The Stoppages Mutiny of 1763

by Paul E. Kopperman

In May 1763, the lords commissioners of the treasury ordered that British soldiers in America thenceforth pay four pence — one-half of their wages — for each daily ration. This decision reversed the policy of providing provisions gratis, a practice that had been followed at least since the onset of the French and Indian War. The consequence of the commissioners' directive was widespread mutiny. Both their decision and the dissension that followed illustrate the manner in which army policy was set and implemented during the eighteenth century.

The commissioners' resolution was not capricious, nor did it mark an initiative that was solely civilian in origin. Indeed, the commander-in-chief in North America, Sir Jeffery Amherst, had in February 1762 recommended this course of action. Prior to this, the commissioners had made several recommendations to him for saving on food contracts, and had also suggested that when troops were given fresh meat, instead of salt, they be stopped [charged — Editor] for the difference. Amherst, writing to James West, secretary of the treasury, advised against the implementation of this stoppage proposal while the war continued. He feared that "it would occasion great murmurings among the Troops, and be of hurt to the Service," but he added that when peace came and food supplies were sufficient "that Provisions [might] be bought at a moderate rate," the soldiers could be expected "to pay for Such portion as [would] be Judged proper." In the process, the crown would "be Eased of part of the Expence of Victual-ling the Troops." ¹

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¹ Public Record Office (Kew), WO 34[Amherst Papers]/74/82. Amherst was concerned by the problem of economy; note John Shy, Toward Lexington. The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution (Princeton, 1965), 110. While Amherst saw cost-cutting as a primary consideration, the first British commander-in-chief in North America, General Edward Braddock, appears to have had more concern for the impact of economies on the soldier. In April 1755, Braddock ordered that two American regiments, which were disgruntled at having to pay for rations, there-
Amherst was not the only high-ranking officer to recommend that the troops be forced to pay for their provisions. In May 1758, even while the outcome of the war was in doubt, General James Wolfe, in a letter to a superior, complained about the policy of distributing rations without charge. While conceding that provisions were more expensive in America than they were in Europe, he argued that soldiers could afford two pence per diem during war time, three pence in peace. He, like Amherst, wrote of the saving that would come in the wake of this additional stoppage, and he added that it was dangerous for the men to have too much spending money, since they used it to buy liquor — and drunkenness, as he noted, seriously undermined discipline.²

Having reached their decision, the commissioners directed Welbore Ellis, the secretary at war, to order its implementation. Ellis complied on May 20, 1763. Meanwhile, on May 11 Charles Jenkinson, as the newly appointed secretary of the treasury, wrote to inform Amherst of the new plan on stoppages, adding that the commissioners were pleased with his efforts in economy. Amherst received the order in late July, and, although he did not question the decision to stop for rations — he had, after all, favored precisely this — he complained to Jenkinson that four pence was “rather too great, considering the high price the Soldiers are obliged to pay for their Necessaries &ca in this Country.” Nevertheless, he reported that he had already ordered the stoppage at several garrisons, and would do so at the rest as soon as possible.³

Despite his reservations, Amherst did indeed try to implement the stoppages. On August 1, he notified General Thomas Gage, the governor of Montreal, of the new directive. He may have anticipated trouble, for in that letter he attempted to put the best face on the new policy: “Altho’ I could have Wished the Stoppage had not been so great at first, I must Own, on Considering Several Advantages a

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² Wolfe to Lord George Sackville, May 24, 1758; Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Report on the Manuscripts of Mrs. Stopford-Sackville, II, 260-61; also printed in Beckles Willson, The Life and Letters of James Wolfe (London, 1909), 367-68. Sackville (later Germain) was well known as a critic of waste in the military.

Soldier may now have in this Country, by Cultivating some Ground where he may happen to be Quartered, or providing himself with Fish, Game, &ca, the Hardship Does not Appear so great as at first View.” He added that an industrious soldier could provide himself with enough food to cut his need for rations in half. In any case, he argued, the new policy was fair, being the same that had obtained during the previous peace.

By the close of August, Amherst had conveyed the order to most or all of the officers who commanded major garrisons. He consistently repeated the two palliatives that he had mentioned to Gage: that the policy merely marked a return to the practice that had existed in America prior to the war; that soldiers could avoid much of the expense by providing themselves with food through gardening, hunting, and fishing. He undoubtedly expected commanding officers to make these points to their men in turn, thereby softening the blow.

