

until 1738, although the existing support act still had two years to run. This may have been a response to Cosby's acquiescence when the assembly voted to issue an additional £40,000 in paper money contrary to royal policy. The governor also permitted the legislature to ratify his ordinance to fix legal fees in the colony although, strictly speaking, imperial theory considered such legislative authorization unnecessary. Cosby's only disagreement with the assembly was over an act establishing triennial elections, which the legislators periodically tried to sneak through; Cosby vetoed it.

Despite Cosby's promises, this was more or less the sum of his public record in New Jersey. He met eight times with the council but transacted little business during its sessions because he was occupied with defending his position in New York. The most famous episode of Cosby's governorship was the trial of John Peter Zenger, which in fact was related to Cosby's feud with Lewis Morris and James Alexander. Morris and his allies, who were active both in New York and New Jersey, established a paper in New York City, the *New-York Weekly Journal*, that was hostile to Cosby. Furious over the paper's sniping, Cosby suppressed it and arrested its editor, Zenger, for libel. Zenger was acquitted in what some have called a landmark case for freedom of the press; Cosby had failed to stifle criticism of his regime in New York or to remove Morris and Alexander from the council in New Jersey (which they had ceased to attend after the first meeting). Indeed, when Morris traveled to London in 1735-36 to organize a campaign for Cosby's removal, it became apparent that New Jersey had little importance except as a pawn in the politics involving New York. Morris tried to persuade the Privy Council to remove Cosby from the New York government; he failed, but to placate him the council separated the colonies and, two years after Cosby's death, made Morris governor of New Jersey.

Lewis Morris thought William Cosby a

"weak madman"; Morris was doubtless too vehement, but, alas, little good can be said about Governor Cosby of New Jersey.

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Stanley Nider Katz



LEWIS MORRIS (October 15, 1671-May 21, 1746), colonial American political leader and jurist, served as governor of New Jersey, 1738-46.

Morris was born in New York City, the only child of Richard and Sarah (Pole) Morris, who had come to the province from Barbados the year before. After the sudden death of his parents in the summer of 1672, Morris was brought up by an elderly Quaker uncle also named Lewis

Morris. When his uncle died in 1691, Morris inherited large estates in New Jersey and New York and became a member of the landed aristocracy in both colonies. In that year he also married Isabelle Graham, the daughter of James Graham, a highly influential New York merchant and political leader. They had fifteen children, eleven of whom—three boys and eight girls—reached adulthood. Although Morris received little formal education, he transformed himself into a highly cultured country gentleman who mastered several ancient languages, amassed a library of 3,000 books, wrote poetry, and dabbled in natural science. Yet Morris's main preoccupation was politics, and his long and complex political career in New Jersey and New York was among the more remarkable in colonial American history.

Morris's appointment as the first separate royal governor of New Jersey in January 1738 was the high point of his career. At the same time it seemed a fitting climax to New Jersey's long-standing opposition to the British government's practice of having the same official govern New Jersey and New York. For at the time of his appointment Morris had been deeply involved in New Jersey political, economic, and religious affairs for almost half a century. Morris had played a key role in negotiating the 1702 settlement between the Jersey proprietors and the imperial administration whereby the crown assumed the government of the province in return for the confirmation of proprietary rights to the soil. For the next thirty-five years he continued to be one of New Jersey's most influential political leaders while serving as a provincial councillor (1702-5; 1708-37), assemblyman (1707-8), and acting governor (1719-20; 1731-32; 1736-38, though in this last period his authority was disputed). In addition, from 1703 to 1736, Morris acted as American agent for an organization of British land speculators known as the West Jersey Society, and from 1725 to 1730 he also served as president of the Board of Proprietors of East Jersey. Final-

ly, as the first American member of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, an Anglican missionary organization based in London, Morris supported the society's efforts to convert Protestant dissenters in New Jersey to the Church of England. Even between 1710 and 1737, when Morris devoted most of his time to politics in New York—managing the provincial assembly for Governors Robert Hunter and William Burnet, serving as chief justice of the supreme court (1715-33), and leading the opposition to the arbitrary rule of Governor William Cosby—he never lost interest in New Jersey affairs.

