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Remarker

Boston Independent Chronicle, 17 January 1788 (excerpt)

To the CITIZENS of MASSACHUSETTS.

FRIENDS & FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN! In our last we commenced answering to the objections which had been stated against the Constitution. We shall now go on with our work. 4th, It is objected, that the Senate in this Constitution, bears too near a resemblance to an aristocratic body. This, however sanctioned by the great objector in Massachusetts, is extremely disingenuous. It is an idea, thrown out on purpose to excite the jealousy of the people, and could proceed only from a heart so deeply tinged with depravity, as to wish to see the world at large of a correspondent *hue*. Unhappily, fear is a contracting principle, and suspicion a poisoning quality. But, my fellow-citizens, let reason counteract the crafty insinuations of malicious spirits.—Settle in your minds the principles of an aristocracy, and then examine the Senate, its origin, its power, and its existence, and you will not find a single feature existing in it, which bears the least degree of resemblance to aristocratic deformity. Even their complexions are perfectly distinct. The Senate must derive their origin *from the people*; their power is limited *by the people*, and they are responsible *to the people*. It is easy to convince any honest mind, that the Senate is by no means a-kin to a body of nobles. This will appear by taking the properties of the latter, and applying them to the former. It is said that aristocracy may be either elective or hereditary. It is with this government, as with monarchy, in this respect. However an elective aristocracy, may seem to promise a good administration, experience shows that for some reason or other, practice will not advocate the preference. Contention here among the people always endangers the springs of government. Hereditary aristocracy in those countries, where it hath existed, has always been found to comport better with national happiness, than one that is elective. The properties of an aristocracy, we take to be these,—1st, It is independent; 2d, Permanent; 3d, Uncontroulable, and 4th, Not responsible. It derives its existence from an inherent right of succession, that does not come within the prescription of the people. This being the case, WISDOM, the only necessary qualification for good government, with which aristocracy hath ever been complemented, may vanish. It is also firmly fixed. Let but a body of nobles once rivet upon a people, the chains of slavery, and they are rivetted beyond the possibility of rupture. The nobility is also beyond coutroul. They know no superior upon earth. They are not under any obligations to their subjects, and therefore pay them nothing. The PEOPLE, who in all good governments are the source of power, are not here permitted to put their hands to the wheel of government. The nobility move the machine as they please. They are not responsible, nor do they know of any authority that can call them to an account. None dare say unto them, why do ye thus, or so? But, my fellow-citizens, for a moment

call to mind the origin, the mode of existence, and the power of the Senate in this Constitution. Their very being is derived from the people, their power is limited, and after all, they are obliged to render an account to the *people* for their conduct, and may at any time be impeached for malpractices. Beware of false pretensions, and trust not to the crafty insinuations of designing men. Think and believe for yourselves. Judge not because there are many performances against the Constitution, that spring solely from malicious depravity, that therefore it is bad in itself. It is a very easy matter for persons wickedly inclined to object to any thing. The christian religion itself has had its opposers. It discovers neither genius nor wisdom to object. Does it express much sagacity or penetration to declaim largely against egregious defects that may exist in any Constitution, without showing that they are to be found in that which is proposed? Or is it not rather easy to excite the suspicions and stir up the fears and jealousy of the people, by telling them that they will lose their liberties, if they grant this, that, and the other power? Any one can cry out to a multitude, that the great fish will eat the little ones up, when in fact there is no danger at all of it. This is paying a very poor compliment to the States indeed. It is impossible that these States, should lose their liberties. Let only the imagination and the feelings be kept quiet, and reason preside, and this Constitution will receive what is due to it, *universal approbation*. The idea of an aristocracy in the Senate, is absurd in another view. If ever there were any qualifications of wealth required, there would be no danger of an aristocracy. The manner of inheriting and the mode of succession in this country, would not admit the amassing of wealth among any number of citizens, to a degree bordering upon aristocracy. Estates are not here entailed, and the dispersion of the fathers among his children, creates such a fluctuation of property, as will not give room for a permanent superiority in fortune. But the fact is, that extensive property is not to be taken into consideration. Here is to be no qualification of wealth. Wisdom and uprightness are the most essential. All honest and sensible men are entitled to a preference. This is a position confined to freedom alone, and which the best republics in the world, have embraced. Aristeus was not less a statesman or a man of integrity, because his estate at his death was not sufficient to discharge the expences of his funeral. Cincinnatus guided at one time the helm of government, and at another the plough, with equal exactness. Thank GOD, poverty is not holden to be a mark of disgrace here, as it is in England. There dignity and wealth are held to be universally concomitant. Here we are glad to embrace wisdom and honesty, whether we find it joined to a great or a moderate fortune. In the reign of Edward the fourth, when fortune frowned upon the Duke of Bedford, the King and Parliament in concurrence knit their brows, and the poor man was degraded. But here such irrational partiality is not to exist. . . .

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