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The American Loyalists: Notes on Their Organization and Numerical Strength

Paul H. Smith*

INADEQUATE knowledge of the American loyalists continues to distort our understanding of the American revolutionary era. Surely no subject so central to interpretation of the Revolution still remains so poorly understood or comparatively ignored. R. R. Palmer's not too recent indictment that the loyalists have been eliminated from the national consciousness—and from the work of the “consensus” historians—is a serious accusation that continues to be taken altogether too lightly.¹ For we can hardly determine whether the Revolution originated in social and economic unrest, in deep-seated ideological tensions, or in a constitutional dilemma until we take seriously the activities of the loyalists during the Revolution. Nor are we likely to decide whether it was basically a “radical” upheaval or a movement to defend rights already long enjoyed until we understand more precisely how the Revolution affected those who opposed it with their lives.

Although such interpretive differences have many complex roots, a basic lack of quantitative information often lies near the center of the most serious problems that plague historians of the loyalists. We stand in particular need of statistical data on the loyalists, otherwise they will continue to be ignored as something of an unknown quantity, an invention of historians, more imaginary than real. We are caught, it would appear, in a vicious circle, on the one hand indifferent to the loyalists because they are difficult to incorporate into our basic conception of the rebellion against Britain, and on the other reluctant to modify our interpretations because we lack data on the loyalists sufficient to justify major revisions.

However, at present we undeniably lack the required statistical foundation for reaching a solid understanding of the loyalists in the Revolution. Because of this lack of knowledge, historians commonly resort to general population percentages when speaking of the loyalists, understandably exhibiting strong preferences for the security and appeal of round figures and easily remembered proportions. Hence the acceptance and authority

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¹ R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution* (Princeton, 1959), I, 190.

of a venerable appraisal, generally attributed to John Adams, that approximately one-third of the American population was loyal, one-third supported the Revolution, and one-third remained uncommitted or indifferent.² Conditioned to such generalities, one is not surprised that even a comparatively recent loyalist estimate by an acknowledged authority should find refuge in a plausible generalization: among the "politically active population" the loyalists constituted "a third" and the revolutionists "two-thirds."³ In a similar manner, the same author's assessment of the distribution of the loyalists, which aspires to greater precision, necessarily remains comfortably vague: in New York the loyalists numbered "half the population," in the South "hardly . . . more than a fourth or a third," and in New England "scarcely a tenth."⁴ In short, one can yet only rarely find reliable statistics on the loyalists' strength in either individual states or the entire thirteen.⁵ And despite a comparative outburst of literature on the loyalists in recent years, we remain today nearly as far from the truth about the strength of the loyalists as we were a half-century ago.

The obstacles to calculating the exact strength of the loyalists are formidable, indeed even insurmountable. Furthermore, no workable definition, applicable equally to persons from all colonies and to both the earlier and later years of the War for Independence, can be formulated to help reduce the task to manageable proportions. Too little attention,

² The origin and spread of this estimate is a curious historical anomaly that reveals more about the readiness of historians to accept plausible information than about the strength of the loyalists. Adams did indeed once write that "nearly one third of the people of the colonies" were loyal in the sense that before 1775 that many Americans were "seduced and deluded" by the British, a definition which would satisfy most Americans. Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams*, X (Boston, 1856), 193. But the more widely publicized statement that "full one third were averse to the Revolution. . . . An opposite third conceived a hatred of the English. . . . The middle third . . . were rather lukewarm," probably owes its popularity to Sydney George Fisher's reproduction of an 1815 Adams letter to James Lloyd that analyzed the division of opinion in the United States over the issue of the French rather than the American Revolution. *Ibid.*, 110; and Sydney George Fisher, *The True History of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1902), 233.

³ William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (New York, 1961), 92. Actually Nelson's estimates and assessments are among the most usable and meaningful that I have seen.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Undoubtedly the best available are those for Connecticut, which are based upon the returns of the 1774 provincial elections. Oscar Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776* (Chapel Hill, 1949), 233-234. Zeichner concludes that Connecticut had about 2,500 loyalists who comprised about 6.5% of the adult males.

for example, has been given to the fact that loyalism meant different things to different persons in different situations. Matters of allegiance to established government seldom appear as clear-cut choices. The loyalty of officeholders and wealthy persons closely allied to the machinery of government involved decisions fundamentally dissimilar to those made by tenants, indentured servants, poor mechanics, and artisans who were induced by cash bounties to join loyalist regiments. Residents of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia did not have the same opportunities to escape involvement in the war that were afforded western Virginians and North Carolinians. Men joining the royal cause in the spring of 1782 in the Carolinas probably did so from motives far different from those of loyalists fleeing inside the British lines in New York and New Jersey in the autumn of 1776. And undoubtedly more than a few persons, on both sides, were periodically involved in overt activities that betrayed their true interests and opinions.