In addition to his intimate familiarity with New Jersey, Morris enjoyed another important advantage as he assumed the governorship—the support he received from some influential British connections. His daughter, Euphemia, was the widow of Matthew Norris, a captain of the Royal Navy. Her father-in-law, Sir John Norris, a British admiral who commanded the Royal Navy and held a seat in Parliament, kept a watchful eye on Morris's interests in Great Britain. A shrewd woman who had elected to remain in England after her husband's death, Euphemia Norris was familiar with some of the leaders of the opposition to the Walpole ministry, and she regularly kept her father abreast of political developments in the home country. But Morris's most important British connection was Sir Charles Wager, another admiral. In addition to being first lord of the admiralty, a privy councillor, and a member of Parliament, Wager was a close political ally of Sir Robert Walpole, then the most powerful statesman in the realm. The combined influence of Wager and Walpole did much to put Morris in the office of governor of New Jersey; and initially, the knowledge that Morris enjoyed the patronage of such highly placed British officials greatly enhanced his influence with the provincial assembly. By the same token, Walpole's fall from power in February 1742, and Wager's removal from office soon thereafter, perceptibly

weakened Morris's standing in New Jersey, making it more difficult for him to rally support in the assembly.

Unfortunately Morris failed to satisfy the expectations his appointment had aroused among the people of New Jersey; instead his administration quickly degenerated into a series of bitter conflicts with the assembly. The disputes largely stemmed from his forthright defense of royal authority in New Jersey. From the outset of his administration Morris maintained that although the assembly was duty bound to provide his government with financial support, he had no reciprocal obligation to consent to the laws it passed unless they stood for the common good without infringing on the royal prerogative. Thus in 1739 he dissolved one assembly after approving only a small number of the popular bills it had passed, and in 1742 he dissolved another after withholding assent from every bill passed except one for the support of government. Even when Morris did not resort to the drastic step of dissolution, he frequently refused to approve assembly bills that the representatives considered sound pieces of legislation but he regarded as ill conceived or unconstitutional. As a result, he was often criticized for keeping the assembly in session to little purpose for inordinately long periods of time.

Morris's adherence to royal instructions also antagonized the assembly. In obedience to such instructions he badgered the assembly into supporting a British expedition against the Spanish West Indies in 1740, an effort which offended New Jersey's politically influential Quaker community. For the same reason in 1744 he carried on a fruitless campaign to persuade the assembly to pass a more stringent militia law to bolster the province's defenses against a possible French attack. In this instance Morris offended large numbers of Quakers and non-Quakers alike, who refused to believe that a French assault on New Jersey was likely. Morris himself shared their skepticism but felt his instructions obliged him to suppress his doubts and push for the

passage of an unpopular law. Yet Morris was not always consistent in following his instructions from the crown. Although they clearly stated he was to exercise the power with the advice and consent of the council alone, he allowed the assembly to determine how the money it raised for the support of government should be expended. Still, he remained sufficiently inflexible in his defense of royal authority to alienate the assembly, as the shift in its attitudes about the issue of support indicated. Whereas in 1739 the assembly provided him a three-year grant of funds for the support of government, in 1741 it approved only a one-year grant and in 1744 it passed a support bill that so reduced Morris's salary and the salaries of other royal officials that the council felt obliged to reject it, leaving the government with no money from the assembly for the rest of the administration.

Morris's defense of parliamentary authority further sapped his popularity in New Jersey. Partly because colonial paper money was then under attack in Parliament and partly to avoid incurring the displeasure of the home authorities by allowing a new emission in New Jersey, he refused throughout his administration to approve a highly popular bill for the emission of £40,000 in bills of credit. And when, in 1744, the assembly denounced as subversive of American liberties a proposal by Parliament to give royal instructions the force of law, Morris admonished it for criticizing Parliament, declaring, "a British Parliament can abolish any Constitution in the Plantations that they deem inconvenient or disadvantageous to the Trade of the Nation, or otherwise." The implications of parliamentary supremacy in the empire could not have been stated more nakedly, nor can one imagine a sentiment less congenial to the people of New Jersey.

As his relations with the assembly deteriorated Morris attempted to retrieve his position by appealing over its head to the New Jersey electorate. More than any other governor before him, Morris carried his case directly to the freeholders and

freemen of the province through printed speeches and pamphlets. These inevitably called forth replies from his opponents and brought about an unprecedented outburst of polemics in New Jersey during his administration. Between 1739 and 1746 at least ten political broadsides and pamphlets appeared in the province—approximately twice the number produced during the entire thirty-six years of the royal period preceding Morris's governorship. Morris himself wrote at least one pamphlet, *Extracts from the Minutes and Votes of the House of Assembly* (1743). He also had several of his speeches to the assembly printed separately, particularly those occasioned by dissolutions of this body. Unfortunately Morris's pamphlet and speeches suffered from certain shortcomings, not the least of which were their dreary prolixity and dry appeals to precedent. Even if he had written more trenchantly, however, it is unlikely that these works would have affected politically aware New Jerseyans more positively. They generally defended unpopular bills or attacked acts of the assembly that Morris interpreted as encroachments on the royal prerogative but others regarded as legitimate expressions of parliamentary privilege or popular rights. In contrast, Morris's polemical adversaries more effectively assailed his refusal to approve popular legislation, his advocacy of unpopular causes such as militia reform, his propensity for long and often unproductive assembly sessions, his explosive temper and his support of the royal prerogative.

