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Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard Boston, 8 December 1787 (excerpt)

. . . We have been all agog here about the Constitution—The Papers teem with Federal & Antifederal Pieces—Caucus-meetings have been held & a coalition effected previous to the Town meeting wh was yesterday when 12 Members were chosen for this Town whose names (if you please) you will see in the Papers—We are here more afraid of your State [New York] than of any other—tho' there will certainly be much opposition to it here—

I suppose every Officer of the United States does with you wish for *some Government*—We have never yet suffered our best Men to do all the good they would do, but we have suffered our worst Men to do a great deal of Mischief—When the Mischief has risen to an extravagant Pitch we have then been *obliged* to call for our best Men to restrain it—witness the Insurrection here last Winter—Now is it not better to let good men *prevent* Evil than to do thus? The present Constitution strikes at the Root of such Evils as we have suffered by the madness of *sovereign* State Assemblies—& if the Congress themselves will not adopt the same sort of Madness I wish they may have the power to restrain & controul all the 13 sub-sovereignties & exercise such a Governmt over the whole as “that we may lead quiet & peaceable Lives in all godliness & honesty” [1 Timothy 2:1–2]—

O that the Time would come when Men would govern themselves! then we should need no other Government! But while the world continues as it is there must be a restraint laid on the Lusts & Passions of mankind & such a Government as will do this in the most effectual manner is the most salutary. We have seen the Time when the Ruler has been “a terror to good works & not to the evil” [Romans 13:3]—But heaven grant that such a Burlesque upon Governmt may never be exhibited again in America. . . .

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