Finally, historians are plagued by the absence of many types of precise demographic data for the eighteenth century as a whole.⁶ We can only guess at the total population of the colonies during the Revolution and have comprehensive population figures for few individual colonies. We know little about the profile of the American population and can only estimate birth and death statistics. Rates of immigration and internal migration remain largely unknown. Consequently, historians of the eighteenth century have frequently avoided topics which involve precise statistical information or conclusions derived from computations based on dependable data.

The present study—which seeks only to establish a more precise approximation of the loyalists' strength—began not at all as a statistical inquiry but rather grew out of an interest in the influence of the loyalists on British policy during the Revolution. In the course of that research, however, I accumulated a quantity of information on the strength of the loyalist military units which, incomplete as it was, I found to be more comprehensive and accurate than data that historians had previously collected. Intrigued by the uses to which such information could be put and confident that more significant conclusions could

⁶ Although colonial American historians have been conditioned to accept the paucity of statistical data, students of American economic development have achieved considerable success in laying a statistical foundation for their work and, more recently, demographers have begun to attack the 18th century. See, for example, United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, 1960), 743-774; and J. Potter, "The Growth of Population in America, 1700-1860," in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley, eds., *Population in History* (Chicago, 1965), 631-688.

yet be reached about both the loyalists' military strength and their overall numbers, I subsequently pursued two simple preliminary assumptions that led finally to the conclusion of this study: first, that the total cumulative strength of the loyalist regiments in the British army could be established fairly accurately through a more thorough, systematic search of surviving manuscripts, and second, that the total strength of the loyalists could be projected from the strength of the loyalist regiments if I could determine what proportion of all loyalists joined loyalist corps. The search for additional data on the loyalist regiments was rather successful, especially in locating information on deaths, desertions, and discharges in the loyalist corps in order to calculate their rates of attrition—hitherto the greatest gap in data on the loyalist soldier. This information (presented in tabular form in Table I), though of necessity approximate and subject to revisions, appears to me to provide as accurate conclusions as surviving data are likely to yield. It represents the great bulk of the research upon which this study is based. For those who wish to go beyond statistics on the loyalist corps to the more interesting and significant, if more speculative and perhaps foolhardy, projection of the total numerical strength of the loyalists, I have summarized my conclusions on this question as well.

From a few weeks before the war began at Lexington Green until several weeks after the Treaty of Paris was actually ratified over eight years later, large numbers of loyalists volunteered their services in "provincial" corps operating with His Majesty's army, and a remarkably complete record of these military units is preserved in several collections of surviving British manuscripts.⁷ They constitute a rich, neglected vein of data, in contrast to the general paucity of loyalist manuscript material. From time to time, to be sure, historians have worked these resources, particularly local historians who have focused their inquiries on the history of specific loyalist battalions, but to date no comprehensive effort has been made to draw systematically from such documents to establish accurately from extant British records the overall numerical strength of the provincial corps or of the American loyalists in general. Thus I have attempted to obtain from these sources all the information

⁷ Especially the British Headquarters' Papers, photostats, and Audit Office Papers, transcripts, in the New York Public Library; Colonial Office Papers, and War Office Papers in the Public Record Office, London; the Clinton, Gage, Germain, Mackenzie, and North papers in the Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; the Loyalist Regiments' Muster Rolls, the Frederick Haldimand Papers, and the Ward Chipman Papers in the Canadian Public Archives, Ottawa; and the Ward Chipman Papers in the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

that can reasonably be extrapolated and have, despite a recognition of the partial nature of those materials, remained convinced that some useful and comparatively reliable conclusions can be drawn.

To give meaning to the figures obtained from the provincial muster rolls, military pay warrants, and other surviving records, one must make several essential distinctions in the process of evaluating the data. First, the men who served in the various units which made up the Provincial Service in the British army were a species of "regular soldier" and are not to be confused with volunteer "associators" or militiamen.⁸ Unlike those loyalists who temporarily enrolled in the militia from time to time, the provincials were full time soldiers serving fixed terms,⁹ subject to service wherever ordered to duty, not merely within the borders of their native province.¹⁰ It is also necessary to recognize that a number of provincial soldiers were not actually loyalists in any meaningful sense, for many officers and non-commissioned officers were actually British regulars, not provincials.¹¹ Finally, a considerable number of the provincial troops were recruited outside the thirteen colonies (in Nova Scotia, East and West Florida, and Quebec), or had arrived in America only shortly before the rebellion, and similarly ought not to be classified as loyalists.

Important as these distinctions are, they represent but a few of the problems that must be considered if one is to make the provincial muster rolls of the British army yield useful conclusions about the strength of the American loyalists during the Revolution. The North administration made no comprehensive contemporary studies of the Provincial Service, and the records that were maintained are but a form

⁸ For an analysis of the Provincial Service, see Paul Smith, *Loyalists and Red-coats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill, 1964), chap. V, "The Loyalists in Arms."

⁹ Generally two years or the duration of the war.

¹⁰ Except for the "Royal Fencible Americans." The "fencible" units were essentially defensive corps organized to protect a specific province.