If Amherst thought that his arguments would placate the troops, he was mistaken. By mid-August, the new policy was already causing mutinous behavior. The first report of trouble came from Captain Stephen Gualy, at St. John’s, on August 17. Gualy claimed that after the orders had been read, “most indecent Discourses or rather worse were in the mouth of every Soldier behind my Back, Such of for ever Blessing the memory of King George the Second, with comparisons that could not fail to Bring many to the gallows.” In this case, open mutiny was forestalled when Governor Thomas Graves ordered that the policy of dispensing rations gratis would continue until the next spring. During the course of his report, Gualy made clear that he sympathized with the troops: “The Soldiers here have no Choice; having neither marketts, nor Bakers, to sell Bread to them in which case they are forced to take the Provisions from the King; and Remain with two pence a day to Pay for the pay master and Surgeon, Their Shaving and washing, the Remainder is not certainly Sufficient to keep them in Shoes.”

Soon after cancelling the order at St. John’s, Graves wrote to Major

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4 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 6.
5 CL, Amherst Papers, vols. 1-2: Amherst to Major Otho Hamilton, Aug. 3; Amherst to the officer commanding the regiments in Florida, Aug. 23; Amherst to the officer commanding at Mobile, Aug. 23. On the basis of Ellis’ directive, Amherst also ordered that officers be limited to one ration, that soldiers’ wives and other noncombatants associated with the army no longer be provisioned, and that the “compassionate list” (rations for the needy) be abolished.
6 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 3.
Otho Hamilton, lieutenant-governor of Newfoundland and commander of the 40th Foot, which was then at Placentia. Graves explained that the stoppage would place a heavy burden on the troops, and he ordered Hamilton to suspend its implementation within his regiment. Hamilton complied; indeed, he did not even read Amherst's order to the men. Yet, he knew that they were aware of Graves' decision and that they were planning resistance, should an attempt be made to implement the new policy. As he wrote to Amherst, on August 28, "the proposal at St Johns caused a universal murmur for wch reason I said nothing about it, as I apprehended it might cause a mutiny." 7 Hamilton and his regiment were soon to move on to Halifax, and there become the center of opposition to the stoppage plan.

The trouble at St. John's established a pattern — resistance to the new policy was to be focused in Canada and at the outposts that were in its orbit. To the south, overt mutiny was uncommon, though desertion sometimes resulted from the stoppages. Still, officers were apprehensive. On September 27, Captain James Robertson reported to Colonel Henry Bouquet that at Fort Ligonier "the General's Orders were red to the Garrison, who behaved very well on this Occasion, tho' I was a little afraid of the Contrary." 8 Probably the main reason for this lack of vigorous response was that in the Ohio Valley and elsewhere on the frontier, the new policy was only briefly implemented, if at all. Amherst, recognizing the crisis that Pontiac's War presented in the region, postponed full implementation until the conclusion of that conflict.9

In Canada, however, virtually every garrison experienced turmoil. According to a report in the Annual Register, shortly after the troops at Quebec had been read Amherst's order on September 18, "they assembled to a man, but without arms, and paraded before the governor's house." The soldiers later took up arms, and there was some violence, but within a few days the governor, General James Murray,

7 WO 34/16/183.
8 British Library (hereafter, "BL"), Bouquet Papers, Additional Mss. 21, 649, f. 358.
9 Thomas Mante, who served as an officer in America, claimed that the original order had a devastating impact on morale and discipline and that "having taken upon him to represent [the troops'] inability to comply with this new regulation, [Amherst] ordered provisions to be issued, as usual, for the ensuing campaign": The History of the Late War in North America and the Islands of the West Indies (London, 1772), 501. Mante's reference is particularly to the region that was central to the Indian war. Implementation of the order was certainly postponed at Fort Pitt and Detroit: Bouquet to Amherst, Sept. 30, 1763, WO 34/40/348.
was able to reduce them to obedience by appealing to their loyalty. If this report is accurate, even at the worst of the trouble the troops proclaimed fealty for their officers. For their part, the officers "agreed that mild methods should be taken" to quell the mutiny.\textsuperscript{10} Reports from Quebec, some of them erroneous, helped to stir trouble at Montreal. Gage informed Amherst in a September 23 letter that, "The Soldiers in this Government were very quiet for three weeks after the Order was published, till hearing of the Mutiny at Quebec, & it being also reported that their Demands were complied with, They began to shew Signs of an intended Revolt." Gage claimed that the plans for mutiny were "perceived" by vigilant officers and that the scheme fell through. The ringleaders deserted, assemblies were banned, and would-be mutineers were detained. Now, as word was spreading that the mutiny at Quebec had not in fact succeeded, there were "no murmurs, or any Signs of Tumult" at Montreal.\textsuperscript{11}

