

XI GOVERNMENT AT WAR

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,

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

practiced by our Enemies, which many of us have woefully experienced, by having our Habitations and Effects, Burned and Destroyed, in the most wanton and Cruel manner, and repeatedly Robed of our Horses and Cattle, which have Subjected many of us (in affluent Circumstances) to Indigence and poverty, and those of us who have not yet felt this Dreadfull Calamity, shudder at the thoughts of being every Hour exposed to the like Merciless Cruelties, Robberies &c.

When at the same time our *Secret* and worst of Enemies (Like the Snake in the Grass) have practiced every artifice their subtile Machinations could Suggest, to stab the States of our Country; and Notwithstanding which these Miscreants enjoy a much greater share of the Blessings of Liberty and Independence than your Petitioners, who have Repeatedly Risque our Lives and Limbs in Defence of it; And are now Living in our own Neighbourhood in the most *perfect Peace* and Security.

Your Petitioners pray the Honourable Legislature will keep in view the Board of Directors,³ appointed by the Court of great Brittain, to Superintend, and Direct, the Maroding & Robing Practice, appointed for the Sole purpose, of Distressing, and Tottally Ruining your Petitioners, With strict Orders at the same time to Protect, and not Molest, the Friends to Government.

Your Petitioners therefore most Earnestly Pray in Order to Baffle the Malicious designs of our Enemies, and put a stop to such Barbarious practices; that a Law may be Passed whereby full Compensation may be made to such of us as have had our Houses and Effects, Burned and Destroyed by the Enemy and Such as have been Robed of their Horses and Cattle; And such of the Friendly Inhabitants, in Future, as may suffer by the like Depredation, by Levieing a Tax on the Disaffected Inhabitants of this State.

Which in Order the More fully to Ascertain, Your Petitioners Humbly Pray, that a Law May Also be passed Appointing Courts for the Express purpose of Bringing, and Ordering on Tryal, all such Persons (Inhabitants within this State,) as have not given, and cannot give at this Day, Satisfactory, and Convincing Proofs, of their Attachment and Friendship to the American Cause, that it may be Clearly known, who are Friends to the Independence of our Country, And who are not By that Inestimable Right of Trial by Jury.

Your Petitioners Apprehend many Difficulties will here present themselves at first View, but we presume those Difficulties will Easily be removed, when the Salutary Affects produced by this Law, in favour of the Friendly Inhabitants Appear in Competition.

Therefore in full Assurance that the Honourable Legislature will Adopt every Measure, that may tend to Alleviate the Distresses of their Petitioners, they have a Confidence the Prayer of their Petition will be Heard.

[Approximately 115 signatures affixed.]

1. The petition is undated, but the reference to the Board of Associated Loyalists and recent destructive raids suggests that it was probably circulated in 1781 after the sacking of Connecticut Farms and Springfield.

2. Essex was a "frontier" county not as a newly settled region but in that it bordered another country, in this case British-occupied New York.

3. The Board of Associated Loyalists described in the headnote.