¹¹ I have discounted this group in my final calculations because at least an equal number of loyalists were in regular British regiments. Loyalists with experience that led them into the service as engineers, artilleryists, or naval officers were necessarily in units on the regular establishment, for there were no corps in the Provincial Service employing such specialists. In addition a number of loyalists were chaplains and surgeons in the British army. I believe the total number of such loyalists, officers and men, exceeds the number of British regulars in the Provincial Service. For evidence that loyalists were enlisted in regular British regiments, see William Howe to Lord George Germain, Apr. 2, 1777, *The Parliamentary Register* (London, 1775-96), XI, 387; and C. T. Atkinson, "British Forces in North America, 1774-1781: Their Distribution and Strength," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, XVI (1937), 4-5.

of raw data. The maximum strength of the Provincial Service as recorded in the provincial returns submitted by the inspector general of provincial forces was 9,659 in December 1780.¹² That figure, however, is quite wide of the mark for the total *cumulative* strength of the loyalist corps and represents only a base from which one must build. The two battalions of the "Loyal Highland Emigrants," for example, of approximately 1,050 officers and men, had previously been placed on the Regular Establishment and after January 1779 were carried on the army returns as the 84th Regiment. Neither Benedict Arnold's "American Legion" nor Benjamin Thompson's "King's American Dragoons" had yet been completed and do not appear in the inspector general's returns of this date.¹³ Sir John Johnson's "Royal Regiment of New York" was stationed in Canada and was carried separately on the returns of the forces under General Frederick Haldimand's command in Quebec, not General Henry Clinton's command in New York. Three small provincial corps had already been disbanded before 1780 and therefore no longer appeared in the records.¹⁴ And finally, eight very small, marginal provincial units, which reported their activities only sporadically, do not appear in this particular compilation.¹⁵ Clearly, any attempt to calculate the total number of Loyalists who enlisted in the Provincial Service at some time during the war carries one well beyond the formal returns and records and into the realm of the evolution of the service and the rise and fall of the individual units which comprised it.

¹² Commissioned officers and staff, 705; non-commissioned officers, 786; rank and file, 8,168. "State of All His Majesty's Provincial Troops in North America," Dec. 15, 1780, Clinton Papers.

¹³ Arnold's corps was created by authorization of a warrant issued Sept. 27, 1780, and Thompson's corps was authorized Feb. 22, 1781. Report of James Robertson to General Clinton, Mar. 17, 1782, Chipman Papers, no. 2005, Huntington Lib.

¹⁴ The "Roman Catholic Volunteers," "Royal American Reformees," and "West Jersey Volunteers."

¹⁵ The "Armed Boatmen," "Emmerick's Chasseurs," "Georgia Loyalists," "Loyal Foresters," "North Carolina Dragoons," "North Carolina Highlanders," "St. Johns Volunteers," and "West Florida Royal Foresters." Seven other units, sometimes classified as provincial corps, also do not appear on this return: "Butler's Rangers," "Holland's Loyal Yorkers," "McAlpine's Royal Americans," "Mackay's Loyal Volunteers," the "Queen's Loyal Rangers," the "Royal Americans," and Robert Leake's "Independent Company." Except for McAlpine's and Leake's corps, which were eventually absorbed into Sir John Johnson's regiment, this latter group of units, raised and stationed in the "Northern" or "Canadian Division," has been omitted from the present study because of their location and questionable status. However, the three largest "Northern Division" provincial corps, the "King's Royal Regiment of New York," "Roger's Rangers," and the first battalion of the "Loyal Highland Emigrants," have been included.

Difficult as it is to follow the complex development of the Provincial Service, with the appearance and disappearance of the various units on the rolls, it is even more difficult to calculate the attrition rate within the loyalist corps. Relatively few accurate tabulations of loyalists who were killed in action, died of disease, or were discharged because of serious wounds, survive for the use of historians. Establishing the rate of desertion and bounty-jumping in the provincial corps presents several nearly insoluble problems. And one can only with difficulty estimate from the meager data that survives the number of "seconded" provincial officers who were dropped from active duty when superseded in various reorganizational moves, or while ill, wounded, or captured were unavailable for immediate service.

Thus the figures in Table I have not been simply transferred directly from the muster rolls, but have been extrapolated by analyzing the growth and decline of the Provincial Service, and the creation, reorganization, and reduction of individual corps. The data rests upon a large number of army returns and muster rolls, loyalist petitions and claims, military accounts and pay warrants, the annual lists of British officers, and several miscellaneous journals and contemporary accounts dealing with the British army. The following explanations are provided to clarify the meaning of the data tabulated in Table I. The reader should be aware of the limitations of the surviving data upon which this compilation is based and of the necessarily conjectural nature of the conclusions that follow.

