

The Bute ministry (1762–1763): peace and cider

‘It was over with [the] Duke of Newcastle – that they should have all the speakers in the House of Commons, and Lord Bute would be strong enough to carry all before him.’¹ So did that robust Bedfordite Richard Rigby realistically pronounce on the new political system. Lord Bute himself took a lot of convincing that such was the case. Even after Newcastle intimated his intention to resign the Treasury Bute was resisting pressure to succeed him, from above by the King and from below by men like James Oswald and Gilbert Elliot. Under ‘anecdotes’ on 9 May the Duke of Devonshire recorded that Bute ‘hesitated and was afraid’.² Bute’s personal distaste for politics was strengthened by awareness of his own limitations, as spelt out in June by the hostile Henry Legge: ‘proud, cunning but not wise, and ignorant of men and business’.³ Bute was a good Parliamentary speaker and a conscientious administrator, faring better as Premier than many contemporaries anticipated and most historians have judged. But his heart was not in it. Bute was to accept office only out of a sense of duty to his young sovereign, and made it clear to George III that he was doing so only on a temporary basis. ‘The end of my labours was solemnly determined, even before I undertook them’, Bute was to tell Henry Fox on 2 March 1763.⁴ It was a well-kept secret, though his young acolyte Lord Shelburne claimed to have known it, informing diarist James Harris on 7 April 1763, the day after Bute’s resignation was announced. ‘It had been his intention to retire (as he, Lord Shelburne, knew) for more than a twelve-month’, once he had settled the peace terms.⁵ Bute’s opponents naturally assumed that he intended to be Premier for as long as possible, and conducted the political battle accordingly. When he did resign many thought he had been forced out of office.

The formation of Bute's ministry was protracted because he refused to take the Treasury unless he had a competent Chancellor of the Exchequer, for the incumbent Lord Barrington evidently would not do. Bute's first choice was Commons Leader George Grenville, who refused that onerous and non-cabinet post, holding out for the Northern Secretaryship that Bute himself would be vacating. Bute then asked Charles Townshend, but the Secretary at War also refused.⁶ Such was the growing desperation that there were rumours of recourse being made to former Chancellor Henry Legge, though a man much out of favour with both George III and Bute.⁷ On 19 May the impatient King told Bute that 'the thoughts of his not accepting the Treasury or of his retiring chill my blood'. If Bute could not find 'a good Chancellor of the Exchequer, he should seek for an honest quiet man'. In such an eventuality James Oswald, presumably disqualified as a Scot, could do the financial business.⁸ Bute accordingly fell back on one of his own supporters, Sir Francis Dashwood, to take responsibility for the nation's finances, to his own amused astonishment. John Wilkes, a Buckinghamshire friend, later made a public jest of the appointment by depicting Dashwood as a man 'puzzling all his life over tavern bills'.⁹

The other major problem concerned the King's objections to Grenville's appointment as Northern Secretary. George III thought him unfit 'for a post where either decision or activity are necessary',¹⁰ and he disliked the prospect of the two Secretaryships of State being held by brothers-in-law, both opposed to a soft peace. Bute saw no impropriety in that, and after Lord Halifax declined the post he prevailed on the King to accept Grenville.¹¹ Otherwise, as in most ministerial changes of the period, there was much continuity of personnel under a new Prime Minister. Lord Granville, over seventy, remained as Lord President of the Council, until his death on 2 January 1763. Lord Henley continued as Lord Chancellor, Lord Egremont as Southern Secretary, the Duke of Bedford as Lord Privy Seal, and Lord Ligonier, though now eighty-two, as army Commander-in-Chief and Master-General of the Ordnance. When Lord Anson, retained at the Admiralty, died on 6 June, Lord Melcombe refused the post on grounds of ill health, but though without office was now summoned to attend cabinet, as Hardwicke and Devonshire had been under Newcastle, since Bute could count on his support: but he died on 28 July. Lord Halifax was appointed, being permitted to retain his absentee high-salary Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland both then and when he became Northern Secretary from October. This pluralism both symbolised the lack of

attention paid to Ireland in the alternate years when the Dublin Parliament was not in session, and reflected the reluctance of the ministry to curb the Undertakers, for the chief of them, Primate Stone, was high in favour with the Bute party.¹² It was the behaviour of Chief Secretary Hamilton that foreshadowed the future, the creation of a Castle Party. He saw his Irish posting as a career move, and sought to create his own faction in the Irish Parliament by recruiting from independent MPs. He stayed on as Chief Secretary when Halifax finally resigned at the beginning of Grenville's ministry.

Outside the cabinet there was also little change. Lord Barrington thankfully vacated the Exchequer to become Treasurer of the Navy, Grenville's old post. Henry Fox, unambitious for the high office befitting a man of his ability, retained the lucrative Pay Office. Charles Yorke and Sir Fletcher Norton remained as Attorney-General and Solicitor-General, and Charles Townshend as Secretary at War. The Bute ministry was not a group of sycophants, nor based on Scots and Tories, as later Whig legends had it, but a coalition of experienced politicians, drawn from the former Leicester House group, the Bedford faction, and above all from 'the old Whig corps', men like Halifax, Barrington, Yorke, and others like Lord North at the Treasury Board, who had deserted Newcastle with varying degrees of awkwardness and embarrassment. Bute's levees were crowded, significantly with many previously deemed Newcastle's friends.¹³ Such men were mindful of their own futures, and the continuous but unavailing pressure on the Duke to retire altogether from politics was not disinterested. Hardwicke feared for the careers of his sons, others for their own.

Newcastle formally resigned the Treasury on 26 May, and refused the King's offer of a pension, even though his personal finances had suffered greatly in the service of the state.¹⁴ The Duke, disorientated at being out of office and disgruntled at his lack of influence, sought to adjust to an unfamiliar role after over forty years in government, a record thirty-seven in the cabinet. It was symptomatic of his confusion that he should have requested friends to stay on in office, while still expecting their political support. The Duke even thought that he would still receive cabinet papers, until Hardwicke convinced him that that was an unrealistic expectation.¹⁵

On his resignation Newcastle promptly contacted the King's uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, who remained hostile to his old foes of Leicester House, the Princess Dowager of Wales and Lord Bute. Hardwicke warned him that this conduct would be construed as planning

an opposition, which would be both factious, unless the peace terms were clearly unsatisfactory, and futile, without Pitt. The Bute ministry was indeed alarmed at the prospect of an alliance between Newcastle and Pitt, whose followers shunned the royal court. So did those personally associated with the Duke of Devonshire, who now ceased to attend cabinet even though he was still summoned. He and Hardwicke were both widely held to have retired from politics. During the summer of 1762 Newcastle therefore received several ministerial approaches, including the offer of Lord President of the Council, all of which he refused, fearing that he would incur a share of the odium for the forthcoming peace treaty without any say in its final formulation. These feelers stopped when it became clear that Pitt would not cooperate in Parliament with the Duke.¹⁶

Much of the peace settlement had already been agreed while Newcastle was at the Treasury, and he risked the charge of factious behaviour by opposing it. Discussions with France had resumed in December 1761, and Britain had soon conceded a French share in the Newfoundland fishery with two small island bases to support it. After news came of the capture of Martinique, the cabinet met on 27 April to decide on new terms in the light of this success: in the absence of an unwell Grenville, it resolved to demand all French North America east of the Mississippi, in exchange for the return of Martinique and Guadeloupe, and to retain the other captured West Indies islands.¹⁷ Bute was pushing for gains France might be expected to concede. The Newcastle cabinet had also agreed to demand Minorca back in exchange for Belleisle, and, in West Africa, to restore Gorée and keep Senegal.¹⁸

