

Philadelphiensis V, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 19 December

1787

...My fellow citizens, this is an awful crisis; your situation is alarming indeed; yourselves and your petitions are despised and trampled under the feet of self-important nabobs; whose diabolical plots and secret machinations have been carried on since the revolution, with a view to destroy your liberties, and reduce you to a state of slavery and dependence; and alas! I fear they have found you off your guard, and taken you by surprise: these aspiring men have seized the government, and secured all power, as they suppose, to themselves, now openly browbeat you with their insolence, and assume majesty; and even treat you like menial servants, your representatives as so many conquered slaves, that, they intend to make pass under the yoke, as soon as leisure from their gluttony and rioting on the industry of the poor, shall permit them to attend such a pleasing piece of sport.

But I trust, these petty tyrants will soon find to their confusion, that their own imprudent zeal has defeated their designs. Providence has ordered, that they should begin to carry their arbitrary schemes too soon into execution, that, their boundless ambition should precipitate their destruction, and that the glory of God should be made perfect in the salvation of the poor. Blessed be his name, "He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." As a villain, who, secreted to rob and murder in the silent hour of night, issues forth from his lurking place before the people have retired to sleep, and thus frustrates his infernal design by impatience; so in like manner the lust of dominion has urged these despots on to the adoption of measures that will inevitably, and, I hope, immediately un hinge every part of their conspiracy against the rights of their fellow-men, and bring on themselves infamy and disgrace.

Figure to yourselves, my brethren, a man with a plantation just sufficient to raise a competency for himself and his dear little children; but by reason of the immoderate revenue necessary to support the *emperor*, the illustrious *well born Congress*, the *standing army*, &c. &c. he necessarily fails in the payment of his *taxes*; then a hard-hearted federal officer seizes, and sells, his cows, his horses, and even the land itself must be disposed of to answer the demands of government: He pleads unfruitful seasons, his old age, and his numerous, and helpless family. But alas! these avail him nothing, his farm, his cattle, and his all are sold for less than half their value to his wealthy neighbour, already possessed of half the land in the county, to whom also himself and his children must become servants and slaves, or else perish with hunger and want. Do I exaggerate here? No truly. View the misery of the poor under the

despotic governments of Europe and Asia, and then deny the truth of my position, if you can. It is a common saying among the poor of Indostan, that to lie is better than to stand, to sleep is better than to wake, but death is best of all; for it delivers them from the cruelty of their nabobs. Even in the freest country in Europe, a lady's lap-dog is more esteemed than the child of a poor man. O God, what a monster is man! that a dog should be nourished and pampered up by him with dainties; whilst a being, possessed of knowledge, reason, judgement, and an immortal soul, bought with no less a price than the blood of our divine Redeemer, should be driven from his door, without admitting him even for a moment to assuage his hunger with the crumbs that might fall from his table.

But the members of the Federal Convention were men who have been all tried in the field of action, say some; they have fought for American liberty: Then the more to their shame be it said; curse on the villain who protects virgin innocence only with a view that he may himself become the ravisher; so that if the assertion were true, it only turns to their disgrace; but as it happens it is not true, or at least only so in part: This was a scheme taken by the despots and their sycophants to bias the public mind in favor of the constitution; for the convention was composed of a variety of characters; ambitious men Jesuites, tories, lawyers, &c. formed the majority, whose similitude to each other, consisted only in their determination to lord it over their fellow citizens; like the rays that converging from every direction meet in a point, their sentiments and deliberations centered in tyranny alone; they were unanimous in forming a government that should raise the fortunes and respectability of the *well born few*, and oppress the plebians.

Cite as: *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution Digital Edition*, ed. John P. Kaminski, Gaspare J. Saladino, Richard Leffler, Charles H. Schoenleber and Margaret A. Hogan. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009.

Canonic URL: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/RNCN-03-15-02-0006>
[accessed 04 Aug 2011]

Original source: Commentaries on the Constitution, Volume XV: Commentaries on the Constitution, No. 3