The "Maximum strength (Known)" in column one simply states the total number (taken directly from muster rolls or reports of the inspector general) of officers and men enrolled in each unit at the time it reported its greatest strength. As the various corps seldom achieved their maximum strength simultaneously—the specific moment for various individual units may have been any time between 1776 and 1782—addition of the figures in column one produces no meaningful total. In general the figures in column two are fragmentary—comprehensive data survive in the muster rolls of only a few corps—but taken collectively they suggest a great deal about the overall attrition rate in the Provincial Service, and in conjunction with evidence extracted from related memorials, journals, letter books, and treasury records, they provide the basis for the general estimates in column three. Although a great number of officer lists exist, the returns in themselves are incomplete and require careful study and comparative analysis. The figures in column four generally indicate the total number of officers whose names appear on various surviving lists of officers that were compiled over a period of several years, but

occasionally estimates have been made to fill in obvious gaps that remain in such data and to assign officers to specific units where membership is not clearly or accurately designated.¹⁶ The total cumulative membership of each unit can generally be calculated with fair accuracy through chronological comparison of returns for successive years and computation of the men lost through deaths, discharges, desertions, and "seconding." The totals in column five have been calculated directly from manuscript records, while column six is a final estimate of the cumulative number of officers and men who were members of each corps throughout the war. (See Table I, pp. 271-277.)

Of the approximately 21,000 men who saw service in the provincial corps during the War for Independence, a rather sizable number clearly cannot be labeled loyalists. Indeed, probably no more than 19,000 can be so classified if any meaningful definition is applied that evaluates the residence of the provincial troops before the outbreak of hostilities. For example, of the more than 1,700 men who were at one time members of the 2 battalions of the "Loyal Highland Emigrants," it appears that approximately 300 were recruited from North Carolina, 400 from the Mohawk valley, about 40 from Boston before the evacuation, and a handful of riflemen from frontier Virginia and Pennsylvania.¹⁷ Thus only about 750 of this group ought to be considered loyalists. The remainder were recruited in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and from among Scots in transit to America when the war began, who were subsequently intercepted and enlisted as provincials upon their arrival at New York, Boston, and Halifax. Similarly, Sir John Johnson's "Royal Regiment of New York" included a few hundred men enlisted from outside the

¹⁶ In 1904, William O. Raymond, editor of the papers of Edward Winslow, the muster master general of provincial forces, compiled a comprehensive list of officers from original muster rolls. As his list included 1,377 officers, exclusive of Johnson's "Royal Regiment of New York," and was admittedly incomplete, especially in regard to the corps recruited in Georgia and the Carolinas, there is a remarkably high correlation between the present estimate and Raymond's previous compilation. William O. Raymond, "Roll of Officers of the British American or Loyalist Corps," New Brunswick Historical Society, *Collections*, V (1904), 224-272.

¹⁷ Although it is impractical to cite every document upon which these figures are based, the following citations illustrate the diversity of the sources analyzed. "Letter-Book of Captain Alexander McDonald, of the Royal Highland Emigrants, 1775-1779," New-York Historical Society, *Collections*, XV (1882), 210, 224, 231-232, 267, 293-294, 301, 303, 310, 356. Thomas Gage to Lord Dartmouth, Sept. 20, 1775, Clarence E. Carter, ed., *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage with the Secretaries of State, 1763-1775* (New Haven, 1931), I, 415. "General report . . . of the Royal Regiment of Highland Emigrants," dated Dec. 20, 1775, and "Present State of the Royal Regiment of Highland Emigrants . . ." enclosed with Lord George Germain to Thomas Gage, June 26, 1776, Colonial Office Group, Class 5, Piece 93 [C.O. 5/93], Public Record Office, London.

areas in rebellion and from recent immigrants, or men who were absorbed from McAlpine's and Leake's Canadian corps when Johnson's second battalion was created in 1780. The "Loyal Nova Scotia Volunteers" and the "Royal Fencible Americans," though recruited heavily from among loyalist exiles fleeing to Nova Scotia and Canada, were in the main composed of men who were never residents of the thirteen colonies. And a significant proportion of the members of the "Independent Companies" and the "Royal Garrison Battalion" must for similar reasons be excluded from our totals of the loyalists, along with a sizable proportion of de Diemar's "Hussars" and Emmerick's "Chasseurs," who were recruited in the German states and transported to America.¹⁸

We may conclude, then, that about 19,000 loyalists formally took up arms in the service of the Crown to suppress the American rebellion.¹⁹ There remains, however, the crucial matter of determining what proportion of all adult male loyalists are represented in this figure. For the solution of this problem, Lorenzo Sabine's mid-nineteenth-century com-

¹⁸ I believe that from among those units cited above more than 2,100 must be subtracted from the total of 21,199 provincials in order to arrive at the number who can be classified accurately as loyalists in the Provincial Service. However, as I also believe that my original total of 21,199 errs on the conservative side, I have used the figure 19,000, an adjustment certainly within the limits of accuracy that can be expected with figures of this magnitude. In this context, it is useful to note that several provincial corps were authorized but failed when their officers were unable to enlist their assigned quotas. These include attempts by Abraham Cuyler, Edward Cole, and William Waddell in 1777 in New York, and by Robert Cunningham, Andrew Deveaux, and John Harrison in 1780 in the Carolinas. Although one might make a case for including the recruits of such units in any list of loyalists who enlisted in the cause of their king, I have concluded that for the present study it is proper not to do so.

