

*Government and Business  
in Early Eighteenth-Century France:  
The Case of Marseilles*

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Most historians who describe the condition of France toward the end of the reign of Louis XIV continue to use some of the gloomiest words and phrases in their vocabulary. They speak of a diminishing population, of the devastation caused by the two final wars of the reign, of crop failures, of harsh winters, of governmental overregulation of trade and manufactures and of rising taxes. But much research done in recent years presents evidence for a differing assessment. Even historians such as Pierre Goubert and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, who have no great affection for Louis XIV, admit that the latter part of his reign has been blackened excessively.<sup>1</sup> Others have gone even further in reevaluating this period. The works of scholars such as Jacques Dupâquier, J. S. Bromley, Tihomir J. Markovitch, Christien Huetz de Lempis and others on demography, trade, industry and agriculture have demonstrated that the picture of the French economy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth

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<sup>1</sup> GOUBERT, *Louis XIV and Twenty Million Frenchmen*, trans. by Anne Carter (New York, 1970), p. 282; LE ROY LADURIE, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, trans. by John Day (Urbana and Chicago, 1974), pp. 234, 303.

centuries was one of only slight decline or stability or even, in some cases, of growing prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

This article will concentrate on the city of Marseilles, which vied with the cities of Nantes and Bordeaux at that time for the honour of being France's busiest and most important port. In particular, I shall treat the last fifteen years of the reign, the years roughly corresponding with the War of the Spanish Succession. Virtually all of the standard histories of Marseilles give one the impression that the city was in the direst of straits during these years. Gaston Rambert declares that during the war, because of the threats of enemy privateers and fleets, the ocean and the Mediterranean were "virtually deserted" by merchant ships from Marseilles.<sup>3</sup> An earlier historian, Paul Masson, speaks of "the ruin of manufactures" and "a sharp crisis"<sup>4</sup>. He notes, for example, that throughout most of 1703, and at many other points in the war, no ships at all were allowed to leave the port.<sup>5</sup> He also points out that nearly 1,800 ships and barges insured at Marseilles were captured by the enemy.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See THOMAS J. SCHAEPER's *The Economy of France in the Second Half of the Reign of Louis XIV* (Montreal, 1980) and "The Economy of the Reign," in Paul Sonnino (ed.), *The Reign of Louis XIV: Essays in Honor of Andrew Lossky* (forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> RAMBERT, *Histoire du commerce de Marseille, Vol. VI, de 1660 à 1789: les colonies* (Paris, 1959), p. 44. Also see Philippe Sagnac, "L'Industrie et le commerce de la draperie en France à la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> et au commencement du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 9 (1907-1908), 33; Sagnac, in Ernest Lavisse (ed.), *Histoire de France depuis des origines jusqu'à la révolution*, Vol. VIII, pt. 1 (Paris, 1908), pp. 202-203, 256, 259; EMILE LEVASSEUR, *Histoire du commerce de la France, I: Avant 1789* (Paris, 1911), p. 423; PAUL MASSON, *Histoire du commerce français dans le Levant au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1911), pp. 332, 337-352; Pierre Léon, *La Naissance de la grande industrie en Dauphiné: fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle-1869* (2 vols., Paris, 1956), I, 115; JOSEPH MARCHAND, *Un Intendant sous Louis XIV: Etude sur l'administration de Lebrét en Provence (1687-1704)* (Paris, 1889), pp. 299-340. Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations are by the author.

<sup>4</sup> MASSON, *Histoire du commerce français dans le Levant au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1896), p. 334.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343; also see RAMBERT, *Histoire du commerce*, VI: 46. Most of the following three pages of this article are drawn from Schaeper, *The Economy of France*, pp. 42-47.

The aim of this article will be twofold. First, it will show that recent research on this subject demonstrates a need for a sharp revision of this traditional view. Second, and at greater length, it will explore some of the factors which contributed to the city's relative commercial and industrial health.

We can begin by pointing out that some of Paul Masson's own research tends to weaken his arguments. For instance, Masson bases many of his conclusions on figures for the *cottimo*, which he has discovered for the period 1670-1714. The *cottimo* was a tax collected on ships returning from various Levant ports. During the years of the succession war the average yearly income of this tax decreased about 30 percent. To be sure, a 30 percent drop in a city's trade would bring many hardships. But Masson himself presents evidence for believing that the decline was not so drastic. He notes, for example, that most foodstuffs were exempt from the *cottimo*. Yet it was precisely during wartime that Marseilles' role as a food importer (especially of grains) became more important. The city's increased trade in foodstuffs thus can explain a large measure of the apparent drop in the level of trade as reflected in the *cottimo*. Masson also acknowledges that, due to a shift in trading patterns, Marseilles at this time increased its business with certain Levant cities on whose trade the *cottimo* was collected at a lower rate.<sup>7</sup> At least a part of the decline in *cottimo* revenues can also be attributed to an increase in Marseilles' trade in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. During this period a higher percentage of the city's traders sent their ships into areas outside the Mediterranean than had been true in earlier years. Since the *cottimo* was collected only on the Levant trade, an increase in non-Levant commerce would therefore result, indirectly, in a lowering of revenues from this tax.

Furthermore, the long list of ships seized by the enemy is rather misleading, in that it includes hundreds of small barges

<sup>7</sup> MASSON, *Histoire... XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, appendix, pp. XIV-XIX.

and coastal vessels — easy prey for privateers — which often were captured, ransomed, and then recaptured one or more times. That the dangers from enemy corsaires has been overdrawn by historians is also indicated by the fact that, throughout the succession war, Marseilles' shippers repeatedly clamoured for the right to send their individual ships to the Levant whenever they wished. They disliked having to wait for armed escort vessels to arrive or for convoys to be formed. They also complained bitterly whenever the secretary of state for the marine (Jérôme Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain), as a precautionary measure, temporarily closed the port to all outgoing traffic. No merchant anywhere at any time has ever wanted to send his ships out to sea unless he has seen a good chance for profit. Thus, despite the dangers, enough ships evidently got through to make the voyages worthwhile.<sup>8</sup>

There is also other evidence that Marseilles prospered or at least held its own during the War of the Spanish Succession. Jean Delumeau has shown that the amount of Roman alum reaching Marseilles early in the eighteenth century was higher than it had been in the 1680s and 1690s.<sup>9</sup> In 1709 the city's *bureau d'abondance* commissioned the purchase of 99,850 *charges* of grain from the Levant. All but 8,700 *charges* escaped enemy privateers and reached the city.<sup>10</sup> This is a further indication that Marseilles' trade did not suffer as much from privateering as was formerly thought. In fact, J. S. Bromley and Charles Carrière have shown that the city's own merchants outfitted and

<sup>8</sup> Discussion concerning this matter can be found throughout the letters of Marseilles' deputies to the chamber of commerce in the Archives de la chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Marseille (hereafter ACC), B 153-165. See especially B 161, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 12 July and 18 July 1707.

<sup>9</sup> DELUMEAU, *L'Alun de Rome* (Paris, 1962), p. 274, table XXXVIII, as cited in Jean Meuvret, "Prices, Population and Economic Activities in Europe, 1688-1715: A note," in J. S. BROMLEY (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History, VI: The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1688-1725* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 895.

