

The Republican Federalist IV, *Massachusetts Centinel*, 12 January 1788

To the MEMBERS of the CONVENTION of MASSACHUSETTS.

...Many great objections to the new system have been unanswered, and I conceive, if we mean to support our liberties, are unanswerable: Notwithstanding which the State Convention will in all probability be warmly urged to accept the system, and at the same time to propose amendments—this indeed may take in the *weak* and *unwary*, but not persons of discernment: For a wise people will never place over themselves an arbitrary government, in expectation that it will be so *remarkably* virtuous as to divest itself of unreasonable and unlimited powers. Is not this contrary to human nature, which is generally grasping at more power, not knowing often times that it would be abused as soon as obtained?

The new Constitution provides “that the Congress whenever two thirds of both houses shall deem it necessary shall propose amendments to this Constitution, or on the application of the legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a convention for proposing amendments, which in either case shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other mode of ratification may be proposed by the Congress:”—To call a Convention then, two thirds of both houses of the new Congress must deem it necessary, or the legislatures of two thirds of the several States must make an application to Congress; and can it be doubted that there will not be found such a majority of the new Congress, or of the State legislatures *disposed* to call a Convention *for making amendments*? When the Constitution is adopted, will not the friends of it strenuously contend to give it a trial? Are there not numbers who at this time openly reprobate republican governments? And will not such persons raise numberless objections to the appointment of such a Convention, and endeavour to prevent it? But supposing a Convention should be called, what are we to expect from it, after having ratified the proceedings of the late federal Convention? They will be called to make “*amendments*” an indefinite *term*, that may be made to signify any thing. Should Judge M’Kean, be of the new Convention, perhaps he will think a system of despotism, *an amendment* to the present plan, and should the next change be only to a monarchical government, the people may think themselves very happy, for *bad* as the new system is, it is the *best* they will ever have should they now adopt it. If therefore, it is the intention of the Convention of this State to preserve republican principles in the federal government, they must accomplish it *before*, for they never can expect to effect it *after* a ratification of the new system.

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