Morris coupled his appeals to the electorate with equally unsuccessful pleas to the imperial administration for drastic British intervention in the colony's political system. Outraged by Quaker opposition to his efforts to win support in New Jersey for the British expedition against the Spanish West Indies in 1740, Morris suggested that the Board of Trade deprive Friends of their right to sit in the assembly—a suggestion the board wisely ignored. Frustrated by his failure to obtain what he regarded as adequate finan-

cial support from the assembly and convinced that its powers had grown too great, Morris advanced proposals to make himself and other royal officials fiscally independent of the assembly. Some of these proposals, when the British implemented them after 1763, helped to bring on the American Revolution. As early as 1739 he advised the Board of Trade to consider the feasibility of an act of Parliament requiring provincial assemblies to pay royal officials fixed salaries. Two years later he returned to this theme, this time urging the board to support a proposal that Parliament issue paper money in America and apply part of it to pay the salaries of the king's officers there. Finally, in 1745, he asked the board to persuade Parliament to authorize the king to determine the expenditure of the funds the provincial assemblies raised for the support of government. The board acted on none of these proposals, which had the potential for revolutionizing the relations between royal governors and colonial assemblies, and took no notice of them in its correspondence with Morris. It is difficult to determine whether this was because New Jersey did not bulk large in the board's scheme of things or because the board was too distracted by the instability resulting from the fall of Walpole's ministry and the problems arising from Great Britain's wars with France and Spain to consider Morris's proposals for radical imperial reform. In any case, it was well for the peace of the empire that the board ignored Morris's plans.

Unable to win support from the people of New Jersey or to convince the imperial administration of the need for parliamentary intervention, Morris spent the last two years of his administration in a bitter deadlock with the assembly. Between June 1744 and May 1746 he met with four different assemblies. An unvarying pattern marked the first three, with Morris insisting that the assembly provide his government with financial support before he consented to the bills it favored and the assembly refusing to pass

a support bill until Morris had approved the bills it wanted passed. During the stalemate the assembly granted the government no money, and Morris withheld assent from every act it passed save one granting supplies for the New England expedition against Louisburg in 1745. Only in Morris's last assembly, which first met in February 1746, did it seem that this deadlock might be broken. Both sides appeared ready to retreat from their extreme positions and to reconcile their differences, but not for long. In the midst of its proceedings, the assembly learned that the Board of Trade, acting on Morris's advice, intended to recommend royal disallowance of a Fee Act approved in 1743 by both the governor and the assembly. Enraged at what it interpreted as an act of treachery by Morris, the assembly renewed its demand for his assent to certain popular legislation before passage of a support bill. Morris agreed, but only if the assembly promised to increase the appropriations it was planning to make to the government. This the assembly refused to do. Suddenly the prospect of stalemate once more confronted the province. In the midst of this crisis, however, Morris, who had been ill for several years, died on May 21, 1746. Yet not even death could dispel the bitterness his administration had engendered. Three years later, when his widow petitioned the assembly for payment of his salary arrears, the assembly turned down the request by an overwhelming majority, remarking that hers was "a Subject so universally disliked in this Colony, that there is none, except those who are immediately concerned in point of Interest, or particularly influenced by those who are, will say one Word in its Favour."

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Eugene R. Sheridan



JONATHAN BELCHER (January 8, 1681/2–August 31, 1757), Massachusetts merchant and politician, was born in Cambridge, the second son of seven children, to Andrew and Sarah (Gilbert) Belcher. The family was rooted in New England society: Jonathan's grandfather had arrived in the 1630s; his father had steadily accumulated property and become one of Boston's wealthiest merchants and a member of the provincial council. After he was graduated from Harvard in 1699, Jonathan entered his father's business. In 1705 he married Mary Partridge, the daughter of New Hampshire's lieutenant governor, and entered Boston's Second Church. On his father's death in 1717, he embarked on a public career.

In a political world rent by constitutional conflict between executive authority and the legislature, this moderate and unreflective political practitioner shunned permanent identification with either ideological position: first, as a member of the council, he defended Governor William Shute; then, as agent of the house of representatives in London, he opposed Governor William Burnet; and, finally, he returned in 1730 as governor of Massachusetts and New Hampshire with