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*Aristides: Remarks on the Proposed Plan of a Federal Government, 31 January 1788 (excerpt)*¹

. . . The power of the president is alarming peculiarly to that class, who cannot bear to view others in possession of that fancied blessing, to which, alas! they must themselves aspire in vain. They tell you, this supreme magistrate, although he be called by the modest name of president, and elected for only four years, will, in every essential, be an emperor, king, or stadtholder at least; and that his dignity, in a few years, will become hereditary. Let us examine the foundation of this alarming prediction.—

Before this appointment can be *entailed*, and before even the term can be enlarged, the constitution must be changed, by consent of the people. By what method, then, shall the president effect this alteration? Every citizen in the union will be a censor on his conduct. Not even his person is particularly protected; and the means of oppression are little in his power. Let the jealousy of the people once take the alarm, and, at the expiration of his term, he is dismissed, as inevitably as light succeeds to darkness. The election of a president is not carried on in a single assembly, where the several arts of corruption may be essayed. He is elected by persons chosen by the people; and those electors give their suffrages on the same day, in thirteen different assemblies, in thirteen different states. An elective monarchy has long been severely reprobated. But had the countries, where it prevailed, enjoyed regulations like these, they would perhaps, at this time, be preferred to the rules of hereditary succession, which have so often placed fools and tyrants on the throne.

It seems, however, that the president may possibly be continued for life. He may so, provided he deserve it. If not, he retires to obscurity, without even the consolation of having produced any of the convulsions, attendant usually on grand revolutions. Should he be wicked or frantic enough to make the attempt, he atones for it, with the certain loss of wealth, liberty or life. . . .

1. The author was immediately apparent. Alexander Contee Hanson had used the pen name “Aristides” for many years, so that it was “equal to a public avowal of the author.” “Aristides” was published as a 42-page pamphlet.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. XV: Commentaries on the Constitution, Public and Private [3] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1984), 530–31.