

Centinel II, Philadelphia Freeman's Journal, 24 October 1787

To the people of pennsylvania.

...The abolition of that grand palladium of freedom, the liberty of the press, in the proposed plan of government, and the conduct of its authors, and patrons, is a striking exemplification of these observations. The reason assigned for the omission of a *bill of rights*, securing the *liberty of the press*, and *other invaluable personal rights*, is an insult on the understanding of the people.

The injunction of secrecy imposed on the members of the late Convention during their deliberations, was obviously dictated by the genius of Aristocracy; it was deemed impolitic to unfold the principles of the intended government to the people, as this would have frustrated the object in view.

The projectors of the new plan, supposed that an ex parte discussion of the subject, was more likely to obtain unanimity in the Convention; which would give it such a sanction in the public opinion, as to banish all distrust, and lead the people into an implicit adoption of it without examination.

The greatest minds are forcibly impressed by the immediate circumstances with which they are connected; the particular sphere men move in, the prevailing sentiments of those they converse with, have an insensible and irresistible influence on the wisest and best of mankind; so that when we consider the abilities, talents, ingenuity and consummate address of a number of the members of the late Convention, whose principles are despotic, can we be surprised that men of the best intentions have been misled in the difficult science of government? Is it derogating from the character of the *illustrious and highly revered* washington, to suppose him fallible on a subject that must be in a great measure novel to him?—As a patriotic hero, he stands unequalled in the annals of time.

The new plan was accordingly ushered to the public with such a splendor of names, as inspired the most unlimited confidence; the people were disposed to receive upon trust, without any examination on their part, what would have proved either a *blessing* or a *curse* to them and their posterity.—What astonishing infatuation! to stake their happiness on the wisdom and integrity of any set of men! In matters of infinitely smaller concern, the dictates of prudence are not disregarded! The celebrated *Montesquieu*, in his Spirit of Laws, says, that “slavery is ever preceded by sleep”...

...Mr. *Wilson*, one of the deputies of this State in the late Convention, has found it necessary to come forward. From so able a lawyer, and so profound a politician, what might not be expected, if this act of Convention be the heavenly dispensation which some represent it. Its divinity would certainly be illustrated by one of the principal instruments of the Revelation; for this gentleman has that transcendent merit!—But if, on the other hand, this able advocate has failed to vindicate it from the objections of its adversaries, must we not consider it is as the production of *frail* and *interested* men...

...My fellow citizens, such false detestable *patriots* in every nation, have led their blind confiding country, shouting their applauses, into the jaws of *despotism* and *ruin*.

May the wisdom and virtue of the people of America, save them from the usual fate of nations...

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