

XI GOVERNMENT AT WAR

would be a great security to the Post and lessen the fatigue of the soldiers. A number of men have been sent into service from each county, who are not armed and accounted as the act requires. Also many men and boys have been enlisted in the regiment, who are by no means fit for soldiers. We have stood in great want of a muster-master⁶. . . .

I shall be much obliged to your Excellency to lay this before the Assembly as soon as you shall think proper.

I remain, with great respect, your very humble servant,
JOHN TAYLOR

1. Taylor, a 1770 graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), joined his classmate Frederick Frelinghuysen on the faculty of Queen's College (now Rutgers University) in 1771 as tutor of the grammar school. When Frelinghuysen resigned to pursue legal studies, Taylor became tutor of the college in 1773 and with few interruptions held the post until 1790.

2. William Winants.

3. Frederick Frelinghuysen. See Sec. XII, Doc. 5, note 2.

4. Taylor was technically still colonel of the Fourth Regiment, Hunterdon County Militia; he was commissioned a colonel in the state militia on October 9, 1779.

5. Now Union.

6. The muster-master was in charge of mustering the militia, supervising the drills, and collecting fines from absentees and improperly equipped soldiers.

14 Abraham Skinner to Governor William Livingston

[*Executive Correspondence*, pp. 260-61.]

The question of prisoners of war was one of the most complicated and confused issues of the revolutionary war. To begin with, the jurisdictional divisions of authority between the Congress and the states on the one hand and the army and civil government on the other were not clearly defined. Then, too, there were different categories of prisoners requiring different standards of detention—military personnel and civilians, regulars and militia, soldiers and sailors, officers and enlisted men. Moreover, there was no agreement between the British and Americans over the conditions and procedures of prisoner exchange. Finally, administrative machinery at both the national and state levels was inadequate to supply prisoners with provisions and supplies. It fell to New Jersey's Abraham Skinner as Continental commissary general of prisoners to superintend the care and treatment of Americans in British hands from

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

September 1780 to August 1782. As he reminded Governor William Livingston in the letter below, his native state was supposed to help provide for the maintenance of its citizens incarcerated in British prison camps. But despite repeated reminders and pleas, New Jersey's relief record was no better than the poor performance of the other states. More concerned with immediate problems than distant prisoners, state governments consistently allowed their citizens to languish in enemy prisons without adequate provisions. The lack of effective administrative organization as much as neglect accounts for the sorry response to the plight of the prisoners of war.

September 9, 1780

Sir,

The very peculiar situation of the prisoners of war belonging to this state who are now in the hands of the enemy, induces me to request that your Excellency will give me instructions relative to their situation, or point our some method in which their distresses may be alleviated and their confinement made sufferable.

The officers who are prisoners on parole on Long Island have not had the least supply or support from this office since the spring of the year 1779; since which they have been at board on Long Island and many of them are at present destitute of a single farthing, are liable to insult daily from their landlords, who seem tired of supporting them without fee or reward, and if their exchange could be effected, they would be detained for the payment of the debts they have contracted for their necessary support.¹

The citizens and privates of this state, some few excepted, are confined in sugar-houses and churches² in a wretched situation, many of them without a shirt or blanket, and no allowance except what they receive from the enemy and about 3 1/2 lbs. of bread, which is issued to them by the continental agent without any authority from the legislature of the state.

To these distresses may be added, the mortification the Jersey prisoners feel in seeing their fellow sufferers receive supplies from the neighboring states to which they belong, when their past services as soldiers and citizens merit equally as much attention.

I am sorry to add that at present there seems to be not the smallest prospect of exchanging or releasing those men, and that if they are not timely supported they must as severely feel the consequences as you can possibly imagine.

I shall at all times be happy to render them the services which my duty as well as inclination may point out, and to fulfil your Excellency's directions with respect to the difficulties they labor under.

I have the honor to be, with great respect, your Excellency's most ob't h'ble servant,

ABRM. SKINNER

1. The deference paid to officers on the battlefield carried over into prisons. In many cases officers were paroled from prison and permitted to take

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up lodging in private quarters.

2. There was an acute shortage of detention facilities to accommodate prisoners. In addition to jails, men were stuffed into factories and warehouses, ships and mines, and all other available places of incarceration. Two of the most infamous British "prisons" were the ship *Jersey* moored in the East River and the Sugar House in New York City.

15 Essex County Residents to the General Assembly on Tory Raiders

[Revolutionary Documents, 155, New Jersey State Library.]

In addition to the disruptive actions of rebel vigilante groups such as the Monmouth County Committee of Retaliation (see Doc. 17), the state government had to contend with the depredations of the Associated Loyalists. Established in 1780, the purpose of the organization was to give political standing to Loyalist exiles in dealing with the British and American governments, to protect crown sympathizers from the rebels, and to retaliate against those responsible for the confiscation and plunder of Loyalist property. In November 1780 the board of directors, headquartered in New York City and led by former New Jersey Governor William Franklin, received authorization to wage an independent war against the Americans. The result was a series of raids of wanton destruction such as that against Connecticut Farms and Springfield in June 1781 (see Sec. IX, Doc. 8). The threat of the Associated Loyalists to New Jersey was more political than military. As the Essex County residents who signed the following petition surely recognized, if the Loyalists could operate with impunity the state government would soon lose the confidence of the people. Ultimately, the Board of Associated Loyalists destroyed itself. The vengeful hanging of Joshua Huddy, an artillery captain in the New Jersey militia, at Middletown, Monmouth County, on April 12, 1782, discredited the organization in the eyes of the British government. Appalled by the atrocity, General Sir Henry Clinton, commander of the British army in America, revoked the military powers of the board and in August William Franklin sailed for England and a life of exile.

[1781?]¹

The Humble Petition of a Number of the Friendly Inhabitants on the Frontiers² of this State Sheweth

That whereas many of your Petitioners by our Local situation, have been, and are Still in the power of the most Inhuman and more then Savage Barbarity,