

Transcription of Georgian Papers, GEO/MAIN/354:

Memorandum by George III on his actions relative to the Stamp Act [11 February 1766]

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The late variety of opinions that have been reported to be mine on the Stamp Act, make it very eligible that I should whilst fresh in my memory put on paper the whole of my conduct during this very arduous transaction.

From the first conversations on the best mode of restoring order & obedience in the American Colonys; I thought the modifying the Stamp Act, the wisest & most efficacious manner of proceeding; 1st. because any part remaining sufficiently ascertained the Right of the Mother Country to Tax its Colony & next that it would shew a desire to redress any just grievances ; but if the unhappy Factions that divide this Country would not permit this in my opinion equitable plan to be followed, I thought Repealing infinitely more eligible than Enforcing, which could only tend to widen the breach between this Country & America; my language to all ever continu'd pointing out my wish of Modification; on Friday 6th of February L[or]d Rockingham said to Me that now the two partys meant to push for Repeal, or Enforce, Immediately answer'd in that case I was for the [PAGE 2] former; He asked my permission to say so, which I freely gave on Monday 9th of February ; I saw L[or]d Strange & opin'd to him my opinion to the following effect, that Modification was my constant but if the different party's were too wild to come into that I clearly declar'd for Repeal instead of Enforcing; He said He agreed in both cases with Me; but said it was currently reported that in all cases I was for the Repeal; I therefore authoriz'd him to declare to whoever declar'd that to be my idea, the very words I now acquainted him with; On Tuesday 10th L[or]d Rockingham came to express his sorrow that He stood accus'd of having falsely stated my opinion; but on discoursing it over, I found L[or]d Strange had most correctly reported what I had said, nay that He had assur'd L[or]d Rockingham his name had never been made use of ; yet this L[or]d Desir'd I would see L[or]d Strange, & tell him what had pass'd on the Friday; this I accordingly did on Wednesday 11th because I never would chuse to have any Man unjustly accus'd on my account, [PAGE 3] L[or]d Strange, & I agreed on Meeting entirely in our accounts; I stated to him what has pass'd on the Friday; He very exactly saw that my answer was calculated to the propositions then before Me & could not be with either truth or candour supposed to exclude my constant opinion of Modification which I had constantly before & since dwelt on; L[or]d Rockingham had produced a note of mine on the Friday night, wherein He thought I shew'd a wish for the Repeal; but it must appear to whoever reads it with impartiality that what I said on the affair is merely a reflection arising from the great majority that day; I have therefore put up a copy of it with this, & also the note I gave L[or]d. Rockingham by way of memorandum of what pass'd on the Friday which entirely must exculpate my conduct in this unpleasant affair.

[PAGE 4] An opinion on the most prudent method of acting upon the Stamp Act & what pass'd in consequence

February 1766

Lord Rockingham = Charles Watson Wentworth, Marquess of Rockingham (1730-1782). As Prime Minister 1765-6, it was his ministry that repealed the Stamp Act and passed the Declaratory Act.

Lord Strange = James Smith Stanley (1716-1771), independent MP for Lancashire and chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster .