A Pennsylvanian to the New York Convention
Pennsylvania Gazette, 11 June 1788 (excerpts)

To the Honorable the CONVENTION *of the* STATE *of* NEW-YORK.

By the permission of divine providence, and from that large proportion of freedom which has been dispensed to the United States, your honorable body is very soon to deliberate on the nature and consequences of the proposed fœderal constitution. The performance of a duty such as this is the most dignified temporal act of human nature. The temper and dispositions, therefore, with which it should be undertaken, ought to be as pure as those with which a pious man would approach the temple of the Deity. Moderation, candor, patience, mutual deference, and a kind conciliating spirit should suggest and govern every thought, word and deed. . . .

. . . *The sovereign power* of altering and amending the constitution, or supreme law of the American confederacy, does not lie with this fœderal legislature, whom some have erroneously apprehended to be supreme—That power, which is truly and evidently *the real point of sovereignty*, is vested in the several legislatures and conventions of the states, chosen by the people respectively within them. The fœderal government cannot alter the constitution, the people at large by their own agency cannot alter the constitution, but the representative bodies of the states, that is their *legislatures and conventions*, only can execute these acts of sovereign power.

From the foregoing circumstances results another reflection equally satisfactory and important, which is, that as the fœderal legislature cannot effect dangerous alterations which they might desire, *so they cannot prevent such wholesome alterations and amendments as are now desired, or which experience may hereafter suggest.* Let us suppose any one or more alterations to be in contemplation by the people at large, or by the state legislatures. If two thirds of those legislatures require it, Congress *must* call a general convention, even though they dislike the proposed amendments, and if three fourths of the state legislatures or conventions approve such proposed amendments, they become *an actual and binding part of the constitution*, without any possible interference of Congress. If then, contrary to the opinion of the eight adopting states, the fœderal government should prove dangerous, it seems the members of the confederacy will have a full and uncontroulable power to alter its nature, and render it completely safe and useful.

It cannot be doubted that a great majority of your honorable house think a fœderal constitution for the United States of America expedient and highly necessary. The object of their desires then must be to obtain the best that can be devised, but not to be disappointed in procuring it. Let me respectfully request of those who wish the proposed plan amended, that they seriously consider how much more easy it will be to obtain those amendments under the forms of the

constitution itself, than by previously attempting another general convention. Three fourths of the states concurring will ensure *any amendments*, after the adoption of nine or more; but at present *all* must concur, or we lose not only the amendments desired, but unfortunately the union itself—and with that the prosperity of the country and the peace and happiness of the people. Will it not be better to ratify a constitution which was formed by men chosen by the state legislatures and the people, and which secures to the people and their state representatives full power to alter and amend it, and which provides that it shall not be altered by any other authority?

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