While Murray and his fellow officers were moderate in their treatment of the mutineers at Quebec — fears of exacerbating the situation may have encouraged leniency — it does not appear that they made any concessions to the troops, or in any way championed their cause. For the most part, however, commanding officers in or near Canada seem to have felt that the new stoppages represented a hardship for their men. Guay was certainly of this opinion. So was Captain William Dunbar, the commander of Fort William Augustus, who on September 11 reported to Amherst that he had "publish'd that Severe Order with respect to the Stopages for Provisions, how the poor men will be provided in Necessarys, pay for their washing &c is more than I can conceive."\textsuperscript{12} Even Major John Beckwith, a harsh disciplinarian, sympathized with his troops in this case. On September 29, he reported to Amherst that at Crown Point "the men came in a body and Complained of the grievance they laboured under in being Stopp'd for their provisions" and added that he found the complaints of the soldiers "reasonable."\textsuperscript{13} And most important, given his rank and

\textsuperscript{10} Annual Register, 1763, 159-60. The reporter for the Register clearly sympathized with the soldiers, and he may have minimized the violence. By contrast, on Sept. 21, Murray wrote to Gage that the mutiny had been "so general, so Violent, and so sudden": CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 2.
\textsuperscript{11} WO 34/5/322. Note also Capt. Daniel Claus to Johnson, Sept. 24, The Papers of Sir William Johnson, IV (Albany, 1925), 207.
\textsuperscript{12} CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 2.
\textsuperscript{13} CL, Gage Papers (American Series) (note: in this paper, all references to the Gage Papers are to the American Series), vol. 9. Beckwith reported that the men at Crown Point were upset not only by the new stoppages, but also by the elimination of extra pay for work.
status, Gage complained to Amherst, on August 29, "Four Pence stirling pr Ration is a large Stoppage, few Soldiers in the Inhabited Country will take from the Magazine, those at the Forts must. They will have very little left for Necessaries. . . . I wish this Matter is not stretched beyond what it will bear, half the Sum might have done." 14

Even more vocal support came from the officers at Halifax. A Council of War was convened there on September 3 by Colonel William Forster, commander of the garrison. The result of its deliberations was a plea to Amherst. The officers began by stating that they had explained the directive on stoppages to four companies that were due for redeployment,

and every Argument used to reconcile this Measure to them; Nevertheless, they with one Consent, threw down their Arms and Accoutrements, and with one voice declared, That it was Impossible "for them to Serve in this Country upon these Terms, the small remainder of Pay not being Sufficient to afford them Clean Linnen, far less the Supply of Necessaries required in this Cold Climate; and desired before they went further, that they might be continued in the same footing, as they had always been during the War; adding that in that Event they were ready to do their Duty like good and obedient Soldiers."

Forster had then provided the members of his council with minutes from two earlier councils: one that had met on August 3, 1749, the other on September 1, 1752. These minutes revealed that, contrary to Amherst's belief, British troops in Canada had received free rations long before the onset of the French and Indian War, for they dealt with initiatives to alter this policy. Both initiatives had been rejected by the earlier councils, and the officers who met on September 3 requested that Amherst do the same in this case. If the new policy were implemented, they argued, no soldier serving in Canada could manage, for "the small remainder [would be] insufficient to provide him with clean Linnen, Spruce Beer and the various necessaries annually required to protect him against the inclemency of the Winter Season." 15

A few commanding officers — perhaps motivated in part by a desire to impress their commander-in-chief — were ready to enforce the stoppages program in its full rigor, and to smash even incipient disidence. It was on September 26 that Lieutenant-Colonel James Robertson, the new commander of East Florida, reported to Amherst that "The new regulations were not well received by the Soldiers, on tuesday morning Six of them deserted, four carryd off their arms." Unlike