These terms broadly satisfied Choiseul, who was fearful of Austrian defection in face of the Russian turnabout, for Prussia continued her war without the British subsidy. But Spain was unwilling to make peace. Her Portuguese campaign had started well, and she also hoped to gain Gibraltar. So in June Choiseul actually urged Britain to prevent the Spanish capture of Lisbon, a feat largely achieved by the British expeditionary force.¹⁹ Meanwhile the Anglo-French negotiation stumbled over the insistence of Choiseul on retaining St Lucia in the West Indies and New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi, even though it was on the east side of that river, the agreed boundary. Deadlock threatened when the Bute cabinet at meetings on 21 and 24 June unanimously insisted on the previous terms.²⁰ For a French response of 2 July repeated both these demands and a refusal to evacuate the Rhineland until peace was made. The situation was resolved by Egremont, who privately informed George III that he was willing

to concede St Lucia if the other gains were agreed, while insisting that the hard-line Grenville should not be told: so much for the King's earlier fear of the two of them conspiring together! Bute and Egremont, without informing the cabinet, then secretly told France of this proposed concession. News of Choiseul's acceptance of this offer came on 8 July, leaving Bute and Egremont with the problem of persuading the cabinet to change its mind.²¹

This task was rendered more difficult by news that the Duke of Brunswick had won another victory over the French in Germany, with Lord Granby the British hero: Newcastle's pessimism about the German war had proved unfounded. On 1 July Horace Walpole summarised the basic ministerial dilemma. 'Lord Bute's situation is unpleasant: misfortunes would remind us of Mr Pitt's glory; advantages will stiffen us against accepting even such a peace as he rejected'.²² Egremont was now privately urging Choiseul to make St Lucia a condition of peace at the very time when his brother-in-law Grenville led the ministerial refusal to concede that point. Yet at a cabinet of 26 July Egremont failed to support a proposal of Bute that the French terms be accepted, and no decision was made.²³ An angry King told Bute that he was 'thunderstruck', and declared that if the opportunity for peace was missed 'I must insist on most of the cabinet of this day being then dismissed'.²⁴ In a rare display of the royal pressure once deemed characteristic of his reign George III then closeted several ministers individually, presumably deploying this threat.²⁵ Two days later, on 28 July, the cabinet agreed to give up St Lucia and New Orleans.²⁶

At that cabinet the Duke of Bedford was appointed to go to Paris as negotiator with both France and Spain, a poor choice. George III commented to Bute later in the year that 'a man of more coolness and less jealousy of temper would have done the business in half the time', and, more succinctly, on 16 January 1763 that his 'warmth of temper turns hillocks into mountains'.²⁷ This temperament got in the way of a pacifism so notorious that the ministry deemed it prudent to restrict his discretion, for there were widespread fears that he would concede too much, as voiced by Newcastle to Hardwicke on 31 July. 'I doubt there is scarce any peace his Grace would reject'.²⁸ After the usual summer break a cabinet of 3 September gave Bedford precise instructions on key points: the Mississippi was to be the colonial boundary between Britain and France, with free navigation for both nations; the Prussian Rhineland was to be evacuated, and both countries were to be neutral in any continuing war between Prussia and Austria; France was not to help Spain in Portugal.

Bedford was in any case instructed not to sign anything without prior royal approval.²⁹

Southern Secretary Egremont soon became concerned about what ‘that headstrong silly wretch’ was conceding, mostly minor points but also the return of Cuba, if it was taken, without compensation.³⁰ The mutual antipathy of Bedford and Egremont was to outlast the peace negotiations, during which Egremont was the link between envoy and cabinet, magnifying small concessions by the envoy and passing on to him instructions he disliked. George Grenville was the real obstacle to an early peace. On 29 September Rigby warned Bedford that he ‘governs Lord Egremont like a child and ... his Lordship has a cordial hatred for you. This I beg you to depend upon, and to have constantly in your thoughts when you write to him. He will lie and make mischief for the sake of doing so, you know of old’.³¹

Havana was reputed to be the strongest fortress in the New World, and Spaniards had scorned the possibility of its capture. On 29 September news of its fall arrived in London, and this precipitated a political crisis in Whitehall, as Grenville and Egremont demanded adequate compensation for its return.³² Earlier George III had actually told Bute that he was ‘much hurt’ at the prospect of this success, fearing it would delay the peace.³³ But he now promptly accepted the principle of compensation, mentioning Florida himself the next day.³⁴ The conduct of the ‘two rascally Secretaries of State’, as Rigby designated them to Bedford, nevertheless so exasperated the King that on 2 October he even accepted Bute’s suggestion of making Newcastle and Henry Fox Secretaries in their stead, confident that they would never unite against Bute.³⁵ The outcome was that Grenville found himself replaced by Henry Fox as Commons Leader and by Halifax as Northern Secretary. The dispute over Havana was merely the excuse for Grenville’s removal as Commons Leader. Fox had already been thought of on 27 September, before the Cuba news arrived.³⁶ Bute had decided he did not want there to carry the peace a man who still objected to some of the terms, notably the cession of Guadeloupe and St Lucia.³⁷ On 6 October Bute told Fox that ‘Mr Grenville (half unable, half unwilling) could go on no longer. His Majesty was in great concern lest a good peace in a good House of Commons should be lost, and his authority disgraced, for want of a proper person to support his honest measures, and keep his closet from that force with which it was so threatened’. Fox declined to succeed Grenville as Northern Secretary, but agreed to be Commons Leader with a cabinet place. He warned Bute that his promotion would add ‘unpopularity

to unpopularity', and, so he told Bedford, that 'my name might frighten Tories away'.³⁸

For Henry Fox, unlike Pitt and Grenville, had been a prominent member of the 'old Whig corps', holding various posts under Walpole, Pelham and Newcastle. His acceptance of office under Bute was therefore seen by the Whig grandees as desertion in a way that the behaviour of men like Grenville was not. In a conversation of 31 July with the Duke of Devonshire Fox had answered such a reproach for siding with Bute over the peace terms: 'It was not supporting my Lord Bute, but acting according to his opinions'. Fox had also then disagreed with Devonshire's aristocratic resentment at Bute's assumption of power: 'that the nobility would not be governed in that manner'. Fox had replied that, on the contrary, 'it was hard indeed, if nothing would do but tearing the King's Favourite from his Majesty's person'. Conscious that he might be accused of desertion, Fox then 'affected to say, that Whig and Tory no longer subsisted, in order to prove, that he was not acting against the Whigs'.³⁹ Fox's 'Court Whig' record and cynical personality made him an eminently suitable choice for converting into firm Parliamentary support those former administration men who had opted for Bute rather than Newcastle during the summer recess.

On 9 October Bute sent his private secretary Charles Jenkinson, later a man reputed to be close to George III, to inform Grenville that Fox would be taking over the lead in the Commons. Bute himself then informed Grenville that he must exchange offices with Lord Halifax, the First Lord of the Admiralty, a post inferior in status and salary, a blow to the purse of a man without private means as well as to his pride.⁴⁰ Naturally anxious not to alienate the King, Grenville had little choice but to accept his demotion, but he warned Bute and, later, the King that Fox was unpopular: to which George III replied, 'We must call in bad men to govern bad men'.⁴¹

That Grenville's insistence on compensation for Havana had little to do with his demotion was underlined by the decision of the reshuffled cabinet on 22 October to demand either Florida or Puerto Rico. That was a unanimous view, except that Grenville and Egremont pressed for both.⁴² Bedford, who feared the peace would be jeopardised by this demand, was specifically instructed that Spanish non-acceptance would mean continuation of the war. Spain must also concede the Honduras logwood settlements, and give up her outrageous claim to a share in the Newfoundland fishery. Choiseul, anxious both for peace and maintenance of Spanish goodwill, had, on news of

the fall of Havana, already offered Spain that part of Louisiana west of the Mississippi. Before the end of October the Spanish government decided to cede Florida and accept western Louisiana. The peace preliminaries were agreed by the British cabinet on 10 November.⁴³

The Bute administration had achieved its timetable objective of securing peace before the Parliamentary session: financial complications and possible criticism were thereby avoided. Ministerial concern over Parliamentary acceptance of the peace terms was to prove groundless. But in the autumn of 1762 that fear should be seen against a background of both press hostility to Bute and the manifest intention of Pitt and Newcastle to oppose the peace.

