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Numa: Political and Moral Entertainment VII Northampton, Mass., *Hampshire Gazette* 5 September 1787 (excerpt)

. . . I scarcely need tell you that Congress is but a name, that her resolutions are cyphers. She is fallen into contempt. Our union is slender: exists rather in idea than in reality—in the shadow than in the substance. Her present state is the grief of the friends of the union, the source of the fears of strangers and the subject of the ridicule of enemies. It is an acknowledged point that without a federal government which binds, collects and consolidates the wisdom, wealth & strength of the states, the union is dissolved, our national existence is destroyed, and the world knows us not. Without a government which can employ and improve the power of the whole to national purposes we are an headless trunk: a monster in creation. Thirteen bodies without one soul to inspire, pervade and move the complicate, unwieldy and nameless machine.

A federal constitution is essential to bestow dignity on the union, to control our finances, to regulate commerce, to make treaties, to establish the government of the individual states, secure prosperity to the citizens, protect from foreign invasions, aid and insure the establishment of our credit abroad[,] provide for the discharge of our debts, discover and apply aright the means in our possession for this end, banish discontent, effect a oneness of wishes and designs, and preserve to us and our posterity the blessings of independence.

To gain such valuable and essential objects, every state must relinquish some privileges of less consideration. The separate interests of the states, viewed upon a large scale, are small objects and must be given up for the public good. When all is at stake, it will not be wise nor reputable to grasp too tight, and dispute too obstinately about claims which do not belong to us in a federal capacity. On the generous relinquishment of which our political happiness stands. Demolish the dagon of state sovereignty which you have too long worshipped. Guard against selfishness the bane of public bodies as well as individuals. Beware of those local views which would draw every thing into their own narrow vortex. Rise not on the ruin of a sister state. Make not a sacrifice of the country. Study the principles of true republicanism. Regard your own particular interest under the influence of a noble benevolence.

Since persons are chosen to form a federal government, let the several Legislatures be prepared after its revisal and approbation by Congress, to consider and ratify it when submitted to them.¹ Let all be impressed with the necessity of it. Nourish a spirit of candour. Reason dispassionately. Embrace it with gratitude, and support it with fortitude: receive it as heaven's rich gift, if it justify the general confidence reposed in the delegation, equal the objects of our union,

remove the evils which we experience, and secure to us the permanent enjoyment of the best civil blessings.

To give energy to these thoughts, call into view your uncomfortable situation for years; the quarter whence your troubles have principally originated. Look forward and reflect upon the portion of sorrow which awaits you in this disjointed and distracted state. There is no other measure which you can take.

Bear in mind that the nations of the earth, from the rising to the setting sun, wait for the result. Your foreign friends, who flew to your relief and afforded essential services, have their fears. They tremble for the issue, lest wisdom should be hidden from you; lest you profit not by the lessons of others; lest you hate your friends, listen to flatterers and love your enemies, and involve yourselves in those miseries which the counsels and arms of Britain could not effect. While there is no efficacy in your public councils, they fear lest they have helped you in vain; when without that help you might have sunk in the hardy contest: lest you will prove ungrateful and perfidious at the last.

Disappoint, my countrymen, these fears: prove that they are unfounded. Convince them that you can and that you will stand: that you will establish a government from which they will have nothing to dread; where hope may have unlimited scope. Do honour to yourselves. Be just to your allies. Confide in your friends. Reward the patriotism of those whose abilities have been devoted to your service. Spurn from your presence those who would wheedle you out of your liberties, rivet your chains and condemn you to everlasting infamy. Nobly disdain the bondage of state prejudices and narrow politics. Honour yourselves as men, as Americans, as citizens of the freest governments on earth. Invest Congress with power. Entrust her with your national prosperity. You have those in whom you can safely trust. Be virtuous yourselves. You need not fear. Until you are stupified by indolence, enervated by luxury, and alienated from all that is good, your rulers can't long oppress you, and never enslave you. Away with that jealousy which is inconsistent with your own peace and the tried and known integrity of many among us. It is indeed possible by your groundless jealousies, you may convert some honest men into knaves; verifying the antient proverb, that the readiest way to make a man an enemy, is to treat him as one. But I hope better things of you. Befriend yourselves. No event will then be unfavourable. Hear what the Convention say to you.

