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## Interrogator: To Publius or the Pseudo-Federalist post-1 December 1787 (excerpts)

This undated, unpublished manuscript written by Hugh Hughes responded to Alexander Hamilton's *The Federalist* 15. Hughes's draft essay, which was addressed to "Publius or the Pseudo-Federalist" asked "a few plain questions," was laced with invectives against "Publius" and the Constitutional Convention. Hughes probably submitted his essay for publication under the pseudonym "Interrogator," but it was never published. Charles Tillinghast told Hughes that "I put the *Interrogator* into the hands of *Cato*, who gave it to *Brutus* to read, and between them, I have not been able to get it published."

Sir, As you appear to me, from your much labour'd & multitudinous Publications, to be *Solicitor General* for the New Constitution (perhaps with a View of being ATTORNEY GENERAL OR LD. CHIEF-JUSTICE under it) and have address'd all your Publications, in it's Favour, "To the People of the State of New York"—in particular; I beg your Permission, *as one of those very Persons*, to request the Solution of a few plain Questions, which (I imagine) are easily solved by a Gentleman of your *Knowledge* and *Identity*. . . .

. . . Your Conduct seems to me, very much like that of a Prostitute recommending Chastity to her Sex, lest they should divide the Profits of the Business with her, as one that thought herself intitled to an exclusive Right to ruin her Adherents.—What else can you there mean by prostituting the *sacred Names of Reason and Justice*?

Have the Framers of that disgraceful & wicked Clause, or their Adherents, any Pretensions to speak of Reason and Justice, unless it be to deceive?—But, when you ask the following Question—"Has it been found that Bodies of Men act with more Rectitude or greater Disinterestedness than Individuals?"—And answer—"The Contrary of this has been infer'd by all accurate Observers of the Conduct of Mankind; and the Inference is founded upon obvious Reasons. Regard to Reputation has a less active Influence, when the *Infamy* of a bad Action is to be divided among a Number, than when it is to fall singly upon one. A *Spirit of Faction* which is apt to mingle its *Poison* in the Deliberations of all Bodies of Men, will often hurry the Persons of whom they are compos'd into Improperities and Excesses, for which they would blush, in a private Capacity."—You really speak as tho' you had been a Member of the late Convention, and there experienced, in your own Person, *all the Improperities and Excesses which a Spirit of Faction could produce* by mingling its Poison in your Deliberations, and which you so feelingly and emphatically now describe. I shall be happy to know whether you had an eye generally, to the Conduct of the Convention, [and?] to the particular Conduct of one of its Members or Both. . . . [A]s I yet wish

to learn of so able an Informant, by what Authority the Delegate from this State to the late Convention acceded to their Proceedings? Have you ever seen, heard, or understood that the Legislature, or either Branch of it, impowered or encouraged him, directly or indirectly, to the accession?

Or, have you ever seen, or heard of, Petitions from a Majority of the Freeholders and Inhabitants of this State, requesting a new Constitution for the U. States? Or, have you any official or authentic Documents to prove that any of the States in the Union requested an entire new Constitution by a Consolidation of the Whole? —

If you can Answer all or any of these Questions in the Affirmative, I beg you will be so condescending; as I really wish for Information, and have Reason to think, that many others are in the like Situation. —

If you do not, comply with such reasonable Requisitions, you will please to remember that you subject yourself and Cause to some very unfavourable Inferences. —

Finally, as you appear to be much bloated by a vain Opinion of a little Learning and Knowledge, and not infrequently to have written like a Person, who considered himself as the sole Proprietor of all common Sense, permit me to remind you of the Fable of the Ox and the Frog,<sup>1</sup> who, ambitious to make as great an Appearance as the Former, kept straining its lankey Sides till it burst, which, must be the Fate of every Individual whatever, that attempts to put his scanty Knowledge or Acquirements in Competition with the Aggregate Knowledge of a Nation. — Only reflect on how little you know of your own mental and corporeal Composition, as well as of what daily and momentarily contributes to your Support and Existence or, that many of the most simple Plebians, or Mechanics, can teach you some of the first Principles of Philosophy. Or how very little you know of any Thing, when compared with what is unknow[n] to you and Thousands who are much wiser, & you will not find much Cause to value yourself on your Omniscience.

P.S. How would you relish making a Trip to Algiers in Company with the Authors, Promoters and Abettors of the Section already mentioned, and there spend the Remainder of your Days at the Chain and Oar or to be driven like Cattle into the interior Parts of the Country and there distributed as might best suit the Captors or Purchasers &c.? Yet Monsters in Wickedness as you and they are! Believe me, I do not wish you nor them a worse Fate, than to experience it long enough to produce a *permanent Contrition*.

1. See Æsop's fable "The Frog and the Ox," the moral of which is "self-conceit may lead to self-destruction."

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