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Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 30 April 1788

Extract of a letter from Franklin county, 24th April, 1788.

“The necessary arrangements,” as they are termed here, have taken place in these counties; committees of observation and correspondence are appointed in every township, who correspond with the militia officers and leading men in every county in the state; the counties of Cumberland, Dauphine, and Franklin, appear to take the lead, and have been long since repairing and cleaning their arms, and every young fellow who is able to do it, is providing himself with a *rifle* or musket, and amunition: They have also nominated a commanding officer, it is said to be General —, and say that they can turn out, at ten days warning, TWENTY THOUSAND expert woodsmen, completely armed; this is I believe very true, as all the counties, this side the Susquehanna, are nearly unanimous, and near three fourths of the other counties. They say the strength of their opponents are in the city, and give out that it will be in vain for them to make any resistance; they mean to make * * *¹ and are promised assistance from a neighbouring state, who, I find, are as warmly opposed as this state to the system. The *lawyers*, &c. when they precipitated with such fraud and deception the new system upon us, it seems to me, did not recollect, that the militia had arms; however, it will be an awful lesson to tyrants, if they should feel the resentment of an enraged people; I can assure Mr. Wilson that the people are now as *determined* to secure their liberties as he is *anxious* for power and offices; and let the worst come to the worst, the opposition have the constitution of the state, the established law of the land, on their side; this yet remains good and firm, any doings, or *acts of a faction, or illegal mob convention, to the contrary notwithstanding. A civil war* is dreadful, but a little blood spilt now, will perhaps prevent much more hereafter. However, another general convention being called, will prevent any thing like it happening; the people appear anxious for farther powers being granted to Congress; and are generally agreed, that those offered by the minority of the convention of this state would be quite sufficient, and all their rights and privileges would be then secured by the proposed bill of rights, consequently unity and harmony would follow: on the other hand, if the votaries of power and offices do not agree to peaceable measures, by having another general convention called, I dread the consequences to themselves.

“N. B. I hear no more of the attempt to execute the order of Council to disarm the militia,² I believe the *sub-lieutenants* in most of the counties refused to deliver up the arms, it was well enough, for the people were determined not to part with them. It is hinted that since the western members went down, they cancelled the order.”

1. At this point the *Independent Gazetteer* printed two lines of asterisks, indicating that material perhaps too sensitive to print was omitted.

2. On 4 December 1787 the Supreme Executive Council resolved “That the Lieutenants of the city and several counties within this state, be directed to collect all the public arms within their respective counties, have them repaired, and make return to Council, with the accounts and vouchers necessary for payment.” Some Antifederalists charged that this was part of a Federalist plot to force the Constitution upon the people. The Council denied the charge, and it published some of its earlier resolves concerning the militia to demonstrate that it was actually arming the militia in order to protect the people, especially on the frontier. As a further demonstration of its goodwill, the Council resolved on 12 January 1788 “That the Lieutenants of the city and counties throughout the state, be directed, as soon as the public arms are repaired, to deliver them to the battalions under their command, apportioning them to the number of men in each, take receipts for them, and make report to Council.”

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