¹⁹ Probably an additional 1000 Americans enlisted in the 2 battalions of Lord Charles Montagu's regiment for quite another purpose. Montagu, former governor of South Carolina, 1766-73, received permission in Nov. 1780 to recruit 500 men from the American prisoners in South Carolina for the defense of Jamaica and use against the Spanish in the Caribbean. Governor Dalling to Montagu, Nov. 17, 1780, British Headquarters' Papers, no. 3153. Nearly a year later Montagu was authorized to raise a second battalion of 5 companies of 100 men each, and he subsequently reported that it had been nearly completed. Montagu to General Carleton, May 12, 1783, *ibid.*, no. 7671. Just how many German-speaking colonists joined the British forces, but enlisted in the Hessian, rather than provincial regiments, is impossible to determine. The interesting career of Christopher Saur III is suggestive on this point, but I have found few clues to aid in solving this mystery. James O. Knauss, "Christopher Saur the Third," American Antiquarian Society, *Proceedings*, XLI (1931), 235-253; and Saur's memorial to the Royal Claims Commissioners in American Loyalists: Transcripts . . . of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists . . . 1783-1790, XLIX, 446-481, New York Public Library.

pilation of biographical data on some 6000 loyalists holds the greatest promise.²⁰ Although certain groups of the loyalists who fled the United States have been studied in considerable depth, and much data is available on the approximately 3000 loyalists who afterward submitted formal claims to the Royal Claims Commission for losses incurred during the war, neither the "exiles" nor the "claimants" sufficiently represent a cross section of the loyalists for determining what proportion of the whole number were in the Provincial Service.²¹ Sabine's collection is open to the same charge, of course, but it appears that both the diversity of his sources and the size of his sample contribute to its remarkable accuracy as an index to the military services rendered by the loyalists as a whole.²²

Careful tabulation of the data on the over 6000 loyalists for whom Sabine collected biographical information reveals that 895 men, or approximately 15 per cent, were in the Provincial Service. Thus if the approximately 19,000 loyalists who served in the provincial corps constituted about 15 per cent of the whole, the total number of adult male loyalists slightly exceeded 128,000. Finally, as the ratio of adult male loyalists to the whole number of persons in loyalist families was very near to 1:4,²³ we can calculate that the total number of Americans

²⁰ Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution, with an Historical Essay*, 2d ed. rev. (Boston, 1864). After pruning his collection of duplications and obvious errors arising from the misspelling of a few surnames, data on 6,025 loyalists were tabulated.

²¹ Esther Clark Wright, in an able study of *The Loyalists of New Brunswick* (Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1955), painstakingly compiled an impressive list of over 6000 exiles who settled in that province, but because the area was a central point of debarkation for disbanded provincial corps, her list is clearly not a random sample of the American loyalists. The records of the Royal Claims Commission have recently been analyzed carefully by Wallace Brown, *The King's Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants* (Providence, 1965), but they also concern a special group and are of limited value for the present study. Tables made by Claims Commissioner John Eardley-Wilmot show that of 1,724 claims examined in England and 1,657 examined in Nova Scotia, 733 (or 21.6%) were submitted by persons who "bore arms in the service." Certainly this represents a higher percentage than would be found among the loyalists as a whole. John Eardley-Wilmot, *Historical View of the Commission for Enquiring into the Losses, Services, and Claims, of the American Loyalists . . .* (London, 1815), 70-71, and appendix.

²² Although Sabine's group is not a true cross section of the loyalists when considered geographically, he has collected adequate data for determining the proportion of loyalists that saw duty in the provincial corps.

²³ This is a ratio I have reached after weighing much conflicting evidence from a variety of sources. "Modern statisticians hold that the ratio of men of military age to the whole population [during the 18th century] is 5 to 1." Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population before the Federal Census of 1790*

who may be classed as loyalists between 1775 and 1783 was very near 500,000.²⁴

Calculating this number as a percentage of the total American population, however, poses some additional problems. Because the military service of the loyalists was spread over a period of several years (early 1775 to late 1783), the 19,000 total clearly does not denote the number of loyalists who were active in the Provincial Service at any particular moment. Many who were in the ranks early in the war were dead long before 1783, and a significant proportion of the troops in the Provincial Service in 1782 were undoubtedly young boys in 1775. It is highly improbable that at any single moment during the war the total number of persons in loyalist families exceeded 450,000. As a percentage of the whole population, then, the cumulative figure of just over 500,000 must be compared with neither the population in 1775 (c. 2,507,000) nor in 1783 (c. 2,950,000), but with some larger figure that would be the sum of the persons alive in 1783 plus an additional number representing the net population increase for the period to be extrapolated from available figures on birth and death statistics. Hence, my final estimate is that the loyalists comprised about 16 per cent (513,000 out of 3,210,000) of the total population,²⁵ or 19.8 per cent of the white Americans.²⁶

(New York, 1932), xxiii. A 1:5 ratio is clearly too high for the present purpose, however. At the opposite extreme, Esther Wright found that in New Brunswick in 1784 "the Loyal Refugees total was nearly three times the number of men." Wright, *Loyalists of New Brunswick*, 167. Returns of 22,331 loyalists who migrated to Nova Scotia and Canada in 1783 (tabulated in groups of men, women, servants, and children under 10 and over 10), show that the ratio of men to the whole was 1:3.2 (6,823/22,331). Loyalist Transcripts, VII, 641-647. In all the documents that I have examined, I have found no important lists of loyalists showing a ratio of men to the total higher than 1:3.1 or lower than 1:4.7.

