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Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*

Senex

Virginia Independent Chronicle, 15 August 1787¹

To the CITIZENS of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA.

I have read, with a great deal of attention, Mr. Adams's PRETENDED Defence of the American Constitutions.—It is, as far as I can judge, one of the most deep wrought systems of political deception, that ever was penn'd by the ingenuity of man. It is a capital picture I must readily confess; but without adverting to the specimens of an Angelo or a Raphael, I will venture to affirm, that it exhibits the truest mixture of light and shade, that ever entered the imagination of a painter. Americans, beware!—for if you imbibe a particle of his political poison, you are undone for ever.—His learned production has been very lately put into my hands—but every subject of such immense moment, as it may have great weight and perhaps prove an eternal ulcer on the body politic of this country, I think it my duty as a citizen and a patriot, as far as my abilities will admit, to probe it to the very bottom—disregarding the shafts of ridicule, the sneer of contempt, or the frown of power. If my health should last, you may depend on hearing from me—and upon every subject inserted in his Janus, or double-faced, composition.

PRINCE EDWARD, *July* 30, 1787.

1. On 22 August Dr. James McClurg of Richmond wrote James Madison that “Senex” was “supposed by some to be Mr. H—y [Patrick Henry].”

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