14 WO 34/5/313.
15 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 2.
the officers at Halifax, however, Robertson expressed no sympathy for the complaints of the troops. Seconding Amherst’s contention that soldiers could do more to feed themselves, he claimed that “this place tho capable of producing every thing affords nothing at present but fish.” For the deserters, he advocated harsh treatment. All six had been captured, by Spanish dragoons, and a court-martial had sentenced four to death, two to one thousand lashes. The latter sentences, he informed Amherst, had already been carried out. He now sought the commander-in-chief’s confirmation of the death sentences. Anticipating approval, Robertson explained how he wanted to deal with the remaining deserters: “The other four equally undergo the fear but one alone suffers the pain of death; four partys are prepared to shoot them, four Coffins are made, they are all to kneel in a row blind-folded but when one party fires, the others will be order’d to recover their arms, and the Regiment will be informed that after this example and notice, certain death will be the consequence of desertion.” Robertson concluded by stating that he had originally planned to execute all four, but that the intervention of their regimental commander, of the court-martial, and of the Spanish governor had led him “to be humanely wrong, rather than rigidly right.”

But while some officers were inflexible and harsh, others caved in before the mutineers. On September 19, Lieutenant-Colonel John Tulleken informed Amherst that he and his subordinates had been unable to quiet their men or to persuade them to resume their duties, and that rather than see the service suffer he had “been forced to comply, in letting them have their pay & provisions till such time as I can hear from your Excellency what I am further to do.”

Amherst’s initial response to the spreading mutiny was to dig in. As late as September 22, in a circular that went out to various officers, he restated the new policy and tried again to justify it. But with so few commanding officers in Canada willing or able to stand up to the mutineers, he changed tack. By October 2, he had responded to Forster. He stated emphatically that the new policy derived from an initiative of the lords commissioners, not his own — an assertion that was technically correct, but ignored his earlier advocacy of stoppages. The reports of trouble at Halifax were, he claimed, the first such that

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16 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 1.
17 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 2.
18 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 2. This set of orders may have been intended primarily for officers who had not yet received the directive on stoppages, or at least not Amherst’s positive interpretation of it.
he had received. Condemning as unsoldierly the men who had thrown down their arms, he added that if they had any grievances they should represent them to the king. He then promised that he would himself forward to England the minutes of the council of war that Forster had convened on September 3, and he specified that while all of the men at Halifax were to be informed of the proposed policy on stoppages, the new plan would not commence until the king’s pleasure was known.  

Although Amherst did not say as much in his letter, he was at that point probably planning to suspend implementation throughout the army under his command. He knew that the mutiny was not confined to Halifax, and he almost certainly realized that to allow a suspension only there would further antagonize the soldiers elsewhere. Nevertheless, on October 11, he changed course again. He sent out at least four sets of orders that day. To the officers commanding in Florida and Louisiana, he wrote, “On a Consideration that the Stoppages of Four Pence Ordered to be made from the Pay of the Troops, was rather more than the Soldier could Bear in the Country at present, I have taken upon me, without waiting for an answer from Home, to reduce the Stoppage to Two Pence Half Penny.” Furthermore, perhaps with Robertson’s letter in mind, he suspended all court-martial sentences until he could review them, and he revoked his warrant to commanding officers to assemble general courts-martial, expressing the hope that “there will be no more Occasion for Immediate Example to prevent Mutiny or Desertion.”  

Also on that day, Amherst communicated his new order to Forster and to Tulleken. To Forster, his tone was petulant, for he reiterated his belief that the men could do much to supply themselves with food, thus reducing their reliance on rations, and he added, “they have no Reason to complain of any Hardship being put upon them by obliging them to Pay in part for their Provisions it being Customary in all Places where Soldiers are Quartered in times of Peace for them to Subsist themselves.” While writing angrily to Forster, he was solicitous in responding to Tulleken’s letter of September 19: “I am sorry to Find the Soldiers of your Garrison followed the Example of those at Halifax; . . . your Complying with their request, that the Service might not suffer, was rightly judged.”  

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19 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 2.  
20 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 1.  
21 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 2.  
22 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 2.
to Forster and to Tulleken suggests that he considered the garrison at Halifax, officers and men alike, to be the primary impediments to the implementation of the new stoppages.