<sup>10</sup> BAEHREL, *Une Croissance: la basse Provence rurale (fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle-1789)* (Paris, 1961), p. 502; also see SHELBY McCLOY, *Government Assistance in Eighteenth-Century France* (Lexington, KY, 1946), p. 15.

financed about 100 privateering ventures during the war.<sup>11</sup> While this was small compared to the privateering activities of Saint-Malo and Dunkirk, nevertheless it did provide modest profits for many of the city's investors. Despite his generally gloomy interpretation of the latter part of the reign, even Gaston Rambert admits that Marseilles' contacts with the French West Indies were never broken during the two final wars of the reign. Most of the city's admiralty records prior to 1711 have been lost or were destroyed in the Second World War, making any precise calculations of Marseilles' shipping impossible. But the fact that the city's only authorized sugar refinery continued to thrive even in the worst years of the succession war would seem to be a clear indication that contacts with the colonies (the principal suppliers of the raw sugar) were never entirely interrupted.<sup>12</sup>

Charles Carrière, who is perhaps the best authority on this subject at work today, has gone even further in demonstrating Marseilles' vitality during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Although he admits that the total volume of the city's trade may have declined somewhat during the succession war, he still sees significant commercial activity. He has demonstrated that the city's trade with Spain, with the *mer du Sud* (the Pacific coast of Peru and Chile), with the Antilles and with the Levant continued to thrive. Speculators of every type made huge profits. Trade on the *canal des deux mers* was as great as it had

<sup>11</sup> Bromley counts 75 privateering ventures, whereas Carrière cites 146. But Carrière's figure includes ships from ports such as Sète and Toulon. Bromley, "Projets et contrats d'armement en course marseillais 1705-1712," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 50 (1972), 74-108; Carrière, "La Draperie languedocienne dans la seconde moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup>: contribution à l'étude de la conjoncture levantine," in Fernand Braudel, et al. (eds.), *Conjoncture économique, structures sociales: Hommage à Ernest Labrousse* (Paris and the Hague, 1974), p. 167; and Carrière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles: contribution à l'étude des économies maritimes* (2 vols., Paris, 1974), I, 530-531.

<sup>12</sup> RAMBERT, *Histoire du commerce*, VI: 31 ff.; also see Paul-M. Bondonis, "Les Centres sucriers français au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 19 (1931), 46-50.

ever been.<sup>13</sup> Of course, Marseilles' greatest amount of trade was with the Levant, and the city's chief exports were the various woolen cloths produced in the province of Languedoc. Using the reports of the inspectors of manufactures as well as other sources, Carrière has demonstrated that the real "take-off" point for the export of these woolens to the Levant came, not in the 1720s, as most historians have assumed, but during the final two wars of the reign of Louis XIV.<sup>14</sup> In short, Carrière concludes that "war stopped nothing".<sup>15</sup> He goes even further, arguing that a veritable "mutation" in the way that Marseilles' businessmen thought occurred during this period. Merchants and shippers, facing the challenges presented by the war and engaging in trade in the Atlantic and Pacific on a scale heretofore unprecedented, were filled with a new sense of daring and vitality which contributed to the even greater prosperity of the city later in the century.<sup>16</sup>

There are many possible explanations for the fact that Marseilles was in better shape during these years than we had earlier believed. Jean Meyer has recently argued that the French navy was able to hold its own with those of England and Hol-

<sup>13</sup> CARRIÈRE, *Négociants marseillais*, I: 77, 80-105, 331-333, 396-397, 432-435, 485-490, 517-540; II: 1051, 1066.

<sup>14</sup> CARRIÈRE, "La Draperie languedocienne," pp. 157-162; Michel Morineau and Charles Carrière, "Draps du Languedoc et commerce du Levant au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 46 (1968), 108-121. PAUL MASSON (*Histoire... XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 476) also presents figures showing a rise in cloth exports during the War of the Spanish Succession. This is at variance with what Masson has said in other places concerning Marseilles' severe crisis during these years (see notes 3-6 above).

<sup>15</sup> CARRIÈRE, *Négociants marseillais*, I, 540; also see BAEHREL, *Une Croissance*, p. 503.

<sup>16</sup> CARRIÈRE, *Négociants marseillais*, I, 77, 84-90; II, 1048; also, CHARLES, CARRIÈRE, MARCEL COURDURIÉ, FERRÉOL REBUFFAT, *Marseille, ville morte: la peste de 1720* (Marseille, 1968), p. 30; Carrière, Courdurié, Rebuffat, "Marseille et la mer du Sud (1703-1716): l'histoire de la pacotille," *Provence historique* 25 (1975), 51-67; J.K.J. THOMSON, *Clermont-de-Lodève, 1633-1789: Fluctuations in the Prosperity of a Languedocian Cloth-Making Town* (New York and London, 1982), pp. 217-300. Gaston Rambert has adopted a more optimistic assessment of Marseilles' trade in his "Marseille et le commerce 'interlope' en mer du Sud (1700-1723)," *Provence historique* 17 (1967), 32-60.

land at least up to 1710. The navy was thus able to give more protection to trade than formerly was thought to be true.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the merchants of Marseilles (as did merchants in other cities) armed their own ships or ships lent by the king.<sup>18</sup> But another important element in the city's economic vitality at that time was the fact that, despite the opposition of every other port city in France, Marseilles in the early years of the eighteenth century was able to defend and even to strengthen its virtual monopoly on French trade with the Levant.

The setting for this confrontation was the Council of Commerce, which was created in Paris in June 1700.<sup>19</sup> This Council was a consultative body charged with examining all matters relating to trade and industry. It sent its recommendations to the secretary of state for the marine and to the controller-general of finances, who usually followed its advice. In the council the government was represented by about a dozen councillors of state and masters of requests. The business community was represented by about a dozen merchant-deputies from the major cities of France.<sup>20</sup> Two of the farmers-general were also admitted to the Council whenever the question of taxes arose.

From the very creation of the council it was obvious that the deputy of Marseilles would not have an easy time defending his city's position. The city owed its privileges in the Levant trade to the edict of March 1669 issued by Colbert. That edict

<sup>17</sup> MEYER, "La France et les puissances maritimes," *XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, no. 123 (1979), 155-172.

<sup>18</sup> See various letters in ACC, B 156-165; and MASSON, *Histoire... XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 338-343; Marcel Courdurié, *La Dette des collectivités publiques de Marseille au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: du débat sur le prêt à l'intérêt au financement par l'emprunt* (Marseille, 1974), p. 149; Carrière, *Négociants marseillais*, I, 489-491.

<sup>19</sup> See SCHAEFER, *The French Council of Commerce, 1700-1715: A Study of Mercantilism after Colbert* (Columbus, Ohio, 1983); also PIERRE BONNASSIEUX and EUGENE LELONG, *Conseil de commerce et bureau du commerce, 1700-1791: inventaire analytique des procès-verbaux* (Paris, 1900).

