

Fabius I, *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 12 April 1788

OBSERVATIONS ON the CONSTITUTION

proposed by the FEDERAL CONVENTION.

The Constitution proposed by the Federal Convention now engages the fixed attention of *America*.

Every person appears to be affected. Those who wish the adoption of the plan, consider its rejection as the source of endless contests, confusions, and misfortunes; and they also consider a resolution to alter, without previously adopting it, as a rejection.

Those who oppose the plan, are influenced by different views. Some of them are friends, others of them are enemies, to the United States. The latter are of two classes; either men without principles or fortunes, who think they may have a chance to mend their circumstances, *with impunity*, under a *weak government*, or in *public convulsions*, but cannot make them worse even by the last—or men who have been always averse to the revolution; and though at first confounded by that event, yet, their hopes reviving with the declension of our affairs, have since persuaded themselves, that at length the people, tired out with their continued distresses, will return to their former connection with *Great-Britain*. To argue with these opposers, would be vain—The other opposers of the plan deserve the highest respect.

What concerns all, should be considered by all; and individuals may injure a whole society, by not declaring their sentiments. It is therefore not only their *right*, but their *duty*, to declare them. Weak advocates of a good cause or artful advocates of a bad one, may endeavour to stop such communications, or to discredit them by clamor and calumny. This, however, is not the age for such tricks of controversy. Men have suffered so severely by being deceived upon subjects of the highest import, those of religion and freedom, that *truth* becomes infinitely valuable to them, not as a matter of curious speculation, but of beneficial practice—A spirit of enquiry is excited, information diffused, judgment strengthened.

Before this tribunal, let every one freely speak, what he really thinks, but with so sincere a reverence for the cause he ventures to discuss as to use the utmost caution, lest he should lead into errors, upon a point of such sacred concern as *the public happiness*.

It is not the design of this address, to describe the present derangement of our affairs, the mischief that must ensue from its continuance, the horrors of a total dissolution of the union, or the division of it into partial confederacies. Nor is it intended to describe the evils that will result from pursuing the plan of another Federal Convention; as if a better temper of conciliation, or a more satisfactory harmony of decisions, could be expected from men, after their minds are agitated with disgust and disappointments, than before they were thus disturbed; though from an uncontradicted assertion it appears, that without such provocations, the difficulty of reconciling the interests of the several states was so near to INSUPERABLE, in the

late Convention, that after many weeks spent in the most faithful labors to promote concord, the members were upon the very point of dispersing in the utmost disorder, jealousy and resentment, and leaving the states exposed to all the tempests of passions, that have been so fatal to confederacies of democratical republics.

All these things have been laid before the public in a much better manner, than the writer of this address is capable of, and to repeat what has been said, he means not. What he wishes, is to simplify the subject, so as to facilitate the enquiries of his fellow citizens.

Many are the objections made to the system proposed. They should be distinguished. Some may be called *local*, because they spring from the supposed interests of individual states. Thus, for instance, some inhabitants of large states may desire the system to be so altered, that they may possess more authority in the decisions of the government; or some inhabitants of commercial states may desire it to be so altered, that the advantages of their trade may center almost wholly among themselves; and this predilection they may think compatible with the common welfare. Their judgment being thus warped at the beginning of their deliberation, objections are accumulated as very important, that, without this prepossession, would never have obtained their approbation. Certain it is, that strong understandings may be so influenced by this insulated patriotism, as to doubt, whether general benefits can be communicated by a general government.

Probably nothing would operate so much for the correction of these errors, as a perusal of the accounts transmitted to us by the ancients, of the calamities occasioned in *Greece* by a conduct founded on similar errors. They are expressly ascribed to this cause—*that each city meditated apart on its own profit and ends—insomuch that those who seemed to contend for union, could never relinquish their own interests and advancement, while they deliberated for the public.*

Heaven grant! that our countrymen may pause in time—duly estimate the present moment—and solemnly reflect—whether their measures may not tend to draw down the same distractions upon us, that desolated *Greece*.

They may now tolerably judge from the proceedings of the Federal Convention and of other Conventions, what are the sentiments of *America* upon her present and future prospects. Let the voice of her distress be venerated—and adhering to the generous *Virginian* declaration, let them resolve to CLING TO UNION AS THE POLITICAL ROCK OF OUR SALVATION.

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