While the order of October 11 was somewhat conciliatory, it was still unacceptable to many soldiers. It also marked a harder line than had the decision that Amherst had communicated to Forster on October 2, for while it did reduce the stoppage, the earlier plan had at least temporarily delayed implementation of the new policy altogether. Why Amherst decided to effect immediately a stoppage for provisions, albeit a smaller one than the lords commissioners had directed, must be left to conjecture. However, as has been noted, he had earlier advocated a stoppage, and appears to have been upset by the amount stipulated by the treasury, rather than by the plan itself. The spreading mutiny in all probability likewise prompted his course of action. Certainly, he had not indicated earlier that he was planning a compromise, and was doing so now only as reports of turmoil and desertion came in daily. Particularly few Canadian commanding officers seemed willing and able to quell the mutiny. Why, on the other hand, did he not postpone implementation entirely, as he had indicated he would in his letter to Forster? Presumably he felt that the lesser stoppage would be acceptable to officers and men alike. In addition, he may well have feared that if he allowed the policy to be suspended, his superiors would see him as weak — or that the soldiers would and might make further demands.

Whatever his reasoning, the successive orders brought quite different results. On October 20, Hamilton, who was now at Halifax and temporarily in command of the garrison (Forster having departed), wrote Amherst that despite the earlier unrest, "I have now the pleasure to acquaint You that having intimated to [the troops] in obedience to Your Orders, that the Stoppages proposed, are not to commence untill His Majestys pleasure is further known; it has given them the highest Satisfaction." 23

Within two weeks, however, feedback began to come through on Amherst's order of October 11. On November 11, Tulleken informed Amherst that despite his efforts to persuade the troops to accept the new orders, "they will not hear me, they Say they enlisted for Pay and Provisions, and if they cant have both they will serve no longer, and to a man in the most Seditious Manner demand to be discharged. I have been Forced to Comply." 24 The troops at Halifax, lulled by

23 CL, Amherst Papers, vol. 2.
Amherst’s order of October 2, became disorderly in the wake of hearing his new directive. Particularly mutinous were the men of the 40th Foot, and a detachment of artillerymen seems also to have been aroused.\textsuperscript{25} By way of remedy, Gage, who had succeeded Amherst on November 16, could suggest only that the officers at Halifax plead for higher wages for the garrison staff, so as to offset the charge for provisions.\textsuperscript{26} However, the officers in command of the garrison chose instead not to implement the new stoppages. Their rationale may have been the order of October 2, and they furthermore believed, or claimed to believe, that troops at other outposts were not being stopped. There was indeed some confusion in implementing the stoppages policy, and the fact that Amherst had issued several conflicting orders probably played a part in muddying the waters. It also appears that the orders did not reach some frontier garrisons for six months or more after they had been issued. As late as March 29, 1764, Gage still felt the need to inform Major James Loftus, commander at Fort Chartres, that stoppages for rations had been reduced from four to two and one-half pence.\textsuperscript{27}

Despite the confusion, by the beginning of 1764 most soldiers, with the exception of those at Halifax, were being forced to pay for rations. But as word spread among the troops that the men at Halifax were not being stopped, mutiny again increased. Gage was informed on February 13 that the men of the 45th Foot, stationed at Louisbourg, had recently learned of the policy at Halifax, and that consequently they had the day before marched on Tulleken’s quarters, demanding that they be granted the same exemption. His chief subordinate, Major William Walters, had assaulted several mutineers and had in turn been attacked by the troops, being saved only through the intervention of other officers. This violence had caused Tulleken to give in to the demands of the mutineers: “Finding that my endeavoring to prevail with His Majestys Commands would be to no purpose, I have been obliged to allow them their Pay and Provisions as formerly.”\textsuperscript{28}

Tulleken’s report apparently caused Gage to conclude that if the troops at Halifax were not quickly put under stoppages, the mutiny would spread, ultimately endangering further implementation of the policy. His experience in Montreal the previous year, when unrest had been fed by reports that the mutiny at Quebec had succeeded, may

\textsuperscript{25} Hamilton to Gage, Dec. 31, 1763: CL, Gage Papers, vol. 11.
\textsuperscript{27} CL, Gage Papers, vol. 16.
\textsuperscript{28} CL, Gage Papers, vol. 14.
have added to his concern. In his February 23 report to Hamilton, he wrote, “As all the Troops even to those in Florida, are now under Stoppages for their Provisions; I hope you will by this Time have convinced the 40th. Regt: of their Error, & brought them to a Sense of their Duty.” 29 For his part, Hamilton, in letters of January 28 and March 14, cited the high market prices that troops faced in Nova Scotia, and generally bemoaned their situation.10

