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Philadelphia Committee of Correspondence to Timothy Pickering, 11 September 1788¹

The present important crisis in the affairs of Pennsylvania having induced a considerable number of respectable Inhabitants of this City & neighborhood to meet & consider of such measures as would be most likely to secure to the State a Representation of men in the next Assembly, equally known for their firm attachment to the federal Government, & real interests of this State as well as for their candour, integrity & good sense, a committee, to communicate their sentiments to, & correspond with their friends in the different Counties, was thought essentially necessary. —

We therefore as the Committee of correspondence,² take the liberty to address you on this important subject, being not only well assured of your zeal and regard for the new Government, but that you will, on all occasions use your influence with your friends to promote its true interests.

To have persons of the best qualifications elected to represent us in the general Assembly, is at all times an object of very great consequence, but at the present moment, when the new federal Constitution is to be carried into effect, it is a matter of the utmost importance. The ensuing legislature will not only have the ordinary objects of our State affairs before them, but they will have in charge to complete the arrangements of the general Government, so far as the present House shall leave them unfinished. It is probable also that the great subject of amendments may form a part of their deliberations: All those points will require representatives of undoubted integrity and sound judgment. But to revise the new Constitution if that should be brought before them, they should be men of great candour free from prejudices against it, & well disposed to the continuance of an energetic power in our federal head.

The late meeting of the opponents of the new Constitution in the town of Harrisburg must have given serious alarm to its friends, & the Election purposes, both with regard to the federal & State Representatives, which we conceive it was calculated to promote, should excite our most active exertions, & vigilance, & awaken all our caution: You will see at once that as this measure was confessedly intended, so it may seriously affect the Election of the eight federal Representatives, as well as of the State Legislature. Their circular letter plainly recommends the nomination of eight persons for that purpose: You will permit us therefore to put you on your guard concerning that Election also, and to recommend it equally to your attention in due time, according as the same may be ordered by the present or future Assembly.

As we shall on all occasions be happy to communicate to you every necessary information which we may obtain in this business, so we are desirous to receive the same from you.

1. The letter was signed by Samuel Miles, Walter Stewart, Francis Gurney, Tench Coxe, Henry Kammerer, John Nixon, Benjamin Rush, and Hilary Baker.

2. There is no evidence of a meeting to create such a “committee of correspondence.” However, at a meeting on 1 October to plan for forthcoming federal elections, these and other men were appointed to a committee to plan for a meeting at Lancaster to nominate Federalist candidates.

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