Bute's accession to office sparked off a hitherto unprecedented propaganda campaign against him. At one level there was a barrage of cartoons, totalling some four hundred during the ministry. At another there was a press attack, mainly in the weekly political essay papers that were a feature of the period.⁴⁴ Bute had anticipated the need for a press campaign and had mobilised an array of writers; but all were outgunned by John Wilkes in 'the war of the weeklies'. The first issue of the *Briton*, founded by Bute and written by Tobias Smolett, appeared on 29 May. It was countered a week later by the *North Briton*, launched by Wilkes, who also contributed to the *Pittite Monitor*. The ministry retaliated on 12 June with the *Auditor*. The controversy centred on the peace terms and on Bute himself, as Wilkes exploited anti-Scottish prejudice and used historical precedents about royal favourites, notably Roger Mortimer, the favourite of young Edward III and lover of that King's mother, a parallel applied to Bute by press innuendo and unfounded popular rumour. The audience was much wider than the limited circulation of these papers, for extracts from the weeklies were reprinted in the daily and thrice-weekly newspapers and in the monthly magazines. This broader newspaper press also entered the fray on its own account, by no means always against Bute. As the peace negotiations came to a head, opposition papers, led by the *London Evening Post* and the *Gazetteer*, criticised any concessions to Britain's enemies, but the ministry was defended by the *London Chronicle* and several sponsored pamphlets.⁴⁵

By the late summer of 1762 the Duke of Newcastle had adapted to the role of opposition, and sought to avoid the slur of 'faction' by claiming that on foreign policy he differed in principle from the ministry. Russia's complete withdrawal from the war after Catherine II deposed her husband in July strengthened, in Newcastle's opinion, the case for support of Prussia, a line of argument showing him to be

yesterday's man. More convincing was the contention that Britain's war successes in 1762 justified demands for better peace terms than the Duke himself had earlier accepted. George III, at a private interview on 3 September, failed to persuade Newcastle to drop his opposition to the peace. So, a few days later, did Devonshire and Hardwicke, even though the latter warned him that only Pitt would be the beneficiary of any political success against Bute.⁴⁶

Grenville now suggested an alternative ministerial tactic, that Newcastle, Hardwicke and Devonshire be summoned to attend cabinet, to compel them to share responsibility for the peace. Bute replied that the first two were no longer in office, but Devonshire had retained his court post of Lord Chamberlain and could still be deemed a cabinet member, though he had ignored all summonses since Newcastle's resignation.⁴⁷ A letter to Devonshire, then at Bath, was answered by a refusal on 3 October. The King was highly indignant, commenting to Bute on 5 October that 'this is a personal affront ... I have no doubt that the Duke of Devonshire is too timid to have taken such a step had he not known that the Dukes of Cumberland and Newcastle would approve of it. We must therefore turn our eyes some other way and see whether ... the House of Commons cant be managed without these proud Dukes.'⁴⁸

There followed the successful approach to Henry Fox, but Bute nevertheless made one last attempt to secure the support of Newcastle and Hardwicke, Halifax being sent to visit the Duke on 16 October. Newcastle and his friends remained unwilling to share the responsibility. '*Coalition* is the favourite word of the administration at present', wrote Cumberland to Newcastle on 17 October, 'but when pressed, it is always dribbled down more than a share of the odium, and hardly any power to serve the country'.⁴⁹ Six days later Hardwicke was even more frank in his assessment of the offer. 'No office hinted at, no particular proposition made; only *pray come to Court and Council*, and help to support those who had demolished you.'⁵⁰ The leadership of 'the old Whig corps' would oppose the peace.

George III, anxious to punish Devonshire's insolence by dismissal from his court office, may have held his hand to await the outcome of this approach. He acted on 28 October, after the Duke had returned to London.⁵¹ Newcastle thereupon sought to build out of this Devonshire incident a campaign of selective resignations. 'There exists the most factious combination of *soi disant* great men against the lawful right and liberty of the King that ever happened in this country', Bute told George Townshend on 2 November.⁵² George III was scornful of

such a tactic, commenting to Bute that on the contrary ‘every officer that votes against government at a time like this ought to be made an example of’.⁵³ On 3 November the King led the way by the rare step of striking out Devonshire’s name from the Privy Council.⁵⁴ The young Marquess of Rockingham and Newcastle’s nephew and heir Lord Lincoln resigned from Bedchamber posts, but apart from the Cavendish family there were few other resignations, only nine of the thirty-three officeholders listed by Newcastle on 3 November for the campaign.⁵⁵ Hardwicke, whose own son Charles Yorke had refused to resign as Attorney-General, told the Duke on 15 November that he should not have expected otherwise. ‘This cannot possibly be new to your Grace, who have been conversant in Courts and parties above these forty years. Have you not all along seen such motives to be the great hinges, on which the generality of people’s conduct has turned?’⁵⁶ The fiasco exposed Newcastle’s political weakness out of power, and provided some convenient patronage opportunities for Bute.

It was only gradually that the Parliamentary implications of his new role in opposition dawned on Newcastle. In August and September his lists of the House of Lords optimistically showed a rough equality, but by 6 December conceded the ministry an advantage of 109 to 51. And on 18 December, when the Duke was licking his wounds, he reckoned on only 45 supporters there.⁵⁷ Likewise, for the House of Commons he at first weeded out only 56 previous supporters, mostly MPs connected with Bute, Bedford and Fox, making no allowance for the magnetic pull of government power.⁵⁸ Fox, unscrupulous and energetic, with a taste and aptitude for political management lacking in Bute, excelled in his task of ensuring a Commons majority for the peace. ‘No man knows better than he does the *weakness* and *wickedness* of mankind, or how to make the best use of it’, Newcastle commented to Charles Yorke on 25 October. ‘He has agents working everywhere. He knows whom to employ and how to work upon different dispositions and constitutions. My Lord Bute had done ably for his purposes in the choice he has made.’⁵⁹

There soon proved to be little substance in early government fears either that independents and old Tories would resent being canvassed by such a Court Whig, or that Pitt’s charisma and reputation would carry much weight. For the ministry was offering a good peace and the prospect of an end to high taxation. Fox shrewdly estimated that the opposition would not muster sixty Commons votes.⁶⁰ But he nevertheless believed that coercion of known opponents would have a salutary effect, beginning with Newcastle himself. ‘Strip the Duke of

his three lieutenantcies', he urged Bute in November. 'I'll answer for the good effect of it, and then go on to the general rout. But let this beginning be made immediately.'⁶¹ Fox did not get his way, and the retributive action was postponed until after the Parliamentary triumph, Newcastle not being deprived of his county lord-lieutenancies until 23 December.

After Henry Fox and George III had in their different ways done their work, Newcastle accepted the inevitable. The last of the Duke's numerous Commons lists, compiled just before the meeting of Parliament on 25 November, classified 176 MPs as 'for' Newcastle, 34 as absent, 91 as doubtful, and 256 as 'against'.⁶² A ministerial majority of 213 votes to 74 on 1 December was ominous for its effect on any waverers.⁶³ The opposition was in disarray. No strategy was agreed upon, either by a group of younger men on 30 November or by the old heads on 2 December; while Pitt declined open cooperation when sounded by Cumberland on 17 November, stating that he did not wish to overthrow Bute merely to restore Newcastle to power.⁶⁴

This opposition incompetence and disunity contributed to and enhanced a ministerial triumph that was already assured. Henry Fox had thought there would be a Commons majority for any peace made by Bute long before he himself was called upon to provide it, comprised, so he told Devonshire on 31 July, of 'the Tories, the Scotch, and the Loaves and Fishes'.⁶⁵ In other words, the independents and the Court Party would outvote the political factions. And so it happened, without need of the bribery of historical legend.⁶⁶

When it came to the point the opposition leadership momentarily doubted whether it would be wise or expedient to oppose the peace after all: but decided to do so on the realisation that supine acceptance would be a poor start to a Parliamentary campaign wherein support might later be expected from peers and MPs who would certainly vote for the peace terms.⁶⁷ It was on 9 December that the ministry sought approval. Lord Shelburne moved the Address in the Lords. The twenty-seven-year-old Duke of Grafton, a Pittite, attacked the terms and imputed corruption to Bute, who mocked him as a callow youth and made a fine speech of two hours. Newcastle and Hardwicke also criticised the peace, the latter condemning the restoration of Havana, the key to the West Indies, and of so many French sugar islands. No vote took place.⁶⁸

