

First Citizen – Background Information

In 1763, salaries of proprietary government officials were set by an act of the Maryland Assembly. Over the years, many people came to believe that the salaries that were established by this law were too high. In 1770, when the act was to expire, there was debate among legislators over the rate at which these government officials' salaries should be set. The Lower House, whose members were elected by the people, crafted a new law that greatly lowered the salaries. Members of the Governor's Council, led by Daniel Dulaney, the Secretary of Maryland, opposed the new law. Unable to break the deadlock among the legislators, Governor Robert Eden decided to use his power to dissolve the Assembly. With no Assembly in session, the Governor had the power to deal with "between-session emergencies," and he issued a proclamation on November 26, 1770 that fixed proprietary government officials' salaries at the old rate of the 1763 law.

Many Marylanders were upset by the Governor's action and in the years that followed much public debate continued over the issue of the high salaries paid to government officials. This issue, among others, was a major cause for the growing split between two political parties in the colony; the government party and the patriot party.

Beginning on January 7, 1773, Daniel Dulaney and Charles Carroll of Carrollton brought the issue of government officials' salaries to the public through a series of letters they placed in the *Maryland Gazette*. At the time, the *Maryland Gazette* was printed in Annapolis by a printing business owned by Mrs. Jonas Green and her son. It was the premier newspaper of the colony and had a reputation for printing letters and editorials about major political issues of the day.

Mr. Dulaney wrote the first of the letters printed in the pages of the *Maryland Gazette*. He crafted the letter to be a conversation between two men; First Citizen, an opponent of the Governor, and Second Citizen, a defender of the governor's action to reestablish the salaries of government officials at the 1763 rate. In this letter, Second Citizen's arguments triumphed over those of First Citizen. A month later, on February 4th, Charles Carroll of Carrollton wrote a letter of his own in response to Daniel Dulaney. These initial letters began a five-month discourse between the two men. In all, eight letters were printed in the newspaper; four by Mr. Dulaney and four by Charles Carroll of Carrollton. The general public was very interested in the exchange of arguments presented by both men. They eagerly anticipated each new edition of the *Maryland Gazette* in hopes it would contain another letter.