²⁴ My initial calculations, which were not rounded off, produced the rather arbitrary number 513,200, from my statistics showing 19,000 actual loyalists in provincial corps, a 895/6025 (14.8%) ratio of provincial troops to adult male loyalists, and a 1:4 ratio of adult male loyalists to the whole number represented in loyalist families. Because those calculations rest upon some rather tentative figures, several subjective decisions, and a bastard methodology, one can make no claim to such precision.

²⁵ It is now believed that the population of the colonies was about 2,507,000 in 1775, 2,780,000 in 1780, and 3,929,000 in 1790 when the first federal census was taken. Thus the population in 1783 was undoubtedly very close to 2,950,000. To produce the rate of growth suggested by the above figures, a net increase of births over deaths of 22 per 1000 annually is required, assuming a moderate net population decline from emigration. J. Potter's recent study of American population growth during the 18th century suggests that this probably meant a birth rate in the range of 45-50 per 1000 and a death rate of 23-28 per 1000. If the American birth rate did

The uncertain statistical foundation upon which these conclusions are based limit building the present structure beyond this point. Further precision can be purchased only at the cost of more carefully refined, and proportionately meaningless, definitions. At best, all such figures have limited meaning, for efforts to classify persons in a revolution run afoul of insuperable problems of definition. The War for American Independence, like most wars, simply does not conform to common assumptions. Too large an event for most persons to comprehend in its entirety, the Revolution was often perceived in terms of immediate, commonplace local issues. Relatively few Americans experienced it directly for any prolonged period. For many more, the issue of their allegiance was never perceived as a matter upon which they might exercise some meaningful choice.²⁷ It is enough, perhaps, that we know more precisely how many Americans the British formally employed in suppressing the rebellion and what proportion of the whole number of loyalists found opportunities to take up arms as regular soldiers in the cause of their king.

indeed fall within that range, the number of Americans alive during the period 1775-83 was about 3,210,000, or the 1783 population of 2,950,000 plus the 260,000 persons buried during that interval (discounting the infant mortality rate). Potter, "Growth of Population in America," in Glass and Eversley, eds., *Population in History*, 644-646; Greene and Harrington, *American Population before 1790*; and U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics*, 756.

²⁸ Since the Negro population in 1790 was 757,000 and probably about 575,000 in 1780, the percentage of loyalists to white Americans should be calculated from a base of approximately 2,590,000 ($513,000/2,590,000 = 19.81\%$), *ibid.*

²⁷ Surprisingly enough, historians have been little concerned about persons who changed their allegiance during the war. For a suggestive, though very limited, study of the problem, see C. Ashley Ellefson, "Loyalists and Patriots in Georgia during the American Revolution," *Historian*, XXIV (1962), 347-356.

TABLE I
THE AMERICAN LOYALIST OR PROVINCIAL CORPS OF THE BRITISH ARMY, 1775-1783

Unit (Commander)	Maximum strength (Known)	Dead, discharged, deserted (Known)	Attrition rate (Estimated)	Officers (Known)	Cumulative total (Known)	Cumulative total (Estimated)
American Legion (B. Gen. Benedict Arnold)	201	161	Heavy	23	407	415
Armed Boatmen (Capt. William Luce)	75	14	(?)	11	90	100
Black Pioneers ^a (Capt. Donald McPherson)	(68)	(12)	(?)	(6)	(80)	(90) ^b
British Legion ^c (Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton)	500	43 ^d	Moderate to heavy	72	614	773
Bucks County Volunteers (Capt. Thomas Sandford)	40	—	(?)	5	45	55

^a Because most of the Negroes enlisted in this corps cannot properly be classified as loyalists, I have omitted the "Black Pioneers" from my overall calculations.

^b See also Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1961), 146-149.

^c After the reform of the Provincial Service in 1779 when the British government began studying proposals to place several provincial regiments on the regular Establishment, five corps (the "Queen's Rangers," "Volunteers of Ireland," "New York Volunteers," "British Legion," and "King's American Regiment") were designated "American Regiments." The British Legion was designated the "4th American Regiment."

^d This return of Feb. 1779 was taken before the southern campaign, in which the legion saw heavy action, and it therefore represents but a small percentage of total casualties and desertions suffered during the entire war. Ward Chipman, "Minutes of return," Feb. 1779, Chipman Papers, nos. 15223, 15236, Huntington Lib.