In the House of Commons that day Pitt made one of the most famous Parliamentary speeches of all time, calculated by several auditors at three hours and twenty-five minutes, reputedly a record length

hitherto. Pitt drank cordial and deployed crutches and bandages for dramatic effect, the better to emphasise his physical self-sacrifice in appearing at all, which the House recognised by permission for him to sit down as required during his oration. His main theme was that Britain had given away most of her economically valuable gains. He dwelt at what many felt to be undue length on the fishery concession to France; and regretted the return of so many West India sugar islands and, above all, of Havana, which would have enabled Britain to dominate the trade with Spanish America. France, too, should not have been given back any slave trade ports in West Africa nor her trading bases in India. Pitt concluded by deploring the loss of the Prussian alliance. His speech was a personal statement rather than an attempt to influence the debate. In that respect it was counter-productive, since his disclaimer of any connection with Newcastle encouraged waverers like Charles Townshend to speak and vote with the ministry: a few days earlier Townshend had resigned as Secretary at War, and had therefore been expected to oppose the peace. After Pitt left during the debate others did the same, including some thirty of Newcastle's followers when the Duke sent word not to force a vote. Horace Walpole noted that 'the secession of Pitt struck such a damp on opposition, that Fox had little to do but to chant *Te Deum* for victory'.⁶⁹ Before the debate opposition estimates of the minority vote ranged from an optimistic 170 to a pessimistic 110.⁷⁰ The actual total of 65, as against 319 for the ministry, was therefore a morale-destroying disaster.

The length of Pitt's speech prevented many MPs from voicing their opinions, and thirty-six did so next day on the report: among those who criticised the peace were Henry Legge and Attorney-General Charles Yorke, and two of Newcastle's young supporters, Thomas Townshend and George Onslow, both still in office. An attempt to retrieve the voting debacle failed because the Newcastle abstentions now present were matched by an equal number of new absentees, opposition mustering only 63 votes against 227.⁷¹ Newcastle calculated that altogether 103 MPs had voted against the peace, and he hopefully added to them 49 others still thought to be friends.⁷² He recognised his numerical weakness, ruefully reflecting to Hardwicke on 14 December that 'it is but too true, what Mr Fox said ... viz, my Lord Bute has got over all the Duke of Newcastle's friends'.⁷³ Already Newcastle's former Treasury Secretary James West had advised the Duke not to instigate 'an opposition to the measures of the publick, in trifling divisions, which become contemptible, by violence being added to weakness'.⁷⁴ The problem of organising a credible opposition was

compounded by the difficulty of finding Commons spokesmen. That political weathercock Charles Townshend was soon negotiating to rejoin the ministry, and early in 1763 became President of the Board of Trade. Attorney-General Charles Yorke was inclined to support government, like Hardwicke's other sons, and had abstained from voting after speaking against the peace on 10 December. In the absence of support from these two formidable debaters Henry Legge, never a close friend of the Duke, declined the role of opposition spokesman. 'He says he is not qualified to be sole Leader in the House of Commons', Newcastle told Devonshire on 12 December.⁷⁵

Political retribution meanwhile followed the Parliamentary rout. Those peers and MPs who sided against Bute over the peace or otherwise must have expected dismissal from any honour or office they held, whether Newcastle, Grafton and Rockingham from their county lieutenancies, or MPs George Onslow and Thomas Townshend from their court sinecures. Such was normal political practice, albeit not with the thoroughness displayed against Newcastle's followers. George III himself insisted on immediate dismissal of Parliamentary offenders, since it would 'frighten others'.⁷⁶ The offices thus made available were distributed to the supporters of those now in power: among them Welbore Ellis, a Fox man, succeeded Charles Townshend as Secretary at War; Bedfordite Richard Rigby at last acquired a lucrative post as a Vice-Treasurer of Ireland; and James Harris, a friend of Grenville, was appointed to the Board of Admiralty. More unusual and open to comment was the consideration of Tories for office: Sir Walter Bagot declined a place at the Board of Trade, while the replacement of Lord North by Sir John Philipps at the Treasury Board was briefly contemplated.⁷⁷

But that the political change inaugurated by the accession of George III signified more of a political revolution than a mere change of ministry was demonstrated by what George Onslow in a 1785 memoir described as 'that general massacre [that] was made of almost every man in office from high to low who had any connection with far better and higher men than themselves, those who composed the Whig administration of the late reign, especially with the Duke of Newcastle'.⁷⁸ The papers of Bute's secretary Charles Jenkinson contain numerous lists of minor officials in various government departments, such as the Customs, Excise, Salt and Stamp Offices, countrywide as well as in London. It was Fox who insisted on local dismissals, to show where the power now lay, and the changes in county lieutenancies also had consequential effects. The victims were men marked out for dismissal

because they had been appointed by Newcastle during his decades of power. The Duke thought this systematic removal of officials appointed by him throughout the government structure, down to local customs officers, to be a breach of political convention: ‘such a stretch of power, as is hardly constitutional’, he wrote to Hardwicke on 19 December.⁷⁹ But the campaign was undertaken just because the old Whig corps had been in power for so long. Newcastle melodramatically compared the political atmosphere to the climate of fear in the reign of James II.⁸⁰ But lives were not at stake, and a more accurate comparison would have been with the proscription of Tories after the Hanoverian Succession. Many of these men facing dismissal constituted an electoral and political organisation for Newcastle, on the government payroll. It was naive of the Duke to believe that they would remain in post, unless they demonstrated their allegiance to be to the King’s government, and not to Newcastle himself.⁸¹

‘A kind of new trade to learn at a late hour.’⁸² That was Hardwicke’s wry comment to Newcastle on the prospect of permanent opposition. It was not these former ministers, but their younger friends, who first began to pick up the pieces of the shattered opposition. The Marquess of Rockingham, Lord Bessborough, Lord Villiers, George Onslow, and Thomas Townshend were among a group anxious in late December to form a political club. Newcastle discouraged the idea, commenting that such conduct would appear factious, still to the former minister a mark of opprobrium, and also expose their numerical weakness. No club was to be formed for another year.⁸³ In January 1763 the Duke equally disapproved of the idea of ‘our young friends’, as he denoted them to Hardwicke, that an approach should be made to Pitt.⁸⁴ Such ducal put-downs can only have further demoralised the opposition, which in January 1763 Rigby, an MP since 1745, reported to Bedford as being disheartened and leaderless. ‘I never saw the Parliament look so tame after the Christmas recess since I have been a Member as the *present* one does. The opposition has not got a grain of spirit to support itself. Numbers and Abilities they are totally devoid of.’⁸⁵ For a while the journalism of John Wilkes, who maintained a relentless attack on Bute in the *North Briton*, seemed to be the sole recourse of opposition, which, in the opinion of the Duke of Devonshire, would be ‘undone’ without Wilkes, who was ‘the life and soul of it’.⁸⁶ Parliamentary opposition did revive later in the session, as the Bute ministry gave hostages to fortune by devising new measures. Policy-making was made necessary by the financial, imperial and

international problems put into sharp focus by the end of the war, and any positive moves were likely to incur criticism.

That was less so with respect to foreign policy. British diplomatic isolation, resulting from the breach with Prussia, was perceived by virtually all politicians in Westminster as a situation to be remedied, and disagreements arose over what ally should be selected, not whether one should be sought. For it was evident that France would be seeking revenge, and she had maintained her alliances both with Britain's former partner Austria and with Spain, now even more hostile since Britain was her supposedly predatory colonial neighbour along the Mississippi as well as in the West Indies. Bute's first move was an attempt to revive the Prussian alliance. Britain had, after all, insisted on French evacuation of Prussian territories in western Germany: but it was optimistic of Bute on 26 May 1762 to seek to mend fences with Frederick II by justifying the cessation of the Prussian subsidy on two grounds: the prospect of peace for Prussia, and the new Spanish war for Britain. Frederick II refused to be reconciled, and Prussia gave support to the anti-Bute propaganda campaign in Britain.⁸⁷ Frederick not only disliked and distrusted Bute. He had his eyes fixed on the Russian alliance that he was to secure in 1764.