<sup>20</sup> Cities which sent deputies included Dunkirk, Lille, Rouen, Nantes, La Rochelle, Saint-Malo, Bordeaux, Bayonne, Lyons, Marseilles, and Paris (which had two deputies). The province of Languedoc also had a deputy.

had established Marseilles' status as a free port, and it had given the city a virtual stranglehold on the country's trade with the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. By making the city a free port, Colbert had increased its entrepôt trade thereby helping it to compete successfully with Italian cities such as Leghorn and Genoa. Further to consolidate Marseilles' position, Colbert had placed a 20 percent surtax on all Levant goods which entered France other than from Marseilles. This tax was designed to make Frenchmen from all other parts of the country purchase Levant goods from Marseilles rather than from Italian, English or Dutch traders. In the years after 1669 many of the privileges contained in the edict had been eroded. Merchants in Atlantic cities had secretly bought sizable amounts of Levant goods from English and Dutch traders, managing to avoid paying the 20 percent duty. And, due to the financial exigencies of the Crown, various tax farmers had been able to establish themselves within the city limits, thereby infringing on the city's free port status. Nevertheless, in law and in practice, Marseilles still had maintained its dominant and highly profitable position in the Mediterranean trade.<sup>21</sup>

That the city was able to preserve and even to strengthen this position after 1700 was a remarkable accomplishment. After many stormy debates (and a few near riots) in the Council of Commerce, the deputy of Marseilles succeeded in having the crown issue the *arrêt* of 10 July 1703.<sup>22</sup> That *arrêt*, with a few limitations, restored the free port status of the city and strengthened the provisions concerning the 20 percent surtax. Over the succeeding years Marseilles' deputies for the most part defeated any attempts to weaken its privileges. In particular, the city's deputies turned back the campaigns of cities such as Saint-

<sup>21</sup> On the 1669 edict and on the subsequent encroachments on Marseilles' privileges see Jules Julliany, *Essai sur le commerce de marseille* (3 vols., 2nd ed., Paris, 1842), I, 54-72; MASSON, *Histoire... XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 160-177, 269-285; RAMBERT, *Histoire du commerce de Marseille* (Paris, 1954), IV, 204-221.

<sup>22</sup> A copy can be found in the Archives nationales (hereafter AN), F<sup>12</sup> 1910.

Malo, Sète and Toulon to win footholds in the lucrative Levant trade.<sup>23</sup> The process by which Marseilles accomplished all of this is fascinating and has to a large degree been ignored by historians of the city.

During the period under consideration here, Marseilles was represented in the Council of Commerce by three different deputies: Joseph Fabre, who served from 1701 through 1703, his brother Mathieu Fabre (1704-1714), and François Philip (1714-1717). Each of these men was selected by the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles. But in addition to its deputy in the Council of Commerce the city of Marseilles was represented in Paris by two other permanent agents. One was simply called the *agent* of the city, and the other was an *avocat* (attorney) charged with handling all legal cases dealing with the city. Both of these positions originated sometime in the mid-seventeenth century. As far as I can discover, no other city in France prior to 1700 had even one permanent representative.<sup>24</sup> Marseilles' *agent* was really what we today would call a lobbyist, as he watched over every possible kind of affair which might affect the city's interests. There was a great deal of overlapping between the duties of the *agent* and those of the new deputy of trade. Indeed, the position of *agent* might have been eliminated if it had not been for the fact that from 1697 to 1712 the person who held that position was François Blondel de Sissonne, *premier commis* of the Marquis de Torcy, secretary of state for foreign affairs. Marseilles was included among the provinces which were under Torcy's

<sup>23</sup> The obtaining of the *arrêt* of 10 July 1703 was far from the only matter which concerned Marseilles during the period under consideration here although it was surely the most important. On some of the other gains and losses of Marseilles in these years see AN, F<sup>12</sup> 51-58 (*procès-verbaux* of the Council of Commerce); ACC, B 152-165; and Schaeper, *The French Council of Commerce*, pp. 87-94.

<sup>24</sup> On Marseilles' representatives in Paris and on its chamber of commerce consult the various works of Masson and Rambert cited above. By JOSEPH FOURNIER see *La Chambre de commerce de Marseille et ses représentants à Paris, 1599-1875* (Marseilles, 1920) and *Inventaire des archives de la chambre de commerce de Marseille* (Marseilles, 1940).

jurisdiction — in his capacity as a secretary of state. Blondel functioned as the minister's personal secretary and as *chef du secrétariat du ministère*. His brother, a *contrôleur des galères* in Marseilles, was married to a member of the Gleize family (of which more will be said below).<sup>25</sup> Blondel corresponded extensively with the chamber of commerce, keeping it informed of the activities of its deputies of trade and reporting on the progress of various issues relating to Marseilles.<sup>26</sup> With his easy access to all top government officials, Blondel was simply too valuable a person to be let go.

Aided by Blondel and by Gabriel David (the *avocat*), the newly-arrived deputy in Paris, Joseph Fabre, was able to mount what can only be described as one of the most successful and resourceful lobbying campaigns in early modern French history. We can follow all of the developments of this campaign in the detailed letters which he sent back to the Chamber of Commerce on a frequent basis. In early January 1701, even before he arrived in Paris, Joseph Fabre wrote to the chamber that he had heard that all of the other deputies "press unanimously against us" and want to destroy our free port. He assured his constituents that he would defend his city, convinced that whatever was good for Marseilles was good for all of France.<sup>27</sup> As soon as he reached the capital he outfitted his valet in Marseilles' colours and decorated his carriage with his city's coat of arms. Shortly after that Blondel took Fabre to Versailles and introduced him to the royal ministers.<sup>28</sup> Secretary of state for the marine Pont-

<sup>25</sup> Bibliothèque nationale (hereafter BN), manuscrits français, 18979, f. 101.

<sup>26</sup> FOURNIER, *La Chambre de commerce de Marseille*, pp. 48, 61; Archives de la marine (hereafter Mar.), B<sup>7</sup> 503, fols. 39-40v, extracts of letters from Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles to Mathieu Fabre; BN, mss. fr., 18979, fols. 104v, 105. On Blondel's career see John C. Rule, "Colbert de Torcy, an Emergent Bureaucracy, and the Formulation of French Foreign Policy, 1698-1715," in RAGNHILD HATTON (ed.), *Louis XIV and Europe* (Columbus, Ohio, 1976), pp. 266-267.

<sup>27</sup> ACC, B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 6 January 1701, written from Lyons.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, same to same, 26 January 1701. Blondel also did the same for Joseph Fabre's successor. See B 158, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 29 May 1704.

chartrain followed that up by winning for Fabre a brief audience with the King. Fabre apparently handled himself well, and Louis XIV declared himself "content with Marseilles"<sup>29</sup>.

Over the next two years Fabre worked untiringly (as he never failed to let his Chamber of Commerce know)<sup>30</sup> to win friends for his cause. He quickly ascertained that Pontchartrain as well as the two leaders of the Council of Commerce, Henri Daguesseau and Michel Amelot, were naturally inclined to help Marseilles, and Fabre did everything possible to "handle" (*ménager*) them. Both of the controllers-general of this period (Michel Chamillart, 1699-1708, and Nicolas Desmaretz, 1708-1715) also tended to favour Marseilles, although with more reservations. Fabre as well as his two successors visited the court at least once a month, whether it was at Versailles, at Fontainebleau or even at Marly.<sup>31</sup> On a few occasions they were received at the country homes of the ministers.<sup>32</sup> The Marseilles deputies constantly bombarded the ministers and the Council of Commerce with a seemingly unending series of memoirs concerning every conceivable objection raised by the other deputies of

<sup>29</sup> ACC, B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 1 March 1701 and 15 March 1701.

<sup>30</sup> Both of the Fabre brothers and François Philip took great pains in the majority of their letters to assure the Chamber of Commerce that they worked untiringly on its behalf. One reason for this was that, despite the general success of the deputies in defending Marseilles' interests, the chamber of commerce was never happy without a total victory on every issue. Also, each of the deputies had great trouble in getting reimbursed for his expenses. Concerning these financial disputes see ACC, A 17-19, B 153-165.