TABLE I (Cont'd)

Unit (Commander)	Maximum strength (Known)	Dead, discharged, deserted (Known)	Attrition rate (Estimated)	Officers (Known)	Cumulative total (Known)	Cumulative total (Estimated)
DeLancey's Brigade (B. Gen. Oliver De Lancy)						
1st Bn. (Lt. Col. John Cruger)	396	58	Moderate to heavy	37 ^e	454	584
2d Bn. (Col. George Brewerton)	412	37	Moderate	38	449	618
3d Bn. (Col. Gabriel Ludlow)	410	15	Moderate to light	34	425	550
Emmerick's Chasseurs (Lt. Col. Andreas Emmerick)	215	11	(?)	28	237	250
Florida Rangers ^f (Lt. Col. Thomas Browne)	547	300	Heavy	50	847	860
Georgia Loyalists (Major James Wright)	170	—	(?)	8	—	175

^e As De Lancy's officers were sometimes reassigned from one battalion to another, it is impossible to establish the precise cumulative strength of each individual battalion.

^f Frequently appears on provincial returns as "King's Rangers," but not to be confused with the "King's Rangers" commanded by Robert Rogers, a corps made up principally of New Englanders and generally stationed in Nova Scotia. Originally raised as the "East Florida Rangers" with loyalist refugees from Georgia and the Carolinas, the corps was later frequently referred to as the "Carolina Rangers." Note also the existence of the "King's Orange Rangers," a corps drawn principally from New York and New Jersey and commanded by Lt. Col. John Bayard.

^g The bulk of the officers for the "Georgia Volunteers" was drawn from other units, including the "South Carolina Royalists," "Queen's Rangers," and "New York Volunteers."

Guides and Pioneers ^a (Major Simon Frazer)	199	9	Moderate	34	238	250
Hussars (Capt. Frederick de Diemar)	73	—	—	4	77	80
Independent Companies ⁱ (Major Timothy Hierlyhy)	212	—	(?)	16	275	300
King's American Dragoons (Lt. Col. Benjamin Thompson)	290	34	Moderate	39	324	350
King's American Regiment ⁱ (Col. Edmund Fanning)	588	208	Heavy	49	740	833
King's Orange Rangers (Lt. Col. John Bayard)	362	227	Heavy	47	571	600
King's Rangers [*] (Lt. Col. Robert Rogers)	144	84	Moderate	17	236	250
King's Royal Regt. of N. Y. ¹ (Col. John Johnson)	1070	137	Moderate	70	1250	1290

^a The "Guides and Pioneers," under the immediate command of Major Simon Frazer, was attached to the "Loyal American Regiment" commanded by Col. Beverly Robinson.

ⁱ Raised principally in Nova Scotia and on the islands of Newfoundland and St. Johns. Undoubtedly a large number enlisted into the "Independent Companies" were loyalists who had fled the rebellious New England colonies earlier in the war. See British Headquarters' Papers, nos. 1329, 2168, 3060, 3654, 9905, 10436.

¹ Or "5th American Regiment."

^{*} See note f above.

¹ Johnson's "Royal Greens," as the corps was familiarly known, was stationed in Canada and was not carried on the rolls of the British commander at New York. After July 1780, it consisted of two battalions. Returns for Johnson's corps which survive in the Haldimand Papers are conveniently summarized in E. A. Cruikshank, "The King's Royal Regiment of New York," Ontario Historical Society, *Papers and Records*, XXVII (1931), 239, 256, 287, 294, 319.

TABLE I (Cont'd)

Unit (Commander)	Maximum strength (Known)	Dead, discharged, (Known)	Attrition rate (Estimated)	Officers (Known)	Cumulative total (Known)	Cumulative total (Estimated)
Loyal American Regiment (Col. Beverly Robinson)	392	99	Moderate	62	604	693
Loyal Foresters (Col. John Connolly)	66	—	(?)	5	71	80
Loyal Highland Emigrants ^a (Lt. Col. Allan Maclean)	—	—	—	—	—	—
1st Bn. (Lt. Col. Allan Maclean) ^a	609	228	Moderate	34	891	950
2d Bn. (Maj. John Small)	615	46	Moderate	35	661	775
Loyal New Englanders (Lt. Col. George Wightman)	112	30	Moderate	16	161	175
Loyal Nova Scotia Volunteers (Gov. Legge; Col. John Parr)	486	262	Heavy	39	752	775
Maryland Loyalists ^b (Lt. Col. James Chalmers)	355	57	Heavy	45	408	425

^a Placed on the regular Establishment as the 84th Regiment in Jan. 1779, and thereafter generally not carried on the provincial returns.

^b As Maclean from time to time "discharged" an unusually large number of men who were unfit for duty, especially in June 1778 and in Dec. 1779, the first battalion of "Highland Emigrants" had a cumulative strength considerably larger than normal. War Office Group, Class 17, Pieces 1572-1575 [W. O. 17/1572-1575], Public Record Office, London.

