Center for the Study of the American Constitution

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# Fabius VIII
## Philadelphia *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 29 April 1788 (excerpt)

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONSTITUTION
proposed by the FEDERAL CONVENTION.

. . . As to alterations, a little experience will cast more light upon the subject, than a multitude of debates. Whatever qualities are possessed by those who object, they will have the candor to confess, that they will be encountered by opponents, not in any respect inferior, and yet differing from them in judgment, upon every point they have mentioned.

Such untired industry to serve their country, did the delegates to the federal convention exert, that they not only laboured to form the best plan they could, but, provided for making at any time amendments on the authority of the people, without shaking the stability of the government. For this end, the Congress, whenever two thirds of both houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose amendments to the constitution, or, on the application of the legislatures of two thirds of the several states, SHALL call a convention for proposing amendments, which, in either case, shall be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the constitution, when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several states, or by conventions in three-fourths thereof, as one or the other mode of ratification may be proposed by Congress.

Thus, by a gradual progress, as has been done in *England*, we may from time to time introduce every improvement in our constitution, that shall be suitable to our situation. For this purpose, it may perhaps be adviseable, for every state, as it sees occasion, to form with the utmost deliberation, drafts of alterations respectively required by them, and to enjoin their representatives, to employ every proper method to obtain a ratification.

In this way of proceeding the undoubted sense of every state, collected in the coolest manner, not the sense of individuals, will be laid before the whole union in Congress, and that body will be enabled with the clearest light that can be afforded by every part of it, and with the least occasion of irritation, to compare and weigh the sentiments of all United *America*; forthwith to adopt such alterations as are recommended by general unanimity; by degrees to devise modes of conciliation upon contradictory propositions; and to give the revered advice of our common country, upon those, if any such there should be, that in her judgment are inadmissible, because they are incompatible with the happiness of these states.

It cannot be with reason apprehended, that Congress will refuse to act upon any articles calculated to promote the *common welfare*, tho' they may be unwilling to act upon such as are

designed to advance PARTIAL *interests*: but, whatever their sentiments may be, they MUST call a Convention for proposing amendments, on applications of two-thirds of the legislatures of the several states.

May those good citizens, who have sometimes turned their thoughts towards a second Convention, be pleased to consider, that there are men who speak as they do, yet do not mean as they do. These borrow the sanction of their respected names, to conceal desperate designs. May they also consider, whether persisting in the suggested plan, in preference to the constitutional provision, may not kindle flames of jealousy and discord, which all their abilities and virtues can never extinguish.

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