

## **A Farmer and Planter, *Maryland Journal*, 1 April 1788**

The time is nearly at hand, when you are called upon to render up that glorious liberty you obtained, by resisting the tyranny and oppression of George the Third, King of England, and his ministers. The first Monday in April is the day appointed by our assembly, for you to meet and choose delegates in each county, to take into consideration the new Federal Government, and either adopt or refuse it. Let me entreat you, my fellows, to consider well what you are about. Read the said constitution, and consider it well before you act. I have done so, and can find that we are to receive but little good, and a great deal of evil. Aristocracy, or government in the hands of a very few nobles, or RICH MEN, is therein concealed in the most artful wrote plan that ever was formed to entrap a free people. The contrivers of it have so completely entrapped you, and laid their plans so sure and secretly, that they have only left you to do one of two things—that is either to receive or refuse it. And in order to bring you into their snare, you may daily read new pieces published in the newspapers, in favor of this new government; and should a writer dare to publish any piece against it, he is immediately abused and vilified.

Look round you and observe well the RICH MEN, who are to be your only rulers, lords and masters in future! Are they not all for it? Yes! Ought not this to put you on your guard? Does not riches beget power, and power, oppression and tyranny?

I am told that four of the richest men in Ann-Arundel County [Maryland], have offered themselves candidates to serve in the convention, who are all in favor of the new Federal Government. Let me beg of you to reflect a moment on the danger you run. If you choose these men, or others like them, they certainly will do everything in their power to adopt the new government. Should they succeed, your liberty is gone forever; and you will then be nothing better than a strong ass crouching down between two burdens. The new form of government gives Congress liberty at any time, by their laws, to alter the state laws, and the time, places and manner of holding elections for representatives. By this clause they may command, by their laws, the people of Maryland to go to Georgia, and the people of Georgia to go to Boston, to choose their representatives. Congress, or our future lords and masters, are to have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises. Excise is a new thing in America, and few country farmers and planters know the meaning of it. But it is not so in Old England, where I have seen the effects of it, and felt the smart. It is there a duty, or tax, laid upon almost every necessary of life and convenience, and a great number of other articles. The excise on salt in the year 1762, to the best of my recollection, in England, was 4s. sterling per bushel, for all that was made use of in families; and the price of salt per bushel about 6s. sterling, and the excise 4s.6d. on every gallon of rum made use of. If a private family make their own soap, candles, beer, cider, etc., they pay an excise duty on them. And if they neglect calling in an excise officer at the time of making these things, they are liable to grievous fines and forfeitures, besides a long train of evils and inconveniences attending this detestable excise—to enumerate particularly would fill a volume. The excise officers have power to enter your houses at all times, by night or day, and if you refuse them entrance, they can, under pretense of searching for exciseable goods, that the duty has not been paid on, break open your doors, chests, trunks, desks, boxes, and rummage your houses from bottom to top. Nay, they often search the

clothes, petticoats and pockets of ladies or gentlemen (particularly when they are coming from on board an East-India ship), and if they find any the least article that you cannot prove the duty to be paid on, seize it and carry it away with them; who are the very scum and refuse of mankind, who value not their oaths, and will break them for a shilling. This is their true character in England, and I speak from experience, for I have had the opportunity of putting their virtue to the test, and saw two of them break their oath for one guinea, and a third for one shilling's worth of punch. What do you think of a law to let loose such a set of vile officers among you! Do you expect the Congress excise-officers will be any better—if God, in his anger, should think it proper to punish us for our ignorance, and sins of ingratitude to him, after carrying us through the late war, and giving us liberty, and now so tamely to give it up by adopting this aristocratical government?

Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included within this union according to their respective numbers. This seems to imply, that we shall be taxed by the poll again, which is contrary to our Bill of Rights. But it is possible that the rich men, who are the great land holders, will tax us in this manner, which will exempt them from paying assessments on their great bodies of land in the old and new parts of the United States; many of them having but few taxable by the poll. Our great Lords and Masters are to lay taxes, raise and support armies, provide a navy, and may appropriate money for two years, call forth the militia to execute their laws, suppress insurrections, and the President is to have the command of the militia. Now, my countrymen, I would ask you, why are all these things directed and put into their power? Why, I conceive, they are to keep you in a good humor; and if you should, at any time, think you are imposed upon by Congress and your great Lords and Masters, and refuse or delay to pay your taxes, or do anything that they shall think proper to order you to do, they can, and I have not a doubt but they will, send the militia of Pennsylvania, Boston, or any other state or place, to cut your throats, ravage and destroy your plantations, drive away your cattle and horses, abuse your wives, kill your infants, and ravish your daughters, and live in free quarters, until you get into a good humor, and pay all that they may think proper to ask of you, and you become good and faithful servants and slaves. Such things have been done, and I have no doubt will be done again, if you consent to the adoption of this new Federal Government. You labored under many hardships while the British tyrannized over you! You fought, conquered and gained your liberty—then keep it, I pray you, as a precious jewel. Trust it not out of your own hands; be assured, if you do, you will never more regain it. The train is laid, the match is on fire, and they only wait for yourselves to put it to the train, to blow up all your liberty and commonwealth governments, and introduce aristocracy and monarchy, and despotism will follow of course in a few years. Four-years President will be in time a King for life; and after him, his son, or he that has the greatest power among them, will be King also. View your danger, and find out good men to represent you in convention—men of your own profession and station in life; men who will not adopt this destructive and diabolical form of a federal government. There are many among you that will not be led by the nose by rich men, and would scorn a bribe. Rich men can live easy under any government, be it ever so tyrannical. They come in for a great share of the tyranny, because they are the ministers of tyrants, and always engross the places of honor and profit, while the greater part of the common people are led by the nose, and played about by these very men, for the destruction

of themselves and their class. Be wise, be virtuous, and catch the precious moment as it passes, to refuse this newfangled federal government, and extricate yourselves and posterity from tyranny, oppression, aristocratical or monarchical government....

Herbert J. Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, (vol. V, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) pp. 74-77.