<sup>31</sup> ACC, B 153-165, *passim*. Mathieu Fabre once estimated that he made the journey to Versailles an average of three times a month: B 165, Philip to chamber of commerce, 17 May 1711. On the close relationship of the Marseilles deputies with Pontchartrain in particular see Mar., B<sup>7</sup> 502, fols. 30-31, Joseph Fabre to Pontchartrain, 22 January 1702; *ibid.*, fols. 78-79, same to same, 21 May 1702; B<sup>7</sup> 503, f. 186, Mathieu Fabre to Pontchartrain, 18 April 1705; B<sup>7</sup> 504, f. 409, same to same, 11 January 1706; B<sup>7</sup> 509, fols. 230-233v, *maire, échevins* and deputies of trade of Marseilles to Pontchartrain, 15 September 1714.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see ACC, B 157, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 7 August 1703 and 11 August 1703.

trade, who were filled with "malignity".<sup>33</sup> It was one of the deputies from Paris who led the fight in the council against Marseilles. That deputy happened to be Samuel Bernard, the great financier.<sup>34</sup> That Bernard, whose assistance to the Crown during the war was universally recognized, was to end up on the losing side is an excellent testimony to the shrewd methods employed by the representatives of Marseilles. Bernard and his fellow deputies were supported in the Council by the farmers-general and by most of the councillors of state and masters of request.

Not trusting to their own persuasive powers alone, the Marseilles deputies used the services of others also. Frequently they urged the chamber of commerce to write courtesy letters to the leaders of the Council of Commerce or to the royal ministers. At times the deputies even counselled the chamber on the wording of these letters. Once, for example, Joseph Fabre told the chamber of commerce to revise several of its missives. First of all, the chamber addressed the masters of requests in the council as "Monseigneur," whereas a simple "Monsieur" would be more appropriate. Also, the chamber used the phrase "Votre Grandeur" too often in its letters to controller-general Chamillart. Finally, the letters to Chamillart praised the great Colbert too often. It was good, Fabre noted, to speak well of Colbert, who, after all, was the one who had issued the famous 1669 edict. But Fabre advised the chamber to stay within limits, for no current minister wanted to hear one of his predecessors praised too much.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> For some of the more colourful descriptions of animosities in the Council of Commerce see ACC, B 154, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 23 July 1701 and 30 July 1701; B 155, same to same, 16 June 1702, 22 June 1702; B 159, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 12 March 1705, 27 August 1705, 31 December 1705; B 161, same to same, 25 January 1707.

<sup>34</sup> ACC, B 155, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 2 February 1702, 13 June 1702; B 157, same to same, 2 August 1703.

<sup>35</sup> Acc, B 156, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 30 September 1702; B 157, same to same, 28 July 1703.

The deputies relied on other assistance as well. The intendant, the governor, and the lieutenant-general of Provence were repeatedly asked to intercede personally or by letter with their friends at court.<sup>36</sup> The deputies also managed to befriend one of the king's confessors, plus the Duchess of Burgundy, Marshal Vauban, and numerous other influential persons. Each of these individuals was asked to speak favourably of Marseilles with the king, with Madame de Maintenon, or with the royal ministers.<sup>37</sup>

Whenever one of the farmers-general was passing through Marseilles, Joseph Fabre beseeched the city and the Chamber of Commerce to give him a kind reception.<sup>38</sup> This was carried even further in March 1701, when the royal princes of the blood paid a visit to Marseilles. Fabre made sure that they received a magnificent welcome there, and he worked cleverly to publicize the event in Paris and at Versailles until he was sure that the king had heard of it and was suitably pleased.<sup>39</sup>

Fabre's influence was so great that on two occasions in 1701 he managed to get the secretary of state for the marine and the controller-general to attend meetings of the Council of Commerce. These were the only two times (outside of its opening in November 1700) that those ministers attended the council during the years being discussed here.<sup>40</sup> Fabre wanted them to attend because he knew that their presence would "stifle" the passions and the hatreds of Marseilles' opponents. At other times Fabre even had royal ministers running errands for him, as they promised to speak to other ministers and to members of

<sup>36</sup> For example: ACC, B 154, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 13 September 1701; B 155, same to same, 14 March 1702; B 157, same to same, 11 January 1703.

<sup>37</sup> Among the other letters, see ACC, B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 19 April 1701, 10 May 1701, 30 May 1701; B 154, same to same, 17 September 1701, 20 September 1701; also RAMBERT, *Histoire du commerce*, IV: 220-221.

<sup>38</sup> ACC, B 155, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 27 April 1702; B 156, same to same, 21 September 1702.

<sup>39</sup> ACC, B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 24 and 29 March 1701.

<sup>40</sup> AN, F<sup>12</sup> 51, foils. 44v, 70v (meetings of 23 June and 15 September 1701); ACC, B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 25 June 1701; B 154, same to same, 9 August 1701, 15 September 1701, 17 September 1701, 20 September 1701.

the Council of Commerce on his behalf.<sup>41</sup> His influence is also attested to by the fact that he had a major role in drafting the *arrêt* which was finally issued on 10 July 1703.<sup>42</sup> With that achievement in hand Joseph Fabre could retire. Before he left Paris late in 1703 Jerome de Pontchartrain presented him with a portrait of the king. All that Fabre's successors had to do was to follow his example and keep up his contacts in order to preserve the city's gains.<sup>43</sup>

At first glance it might seem that the remarkable lobbying tactics and the persuasive arguments of Marseilles' deputies are a sufficient explanation for their success in upholding their city's interests. But upon a closer inspection of the records available it becomes clear that this was only half of the story. The other key to Marseilles' success was that, far more than any other city in France, it had the money to pay for what it wanted.

The *pot-de-vin* or the gratification was nothing new in European history, and all of the deputies in the Council of Commerce seem to have used it at one time or another. The recipients of these gifts and bribes were royal ministers and their *commis*, royal princes and princesses, and fellow members of the Council of Commerce. Some of the gifts were relatively simple.

<sup>41</sup> ACC, B 155, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 14 February 1702; B 156, same to same, 22 July 1702; ACC, A 18, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 4 December 1704.

<sup>42</sup> Mar., B<sup>7</sup> 502, fols. 76-77, 329-330, Fabre to Pontchartrain, 21 May 1702, 2 June 1703.

<sup>43</sup> RAMBERT, *Histoire du commerce*, IV, 288. Neither Mathieu Fabre nor François Philip seems to have been quite as adept as Joseph Fabre, but in general they did prevent any major infringements upon Marseilles' privileges in the Levant trade. Mathieu Fabre possessed a fiery temper which often made him offensive and thus less effective as a negotiator and lobbyist. He wrote to the chamber of commerce about once a week up to 1710. After that his letters decreased in frequency. By that time the chamber of commerce had begun to work more through Blondel. Also, in April 1710 the chamber sent François Philip, its assistant archivist, to Paris to work with the royal commission examining the accounts of the chamber of commerce and the municipality of Marseilles. Gradually, Philip took over many of Fabre's duties. Finally in August 1714 Pontchartrain and Desmaretz asked the chamber of commerce to appoint Philip as its official deputy. See various letters in ACC, B 162-166 and Fournier, *La Chambre de commerce*, pp. 59-80.

