



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

csac.history.wisc.edu > Document Collections > Constitutional Debates: Federalist and Antifederalist Essays > The Debate Over the Nature of Union and Republican Government > Constitution Preserves Union

Remarker

Boston *Independent Chronicle*, 27 December 1787 (excerpt)

To the Citizens of Massachusetts.

FRIENDS and FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN!

When any nation is about to make a change in its political character, it highly behoves it to summon the experience of ages that have past, to collect the wisdom of the present day, and ascertain clearly those just principles of equal government, that are adapted to secure inviolably the lives, the liberties and the properties of the people. In such a situation are the United States at the present day. They are now called to pronounce the *alpha* or the *omega* of their political existence, to lay a deep foundation for their national character, and to leave a legacy of happiness, or misery to their children's children. The Constitution recommended to the United States, is a subject of very general discussion, and while it involves in its fate, the interest of so extensive a country, every sentiment which can be offered upon it, deserves its proportion of the public attention. It is worth our while, before we make any observations on the Constitution, as it stands recommended, to recur to the motives which gave rise to the calling of a Convention. Sad experience taught us the defects of the present articles of confederation. At the framing of these however, the bond of union among the States, which arose from a community of danger, in some measure superseded the necessity of wisdom. A common interest excited us to unite our exertions for the public good: At such a time a system of government conceived in perfect wisdom, and adopted with deliberation, was not expected, and as soon as those common principles which supplied its defects ceased to operate, the inconveniences which arose from them, were very sensibly felt. Since that time the seeds of civil dissention, have been gradually ripening, and political confusion hath pervaded the States. Commerce hath been declining, our credit suffering, and our respectability as a nation hath almost vanished. The deficiency of supreme power, was indeed glaring, and became the object of universal censure. In such a situation, it was thought proper to collect the patriotic wisdom of the States, for the purpose of framing a system of national government, that should effectually secure the peace and prosperity of these States.

This wisdom hath conceived one, and it is now offered to the several States, for their ratification. The time of pronouncing the voice of this State is approaching, and as a citizen of it, I feel myself bound to offer my opinion with the reasons on which it is founded, for their perusal. This State hath indeed of late experienced a great fermentation; but thanks to him who ordered it, it was not a presage of its dissolution—but only a temporary tumult derived from that natural

jealousy of the people, which Montesquieu says is the very life and soul of republican States. On considering barely the integrity and abilities of the members of the late continental Convention, a presumption would arise that any Constitution framed by them, would be as free from imperfections as humanity would warrant us to expect: It is true indeed that in most cases the scrutiny of the public eye, viewing any production in an infinite variety of lights, would more readily discover its defects; but when we consider that this Constitution is intended to unite the jarring interests of thirteen States, variously differing in their customs and privileges, for the purpose of one efficient national government, we are anxious to delegate the extremity of our wisdom, to decide upon its merits: Laying it down then as a principle detached from the other excellencies of this government, that union is the principle object, and that therefore no objection from one State dictated by local partiality or interest, can lie against it; let us look a little into those objections, with which the public has been favoured. We shall first premise that there are certain classes and ranks of persons in every State, who are no doubt determined to oppose this Constitution, not because they think it a bad one, but because they know it to be one at all. These are demagogues in particular towns, whose popularity will probably be done away—persons holding certain places of emolument or honor, which may be discontinued, and those who became noticed by the public, barely by their excentric opposition to the wisest measures: Objections therefore from these sources, that are not founded in judgement and truth, are not much to be regarded. I believe however, that the futility of all objections can be easily exposed. . . .

December 15, 1787.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. V: Massachusetts [2] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1998), 527–30.