

Edmund Randolph Speech: Virginia Ratifying Convention, 10 June 1788

...After having acknowledged the evil tendency of separate confederacies, he recurs to this, that this country is too extensive for this system. If there be an Executive dependent for its election on the people; a judiciary which will administer the laws with justice, no extent of country can be too great for a republic. Where is there a precedent to prove that this country is too extensive for a Government of this kind? America cannot find a precedent to prove this. Theoretic writers have adopted a position, that extensive territories will not admit of a Republican Government. These positions were laid down before the science of Government was as well understood as it is now, Where would America look for a precedent to warrant her adoption of that position. If you go to Europe before arts and sciences had arrived at their present perfection, no example worthy of imitation can be found. The history of England from the reign of Henry the 7th; of Spain, since that of Charles the 5th; and of France, since that of Francis the 1st, prove, that they have greatly improved in the science of politics since that time. Representation, the source of American liberty, and English liberty, was a thing not understood in its full extent till very lately. The position I have spoken of was founded upon an ignorance of the principles of representation. Its force must be now done away, as this principle is so well understood. If laws are to be made by the people themselves, in their individual capacities, it is evident, that they cannot conveniently assemble together for this purpose, but in a very limited sphere; but if the business of legislation be transacted by Representatives, chosen periodically by the people, it is obvious that it may be done in any extent of country. The experience of this Commonwealth, and of the United States, proves this assertion...

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