The deputy of Bordeaux frequently gave prized Gascony hams and Bordeaux wines to people in Paris and at court.<sup>44</sup> And all of the deputies were expected to distribute New Year's presents not only to ministers but also to the domestics of ministers. In December 1701 Joseph Fabre complained that he had to disburse gifts to everyone from the personal valets to the porters, all of whom awaited the holiday "as if it were manna".<sup>45</sup> Six years later his brother Mathieu was so short of funds that he complained of being unable to hand out any New Year's gifts. To save the reputation of himself and of his city he therefore feigned an illness and stayed home for several weeks until the holiday passed.<sup>46</sup>

While the distribution of such gifts appears to have been customary, if not exactly laudable, it is clear that the city and the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles far outdid any of their competitors.<sup>47</sup> After Joseph Fabre had retired late in 1703 he

<sup>44</sup> AUGUSTE BRUTAILS, "Etude sur la chambre du commerce de Guienne," *Actes de l'Académie nationale des sciences, belles-lettres et arts de Bordeaux* 55 (1893), 302-303; V. Labraque-Bordenave, "Histoire des députés de Bordeaux au conseil de commerce, au comité national et à l'agence commerciale à Paris, 1700-1793," *Actes de l'Académie nationale des sciences, belles-lettres et arts de Bordeaux* (1889), p. 279. On the general subject of gratifications and pensions in both diplomacy and domestic politics see the following: J. Levron, "Louis XIV's Courtiers," in Ragnhild Hatton (ed.), *Louis XIV and Absolutism* (Columbus, OH, 1976), pp. 142-146; Janine Fayard, "Attempts to Build a 'Third Party' in North Germany, 1690-1694," in RAGNHILD HATTON, *Louis XIV and Europe*, pp. 213-240; Hatton, "Gratifications and Foreign Policy: Anglo-French Rivalry in Sweden during the Nine Years War," in HATTON and J.S. BROMLEY (eds.), *William III and Louis XIV: Essays by and for Mark A. Thomson* (Liverpool, 1968), pp. 68-94; Maurice Quénet, "Un Exemple de consultation dans l'administration monarchique qu XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: les nantais et leurs députés au conseil de commerce," *Annales de Bretagne* 85 (1978), 459, 477.

<sup>45</sup> ACC, B 154, Fabre to chamber of commerce, 6 December 1701.

<sup>46</sup> ACC, B 161, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 10 December 1707.

<sup>47</sup> The Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles was far wealthier than any of the chambers or commercial bodies in other cities. The chamber in Marseilles was charged with supervising many aspects of the Levant trade, and to pay for its expenses it collected various taxes (including the *cottimo* mentioned earlier in the text). These taxes gave the chamber an income of about 200,000 *livres* a year. The practice of distributing gratifications, it need hardly be said, was far older than 1700. On Marseilles' gifts at court in the 1690s see various pieces in ACC, A 38-50; and Masson, *Histoire... XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, appendix, p. IX.

drew up a list of his expenses for the previous three years. Included among them was the sum of 23,500 *livres* which he had paid to "secret agents".<sup>48</sup> Converted into today's American currency, this means that in less than three years Fabre had given out about \$ 70,000 in "presents" to various unnamed persons in government. But this was only the tip of the money tree. In addition to hard cash, the chamber of commerce continually sent gifts in kind. Huge cartloads of fine cloths, spices, raisins, anchovies, and other Mediterranean fruits and delicacies regularly arrived in Paris for distribution to "persons of consideration." Although such things could cost several hundred *livres* per load, the Marseilles deputies said that they were mere *bagatelles*.<sup>49</sup>

It is impossible to gauge the value of these shipments. What makes it even more difficult is the fact that Blondel, the city's agent in Paris and Versailles, was perhaps even more important than the deputies in dispensing this largesse. Blondel received money and goods from both the chamber and the municipality. Furthermore, he was the financial agent (*caissier*) of these two bodies in the capital. As such he handled what can best be described as a huge "slush fund".<sup>50</sup> Frequently Blondel was called upon to advance money to the city's commercial deputy.<sup>51</sup> There are, for obvious reasons, no precise records for any of these disbursements. It seems safe to say, however, that in

<sup>48</sup> ACC, A 17, "Compte de la recepte et dépense faite par Mr. Joseph Fabre, député du commerce de marseille à Paris," Marseille, 29 March 1704.

<sup>49</sup> See for example ACC, B 156, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 21 December 1702; B 157, same to same, 11 January 1703; B 158, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 27 October 1704.

<sup>50</sup> ACC, B 157, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 5 June 1703; B 164, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 16 June 1712. The city's *avocat* (Gabriel David) was also involved, to a lesser extent, in distributing money and merchandises at the capital. See B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 10 February 1701.

<sup>51</sup> ACC, B 156, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 21 September 1702; B 157, same to same, 6 January 1703, 19 June 1703, 23 June 1703, 26 June 1703, 14 July 1703; B 162, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 3 April 1708; A 17, "Compte de la recepte et dépense faite par Mr. Joseph Fabre."

money and in goods Marseilles' "generosity" amounted to at least 100,000 *livres* during the period under review here. And this is clearly a conservative estimate.

Perhaps the person who benefited most from all of this was Blondel himself. In addition to the official pension which he received, it is clear that he used his position and the funds at his disposal for his own profit. Merchants in Marseilles who opposed the group of officials who ran the city government complained that Blondel's personal wealth in the 1690s had amounted to only 80,000 *livres* but that by 1709 he was worth 600,000 *livres*. They also noted that Blondel had just purchased a noble estate worth 200,000 *livres*.<sup>52</sup>

It also seems that it was Blondel, rather than the city's deputies in the Council of Commerce, who paid the pensions of many of the city's other "friends" at court. Two of the people on his regular payroll were Charles de Sallaberry, a *premier commis* in the marine ministry,<sup>53</sup> and Clair Adam, a *premier commis* and fellow colleague of Blondel in the foreign affairs ministry.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> On Blondel's activities and finances see Fournier, *La Chambre de commerce*, pp. 48, 61; Mar., B<sup>7</sup> 503, fols. 39-40v, extracts of letters from the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles to Mathieu Fabre; BN, mss. fr., 18979, fols. 93v, 101, 102v, 104v, 105.

<sup>53</sup> On Sallaberry and his office see Albert Duchêne, *La Politique coloniale de la France: le ministère des colonies depuis Richelieu* (Paris, 1928), pp. 34-35; Didier Neuville, *Etat sommaire des Archives de la marine antérieures à la révolution* (Paris, 1898), p. XXXIX. On his work with the deputies of Marseilles see RAMBERT, *Histoire du commerce*, IV: 268; and ACC, B 153-164, passim. Rambert (IV: 309) says that Sallaberry received an annual pension of 4,000 *livres*, whereas MASSON (*Histoire... XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 318) says 1,000 *livres*. The figures 1,000 and 2,000 *livres* are mentioned in BN, mss. fr., 18979, fols. 104v, 135v. The *procès-verbaux* of the chamber of commerce record 1,000 *livres* (B 7, f. 103, 28 December 1713). After Sallaberry retired in 1708 the pension was continued for his successor, Givry. That a *premier commis* in the marine ministry was receiving a pension of several hundred *livres* per year as early as the 1670s and of 1,000 *livres* by the early eighteenth century is indicated in a long memoir drawn up by Lebrét, former intendant of Provence, on 4 August 1708 (AN, G7 1692, piece 259, fols. 273-305).

<sup>54</sup> His pension was reported to be 1,500 *livres* per year. BN, mss. fr., 18979, fols. 104v, 127. On Adam's cooperation with Marseilles' deputies see ACC B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce 19 March 1701, 5 April 1701, 19 April 1701.

