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Tamony

Virginia Independent Chronicle, 9 January 1788 (excerpt)

... The office of president is treated with levity and intimated to be a machine calculated for state pageantry—Suffer me to view the commander of the fleets and armies of America, with a reverential awe, inspired by the contemplation of his great prerogatives, though not dignified with the magic name of King, he will possess more supreme power, than Great Britain allows her hereditary monarchs, who derive ability to support an army from annual supplies, and owe the command of one to an annual mutiny law. The American President may be granted supplies for two years, and his command of a standing army is unrestrained by law or limitation.

As to supplies, the term may be shortened; but such a measure implying want of confidence in the first magistrate, will probably be postponed till the hour of danger arrives, and commonwealths be exposed to that hazardous situation, emphatically called death bed repentance. Expectation from such a source may be deemed visionary, and reflection must compel even hope to confess, a mutiny law must owe existence to a general Convention, as the mode prescribed by article the 5th—for the president being by the people made commander of an army, is not subject in that command to a legislative body. Pause America—suspend a final affirmation, till you contemplate what may ensue—Do not condemn the declarations of Locke, Sydney, Montesquieu, Raynal, whose writings are legacies to the present and future ages, they unite in asserting that annual supplies and an annual mutiny law, are the chief dykes man's sagacity can raise against that torrent of despotism, which continually attempts to deluge the rights of individuals. You are told impeachment will stem the flood, a legislative body, sixty five in number, are to march in formidable array, to a tribunal of twenty-six, and summons the commander of an army sworn to obey him—the event can be foreseen without suspicion of second sight, for anticipation may with confidence announce, that the bauble of a mace, hazarded in the mouth of a mortar, would be speedily conveyed, to that “bourn from whence no traveller returns” [*Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1].

Had the Constitution said, the president can do no wrong, nor shall he be re-elected—corruption in the man, might be guarded against by that rotation, which inculcates the idea of certain dissolution, and a council answerable to the people for consenting to, or advising measures, would cautiously give their sanction to a ruler whose official shield, must inevitably revert to dust.

Virginia, Dec. 20, 1787.

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