On March 25 Gage responded to Hamilton. He rejected as irrelevant the precedents that Forster had cited, and denied that provisions in Canada were either so scarce or so dear that the policy should not be implemented there. Claiming that the troops in the Illinois country were purchasing necessaries at prices more than half again those being charged in Nova Scotia, he added that they had “proved themselves Faithfull and Obedient Subjects and Soldiers, without flying in the face of Authority, and Rebelling against the Orders of their King.” Gage noted the mutiny of the 45th at Louisbourg, blaming it, as Tulleken had, on the failure of the high command at Halifax to effect stoppages. He concluded, “Two Regiments [i.e., the 40th and the Artillery] will never be Suffered to give such a pernicious Example of Mutiny & Sedition to His Army; . . . unless they Shew a proper Concern for their past Conduct, & Assurances of a Behaviour hereafter more becoming Dutyful Subjects, & Obedient Soldiers; Those Corps may depend upon it that they will Soon feel the Heavy Weight of His Majesty’s Displeasure.” 31

Hamilton was clearly reluctant to comply. Claiming that he had rebuked the mutinous troops of the 40th and the Artillery, he reported, “They behaved with much seeming moderation but persisted in their former Resolution; arguing, . . . that it was impossible for them to subsist and do their duty, if their Pay or provisions should be subjected to any Diminution.” According to Hamilton, when he had warned of “the bad consequences their Obstinacy might be attended with,” the men had simply repeated their position. 32

Hamilton was, of course, writing before Gage’s letter of March 25 arrived. That piece, peremptory and inflexible, appears to have put an

30 CL, Gage Papers, vols. 13, 15. In his letter of Jan. 28, Hamilton also noted that the 40th, being undermanned, had been filled out by drafts from the 77th and the Royal Americans, and that the draftees were disgruntled and difficult to handle. The new stoppages may therefore have been only one reason for the mutinous behavior of the regiment.
31 CL, Gage Papers, vol. 15.
32 CL, Gage Papers, vol. 16.
end to attempts by officers to challenge the new policy. Indeed, apparently by the close of spring 1764, all British troops were under stoppages. Some men resisted to the last, however. In a May 16 letter from Louisbourg, Walters told Gage, "I have the Pleasure to inform You that the Companies here have at length Submitted to the Kings order respecting the Stoppages, Excepting four men who persisted in their Obstinacy with the highest insolence and are ordered on board a Sloop of War bound to Halifax, in order to be sent to New York." 33

Once established, the policy of requiring two and one-half pence per ration continued throughout the period of peace. The stoppages further reduced the soldiers' poor standard of living. Many officers were sympathetic, and a few of them at least, true to their code of paternalism, provided relief from their own pockets. But the generosity of some officers was not enough. On February 28, 1764, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Elliott, commander at Albany, informed Gage, "the Stoppages the Soldiers are now under for their provisions will make it Difficult to the Capts: to provide for their men such Necessaries as must be absolutely Necessary for them to have." 34 Not even the outbreak of war in 1775 caused the government to return to the policy of distributing provisions gratis, and as the troops fell subject to wartime inflation and scarcity, their situation worsened still further. Again, there were officers who sympathized, and who saw the stoppages policy as being to some extent responsible for the soldiers' plight. During January 1776, Lieutenant William Fielding, who was stationed in Boston, wrote to his uncle, Lord Denbigh, "Were the Soldiers Allow'd their Rations without paying for [them], it wou'd be of Infinite service in getting them War Clothing and other Necessaries which at present the Captains are Oblig'd to provide, to the Ruin of their pockets and the distress of the poor Soldiers. . . . this method was only introduced since the peace by Sir Jeffery Amherst." 35

33 CL, Gage Papers, vol. 18.

34 CL, Gage Papers, vol. 14. There were also complaints against other aspects of the new policy, especially the allowance of only one ration to officers and the abolition of the compassionate list: Major Robert Milward to Gage, July 10, 1766; Gage to Lieutenant-Colonel Maurice Carr, Sept. 10, 1766: CL, Gage Papers, vols. 54, 57. However, Gage insisted that all aspects of the policy be implemented: Gage to Colonel Henry Bouquet, Apr. 19, 1764; Gage to Robert Leake, same date: CL, Gage Papers, vol. 17; Major James Livingston to Bouquet, Oct. 9, 1763, and John Read to Bouquet, Nov. 1763: BL, Add. 21, 649, ff. 383, 490.

