed from data provided in *A Copy of the Poll List of the Elections for Representatives for the City and County of New York; which election began on Monday the 7th day of March, and ended on Friday the 11th, of the same Month, in the Year of our Lord MDCCCLXVII* (New York, n.p., 1880); *The Burgers of New Amsterdam and the Freemen of New York, 1675-1866*, in *New York Historical Society, Collections* (New York, 1885); *Muster Rolls of New York's Provincial Troops, 1755-1764* in *ibid.* (New York, 1936); and *Abstracts of Wills, 1766-1783* (New York, n.p., 1898-1900), vols. 7-9, passim. For occupational headings, see Champagne, "Liberty Boys and Mechanics of New York," pp. 126-128.

22. Bonomi, *A Factious People*, p. 248.

23. Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America*, p. 153.

24. Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 93-95.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

26. Friedman, "New York Assembly Elections," pp. 13-15; Nash, *Urban Crucible*, pp. 362-374.

27. Table II was constructed by matching occupationally identified voters from the 1768 election (compiled in Table I) with their voting records in the 1769 election as listed in *A Copy of the Poll List of the Election for Representatives for the City and County of New York; which election began on Monday the 23rd day of January, and ended on Friday the 27th, of the same month, in the year of our Lord, MDCCCLXIX* (New York, 1769), available in the Reader Microprint edition of the *Early American Imprints* published by the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

28. The smaller voter turnout in the 1769 election raises some important historical questions for this study. For instance, did artisans abstain to escape the compulsion of economic clientage? Patricia Bonomi has suggested that the polarization of the 1769 election put voters in an untenable position in which they could not split their vote without alienating one party or the other. In other words, if Bonomi were correct, abstainees would be mainly those who had split their ballot in 1768. This seems unlikely because the number of those 1768 slate voters who did not vote in 1769 is within seven percent of slate voters in the 1768 sample. (See Table III below.) The almost equal percentages of 1768 Livingston and DeLancey slate voters among the 1769 ab-

stentions also makes it unlikely that the mass of these abstainees were avoiding compulsory voting. Furthermore, we can assume that abstaining could have been identified by individual artisans' patrons and this would have placed the artisan in a poor position vis-à-vis the patron nearly as much as an incorrect vote.

TABLE III

1768 VOTERS ABSTAINING IN 1769

## LEGEND:

D - DELANCEY SLATE VOTERS IN 1768

L - LIVINGSTON SLATE VOTERS IN 1768

S - SPLIT-BALLOT VOTERS IN 1768

	TOTAL	D	L	S
CARPENTERS	31	9	10	12
LABORERS	52	11	14	27
CORDWAINERS	32	8	13	11
BAKERS	26	10	10	6
COOPERS	16	4	7	5
MARINERS	15	3	5	7
TAILORS	8	4	2	2
CARTMEN	10	4	5	1
JOINERS	6	1	1	4
WEAVERS	8	2	4	2
WIGMAKERS	9	0	5	4
SHIPWRIGHTS	7	2	1	4
SHOPKEEPERS	8	3	3	2
BUTCHERS	5	3	1	1
BLACKSMITHS	5	0	3	2
BRICKLAYERS	4	1	2	1
INNKEEPERS	3	0	0	3
SADLERS	3	2	1	0
MASONS	3	1	1	1
MISCELLANEOUS	47	12	19	16
TOTAL	298	80	107	111

Table III was constructed by matching the poll list from the 1768 election with that of the 1769 election and extracting those occupationally identified voters who failed to vote in 1769. For further information see Bonomi, *A Factions People*, passim; and Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America*, passim.

29. It is possible to ascertain the pro-DeLancey composition of the merchants' non-importation committee by comparing the similarities between the list of the committee's members found on the signed *Broadside* . . . (New York, 1770), which called for a meeting to choose a new committee, and the list of the signatories to the broadside, *To the Independent Freeholders and Freemen, of this City and County. It having been industriously Propagated* . . . (New York, 1770), which launched the DeLancey party's campaign against the secret ballot.

30. *Proposals for Erecting and Encouraging a New Manufactory* . . . (New York, 1770).

31. *Report of the Committee appointed the 29th of December last* . . . (New York, 1768).

32. The Sons abandoned earlier political differences and reunited under the title of the United Sons of Liberty. See *Original Founding Resolutions of the United Sons of Liberty* (New York, 1769).

33. The artisans' success at enforcing non-importation is reflected in these broadsides: *Simon Cooley* . . . (New York, 1769) and *Thomas Richardson* . . . (New York, 1769).

34. *A Pill for the Committee of Non-importation* . . . (New York, 1769).

35. Schlessinger, *Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution*, p. 224.

36. Ernst, *Money and Politics in America*, pp. 266-267.

37. *To the Betrayed Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New York* . . . (New York, 1769).

38. *Union, Activity, Freedom* . . . (New York, 1769).

39. Bonomi, *A Factions People*, p. 269.

40. *To the Freeholders and Freemen of the City and Province of New York, Gentlemen* . . . (New York, 1769).

41. *To the Independent Freeholders and Freemen, of this City and Country. It having been industriously propagated* . . . (New York, 1770).

42. For the similarity of the composition of these two committees see: *Broadside* . . . (New York, 1770), and *To the Independent Freeholders and Freemen, of this City and County. It having been industriously Propagated* . . .

(New York, 1770).

43. *All the real Friends of Liberty* . . . (New York, 1770).

44. *Ibid.* On the same day, January 5, 1770, at the meeting at the Coffee House, the Sons of Liberty circulated a petition calling for a secret balloting bill. In an advertisement, the Sons advised the artisanry to sign their petition which could be found at the houses of James McCartney, mariner; David Phillips, wigmaker; Jasper Drakes, boatmen, and Henry Becker. That the Sons' support lay among the artisanry is clear from the locations of the petitions. See *Advertisement* . . . (New York, 1770).

45. Bonomi, *A Factious People*, p. 275.

46. For the DeLanceys' initial opposition see: *All the real Friends of Liberty* . . . (New York, 1770).

47. *New York Assembly Journal*, January 9, 1770.