But the deputies in the Council of Commerce were also heavily involved in this activity. Indeed, they often complained of the awkward position in which they found themselves. Joseph Fabre again and again informed the chamber that to get anything done in Paris one needs "an open pocketbook" rather than "empty hands," for no one there "does anything for nothing." Whenever the Chamber of Commerce delayed in sending money, Fabre assured it that he "knew the terrain" and that it was always necessary to "pad someone's pocket".<sup>55</sup> The chief person with whom Fabre and his successors dealt was a man named de la Vigne, who was the chief secretary of Amelot and Daguesseau. During the period being considered here, de la Vigne drafted virtually all of the laws which dealt with trade, industry and even finances. He was therefore, in Fabre's words, a man "very necessary" to Marseilles. Thus the city's deputies paid him a pension of 500 *livres* a year, and to de la Vigne's secretary they paid 100 *livres* annually. In addition, de la Vigne "graciously" accepted gifts in kind at various times during the year.<sup>56</sup> That these pensions were essential for Marseilles' cause is demonstrated by the fact that whenever his pension was in arrears de la Vigne became "scrupulous," "cold" and "rude," causing delays and even working against Marseilles until his account was paid up.<sup>57</sup> The deputies helped Marseilles' benefac-

<sup>55</sup> ACC, B 154, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 16 August 1701, 30 August 1701, 19 November 1701; B 157, same to same, 11 January 1703, 3 July, 14 August 1703.

<sup>56</sup> Discussions of de la Vigne's pension and of his close cooperation with the deputies of Marseilles can be found throughout the letters of Joseph and Mathieu Fabre (ACC, B 153-164). See in particular B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 14 May 1701; B 156, same to same, 1 July 1702; B 159, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 16 April 1705, 22 June 1705. Also consult Mar., B<sup>7</sup> 503, fols., 39-40v, extracts from letters of Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles to Mathieu Fabre; MASON, *Histoire... XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 318; AN, G<sup>7</sup> 1703, Piece 32, rough draft of an *arrêt* concerning the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles; ACC, B 6, fols. 165, 180v (meetings of 24 November 1701, 22 August 1702); ACC, A 18, "A Nos Seigneurs les commissaires...." 22 June 1716, by Mathieu Fabre.

<sup>57</sup> ACC, B 158, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 16 June 1704, 7 July 1704, 14 August 1704; B 159, same to same, 10 October 1705, 26 November 1705, 22

tors in other ways also. When Blondel's daughters were married, Joseph Fabre made sure that they received sizable gifts of money and fine cloths.<sup>58</sup> And the Fabre brothers worked to find jobs for relatives and friends of Blondel, Amelot, and de la Vigne.<sup>59</sup> Other persons for whom the deputies provided substantial gifts included Chavigny (*premier commis* of Chamillart),<sup>60</sup> Jean de Valossière (secretary of the Council of Commerce),<sup>61</sup> Jean-Baptiste-Henri Du Troussel de Valincour (secretary-general of the Admiralty),<sup>62</sup> Anfossy (secretary of the lieutenant-general of Provence),<sup>63</sup> and various of the farmers-general.<sup>64</sup>

December 1705; B 160, same to same, 9 January 1706, 29 January 1706, 11 March 1706, 29 April 1706, 16 June 1706; B 161, same to same, 7 April 1707, 24 October 1707, 22 November 1707; B 163, same to same, 23 March 1709.

<sup>58</sup> ACC, B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 30 April 1701; B 154 same to same, 9 July 1701, 12 July 1701; B 158, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 28 August 1704, 6 October 1704; B 6, f. 151v, 30 June 1701.

<sup>59</sup> ACC, B 157, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 28 August 1703, 25 September 1703, 17 October 1703; B 158, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 15 September 1704; B 159, same to same, 15 January 1705; B 6, f. 368v, 10 March 1707.

<sup>60</sup> ACC, B 6, f. 165, 24 November 1701; B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 3 May 1701, 4 June 1701; B 154, same to same, 28 July 1701, 30 August 1701, 27 September 1701, 11 October 1701, 8 November 1701, 19 November 1701, 3 December 1701, 10 December 1701; B 156, same to same, 1 July 1702; ACC, A 18, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 4 December 1704.

<sup>61</sup> VALOSSIÈRE received a yearly gift of cloths and fine foods. To keep everything "honest" (as Joseph Fabre said), Valossière refused to accept money. See ACC, B 6, f. 165, 24 November 1701; B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 10 February 1701; B 154, same to same, 8 October 1701, 8 November 1701, 19 November 1701, 3 December 1701; B 155, same to same, 8 April 1702; B 156, same to same, 9 September 1702, 26 September 1702, 14 November 1702, 9 December 1702, 16 December 1702, 19 December 1702, 21 December 1702, 23 December 1702; B 157, same to same, 15 March 1703; B 159, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 7 December 1705; lists of Valossière's presents are contained in ACC, A 49.

<sup>62</sup> ACC, B 157, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 25 January 1703.

<sup>63</sup> Anfossy received 1,200 *livres* annually. ACC, B 6, fols. 125v, 151v, 209, 225v, 289, 336, 371v, 399v.

<sup>64</sup> The particular farmers-general who accepted money or expensive cloths are usually left unnamed. ACC, B 154, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 16 August 1701; B 156, same to same, 11 July 1702, 7 October 1702; B 157, same to same, 15 March 1703, 3 July 1703, 24 July 1703, 14 August 1703, 28 August 1703; ACC, A17, "Compte de la recette et dépense faite par Mr. Joseph Fabre."

As noted earlier, Marseilles' representatives in Paris were able to distribute far more gifts and pensions than were the deputies or special agents of any other city. The other cities nevertheless did as much as they could in this regard. The *six corps des marchands* of Paris on at least one occasion gave 20 *louis d'or* to de la Vigne.<sup>65</sup> Agents working for Toulon early in the eighteenth century disbursed various gifts to different persons in the capital in a fruitless campaign to win privileges in the Levant trade for their city.<sup>66</sup> Although such things never came close to the size and the scope of Marseilles' financial inducements, de la Vigne repeatedly led Joseph and Mathieu Fabre to believe that they did. De la Vigne evidently did this in order to guarantee that he would receive his regular payments from Marseilles.<sup>67</sup>

Just how much of all of this we can call corrupt and how much of it we can say was normal, accepted practice for that age is not immediately obvious. Even Louis XIV himself on at least one occasion accepted a piece of cloth from Marseilles' deputy.<sup>68</sup> But by careful analysis we can determine that much of what Blondel and the deputies did would have been considered shady even by the loose standards of that day. Oftentimes in their correspondence with the Chamber of Commerce the deputies refused to name names, for fear of compromising the persons at court who were accepting their favours. At other times the deputies requested that the chamber keep certain information secret.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> AN, KK 1340, p. 510.

<sup>66</sup> ACC, B 156, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 21 December 1702.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, same to same, 15 August 1702; B 159, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 22 June 1705. De la Vigne's pension sometimes went unpaid because Mathieu Fabre apparently kept the money for himself. See AN, G7 1703, pieces 31-32, Harlay to Desmaretz, 11 September 1714, with accompanying draft of an *arrêt*.

<sup>68</sup> FOURNIER, *La Chambre de Commerce*, p. 49.

<sup>69</sup> For illustrations see ACC, B 155, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 23 May 1702; B 156, same to same, 1 July 1702, 21 September 1702, 23 December 1702; B 157, same to same, 19 July 1703; B 158, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 7 July 1704; B 159, same to same, 5 September 1705; B 166, Philip to chamber of commerce, 6 May 1715.