35 Marion Balderston and David Syrett, eds., The Lost War. Letters from British Officers During the American Revolution (New York, 1975), 60. For a general review of pay and stoppages during the Revolution, see Sylvia
The introduction of the new stoppages in 1763, and the resultant turmoil, reveals much about the complex world of the eighteenth-century military. The initial decision to stop for rations reflects the obsession with economy that characterized government — in this case, the treasury. Officers like Amherst and Wolfe shared the obsession, and they were likewise aware that they might ingratiate themselves to their superiors, military and civilian alike, if they proposed means to save money. Significantly, Amherst, in his letter of February 1762, and Wolfe, when he wrote in May 1758, both spoke of the potential savings that would be realized by stopping for provisions.

In the arguments that both Wolfe and Amherst made when advocating stoppages for provisions, one can also see conscious plans to modify the behavior of the troops. As has been noted, Wolfe hoped that the initiative that he proposed (but did not live to see implemented) would, by keeping money out of the men’s pockets, lead to a reduction of drinking and of the indiscipline that resulted from drunkenness. For his part, Amherst hoped that the institution of stoppages would make the soldiers more industrious — specifically, that they would turn to gardening, fishing, and hunting in order to save money. Both officers believed that by charging for provisions the army would positively influence the character of the troops. Too often, students of military history assume that “discipline” in the British Army of the eighteenth century was virtually synonymous with lash and gibbet. But physical punishment was only one method by which the military attempted to dictate the men’s behavior.

That the new stoppages policy should have caused mutiny is unsurprising. It did, after all, require the troops to sacrifice half of their pay in order to obtain the same provisions that they had earlier received free of charge, and although they were used to stoppages, it significantly reduced their spending money. Undoubtedly, many soldiers, particularly those who had enlisted since 1755 and had served mainly in America, considered free provisions to be a right, and they felt that by introducing the new policy the army was violating an implied contract. What most distinguished the mutiny is the level of the soldiers’ organization. While there were individual acts denoting opposition — desertion, in this case, being a form of protest — the soldiers

R. Frey, *The British Soldier in America* (Austin, 1981), 54-55. The combination of inflation and army economy had a negative impact on soldiers even during peacetime, e.g., when in 1763-64 the army attempted to place a cap on contractors’ prices, its contractors were sometimes forced to purchase inferior goods, notably, salt instead of fresh meat; note William Plumsted and David Franks to Bouquet, Mar. 14, 1764, BL, Add. 21, 650, f. 84.
usually acted in unison. In many instances they put their complaints in writing. They tried to avoid antagonizing superiors, emphasizing instead that their grievance was only with the new policy, and that they hoped their commanders would be advocates for them.

When faced with the massive protest, commanding officers behaved in different ways. Robertson's stance represented the hard-line extreme. On the other hand, Tulleken appears to have been intimidated, and perhaps his concessions to the troops were granted out of fear. Clearly, however, a number of officers were actuated by a humanitarian concern for their men. The stands of Forster and of Hamilton appear to have been sincere, and Fielding's bitter comments of January 1776 reflect a lingering sense that stopping for provisions was unfair to the troops. It is entirely possible that the initial opposition to the new policy on the part of officers at Halifax and elsewhere played a significant role in persuading Amherst to reduce the stoppages. In fact, Amherst may have felt that their opposition to the stoppage plan was legitimate in a way that the troops' protests were not, for critical review of new policies was to some extent permitted — even expected — within the officer class. Rather, it was the continued opposition after the policy was considered finalized that was condemned. Hamilton probably seemed, from Gage's perspective, to be guilty of obstinacy that bordered on insubordination, which brought down upon him the wrath of the commander-in-chief.

The mutiny of 1763 was by no means a total failure. It almost certainly played a role in moving Amherst to reduce the stoppage. In the end, however, headquarters felt compelled to take a strong position. As already noted, when Gage decided to crack down on the mutineers at Halifax, he likely did so in the fear that if not all troops were promptly stopped, unrest would spread and the policy itself might be undone. But he may also have been prompted by a general sense that the army could not be seen to surrender in the face of mutiny, regardless of the issue at hand or of the justice of the mutineers' case. Amherst and Gage suffered the unrest to continue for more than six months, and the former at least showed some flexibility in enforcing the new directive on stoppages. But while concession was possible, capitulation was not. Discipline was of paramount concern, and the commanders-in-chief, being most responsible for the maintenance of discipline, probably felt that order in the ranks demanded that the stoppages policy be enforced.