Russia was also cultivated by the Bute ministry, for Peter III, ruler from January to July 1762, was anti-French as well as pro-Prussian. Apart from the obvious attraction of Russian military might, there was a need to renegotiate a lapsed 1734 trade treaty, and a common interest in countering French intrigues in Sweden and Turkey. Even the deposition of Peter III by his wife Catherine II was not perceived as a setback, since she was reputed to be an Anglophile, and a new ambassador, the Duke of Buckinghamshire, left in August 1762 for St Petersburg with instructions to renew a 1742 military alliance as well as the trade treaty. But Catherine would not commit herself, and merely told Buckinghamshire that the evident goodwill on both sides made her consider 'the treaty as already concluded', and a formal alliance might alarm Europe. Meanwhile she made clear her expectation of British support at the anticipated vacancy for the elective monarchy of Poland, currently a Russian satellite; for French intervention was expected, as at the last election in 1733. This issue remained dormant, for the ailing Polish King Augustus III lived longer than expected, until October 1763.⁸⁸

Prussian enmity pointed to an approach also to Prussia's foe Austria. There were many British politicians who through tradition and sentiment hankered after this partnership, even though unsuccessful

overtures to Austria and Holland early in 1762 had confirmed that the 'Old Alliance' was dead. Such men included George III, who detested Frederick II, and most 'old Whigs', among them Northern Secretary Halifax. An Austrian alliance was never a viable possibility, for Chancellor Kaunitz regarded his French alliance as the cornerstone of his foreign policy. All the Bute ministry achieved was the restoration of diplomatic relations, Lord Mansfield's nephew Lord Stormont being appointed as ambassador to Vienna.

Imperial measures were as yet as uncontroversial as foreign policy, when the Bute ministry considered problems, old and new, arising in North America. Other imperial matters, in India and Africa, were rather deemed the concern still of the respective trading companies, apart from a decision to station an army regiment in Senegal. An old colonial issue was the depreciated value of the paper money printed by Virginia, whose planters were wont to borrow in sterling and repay their debts in notes worth only about five-eighths of their nominal value. In 1762 the Board of Trade received complaints from the merchants of Glasgow, Liverpool, and London, and in February 1763 the Board warned the colony to mend its ways. Otherwise the local currency would be made illegal.⁸⁹ A more obvious problem, highlighted by wartime events, was that of ensuring an amicable relationship with Indian tribes angered by encroaching settlers and cheating traders. In the summer of 1762 three Cherokee chiefs from Virginia visited London, and Southern Secretary Egremont, the minister responsible for America, in March 1763 sought to organise a meeting of southern Indians at Augusta. But northern Indians were being alienated by the establishment of settlements near the Great Lakes, and Egremont, fearing an Indian war, urged the army commander in America, General Jeffrey Amherst, to prevent this. Such events brought to ministerial attention the need to organise and defend Britain's new American territories. Egremont told Amherst on 27 January 1763 that 'a plan' was under consideration; soon afterwards he asked the Board of Trade for ideas on a colonial tax; and early in March approved a scheme, drafted by former Georgia governor Henry Ellis, for the government of the new possessions, including the idea of a western settlement boundary for the old colonies.⁹⁰ The Bute ministry ended before any of these ideas were implemented, but they foreshadowed much of what the Grenville ministry was to enact.

These matters of foreign and imperial policy did not come before Parliament, and so in a sense were outside the political arena. By contrast military and financial decisions always needed Parliamentary approval,

and in 1763 independent MPs as well as the chastened Newcastle faction were to voice various concerns about such government business.

The wartime army amounted to some 100,000 men in July 1762, including 18,000 in Germany and 6,000 in Portugal.⁹¹ George III, in true Hanoverian tradition, 'looked upon the army to be his own department', so Bute later told Henry Fox.⁹² As early as September the King was drawing up plans for the peacetime army.⁹³ But exactly how much of 'his majesty's plan', a phrase used by Fox, was incorporated into the ministerial decision to have an army of some 54,000 men cannot be ascertained.⁹⁴ The cabinet on 29 December 1762 settled on 20,000 men in Britain, 18,000 in Ireland, 10,000 in North America and the West Indies, 2,600 in both Gibraltar and Minorca, and a regiment of 550 men in the new African base of Senegal.⁹⁵ This plan represented a substantial increase on pre-war numbers, up from 4,000 in America, and 12,000 in Ireland, the statutory minimum for that country by an act of 1699. The proposed American army was already in place, and was intended to keep the peace between colonists and Indians, overawe the French inhabitants of Canada, and guard the southern coast against potential French or Spanish attack: any need to control the existing colonies by force did not come to mind, in 1763.⁹⁶ The proposal for an army almost double the previous peacetime establishment, when it was announced to Parliament, revived old and absurd 'country party' fears of a large permanent army being a threat to political liberty. Sir John Philipps, an old Tory but now a loyal supporter of George III, wrote to Bute on 18 February warning that many MPs would not support it. The King, conscious of his own rectitude, privately denounced the sinister implication as nonsensical, but Bute could not afford to alienate independent opinion.⁹⁷ Rigby told Bedford on 23 February that the army estimates had been delayed because of objections from 'most of the Tories, and some even of the Walpolian Whigs'.⁹⁸ The next day Secretary at War Welbore Ellis presented revised estimates to an invited group of MPs. They included the reduction of the British army to 17,500 and that in Ireland to 12,000. These altered estimates were approved by all those present, including Philipps and Charles Townshend, except for Sir Roger Newdigate.⁹⁹

The Newcastle faction nevertheless still saw the presentation of the army estimates for Commons approval on 4 March as an opportunity to attack the ministry, but Pitt was known to favour a large army. Newcastle, Rockingham and Henry Legge therefore decided to raise the matter only if he was absent. Since he attended, the sole direct attack came from William Beckford, currently Lord Mayor of London, who

opposed the motion on grounds of cost, corruption, and putative tyranny, country party sentiments not endorsed even by the squires, among whom Philipps now commended ministerial economy. Pitt regretted that the proposal was not for a larger army, since the peace was only ‘an armed truce’. Legge did venture to criticise such expense at a time when the national budget could barely be balanced, but the Newcastle party deemed it unwise to force a vote.¹⁰⁰

Even before that problem had been resolved the ministry had also removed the sting from another move by Sir John Philipps, who was proving almost more troublesome to Bute as a supporter than his avowed political opponents. Newcastle had long been fearful that his fall from power would be followed by a vindictive inquiry into the vast financial expenditure of the Seven Years War, when apparent inefficiency had been unavoidable, however honourable the Duke’s own conduct. Far more concerned about such a prospect, and with good reason, was Henry Fox, who as Paymaster-General of the Forces during the war had used that post to make a fortune. For Newcastle the intention of Philipps to move for a Commission of Public Accounts, an antiquated procedure and the very method anticipated by the Duke in trepidation, seemed to confirm his suspicion of a deliberate attempt by Bute to harass him. Philipps had in fact acted on his own initiative and put the ministry in an embarrassing predicament, George III deeming the proposal ‘very silly’.¹⁰¹ A demand for an inquiry into suspected government extravagance and corruption could not be voted down, and so it had to be evaded, after the motion by Philipps passed on 11 February. When the formal appointment of the Commission came under consideration on 22 February, Chancellor of the Exchequer Dashwood persuaded Philipps to accept instead the modern procedure of a Commons Committee of Inquiry. The next day Dashwood successfully proposed, on the ground of efficiency, that it should be a Select Committee, chosen by ballot. This decision achieved the ministerial objective of neutering Sir John’s initiative, while accepting the principle of accountability; for the Committee chosen on 1 March corresponded exactly with a Treasury list, and progressed no further than an examination of the finance of the Board of Ordnance.¹⁰²

Such a retrospective inquiry paled into insignificance by comparison with the legacy of the financial burden from the Seven Years War that now confronted the British government. Two quite distinct problems were the cost of administering and defending the greatly enlarged empire, and the increased burden of the national debt. For the British taxpayers already felt squeezed beyond endurance.

