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Debates in the Pennsylvania Convention 28 November 1787 (excerpts)

THOMAS MCKEAN: . . . I earnestly hope, sir, that the statutes of the federal government will last till they become the common law of the land, as excellent and as much valued as that which we have hitherto fondly denominated the birthright of an American. Such, Mr. President, are the objects to which the powers of the proposed government extend. Nor is it entirely left to this evident principle, that nothing more is given than is expressed, to circumscribe the federal authority. For, in the ninth section of the first Article, we find the powers so qualified that not a doubt can remain. In the first clause of that section, there is a provision made for an event which must gratify the feelings of every friend to humanity. The abolition of slavery is put within the reach of the federal government; and when we consider the situation and circumstances of the Southern States, every man of candor will find more reason to rejoice that the power should be given at all, than to regret that its exercise should be postponed for twenty years. . . .

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. II: Pennsylvania (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1976), 416–17.