It has been said, that foreigners remark a certain moderation of temper as characteristic of Americans. This disposition introduces happiness and honour into domestic life. It does the same into public life. It has its effect on a nation. Under its influence her councils will be wise and her measures decisive. In trouble her patience will be conspicuous: In danger her courage will be unbroken. Unhurt because unacquainted with those violent storms which convulse other parts. Qualified for public exertions her sons will be renowned in the earth. While nations around her become the sport of contending passions, and exchange ease and prosperity for war and tyranny, she will save herself by wisdom and moderation. It will show itself by a cheerful obedience to them that rule well. If foreigners entertain a just opinion of you, now is the time to prove it. Avail yourselves of the advantages which this temper yields. Let your wisdom shine; let your moderation display itself in your treatment of the constitution which is soon to be laid before you.

Pass it not that except you form such a constitution and that speedily, (and can it be ever more needed, or any time preferable to the present?[]) you may believe it will be too late. You

may justly suppose, that if you forget those who loaned you their property, they will not forget themselves: that if you are callous to obligation they will do themselves justice: that if you have forfeited their friendship, they will cast you off and let you reap the harvest which you prefer. And will you break that friendship which was formed in the hour of danger, cemented by the blood of both parties, and which has yielded the most substantial fruit?

Think besides how your enemies (for enemies you have) will feast upon your folly, fatten at your charge, and plume themselves on the success of steps which they suggested. Shall your enemies tax you? Shall Britain enrich herself at your expence? Shall your imports fill her public coffers? Will you first pay the debt which she contracted in a war upon your rights and privileges? You may perhaps defy the world to produce a parallel instance of perfect disinterestedness. All this, let me tell you, is not the dream of a distempered brain, not the bugbear of a timorous fancy, nor the sally of a bold imagination. Things are set before you as they appear to the view of sober reflection. The alarm is sounded that you may see your danger, exert yourselves in season and avert the storm.

If you are wise, you are wise for yourselves and children after you. Your conduct will always please on the recollection—when time closes you will leave an honourable testimony behind—your example may inspire other nations, fettered by lawless power, with just views, and posterity may gladly revolve the liberal sentiments and manly conduct of their fathers.

If you are foolish, contentious, self-willed, opposed to government and your own good and dead to feeling, you must bear it: but, painful thought, not only you,—your descendants to the fourteenth generation [Matthew 1:17] may and will execrate your memory and be amazed at your madness: that when you might have reached the summit of national glory, freedom and improvement, you chose the depth of poverty, infamy and wretchedness.

I can't suppress the pain produced by the late authentic information which the public has received, that one in high office in a neighbouring state has unreservedly declared against the Federal Convention.² Asserting the inexpediency, impolicy, unsuccessfulness, and even danger of their appointment. As the necessity of the measure was long since among persons of discernment and honesty, removed beyond a doubt; as it met with such a ready reception and was sanctioned by the voice of many ten thousands, a conduct like this in such a character at such a time, most interesting, must force the enquiry, whether exalted station is a certain preservative against narrow views and local attachments? Whether one may not be a first magistrate, and yet love himself better than his country? Be more willing to see the deranged sinking state of the latter than the former?

Now those that can do good should do it. Those that have influence should exert it. Whether they possess one, five or ten talents, their country calls by the most moving eloquence for them to be employed in her behalf: that the opinions which every man entertains, the thoughts which he writes, the observations which he utters & the efforts which he makes, should center, like the rays of the focus, in her prosperity. What shall we think and say then of him who disobeys her voice and disregards her interest?

Shun, my countrymen, the sham patriot, however dignified, who bids you distrust the Convention, and reject the collected wisdom of these states. Mark him as a dangerous member to society. Brand him as hostile to the commerce, respectability and independency of America. Assign [him] such places in which you will have nothing to fear.

Fix your eyes on those that love you—rejoice in your welfare—will never rest till you are happy, and who hazard all on the civil system which they have framed for you. Fix your eyes on those to guide your public concerns, who, supported by conscious integrity, neither court applause, fear scrutiny nor dread censure: on those whose views are not bounded by the town nor county which they may represent, nor the state in which they reside, nor by the union. Their philanthropy embraces the interest of all nations. Men whose ambition and avarice would not reproach the office which they hold: and whose luxury & prodigality would not, like a bottomless sea, swallow up thousands and still be empty—Select those for your rulers at this day of peculiar difficulty, whose political and moral sentiments render them the boast, the admiration and patterns of the age.

I am a well wisher to this country, NUMA.

1. Article XIII of the Articles of Confederation states: “And the Articles of this confederation shall be inviolably observed by every state, and the union shall be perpetual; nor shall any alteration at any time hereafter be made in any of them; unless such alteration be agreed to in a congress of the united states, and be afterwards confirmed by the legislatures of every state.”

2. A reference to New York Governor George Clinton, who reportedly had publicly “reprobated the appointment of the [Constitutional] Convention, and predicted a mischievous issue of that measure.”

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