That imperial possessions should be as small a financial burden as possible on the home country had long been a precept of British politicians: and estimates of the cost of maintaining an army of 10,000 soldiers in America soon led the Bute ministry into contemplating a tax on the colonies there. That was evident from a note sent by George III to Bute early in February, for his comparison between the army establishments of 1749 and 1763 excluded the American army 'as [it is] proposed that being no expense to Great Britain'.¹⁰³ For the Bute ministry decided that after the first year the American colonies should bear the cost of the army in their continent, and Secretary at War Welbore Ellis promised this to the House of Commons on 4 March.¹⁰⁴ But no resolution had been taken as to the method of taxation, and George III was therefore indignant when on 18 March Charles Townshend, then President of the Board of Trade, proposed in the House of Commons the conversion of an old molasses duty, designed in 1733 by Sir Robert Walpole to prohibit the import of foreign molasses into British North America, into a revenue to pay for the American army.¹⁰⁵ The King reminded Bute that 'this subject is new to none, having been thought of this whole winter'. He was angry that the silence of the Treasury Board, Fox and Grenville had allowed Townshend to claim the whole credit for the idea. 'All ought to have declared that next session some tax will be laid before the House, but that it requires much information before a proper one can be stated, and thus have thrown out this insidious proposal'.¹⁰⁶ Townshend's idea was so popular that an American Tax Bill was at once brought in; but it was killed in Committee on 30 March, ironically by George Grenville, the minister who was to tax America.¹⁰⁷

The National Debt, so Chancellor of the Exchequer Dashwood told the Commons on 18 March, amounted to £141 million, with an interest burden of £4,700,000.¹⁰⁸ During the army debate of 4 March former Chancellor Henry Legge had cited this situation as an argument against the proposed increase of the army. His concern was that the debt would never be paid off, still the professed long-term aim of the Treasury: for he conjectured the total taxation revenue at £10 million, the debt interest at £4,500,000, and the cost of the Civil List, army and navy at £3,900,000, which together with sundry other expenses, would leave only £1 million a year to redeem the debt, a 'tedious' process.¹⁰⁹

Three days later Dashwood presented his budget. Needing to raise a further loan of £3,500,000 to meet remaining wartime expenses, he proposed new taxes to cover the interest thereon, one of which was a

duty of ten shillings on each hogshead of cider sold, to bring in £75,000. The proposal was postponed for further consideration at the request of MPs from the cider counties, in the West of England. This minor tax was to provoke a major political crisis. Pitt, to win favour with the squirearchy, then threw out the irresponsible suggestion that the main direct tax, the land tax, should be halved from its wartime level of 20 per cent, four shillings in the pound. Grenville challenged him to state what extra taxes he would raise to meet the consequent shortfall of £1 million a year, only to be mocked by Pitt, who quoted or hummed, a popular ditty, 'Gentle Shepherd, tell me where' and then walked out. Many MPs deemed Pitt's conduct silly and rude, but the nickname 'Gentle Shepherd' long stuck to Grenville.¹¹⁰ Within a few days the proposed cider duty was changed from ten shillings a hogshead on cider sold to four shillings on all cider, whether sold or consumed privately. This attempt at fairness did not remove the sense of grievance in the West Country, even though the rest of England had long endured a beer duty on their favourite drink. Cider county squires were roused to make maiden speeches in the House, with Worcestershire MP William Dowdeswell rising to prominence as the chief opponent of the duty. When the tax was confirmed on 13 March by a vote of 138 to 81, diarist James Harris noted, 'the division was such as no object but cider could produce. Against the measure all the members of the cider counties of Devon, Somerset, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Herefordshire; part of the Tories; part of the Newcastle men, such as Mr Legge'.¹¹¹ Attendance at the cider debates was poor, and the burden of argument fell on the squires. The West Country was not Pelhamite territory, and the Newcastle party gave support to the protest only by votes. They raised the minority to 112 as against 181 after a long debate on 21 March, but the political inexperience of the cider MPs led them to force too many divisions, a tactic counter-productive as an annoyance factor.¹¹²

Opposition was even made to the cider duty in the House of Lords, contrary to the constitutional convention that taxation was a matter for the Commons only. A long debate took place over the second reading on 28 March, when Lord Bute argued that since beer was taxed so should cider be; but he agreed that the method of taxation by excise duty was objectionable; and offered to repeal the tax in the future if it was not equitable. Hardwicke somewhat unfairly portrayed the cider tax as a second land tax on the western counties. The Lords divided 72 to 40 in favour of the tax, a majority raised by proxies to 83 to 41. Another vote was forced after a debate on the third

reading two days later, when the tax was voted by 73 to 39.¹¹³ The City of London sheriffs at once presented a petition to the King, who made no reply to what he described to Bute as ‘a parcel of low shop-keepers’.¹¹⁴ Bute’s behaviour in the cider controversy belied the image of a timid and spineless politician. He had risen to the occasion both as Prime Minister and as Parliamentarian, persisting with the tax despite the misgivings of Fox, Grenville and even George III, and excelling personally in both Lords debates.¹¹⁵

Simultaneously with these attacks at Westminster the reviving opposition also sought to embarrass the Bute ministry at India House, where the dominant Laurence Sullivan was an ally of Bute and Shelburne. Robert Clive had returned to Britain in 1760 with an intention to play a part in Parliamentary rather than Company politics. He created his own small group in the Commons, and obtained an Irish peerage from Newcastle in 1762. But a potential threat to his *jagir* then led him to join a challenge to Sullivan’s control, and this dispute within the East India Company became part of the battle between administration and opposition. During the peace negotiations of 1762 the Bute ministry coerced the Company into acceptance of less favourable terms than it sought. This treatment alienated Company Chairman Thomas Rous, Lord Clive, and, so Newcastle thought, ‘the Company in general’.¹¹⁶ Early in 1763 the Company polarised into supporters of Sullivan and Clive, who on 15 March carried in the General Court of the Company, by 359 votes to 298, a motion approving the conduct of Rous.

The Bute ministry, threatened with the prospect of a hostile Company after the next election of Directors in April, threw its full political and financial weight behind Sullivan. Commons Leader Henry Fox and Lord Shelburne took out voting qualifications, and government supporters hastened to follow suit. The Newcastle party backed Clive, with grandees like the Duke of Portland and Lord Rockingham qualifying to vote. This contest of 1763 was distinguished from that of 1758 not only by the intervention of Parliamentary politicians but also by the tactic of stock-splitting. Direct ministerial intervention produced 100 of the 160 votes created for Sullivan, the Pay Office under Fox purchasing £19,000 of stock, equivalent to 38 votes. Clive alone was rumoured to have spent £100,000, and altogether 220 votes were made for his party. Such stock-splitting attracted much censorious comment, but did not decide the contest, for over 1,200 proprietors voted, the great majority of them genuine shareholders. Ministerial canvassing of such proprietors was more successful than

the campaign of the Newcastle party, for Sullivan carried all ten places contested, fourteen candidates having been double-listed.¹¹⁷ Both Clive and the Parliamentary opposition were humbled, even though the Company election on 13 April took place just after the end of the Bute ministry.

The irony of the cider tax episode was that the Newcastle party had exploited the issue in order to force Bute out of office; whereas by then he had already finally decided to resign. After the Lords debate of 28 March Fox reported to Bute that one opposition peer had said that the aim was ‘only to get rid of you, which shows that they don’t smoke the secret yet’.¹¹⁸ Even after Bute’s resignation Newcastle, to whom such a voluntary retirement was inexplicable, remained convinced that he had been forced out of office by ‘the noble stand made in the House of Lords, and the spirit shewed in the House of Commons, the end of the session, with the general sense of the nation’.¹¹⁹

That Bute did resign within a week or so of the cider tax controversy was coincidence, not cause and effect. Only constant royal encouragement had persuaded him to persevere thus long in face of incessant personal attacks in press and Parliament. On 3 February he told his son-in-law Sir James Lowther that ‘if I had but £50 per annum, I would retire on bread and water, and I think it luxury, compared with what I suffer’.¹²⁰ Political resentment of him as an unconstitutional royal favourite was transmuted into personal antipathy. Especially did the prejudice against Bute as a Scot span the whole range of society, from the mob to the aristocracy: it was Lord Rockingham who referred to ‘the Thistle Administration’.¹²¹ By early March Bute was resolved to retire, but for long only Henry Fox and George III knew of his intention.¹²² It was kept so close a secret that Secretaries of State Egremont and Halifax were not told until 1 April.

