Many hard-line imperial officials were soon convinced that the repeal of the Stamp Act had been a mistake. Conciliatory gestures met with no suitable return. As Peter Oliver, Andrew Oliver's brother, complained, Lord Rockingham's ministry had placed "too much confidence in the gratitude of the colonists to the parent state"; as a result, it had enabled the radicals to advance their own selfish motives by "mouthing" praises of "liberty" (Document 5-8). In an effort to slow the descent into what Oliver feared would be mob rule in Massachusetts, the British ministry in 1768 stationed two regiments of troops in Boston. Their presence, however, only increased the tensions felt on both sides and resulted finally in a "massacre" (Document 5-9).

5-4 The Stamp Act Riot, 1765
Francis Bernard

The colonists organized a variety of responses to protest the Stamp Act. Their formal protests culminated in the declarations of the Stamp Act Congress (Document 5-3), which questioned Parliament's authority to impose a tax. They also posed direct challenges through organized, but unpredictable, crowd actions. Radicals throughout the colonies systematically engaged in activities aimed at intimidating royal officials into not performing their assigned duties. The most likely targets were the commissioned stamp distributors in each of the colonies. In Boston, where the action began, the crowd's anger was directed against Andrew Oliver, who was rumored to be the appointed stamp distributor for Massachusetts. Oliver, a member of a family whose wealth and connections had secured him a place among the colony's social and political elite, was forced to resign his position twice: first in November, when in fact he had no commission to surrender, and then in December, after his commission finally arrived. In the excerpt here, Massachusetts governor Francis Bernard describes the actions of the Boston crowd in a letter to Lord Halifax, the royal secretary in charge of colonial affairs.

Yesterday Morning at break of day was discovered hanging upon a Tree in a Street of the Town an Effigy, with inscription Distributor. Some of the Neighbours offered to take it down, Governor and Council. But I did not think so however I considered what should be done, if the Sheriff's Officers were obliged to it, without a power to support the Opposition, would only inflate the People; and be a means of extending the mischief to persons not at present the Objects of it. The Council were almost unanimous in advising, that nothing should be done, if the Sheriff's Officers were obstructed in removing the Effigy.

Before the Council met, the Sheriff reported, that his Officers had endeavored to take down the Effigy; but could not do it without imminent danger of their lives. The Council met I represented this Transaction to them as the beginning in my Opinion, of much greater Commissions. I desired their Advice, what I should do upon this Occasion. A Majority of the Council spoke in form against doing anything but upon very different Principles: some said, that it was trifling Business, which, if left alone, would subside of itself, but, if taken notice of would become a serious Affair. Others said, that it was a serious Affair already; that it was a preconcerted Business, in which the greatest Part of the Town was engaged; that we had no force to oppose to it, and making an Opposition to it, without a power to support the Opposition, would only inflame the People; and be a means of extending the mischief to persons not at present the Objects of it. The Council were almost unanimous in advising, that nothing should be done, they were averse to having such advice entered upon the Council Book. But I insisted upon their giving me an Answer to my Question, and that it should be entered in the Book; when, after a long altercation, it was avoided by their advising me to order the Sheriff to assemble the Peace Officers and preserve the peace which I immediately ordered, being a matter of form rather than of real Significance.

It now grew dark when the Mob, which had been gathering all the Afternoon, came down to the Town House, bringing the Effigy with them, and knowing we were sitting in the Council Chamber, they gave three Huzzas by way of defiance, and passed on. Thence they went to a new Building, lately erected by Mr Oliver to let out for Shops, and not quite finished: this they called the Stamp Office, and pulled it down to the Ground in five minutes. From thence they went to Mr Oliver's House; before which they beheld the Effigy; and broke all the Windows next the Street; then they carried the Effigy to Fort hill near Mr Oliver's House, where they burnt the Effigy in a Bonfire made of the Timber they had pulled down from the Building. Mr Oliver had removed his family from his House, and remained himself with a few friends, when the Mob returned to attack the House. Mr Oliver was prevailed upon to retire, and his friends kept Possession of the House. The Mob finding the Doors barricaded, broke down the whole fence of the Garden towards fort hill, and coming on beat in all the doors and Windows of the Garden front, and entered the House, the Gentlemen there retiring. As soon as they had got Possession, they searched about for Mr Oliver, declaring they would kill him; finding that he had left the House, a party set out to search two neighbouring Houses, in one of which Mr Oliver was, but happily they were diverted from this pursuit by a Gentleman telling them, that Mr Oliver was gone with the Governor to the Castle. Otherwise he would certainly have been murdered. After 11 o'clock the Mob seeming to grow quiet, the (Lt. Governor) Chief Justice and the Sheriff ventured to go to Mr Oliver's House to endeavour to persuade them to disperse. As soon as they began to speak, a Ringleader cried out, The Governor and the Sheriff to your Arms, my boys! Presently after a volley of Stones followed, and the two Gentlemen narrowly escaped thro' favour of the Night, not without some bruises. I should have mentioned before, that I sent a written order to the Colonel of the Regiment of Militia, to beat an Alarm; he answered, that it would signify nothing, for as soon as the drum was heard, the drummer would be knocked down, and the drum broke; he added, that probably all the drummers of the Regiment were in the Mob. Nothing more being to be done, The Mob were left to disperse at their own Time, which they did about 12 o'clock.

Questions
1. What message was Bernard sending to his superiors in London? Was he asking for assistance? If so, what kind of assistance?
2. Why did the crowd single out Andrew Oliver? He was hung in effigy in August, but he was not officially commissioned as a stamp distributor until December. Why is this significant? What does this suggest about the Boston crowd? What does it suggest about Oliver?
3. How might Oliver's treatment described here have affected the history of the "Rebellion" written by his brother, Peter, in the 1780s (Document 5-8)? Why were men like the Olivers targeted by the radicals?

5-5 The Examination of Benjamin Franklin (1766)

Benjamin Franklin was the best known, and until 1774 probably the best loved, American living in England. By the start of the Stamp Act crisis in 1765, he had spent six of the previous eight years in London, first as an agent of the Pennsylvania Assembly and then as a champion of the movement to convert Pennsylvania into a royal colony. Men of influence sought his advice, and some openly admired his electrical experiments. Franklin was so comfortable among his friends at "home" that he even suggested he was considering becoming "a Londoner for the rest of my Days." In February 1766, as Parliament contemplated repealing the Stamp Act, Franklin was summoned to testify before the House of Commons. For four hours, he fielded questions about the colonists' determined resistance to measure most members of Parliament considered both necessary and constitutional. Franklin, who was mortified that his earlier nomination of John Hughes to be the stamp agent for Pennsylvania had backfired and exposed his friend to hostile mobs, was now an avowed opponent of the Stamp Act. But he did not argue that Parliament should not yet have any external authority. Instead he insisted on a distinction between "internal" and "external" taxes that few of his fellow Americans accepted as

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