Philadelphiensis IX
Philadelphia *Freeman's Journal*, 6 February 1788

Instamus tamen immemores, cœcique furore,
Et monstrum infelix sacrata sistimus arce.
VIRG.

TRANSLATION.
Thus we, by madness blinded and o'ercome,
Lodge the dire monster *in the sacred dome.*[1]

My Fellow-Citizens, Before *martial law* is declared to be the supreme law of the land, and your character of free citizens be changed to that of the subjects of a *military king*, which are necessary consequences of the adoption of the proposed constitution, let me admonish you in the name of *sacred liberty*, to make a solemn pause. Permit a freeman to address you, and to solicit your attention to a cause wherein yourselves and your posterity are concerned. The sun never shone upon a more important one: It is the cause of freedom—of a whole continent—of yourselves and of your fellow men.

Men who have so gloriously asserted the rights of human nature, and overcome tyranny, one ought reasonably to suppose could not have their spirits so much broken as peaceably to submit to it a few years afterwards. By the declaration of peace, wherein Britain acknowledged the independence and sovereignty of the United States, the people of America became citizens of the freest country under heaven. But under the proposed plan of government the least fragment of liberty cannot exist.

The writers against the proposed constitution are denominated, by the *aristocratics*, *incendiaries*, and enemies to America, men whose writings tend to involve this devoted country in anarchy, and in all the horrors of a civil war. Now, in reply to this charge; let me ask the friends of this government, Is that man an *incendiary* who advocates the unalienable rights of the people? Is he an enemy to America who endeavors to protect the *oppressed* from the *oppressor*; who opposes a conspiracy against the liberties of his country, concerted by a few *tyrants*, whose views are to lord it over the rest of their fellow citizens, to trample the poorer part of the people under their feet, that they may be rendered their servants and slaves? If such a writer is an incendiary, and an enemy to America, then I glory in the character. A conspiracy against the freedom of America, both deep and dangerous, has been formed by an infernal junto of demagogues. Our thirteen free commonwealths are to be consolidated into one *despotic monarchy*. Is not this a position obvious? Its evidence is intuitive; and the address and dissent of the minority of the

convention of Pennsylvania add such strength to its illustration, that no man of common sense can refuse his assent. But why need I attempt to prove a point, that that honest man and firm patriot, Mr. Martin, says the monarchy men of the federal convention declared was their intention.

Who can deny but the *president general* will be a *king* to all intents and purposes, and one of the most dangerous kind too; a king elected to command a standing army? Thus our laws are to be administered by this *tyrant*; for the whole, or at least the most important part of the executive department is put in his hands.

A quorum of 65 representatives, and of 26 senators, with a *king* at their head, are to possess powers, that extend to the *lives*, the *liberties*, and *property* of every citizen of America. This novel system of government, were it possible to establish it, would be a compound of *monarchy* and *aristocracy*, the most accursed that ever the world witnessed. About 50 (these being a quorum) of the *well born*, and a *military king*, with a *standing army* devoted to his will, are to have an uncontrouled power over our lives, our liberties, and property, in all cases whatsoever. Is he an incendiary who abhors the thought of such a government, who declares it his opinion, that none but a sycophant or a slave could submit to it? I think not; and there is no power under heaven that could cause me to change my opinion; which has the joint evidences of reason and experience for its foundation.

There is not a tincture of democracy in the proposed constitution, except the nominal elections of the president general and the illustrious Congress be supposed to have some colour of that nature; but this is a mere deception, invented to gull the people into its adoption. Its framers were well aware that some appearance of election ought to be observed, especially in regard to the first Congress; for without such an appearance there was not the smallest probability of their having it organized and set in operation. But let the wheels of this government be once cleverly set in motion, and I'll answer for it, that the people shall not be much troubled with future elections, especially in choosing their *king*, the *standing army* will do that business for them.

The thoughts of a military officer possessing such powers, as the proposed constitution vests in the president general, are sufficient to excite in the mind of a freeman the most alarming apprehensions; and ought to rouse him to oppose it at *all events*. Every freeman of America ought to hold up this idea to himself, *that he has no superior but God and the laws*. But this tyrant will be so much his superior, that he can at any time he thinks proper, order him out in the militia to exercise, and to march when and where he pleases. His officers can wantonly inflict the most disgraceful punishment on a peaceable citizen, under pretence of disobedience, or the smallest neglect of militia duty.