Bute’s first idea was to recommend Fox as his successor, but he was as reluctant to accept as George III was to agree to this proposal, and urged Bute to reconstruct his ministry and carry on. A detailed proposal written by Fox at Bute’s request and submitted to him on 11 March suggested that Lord Gower should replace Egremont as Southern Secretary: not merely because Egremont was ‘an useless, lumpish, sour friend’, or even because Gower was a man of honour and good humour, who would not quarrel with Charles Townshend at the Board of Trade; but also to ‘fix that capricious being the Duke of Bedford, who intends to resign, and would be a fifth Duke at Devonshire House within a year’. Fox also recommended for high office young Lord Shelburne, who ‘has uncommon abilities, great activity, and

loves you sincerely'. Those to be dismissed along with Egremont were Grenville, 'a tiresome incumbrance', and Halifax, 'vain and presumptuous, aiming at the highest degree of power ... insincere, regardless of his word to a supreme degree'.¹²³ George III dismissed Fox's suggestions out of hand, commenting to Bute, 'I never saw anything less calculated to cement, and make a firm administration'.¹²⁴

In the same letter Fox commented on the House of Commons that 'there never was one so well disposed to be governed', and it would have been at this time that he gave the King advice Shelburne recalled in 1768. 'Not to be diffident about his first Minister, for let him chuse whom he pleased, such Minister would govern the House of Commons'.¹²⁵ The restriction on George III's choice was of his own making, for he was known to be angry at the behaviour of the opposition leaders, 'who not only pretended to tell him who should quit his *service*, but who also should succeed them, that ... *nothing but the greatest extremity* would ever induce him to take them in, particularly the Dukes of Newcastle, Devonshire, and Pitt'.¹²⁶ The immature young King might hold such opinions early in 1763, but within months his animosities proved not to be immutable.

By mid-March Fox, as adamant in his refusal to be Premier as Bute was determined to resign, was reluctantly suggesting Grenville as Prime Minister. Halifax could still be Northern Secretary, but Bute's young protégé Lord Shelburne should replace Egremont. Bute accepted this plan, but George III thought Shelburne too young and inexperienced for such high office, suggesting that Charles Townshend should succeed Grenville at the Admiralty and then Shelburne could go to the Board of Trade.¹²⁷ Grenville's reluctance to replace his brother-in-law with the raw Shelburne, whose appointment as Secretary of State would arouse widespread resentment among more senior and experienced peers, made this seem the obvious arrangement after Grenville on 25 March accepted both the Treasury and the Exchequer, for Bute was determined to secure some office for Shelburne.¹²⁸ The Lord Presidency of the Council, vacant since Lord Granville's death in January, was offered to Bedford, who declined, saying he would be 'a madman' to join men who had treated him so badly during his Paris embassy, being especially angry with Egremont. He resigned as Lord Privy Seal, but his resentment was personal, and there was a strong Bedfordite presence in the new ministry.¹²⁹ His own son-in-law the Duke of Marlborough succeeded him as Lord Privy Seal, Lord Gower became Lord Chamberlain of the Household, and Richard Rigby continued as an Irish Vice-Treasurer, while Lord Sandwich re-entered

the cabinet on his return to the Admiralty after twelve years, when Charles Townshend changed an acceptance of that post into a refusal after his stipulation that a friend be appointed to that Board was rejected. Dashwood gladly took a peerage and a court office in lieu of the Exchequer, but Fox, while claiming a promised peerage as Baron Holland, refused to give up the Pay Office, as had been expected. In personnel the new ministry was a continuation of the old one, friends of Bute, Fox and Bedford being appointed and promoted. Grenville had few recommendations to make, but among them James Harris joined him at the Treasury Board, and Thomas Pitt and Lord Howe went to the Admiralty Board.

Halifax continued as Northern Secretary, but now at last resigned as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, since that post would soon require residence in Dublin. Rumours about his replacement had circulated since the end of 1762. Among those named were the Marquess of Granby, heir to the Duke of Rutland and on military duty in Germany as commander of the British cavalry; Lord Hertford, a courtier and elder brother of General Conway, thought to be keen on the appointment; and Lord Waldegrave, who died suddenly of smallpox in April.¹³⁰ Lord Granby was offered the post, so Hardwicke ascertained from Halifax and Egremont, informing Newcastle that ‘his Lordship was apprehensive of the difficulties attending it and the Duke of Rutland was averse to it for fear it should lead his son into too much claret’.¹³¹ Granby preferred a post more connected with the army, Master-General of the Ordnance. George III told Bute on 10 April that ‘Lord Granby’s refusal I own hurts me’: but he agreed with Bute that ‘the next best’ was the Earl of Northumberland, whose son was to marry a daughter of Bute in 1764. The King suggested that Lord Hertford be simultaneously made ambassador to France ‘to prevent jealousies’, and both appointments were announced on 11 April.¹³²

Bute’s intention to retire from politics was genuine, motivated by ill-health and a dislike of ‘the fatigue of business’. Grenville therefore assumed he was being appointed Prime Minister ‘in the manner as Mr Pelham was’, so he confided to James Harris on 5 April.¹³³ Henry Pelham had been the last MP to hold that post. But what Bute and George III envisaged was rather a power-sharing arrangement. Bute commented to Attorney-General Charles Yorke that ‘he should leave the King’s affairs in much abler hands than his own. Lord Halifax, Lord Egremont, Mr Grenville, whom he had known from 12 years of age, a very worthy and able man, and whose turn lay towards the revenue, and to that public economy, that was so much wanted’.¹³⁴ The King

specifically described his new administration as ‘the Triumvirate’.¹³⁵ It was publicly given out that ‘the Ministry is Mr George Grenville, My Lord Egremont and My Lord Halifax, and that everything *important* was to be determined by their *unanimous* opinion’, so Newcastle told the British ambassador at the Hague. But the Duke added this interpretation. ‘People generally think, that my Lord Bute will be minister behind the Curtain, though his Lordship absolutely denies it.’¹³⁶ The events of the summer of 1763 would determine whether power lay with Bute, Grenville alone, or ‘the Triumvirate’.

Notes

- 1 *Devonshire Diary*, p. 170.
- 2 *Devonshire Diary*, p. 170.
- 3 Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies A172–3.
- 4 BL Add. MSS. 51379, fos 140–1.
- 5 Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies B682.
- 6 BL Add. MSS. 51379, fos 204–5.
- 7 There is an unclear reference to him in their correspondence. *Bute Letters*, p. 108.
- 8 *Bute Letters*, p. 109. The printed text has ‘see’ for ‘seek’.
- 9 Thomas, *John Wilkes*, p. 18. For the search for a Chancellor of the Exchequer see Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 57–62.
- 10 *Bute Letters*, pp. 104–5.
- 11 *Grenville Papers*, I, 447, 450. Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 61–3.
- 12 Walpole, *Memoirs*, I, 334.
- 13 For a list of the 210 present at the levee of 2 June, compiled for Newcastle, see BL Add. MSS. 32939, fos 309–11.
- 14 Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies A171.
- 15 BL Add. MSS. 35421, fos 259–60. Namier, *Age*, p. 328.
- 16 *Devonshire Diary*, p. 173. *Bute Letters*, p. 129. Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies A172. Namier, *Age*, pp. 326–40.
- 17 *Devonshire Diary*, pp. 168–9. *Grenville Papers*, I, 450.
- 18 Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 95–108. Rashed, *Peace of Paris*, pp. 118–42.
- 19 Rashed, *Peace of Paris*, p. 150.
- 20 BL Add. MSS. 57834, fos 8–12.
- 21 *Bute Letters*, pp. 118–21.
- 22 Walpole, *Letters*, V, 217.
- 23 BL Add. MSS. 57834, fos 62–3.
- 24 *Bute Letters*, pp. 126–8.
- 25 *Devonshire Diary*, pp. 173–4. *Bute Letters*, pp. 128–9.

