

A Delegate Who Has Caught Cold, *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 25 June 1788

To the Honorable the CHAIRMAN of the COMMITTEE of the CONVENTION at RICHMOND.

As we may propose and recommend amendments to Congress, and to avoid the reproach of making them either partial, or numerous and contradictory, let us be satisfied with presenting a bill of rights of the people of America, in such general terms; so expressive, so clear, and at the same time so short, as never to require either comment or interpretations. Nothing that has been yet laid before the public is satisfactory; may it be written by men conscious of its necessity and of the dignity of their subject, that it may be an honorable introduction to the constitution of the United States of America.

Our rights as a free people, were fixed and fully expressed at the head of our different constitutions. Why then should they not be placed also at the head of this general fœderation, which may supercede these? Some states, it is true, have no bill of rights, but it is an additional reason for inserting one in the fœderal; since as Americans their rights are the same, and making a greater concession of those rights to the fœderal body, that precaution is at present indispensable: it is not possible now to be ignorant of our rights, and to contest them, being so near of the glorious epoch of their acquisition; but it will be attempted in the future time and the history of all ages announce that they will no more be spared, than those of all the people who have preceded us, if we have no more care for their preservation.

In considering all peoples existing on the earth and the nations who have preceded them, it is not possible to sustain, that they have been reduced in that state of servitude with their full consent and by the free concession of their rights! but in contrary it is certain, that they have lost them imperceptibly and have been subjugated by gradation, or by a violent revolution occasioned by anarchy; if they had well known, established and maintained their prerogatives and their government, they should have prevented those two extremes, who have constrained them to creep under a chief, and becoming conqueror, or conquered people.

Those rights characterise the man, essentially the true republican, the citizen of this continent; their enumeration, in head of the new constitution, can inspire and conserve the affection for the native country, they will be the first lesson of the young citizens becoming men, to sustain the dignity of their being; in fine the publication of those prerogatives has drawn us the envy and the admiration of all Europe, and being the preamble of our fœderal constitution, they may be the means of a considerable emigration to this continent.

We shall consider the new modelled Congress, as the general arsenal in which we deposit our arms and our ammunitions, our bill of rights, if accepted, will be the authenticated act of deposit, and the limited time for revision, will serve to verify, whether they have been kept in good order and whether the trust has not been abused.

Under a firm persuasion and conviction of the necessity of an energetic, uniform and regular government, to which we must necessarily yield up a part of our states sovereignties, I cannot

discover, with my feeble understanding, any other means, that [i.e., than] this sacred palladium that can effectually secure us and our posterity from the odious tyranny of an aristocratic government, nor any thing less, than the adopting this new constitution to save us from anarchy and annihilation.

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