Among the substantial objections to the great powers of the president, that of his *negative* upon the laws, is one of the most inconsiderable, indeed it is more a sound than any thing else; For, if he be a bold enterprising fellow, there is little fear of his ever having to exercise it. The two branches of the legislature, will be at his service; no law contrary to his sentiments, however salutary in its operation, dare be mentioned by them. As a body, and as individuals, they will be his sycophants and flatterers. But, if on the contrary he should not be a man of spirit, a thing very improbable, as none but an ambitious man, well versed in the ways of men, could have the address to be raised to that elevated station; if, however, I say, he should not be a man of an enterprising spirit, in that case he will be a *minion* of the aristocratics, doing according to their

will and pleasure, and confirming every law they may think proper to make, without any regard to their public utility.

Every idea of such unlimited powers being lodged in so small a number of the *well born*, elevated so far above the rest of their fellow citizens, and supported by a *king* with a *standing army* at his disposal, ought to cause the blood of a free citizen to boil with indignation: the very mentioning of it shocks my whole frame. I abhor the thought from my soul: And I flatter myself that the people of this continent will not suffer such a government to be placed over them. Indeed it astonishes me, that the conspirators who framed it, had not the most dreadful apprehensions of their personal safety, from the just resentment of the freemen of an insulted country.

To such lengths have these bold conspirators carried their scheme of despotism, that your most sacred rights and privileges are surrendered at discretion. When government thinks proper, under the pretence of writing a libel, *&c.* it may imprison, inflict the most cruel and unusual punishment, seize property, carry on prosecutions, *&c.* and the unfortunate citizen has no *magna charta*, no *bill of rights*, to protect him; nay, the prosecution may be carried on in such a manner that even a *jury* will not be allowed him. Where is that *base slave* who would not appeal to the *ultima ratio*, before he submits to this government?

If the despots persist in pushing it on, let them answer the consequences; they may fall a sacrifice to their own obstinacy; for liberty will triumph over every obstacle, even were a *standing army* opposed to it.

To preserve the peace of the country, every patriot should exert himself at this awful crisis, and use his influence to have another federal convention called as soon as possible; either to amend the old articles of confederation, or to frame a constitution on revolution principles, that may secure the freedom of America to the remotest time.

If the State of Massachusetts should reject the proposed constitution, of which there is a strong probability, what a contemptible figure must its advocates make, who, after it made its appearance from the *dark conclave*, affirmed that there was but *five men* opposed to it in the United States.[2] The convention of that state was chosen in the moment of blind enthusiasm, and yet we find it so much divided that the issue is doubtful. The sentiments of the people are changing every day, and were that convention to be elected now, I doubt not but four fifths would be against it. In the back counties of Pennsylvania, where the *well born* have no influence, the opposition is said to have become so powerful that a person would be in danger of losing his life, if he ventured to speak a word in its favor.

The conspirators saw clearly, that such a system of government could never be established over freemen, except they were taken by surprize; and hence they hurried matters forward with that view; in short, the people were made to believe, that they were all *dead men*, if they did not adopt it immediately. Even still they are endeavoring to hold up the idea of anarchy being the consequence of rejection: But he must have very weak intellects indeed, and little acquainted with the spirit of freemen, to whom it is not obvious that adoption will produce anarchy and ruin.

No evil can result from calling another general convention, but much good would be the consequence. The distresses of America are not of that nature to be healed all of a sudden; some of them indeed have arisen from the defects in the general government; but there are others of a different kind, that must be removed by time, and by the prudence of the people at large.

Ye patriots! ye lovers of peace, of liberty, and of your fellow men! Ye are called upon at this solemn juncture, to stand forth and save your country; before the breach is too wide, and while the parties may still be reconciled to each other; before anarchy stalks through the land; and before the sword of civil discord is unsheathed. For the sake of every thing that is great and good, and as you shall answer for it at the great tribunal, use your influence to procure another general convention with all possible speed, as the only way left to preserve the union of America, and to save your fellow citizens from misery and destruction.

1. A reference to the Trojan horse being brought into the city of Troy.

2. A satirical Federalist letter, said to be written by Daniel Shays to the Antifederal junto of Philadelphia, asserted that the opposition to the Constitution in Pennsylvania was composed of "five gentlemen."

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