From the evidence that I have been able to uncover it seems that, with the possible exception of foreign minister Torcy,<sup>70</sup> the royal ministers themselves never accepted a regular pension from any of Marseilles' representatives. But they did accept presents in kind, and sometimes these gratuities were quite large. In 1715, for example, the chamber of commerce sent Jérôme de Pontchartrain a gift of 13 crates of various foods weighing a total of 1,880 pounds.<sup>71</sup> It also seems clear that the two leaders of the Council of Commerce (Daguesseau and Amélot) refused any regular payment. Beginning in 1706 Daguesseau, in fact, declined to accept anything but a small supply of coffee every New Year's holiday.<sup>72</sup> Virtually every other member of the council, however, as well as most of the *commis* and other minor officials at court were eager to get whatever they could from Marseilles. Some prominent government officials went so far as to solicit gifts such as fruits and Moroccan leather from the chamber of commerce. To give the appearance of honesty, they always offered to pay for these items. But they knew that the Chamber of Commerce would refuse to accept any such payment.<sup>73</sup>

In brief, when this side of the story is told, it becomes easier to understand how Marseilles successfully upheld its privileges in the early eighteenth century. But the full story may never be known. It is impossible adequately to examine the revenues and

<sup>70</sup> He apparently received a pension of 2,000 *livres* per year. BN, mss. fr., 18979, f. 104v.

<sup>71</sup> ACC, B 7, f. 201v, 22 August 1715. Pontchartrain, often referred to in the Marseilles deputies' letters as the city's protector, seems to have received gifts more frequently than did any other minister. See also B 153, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 10 February 1701; B 155, same to same, 11 February 1702; B 156, same to same, 9 December 1702, 19 December 1702.

<sup>72</sup> ACC, B 160, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 26 February 1706; B 161, same to same, 20 December 1707.

<sup>73</sup> ACC, B 156, Joseph Fabre to chamber of commerce, 28 November 1702, 2 December 1702; B 157, same to same, 11 January 1703; B 159, Mathieu Fabre to chamber of commerce, 5 September 1705; B 160, same to same, 11 March 1706, 10 May 1706, 16 June 1706, 28 December 1706; B 163, same to same, 11 May 1709.

expenditures of the municipality and the chamber of commerce of Marseilles because in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the city was controlled by a corrupt group of officials headed by members of the Gleize family (Jean, Michel, Jacques and Pierre).<sup>74</sup> This political faction not only doctored the books of the municipality and the Chamber of Commerce, but it also falsified or, at the very least, caused confusion in many of the records of the trade of the city. One reason for these readjustments in the books was the wish to conceal secret payments such as those described above. One must also consider as possible explanations the peculations and the sheer mismanagement of the persons in charge. But the confusion in Marseilles' records was also very probably caused in order to give the impression that the city's economy was in worse shape than it really was. If Marseilles could convince the government that its trade was suffering terribly, this would not only make the crown more eager to aid the city, but it would help to explain the mounting debts of both the city and the chamber of commerce.

Surprisingly, only one historian of Marseilles has ever dealt with the cabal that ran the city in these years. That was Joseph Marchand, in his 1889 book on Cardin Lebret, the intendant of Provence and inspector of commerce in Marseilles at that time.<sup>75</sup> Paul Masson, Gaston Rambert, and others do not mention it at all.<sup>76</sup> Charles Carrière, in fact, affirms confidently that no small

<sup>74</sup> Occasionally a member of the Gleize family served as an *échevin* of the city or as a deputy in the chamber of commerce, but they largely owed their power to their positions in trade and to their personal connections. They controlled the *Compagnie de l'Afrique* during this period. Rambert does not mention them in his list of wealthy merchants in Marseilles in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (*Histoire du commerce*, IV: 497-510). But the commercial activities of the family are frequently mentioned in the *procès-verbaux* of the chamber of commerce (ACC, B 6-7) and in the correspondence of deputies in Paris (B 153-166). See also CARRIÈRE, *Négociants marseillais*, I, 85, 93, 106; BROMLEY, "Projets et contrats," p. 100.

<sup>75</sup> MARCHAND, *Un Intendant*, pp. 131-142.

<sup>76</sup> Masson does discuss the mounting debts of the chamber of commerce early in the century (perhaps as much as 800,000 *livres*), but he does not speak of local corrup-

group of officials or businessmen controlled the Chamber of Commerce at any point in the eighteenth century.<sup>77</sup> Marcel Courdurié does mention briefly that the royal government accused the city and the chamber of commerce of corruption and mismanagement. But Courdurié goes on to say that this was merely an excuse invented by the Crown to hide the fact that the government's own burdensome taxes and wars were solely responsible for Marseilles' problems.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps the reason why Marseilles' historians have overlooked this part of the story is that much of the best evidence of this rather seamy episode in the city's history lies not in Marseilles but in Paris — in the archives of the controller-general and in various papers deposited in the Bibliothèque nationale.<sup>79</sup> These materials reveal, for example, that beginning

tion or of the royal investigations of it. In one place he does, however, rather obliquely remark that the chamber seems to have had reasons for disguising the true extent of the city's trade (*Histoire... XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 346-347; appendix, p. X). Rambert does not speak of this subject at all (*Histoire du commerce*, IV and VI); nor does Louis Bergasse: *Notice historique sur la chambre de commerce de Marseille (1599-1912)* (Marseille, 1913). Robert Paris not only does not mention it, but he says that the commercial records kept by the chamber of commerce are especially good beginning with the year 1700 (Paris, *Histoire du commerce de Marseille. V. De 1660 à 1789. Le Levant.*, ed. Gaston Rambert (Paris, 1957), p. 504. JOSEPH FOURNIER briefly discusses the crown's examination of the chamber's debts, but he does not mention the Gleize faction (*La Chambre de commerce*, pp. 73-75). JULIEN RICOMMARD ("Les Résistances régionales et locales à l'administration royale à la fin du règne de Louis XIV: l'exemple de la Provence et de Marseille," *L'Information historique* 28 [1966], 64-68, 110-114, 152-154, 193-199) and MIREILLE ZARB (*Les Privilèges de la ville de Marseille, du X<sup>e</sup> siècle à la révolution: histoire d'une autonomie communale* [Paris, 1961] provide useful information. They too, however, neglect to speak of the Gleize family, Blondel, bribes to government officials, and the financial problems of the chamber of commerce.

<sup>77</sup> CARRIÈRE, *Négociants marseillais*, I, 228.

<sup>78</sup> COURDURIÉ, *La Dette des collectivités*, pp. 166-169. Of course, I agree that taxes, wars, and other factors may have been important in leading to the huge debts of the city and of the chamber of commerce. What I object to is Courdurié's exclusion of municipal corruption as yet another element. See also JULES JULLIANY, *Essai sur le commerce*, I, 68-73.

<sup>79</sup> This is not to deny that amply documentation exists in Marseilles. The correspondence of François Philip vividly describes the agonies he went through as he tried to explain the deficiencies in the bookkeeping practices of the city and the chamber of commerce (ACC, B 165-166).

in the 1690s intendant Lebret warned the controller-general of the situation. He described to the minister the manner in which members of the Gleize family controlled elections for municipal offices. One member of the family would sit toward the front of the assembly room and, by pre-arranged signals with his hands or feet, he would alert his supporters to candidates who were or were not suitable.<sup>80</sup> In this manner the Gleizes could direct affairs even when they themselves were not in office. Thus they operated in much the same way as big-city bosses in nineteenth and early twentieth-century America. According to enemies of the Gleize faction, municipal authorities often got port officials to declare the city's harbour closed. Royal officials continued, however, to issue special, secret permissions for departures to vessels belonging to friends and associates of the Gleize clique. One reason why this situation persisted was that port officials and royal ministers — who were well supplied with money and other favours from Marseilles — seem to have paid little heed to many of the complaints which they received from persons in the city who opposed the ruling faction.<sup>81</sup>

On several occasions in the early years of the century intendant Lebret was ordered to investigate the records of both the city and the chamber. In 1710 a royal commission under councillor of state Archilles de Harlay began yet another study of the documents. The evidence of mismanagement and fraud was overwhelming. Over the next several years Harlay ordered that hundreds of bundles of financial records, dating back to 1669, be shipped to him in Paris. He and his fellow examiners often complained of missing documents, of discrepancies, and of the "corrupt administration" of the "cabal" that dominated the city and the chamber of commerce.<sup>82</sup> In 1716, the Harlay group

<sup>80</sup> MARCHAND, *Un Intendant*, p. 133.

