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Robert Galbraith et al. to President Benjamin Franklin Huntingdon, Pa., 23 August 1788

With the utmost regret we find ourselves once more under the disagreeable necessity of informing Your Excellency that our part of the state is still torn and distracted by the machinations of wicked and evil disposed persons. A few days after our last letter to your honorable board from Messrs. Smith and Henderson, a party armed with bludgeons, about twenty in number, headed by Abraham Smith, William M'Cune and Samuel Clinton, the latter of them a most notorious rioter, came into the town and violently beat Mr. Alexander Irwin, one of our citizens. Some of the same riotous party, whose names and persons we have not been able properly to ascertain, have frequently, at night, assaulted our houses with showers of stones. Threats have been sent from all parts of the county that death—or what is to a man of feeling worse—cropping, tarring, etc., should be inflicted on us or any other officer of the county who should attempt to put the laws in force. On Wednesday last [20 August] about one hundred and eighty men collected from different parts of the county—some few of the townsmen among them—paraded the streets, not with muskets, as before, altho we have reason to believe they had a number secreted. They were headed by William M'Elroy, Abraham Smith, John Smith and John Little, Esq., one of the county justices. What their intentions were we know not, but hearing from many different quarters that they were determined to destroy some of us, we collected a few friends of government and some arms and met at the house of Benjamin Elliot, Esq., our sheriff, resolved, if any attack was made, to repel force with force, and to the utmost defend our own lives. This salutary precaution, of which we are satisfied, their spies had given them information, was without doubt, the reason of their not committing any violence that day. After marching with colors flying and fifes playing thro the town, they held, what they called an election, at the house of William Kerr, for members to meet in convention at Louisburg [i.e., Harrisburg], as we have been informed. At this election they excluded from voting everyone who did not march with them, and admitted promiscuously everyone who did. A number of insults were thrown out against the government, but no personal injury done.

To your honorable board, as the supreme executive power of the state, we apply for such assistance in support of government, as to your wisdoms shall deem proper.

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