

V FROM RESISTANCE TO REBELLION

Provincial Congress, but opted for the British after the Declaration of Independence.

2. Probably Jonathan Deare (1748-1796), Anglican lawyer from Perth Amboy who, as a major in the New Jersey militia, participated in the arrest of Governor Franklin in June 1776 (see Sec. VII, Doc. 4).

7 Governor William Franklin to Lord Dartmouth

[*NJA*, 10:652-53.]

For all the support enjoyed by the popular front, there existed a considerable number of Jerseymen who were either politically uncommitted or devoted to the royal standard. While Governor Franklin exaggerated the amount of latent Loyalism in the province, he was correct in asserting that the opponents of the rebellion were afraid to speak out because of the weakness of the civil establishment. By August 1775 Franklin and his associates had only their powers of persuasion and the inherent conservatism of Jerseymen to stem the tide of revolution. There was no Royal Army, no police force, no mass communications controlled by the government. To the contrary, the organs of public control (the militia and local sheriffs) were in rebel hands. Royal officials could only sit back, wait, and hope for the best. That fact alone explains to a considerable degree the lack of overt royalist activity in the province and the ease with which the radicals erected an extralegal political structure.

Perth Amboy, August 2nd, 1775

My Lord,

. . . . The same Disposition & the same Measures continue as mentioned in my last. A formal Declaration¹ has been published by the Congress, & every preparation made for carrying on a War which is in their Power, the Particulars of which I need not mention as they are printed in all the News-papers. Enclosed is a Copy of the Declaration, and also of a Letter which Mr. Skinner the Attorney General received a few Days ago from Col. Coxe one of the Members of His Majesty's Council in this Colony.² The latter will shew your Lordship the Critical Situation the Officers of Government are in, having no kind of Protection. It is true that there are many Friends of Government still remaining in the several Provinces, but they are too scattered to venture forming themselves into a Body, especially as they have no places of Strength or Security to resort to. Not that I believe there are any of the Gentlemen of the Country who would draw their Swords in Support of Taxation by Parliament; but there are many who would fight to preserve the Supremacy of Parliament in other respects, and their Connexion with Great Britain, until some

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Constitution should be formed for America, consistent with that idea, on just and equitable Principles. There is indeed, a Dread in the Minds of many here, that some of the Leaders of the people are aiming to establish a Republic, rather than to submit to which we have Thousands who would risk the loss of their Lives in Defence of the old Constitution, and are ready to declare themselves whenever they see a Chance of its being of any Avail.

I have the Honour to be, with the greatest Respect and Regard,
My Lord, Your Lordship's most obedient & most humble Servt.
WM. FRANKLIN

1. On July 6 the Continental Congress adopted the "Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms" which, tantamount to a declaration of war, justified defensive military action against Britain.
2. See Doc. 4.

8 Charles Pettit to Joseph Reed

[Reed Papers, 2:113, New-York Historical Society.]

As the rebellion progressed, men increasingly were troubled by a clash of loyalties. While the conflict felt by royal official Charles Pettit is obvious, it was no less traumatic than that confronting the average citizen who found himself aiding and abetting a revolt against his country. Pettit (?-1806) and Joseph Reed were brothers-in-law, the former having married the latter's half sister, Sarah. Pettit had also been a partner with Reed's father, Andrew, in the Philadelphia mercantile house of Reed and Pettit. After going out of business, Pettit became, thanks to the influence of the younger Reed, deputy secretary, provincial surrogate, and finally provincial secretary of New Jersey. The two men were the closest of friends, Reed serving as Pettit's alter ego. At the time Pettit wrote the following letter, Reed was in Cambridge, Massachusetts, serving as secretary to General George Washington, commander in chief of the Continental army.

Amboy August 10th 1775

Dear Sir

.... My Prospects here are daily more clouded. My Sentiments are so different from those of my Neighbours that Society, instead of affording some Relief from