

## A Friend to Paper Money, *Newport Herald*, 12 June 1788

Mr. EDES, *As a man of candor you will give the following a place in your paper, though it makes not so directly to your interest, as you may wish.*

FRIENDS AND FREEMEN, I am not about to baffle your reason with sophistry, or drown your understandings with a torrent of rhetoric, but in the plain language of honesty to call your attention to the press, lately become the nuisance of society; for two years past that malicious machine of ingratitude, though fostered by the public, has been thundering defamation against her leading characters; half-heads, antifederalists, and patrons of paper have been her common epithets for those justices, judges, and governors, who have so much *distinguished* themselves, in procuring a revolution, which has spread the *fame* of Rhode-Island to distant quarters of the world: who but knows our sad situation before this revolution? we were then pressed by domestic necessities, loaded with taxes, and closely pursued by merciless creditors, threatening us with poverty, and the prison: these *my friends* are not imaginary evils; they really existed, and were prevented, but by the arduous endeavors of citizens, whose names deserve immortality; they, by measures seemingly magical, immediately changed the common order of occurrences, sending the *debtor* after the flying *creditor*, with money in his hands, crying, receive your demands, or "KNOW YE" they are *for ever* forfeited: *how rare a blessing!* to which, God knows, many of us owe our very existence; for before this, had our debts been exacted by the rigor of the law, we must have given our goods to the *sheriff*, and our bodies to the *gaol*: since then we are free, shall we suffer the *authors* of our freedom to be defamed, and abused by the press, which has become the hobby of every snarling scribbler? No, veteran freemen, no; rouse to your duty, and assert your rights; protect your benefactors by exterminating the press, that idol of the minority, and *pest* to the *honest* asserters of paper money; this is easily done, and to neglect it will continue us the ridicule of mankind. But perhaps you are intimidated at the terrors painted by your opponents? they declare *your end to be near*, and therefore you should be silent; but *will* you be silent? like cowards *will* you tremble at distant danger, and yield to inferior enemies, when a vigorous and determined conduct may still secure our power, and protect our declining privileges? they point also to the new *federal constitution*; what then? why forsooth 'twill soon plunge us from power to impotence, and there leave us to eternal contempt; and shall *this* terrify us? shall it shake the reins of government from our hands, and render us the dupes of every buffoon? what if we have forced the creditor to receive *one dollar* in satisfaction for every *six* honestly due to him? had we not a *right* to do it? if not we had the *power*, and that ever did, and ever will supply the place of right, and among the greater part of mankind generally passes for the same. To crown their imaginary terrors they cry out *conscience! conscience! hereafter! hereafter!* hang conscience, and hereafter together; how can they be connected with politics? but if they are, dismiss them; for is not a bird in the hand worth two in the bush? I now, *my friends*, conclude, presuming that the *propriety*, and *necessity* of acting with firmness, banishing the *printer*, and *burning the press* clearly appears to your understandings; hoping that you, as friends to *paper equity*, will make

those purposes the objects of your *wisdom*, wherein you may discover all that *dignity* and *patriotism* that for two years past have moved and directed your operations.

1. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, Part I, Book IV, Chapter iv. Part I first appeared in Spanish in 1605.

Published in Volume XXIV of *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution, Rhode Island*, Vol. 1, edited by John P. Kaminski, Charles H. Schoenleber, Gaspare J. Saladino, Richard Leffler, Jonathan M. Reid, Margaret R. Flamingo, Patrick T. Conley, Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2011.