^c Because the "Maryland" and "Pennsylvania Loyalists" were shipped to West Florida in 1779 to defend Pensacola from Spanish attack, their commanding officers were unable to continue recruiting to maintain the corps, and their strength declined steadily leaving the units mere skele-

New Jersey Volunteers (B. Gen. Cortland Skinner)						
1st Bn. (Lt. Col. Joseph Barton)	500	332 ^p	Heavy	52	864 ^p	887
2d Bn. (Lt. Col. John Morris)	350	—	(?)	31	521	718
3d Bn. (Lt. Col. Isaac Allen)	481	318 ^p	Heavy	42	822 ^p	845
4th Bn. (Lt. Col. Abraham Van Buskirk)	304	27	(?)	38	—	a
5th Bn.	209	—	—	} 17	—	a
6th Bn.	128	—	—		—	a
New York Volunteers ^r (Lt. Col. George Turnbull)	364	21	Moderate	52	455	475
North Carolina Dragoons (Capt. Gilles)	54	21	Heavy	5	75	80
North Carolina Highlanders (Gov. Josiah Martin)	86	—	—	7	90	110

tons at the end of the war. The "Pennsylvania Loyalists" suffered heavy casualties in the defense of Pensacola (of the 60 soldiers killed, 45 were Pennsylvanians), and subsequently both units were combined, probably in violation of commitments generally made to commanders of Provincial corps.

^p The most complete figures for any provincial corps that I have been able to locate are for the first and third battalions of the "New Jersey Volunteers." A return of May 1, 1782, contains the following comprehensive data: 1st Bn.—Total effectives, 500; dead, 101; deserted, 205; discharged, 26. 3rd Bn.—Total effectives, 481; dead, 133; deserted, 147; discharged, 38. British Headquarters' Papers, no. 10288.

^a The various battalions of the "New Jersey Volunteers" were combined and recombined on several different occasions, leaving during the latter part of the war only three battalions. Although very complete data are available for the first and third battalions, my cumulative total for the second is merely an estimate of the total number that served in the unit at any time regardless of which battalion they originally joined.

^r Or "3rd American Regiment."

TABLE I (Cont'd)

Unit (Commander)	Maximum strength (Known)	Dead, deserted (Known)	Attrition rate (Estimated)	Officers (Known)	Cumulative total (Known)	Cumulative total (Estimated)
North Carolina Volunteers (Lt. Col. John Hamilton)	471	35	Moderate	44	503	660
Pennsylvania Loyalists ^a (Lt. Col. William Allen)	188	61	Heavy	27	190	200
Prince of Wales Am. Volunteers (B. Gen. Montfort Browne)	499	33	Light	57	610	610 [†]
Queen's Rangers ^a (Lt. Col. John G. Simcoe)	616	—	Heavy	83	711	937 [‡]
Roman Catholic Volunteers (Lt. Col. Alfred Clifton)	213	13	—	18	230	240

^a See note o above.

[†] Because the "Prince of Wales Volunteers" was stationed successively in Rhode Island and the Bahamas, the unit suffered few casualties and had a low desertion rate. On the other hand, Gen. Browne was generally unable to recruit after leaving the mainland, and the corps steadily declined in strength throughout the war. A muster certificate stating the precise number of enlisted men recruited during the war survives in the Muster of Apr. 13, 1783, British Headquarters' Papers, no. 7414.

[‡] Or "1st American Regiment."

[‡] Simcoe's "Rangers" was considered one of the most dependable provincial corps, saw considerable action over an extended period of time, and experienced a high personnel turnover rate. Nevertheless, Simcoe never experienced difficulty in keeping his corps up to strength. The "Queen's Rangers" probably had a higher percentage of recent immigrants than most units, for Simcoe obtained permission to recruit prisoners and "old countrymen." John Graves Simcoe, *Simcoe's Military Journal* (New York, 1844), 18-19.

Royal American Reformees ^w (Lt. Col. Rudolphus Ritzema)	112	6	—	11	115	120
Royal Fencible Americans (Lt. Col. Joseph Goreham)	289	106	Heavy	26	413	462
Royal Garrison Battalion (Lt. Col. Robert Donkin)	769	—	Light	45	794	800
Saint Johns Volunteers (Capt. Philips Callbeck)	—	—	—	—	—	z
South Carolina Royalists (Lt. Col. Alexander Innes)	452	39	Moderate	69	547	660
Volunteers of Ireland ^y (Lord Rawdon)	632	43	Moderate to heavy	46	679	871
Wentworth's Volunteers (Gov. John Wentworth)	43	—	—	3	—	43
West Florida Royal Foresters (Capt. Adam Chrystie)	41	17	Heavy	3	59	75
West Jersey Volunteers ^z (Major John Van Dyke)	184	10	—	17	194	200
				1503		21199

^w The designation "Reformees" derives from Ritzema's original proposal to recruit his corps from rebel deserters, which of course led the British to place little reliance upon the unit.

^z Included in the figures for the "Independent Companies" under Major Hicrlyhy.

^y Or "2nd American Regiment."

^z Many members of the "West Jersey Volunteers" undoubtedly were absorbed into one of Skinner's battalions after Sept. 1778 when the unit was "reduced" and its officers were placed on half pay.