- 26 BL Add. MSS. 57834, fo. 63. For accounts of this stage of the negotiation see Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 111–33, and Rashed, *Peace of Paris*, pp. 142–58.
- 27 *Bute Letters*, pp. 178, 187.
- 28 BL Add. MSS. 32941, fos 126–7.
- 29 *Bedford Papers*, III, 96–9. Rashed, *Peace of Paris*, pp. 165–6.
- 30 *Grenville Papers*, I, 474–6.
- 31 *Bedford Papers*, III, 128.
- 32 Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies B77.
- 33 *Bute Letters*, p. 130.
- 34 *Devonshire Diary*, p. 184.
- 35 *Bedford Papers*, III, 130. *Bute Letters*, p. 142.
- 36 Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 180–1.
- 37 Bute MSS (Cardiff), no. 188. *Grenville Papers*, I, 483.
- 38 *Bedford Papers*, III, 133–4.
- 39 BL Add. MSS. 33000, fos 96–8.
- 40 Lawson, *George Grenville*, p. 142. Grenville's drop in salary was from about £8,000 to around £2,000. In 1763 Grenville said that he had changed posts over the cession of Guadeloupe, and in 1767 that he had resigned over Havana. Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies B77, 854.
- 41 *Grenville Papers*, I, 451–2.
- 42 PRO 30/47/21 (cabinet minute). *Bute Letters*, pp. 142, 149–50, 153.
- 43 Rashed, *Peace of Paris*, pp. 178–87.
- 44 On this see Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 77–92, and Rea, *The English Press in Politics*, pp. 28–41.
- 45 Peters, *Pitt and Popularity*, pp. 241–7. Thomas, *John Wilkes*, pp. 19–23.
- 46 Namier, *Age*, pp. 339–41.
- 47 *Devonshire Diary*, p. 173.
- 48 *Bute Letters*, p. 143.
- 49 BL Add. MSS. 32943, fo. 266.
- 50 BL Add. MSS. 32943, fo. 369.
- 51 *Bute Letters*, p. 152.
- 52 BL Add. MSS. 38200, fos 89–90.
- 53 *Bute Letters*, p. 155.
- 54 The only recent example of such disgrace was Lord George Sackville. Of the other four examples earlier in the century two were for corruption. *Jenkinson Papers*, pp. 77–9.
- 55 Namier, *Age*, pp. 385–6.
- 56 BL Add. MSS. 32945, fo. 18.
- 57 Namier, *Age*, pp. 361–3.
- 58 Namier, *Age*, pp. 363–4.
- 59 Yorke, *Hardwicke*, III, 426.

- 60 *Bedford Papers*, III, 161.
- 61 Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, I, 137.
- 62 Namier, *Age*, pp. 386–7, 422–4.
- 63 Walpole, *Memoirs*, I, 175.
- 64 Namier, *Age*, pp. 387–94.
- 65 BL Add. MSS. 33000, fo. 96.
- 66 That story was repeated as late as 1951 by Rashed, *Peace of Paris*, pp. 188–9. Journalist John Almon was a main source for it, pointing out that from Oct. 1761 to Apr. 1763 a credit on the Civil List balance of £130,000 became a deficit of £90,000. *Chatham Anecdotes*, I, 306. That was however an expensive time for the Crown for many reasons, notably those arising out of the royal marriage. Reitan, *BIHR*, 47 (1974), 186–201.
- 67 Hoffman, *Edmund Burke*, p. 301.
- 68 Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings and Debates*, I, 412–15. Walpole, *Memoirs*, I, 175–6. Hoffman, *Edmund Burke*, pp. 302–3. Namier, *Age*, pp. 394–5.
- 69 Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings and Debates*, I, 415–24.
- 70 Hoffman, *Edmund Burke*, p. 301.
- 71 Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings and Debates*, I, 424–8.
- 72 Namier, *Age*, p. 399.
- 73 BL Add. MSS. 32945, fo. 289.
- 74 BL Add. MSS. 32945, fo. 278.
- 75 BL Add. MSS. 32945, fos 280–1.
- 76 *Bute Letters*, pp. 173–4.
- 77 Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 262–4.
- 78 *HMC Onslow*, p. 521. Onslow himself was by then a holder of court office and a peer. Sir Lewis Namier dramatically denoted the episode ‘the massacre of the Pelhamite innocents’. Namier, *Age*, p. 403.
- 79 BL Add. MSS. 32945, fo. 316.
- 80 BL Add. MSS. 32946, fo. 11.
- 81 For accounts of the ‘massacre’ see Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 259–71, and Namier, *Age*, pp. 403–15.
- 82 BL Add. MSS. 32948, fos 1–2.
- 83 Watson, *BIHR*, 44 (1971), pp. 56–9.
- 84 Namier, *Age*, pp. 416–17.
- 85 Quoted by McCahill, ‘The House of Lords in the 1760s’, in Jones, ed., *Pillar of the Constitution*, p. 169.
- 86 Thomas, *John Wilkes*, pp. 12, 24–5.
- 87 Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 363–9.
- 88 Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 369–75.

- 89 Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 326–8. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 62–3.
- 90 Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 315, 322–30. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 41–2.
- 91 Whitworth, *Ligonier*, pp. 373–4.
- 92 BL Add. MSS. 51379, fo. 141.
- 93 *Bute Letters*, p. 135.
- 94 Bullion, ‘Securing the peace ...’, in Schweizer, ed., *Lord Bute*, pp. 17–18, 36.
- 95 PRO 30/47/21 (cabinet minute). Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 295–6.
- 96 Shy, *Towards Lexington*, pp. 45–83.
- 97 Thomas, *Politics in Eighteenth-Century Wales*, pp. 196–7.
- 98 *Bedford Papers*, III, 210–11.
- 99 *Bute Letters*, p. 191.
- 100 Malmesbury MSS. Harris Diary, 4 Mar. 1763. Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 300–2. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 38–9.
- 101 *Bute Letters*, p. 190.
- 102 Thomas, *Politics in Eighteenth-Century Wales*, pp. 195–6.
- 103 Bute MSS (Cardiff), no. 414.
- 104 Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings and Debates*, I, 440.
- 105 Bute MSS (Cardiff), no. 46: printed in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings and Debates*, II, 562–3.
- 106 *Bute Letters*, pp. 201–2.
- 107 Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 39–40.
- 108 Malmesbury MSS. Harris Diary, 18 Mar. 1763.
- 109 Malmesbury MSS. Harris Diary, 4 Mar. 1763.
- 110 Malmesbury MSS. Harris Diary, 7 Mar. 1763. Walpole, *Memoirs*, I, 198.
- 111 Malmesbury MSS. Harris Diary, 7–13 Mar. 1763.
- 112 Woodland, *PH*, 8 (1989), pp. 68–71.
- 113 Malmesbury MSS. Harris Diary, 28 and 30 Mar. 1763.
- 114 *Bute Letters*, p. 208.
- 115 Bute MSS (Cardiff), no. 143. Nicholas, Thesis, p. 451.
- 116 BL Add. MSS. 32944, fo. 30.
- 117 BL Add. MSS. 32948, fo. 130. For accounts of this episode see Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 345–6; and Sutherland, *East India Company*, pp. 100–9.
- 118 Bute MSS (Cardiff), no. 155.
- 119 BL Add. MSS. 32948, fos 120–2.
- 120 *HMC Lonsdale*, p. 132; quoted Nicholas, Thesis, p. 308.
- 121 Nicholas, Thesis, pp. 381–99.
- 122 *Bute Letters*, pp. 195–6.
- 123 BL Add. MSS. 51379, fos 148–52.

- 124 *Bute Letters*, p. 199.
- 125 Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies, B912.
- 126 Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies, B680.
- 127 Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, pp. 7–9.
- 128 *Grenville Papers*, II, 33–40.
- 129 Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies, B684–5, 691.
- 130 Hoffman, *Edmund Burke*, p. 305. *Waldegrave Memoirs*, pp. 96–8.
- 131 BL Add. MSS. 32948, fo. 55.
- 132 *Bute Letters*, p. 216.
- 133 Malmesbury MSS. Photocopies B677.
- 134 BL Add. MSS. 32948, fos 92–8.
- 135 *Bute Letters*, p. 228.
- 136 BL Add. MSS. 32948, fos 120–2.