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Federalist and Antifederalist: The Origin of the Terms > Opponents of the Constitution  
Resist Being Labeled Antifederalists

## A Countryman II (De Witt Clinton)

*New York Journal*, 13 December 1787 (excerpt)

HONORED and GOOD SIR, Your kind letter of the 10th of this month gave me great relief, for I was sore afraid that my very long epistle to you, had wearied and offended you, which I am very glad to find is not the case, as you ask me to write to you again, which I shant fail doing: my neighbour —, and myself, as I mentioned to you in my last we intended, have since spent several evenings together, and sat up late, reading the new constitution, and papers, in hopes to come to a thorough knowledge of them, which to be sure, is not an easy matter; one thing, and it would appear but a trifling matter, puzzled us exceedingly, that is, the names the different writers have fixed upon one another; for we found that those who are for abiding by the confederation and strengthening it, so as to make it lasting, are called antifederalists; and the other party who are for throwing it aside, and having nothing farther to do with it, but are for making of us into one solid government, are called federalists: now I did not know the meaning of the high-flown words, but my neighbour told me, that antifederalists were people, that were against the confederation; and that federalists were those that were for it: now, as I said before, this puzzled us very much, and often prevented our understanding what we were reading—at length we both agreed, that either the writers themselves or the printers had made a mistake; so to hinder our being bothered any more, it was agreed, that my neighbour should take pen and ink, and strike out anti, where it was used, and put it to the other word, so as to make it read right all through, and this, I can assure you, was a great help to us, and well paid for the time it took, for we could understand what we read with much greater ease afterwards. . . .

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