<sup>81</sup> BN, mss. fr., 18979, *passim*. Foreign minister Torcy and marine minister Pontchartrain in particular are accused of being repeatedly manipulated by the Gleizes and their associates.

<sup>82</sup> Among various letters in ACC, B 165-166, see B 165, Philip to chamber of

was joined by an additional investigating panel, this one under Marshal Villars. At last in 1716 and 1717 a series of *arrêts* and edicts were issued placing new safeguards on the management of the city's and the chamber's funds.<sup>83</sup> There is some evidence, however, that these laws were only partially successful in gaining for the crown a surer control of the administration of the city and the chamber.<sup>84</sup>

commerce, 29 June 1710, 10 July 1710, 23 July 1710, 14 October 1710, 12 January 1711, 13 March 1711, 16 July 1711.

<sup>83</sup> By far the best single source on this entire subject is BN, mss. fr., 18979, which includes summaries of most of the various pieces of information collected by the Harlay commission. Various relevant documents can also be found in BN, mss. fr., 16909; and AN, G<sup>7</sup> 1691, Merchants of Marseilles to Desmaretz, 8 March 1708, 23 March 1708; G<sup>7</sup> 1692, piece 259, fols. 273-305, memoir by Leuret, dated 4 August 1708; G<sup>7</sup> 1696, Harlay to Desmaretz, 27 October 1711, 31 October 1711; G<sup>7</sup> 1697, "Mémoire présenté par les principaux négociants de la ville de Marseille;" G<sup>7</sup> 1703, pieces 31-32, Harlay to Desmaretz, 11 September 1714, with accompanying draft of an *arrêt*. Several pertinent letters are reprinted in the second and third volumes of A. DE BOISLISLE (ed.), *Correspondance des contrôleurs généraux des finances avec les intendants des provinces* (3 vols., Paris, 1874-1897). Scattered throughout the correspondence of the Marseilles deputies of trade (ACC, B 153-166) are many references to the political and commercial conflicts within the city; these letters also frequently mention the "révision des comptes" (as the various investigations into the financial affairs of the city and the chamber were termed). The minutes of the chamber (B 6-7) also speak of the "révisions." In addition, see ACC, A 10, 12. The chamber's financial records comprise all of series C in ACC.

Marseilles, of course, was far from unique in being dominated by a small group of merchants and office-holders. Such appears to have been the norm rather than the exception for most cities during the Old Regime. See Nora Temple, "Municipal Elections and Municipal Oligarchies in Eighteenth-Century France," in J.F. BOSHER (ed.), *French Government and Society 1500-1850: Essays in Memory of Alfred Cobban* (London, 1973), pp. 70-91; François Dumont, "French Kingship and Absolute Monarchy in the Seventeenth Century," in HATTON, *Louis XIV and Absolutism*, pp. 83, notes 137, 138.

<sup>84</sup> Certainly the financial problems of the two bodies continued, although most public institutions were in the same situation in the eighteenth century. See COURDURIÉ, *La Dette des collectivités*, passim; RAMBERT, *Histoire du commerce*, IV, 315; MARCHAND, *Un Intendant*, pp. 341-342. The reforms of 1716-1717 were much milder than the situation warranted. Indeed, Marshal Villars, who headed one of the investigating commissions, was known to favour Marseilles. He was the governor of Provence. On several occasions he accepted gifts from the city worth thousands of *livres* (ACC, A 48; B 7, f. 232, 20 June 1716). One of the few individuals to suffer as a result of the royal inquests was François Blondel, whose position as agent of the city was abolished by Harlay in 1712.

The chamber of commerce continued to disburse huge sums of money and mer-

What conclusions can be drawn from all of the above? First, it appears that the economic condition of Marseilles was not nearly as bad as we often have been led to believe. In many cases huge profits were made and new directions were taken, thereby contributing to even greater wealth later in the eighteenth century.

Second, this revised picture of the city's economy in the latter part of Louis XIV's reign fits in with research now being done on other aspects of this period. All too often the first half of the reign is described in bright, glorious terms, whereas the second half is dismissed simply as a "decline." But the findings of various scholars on the economic, administrative, and diplomatic history of the final years of the reign are increasingly calling this view into question.<sup>85</sup>

Third, I believe that the information presented here gives us more evidence with which to combat old stereotypes about the nature of royal absolutism and mercantilism. Whereas some historians still speak of the crown's relationship with cities almost as if it were a master-slave situation,<sup>86</sup> it is clear that the government was much more limited than Louis XIV and his ministers would like to have admitted. Recent works by William

chandises to persons at court throughout the eighteenth century. See ACC, A 31-50; AN, Archives des colonies, F<sup>2B</sup> 8, "Tableau des différentes caisses relatives aux affaires du commerce à Marseille, des recettes et des dépenses," 1 January 1787.

<sup>85</sup> JOHN C. RULE, "Royal Ministers and Government Reform during the Last Decades of Louis XIV's Reign," in CLAUDE C. STURGILL (ed.), *The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750-1850* (Gainesville, Florida, 1973), pp. 1-35; Patrice Berger, "Pontchartrain and the Grain Trade during the Famine of 1693," *Journal of Modern History*, supplement, 48 (1976), 37-86; Ragnhild Hatton, "Louis XIV: Recent Gains in Historical Knowledge," *Journal of Modern History*, 45 (1973), 277-291; Hatton, "Louis XIV et l'Europe: Eléments d'une révision historique," *XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, no. 123 (1979), 109-135; PHILIP F. RILEY, "Hard Times, Police and the Making of Public Policy in the Paris of Louis XIV," *Historical Réflexions/Reflexions historiques* 10 (1983), 313-334.

<sup>86</sup> TEMPLE, "Municipal Elections" and "The Control and Exploitation of French Towns during the Ancien Régime," *History* 51 (1966), 16-34; NANNERL O. KEOHANE, *Philosophy and the State in France: The Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1980), p. 259.

Beik, Daniel Hickey, Hilton L. Root, and Sharon Kettering, among others, have demonstrated that the Crown often followed policies involving cooperation rather than confrontation with local elites and communities.<sup>87</sup> As the example of Marseilles demonstrates, a city's officials and businessmen could be quite successful in evading or in helping to determine government policies. The power wielded by Marseilles' representatives in Versailles and Paris contributed significantly to the preservation of that city's privileges and prosperity.

<sup>87</sup> BEIK, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (New York and London, 1985); DANIEL HICKEY, *The Coming of French Absolutism: The Struggle for Tax Reform in the Province of Dauphiné, 1540-1640* (Toronto, 1986); ROOT, *Peasants and King in Burgundy: Agrarian Foundations of French Absolutism* (Berkeley, 1987); KETTERING, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York and Oxford, 1986).

