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## Centinel, Revived, XXV

*Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, 27 August 1789

(excerpts)

### TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES

*Friends and Fellow-Citizens*, At this momentous crisis, when Congress, in compliance with the earnest wishes of a great part of the citizens of the United States, are proceeding to revise and amend the new constitution of government, every patriotic citizen is loudly called upon to exert all his abilities and influence to obtain the requisite amendments; for upon the present decision will depend the complexion of the general government:—liberty or despotism will be the consequence.

The Centinel feels it peculiarly incumbent on him to step forward again on this great occasion, as he was the first person who apprized the public of the defects and dangers of the new constitution, and was greatly, if not wholly, instrumental in occasioning that enlightened, virtuous, and formidable opposition, to the implicit and unqualified establishment of this government, which nothing could have rendered ineffectual, but the magical influence of the name of *Washington*, which diverted the attention of the people from the construction of the new constitution, to a contemplation of his illustrious virtues, and induced them to place an entire dependence in his magnanimous conduct, and upright intentions, as first Magistrate, for the security of their dearest privileges, and the attainment of their every wish; not considering that to effect these desirable purposes, a proper form of government is essentially necessary to co-operate with the good intentions of the first Magistrate.

It is a very flattering circumstance to the author of the Centinel, that notwithstanding he commenced his animadversions on the new constitution, when the delusion was so powerful and extensive as to effect almost a total unanimity of infatuation, and so violent as to make it highly dangerous to doubt of the divinity of this constitution; when the public mind was revelling in the chimerical prospects of an additional government, with a duplicate of officers, that was to be administered by the annihilation of all taxes, that was to discharge, with the most scrupulous punctuality, the principal and interest of the public debts without funds, that was, in short, by some strange magic, to enrich and aggrandize every individual; I say it is very flattering to the Centinel, that although such fascinating visions had rendered the people almost impervious to information, yet his illustration of the impending dangers was so striking and well founded, as to produce so general a conviction of their reality, as nearly to give the *coup de grace* to the projects of ambition; and that, notwithstanding the author of the Centinel wrote without concert with,

or assistance by any other person, not one of the numerous objections made by him against the new constitution, but what has been recognized and adopted by a respectable opposition throughout the United States. And as to the personal attacks made in the course of his essays, he challenges the objects of them, or their advocates, to disprove the justness or truth of any of the charges or facts adduced by him. . . .

It is with the most heart-felt satisfaction the Centinel congratulates the infatuated federalists on their return from the airy regions of Utopia, and the resumption of their usual good sense and discernment; and as the most effectual method to confirm their recovery from the wild-fire of federalism, he intreats them to contrast the predictions of their deceivers prior to establishment of the new constitution, with the event of affairs already. This comparison, he is assured, will cure the most desperate case of delusion, and bring the egregious dupe to his senses. That sagacious and profound politician, Dean Swift, lays it down as a maxim, that in public affairs, the people cannot be made sensible of any thing injurious to their interests, until they feel by experience the mischief. If this sentiment be founded, it is only surprising the writers for amendments to the new constitution have accomplished so much in a speculative controversy, and is, at the same time, an evidence of extraordinary illumination and good sense in the people of the United States, that they were so very near forming an exception to the Dean's humiliating maxim. . . .

In the succeeding numbers, I mean to investigate the amount of the amendments reported by the select committee of the lower House of Congress, and thereby to shew the inadequacy of them to secure our liberties and properties from the depredations of power and ambition; and that these propositions are intended as a further opiate to lull the awakened jealousies of the freemen of America: The present being intended merely as an introduction to the subject. I also pledge myself to prove the injurious consequences of a national consolidated government, in so extended a country as the United States, on a new ground, and consequently the superiority of a confederation of republican governments, united only in general concerns—such as the regulation of commerce, and the common defence, but retaining to every state the exclusive power in internal taxation, the only practicable plan of such a form of general government. The ground alluded to is, that a national government, possessing all the sources of taxation, would drain all the circulating medium, or money, to the seat of empire, where it would remain, and thus impoverish the distant parts of the union;—and to corroborate his arguments on this subject, he will quote the corresponding sentiments of the celebrated, and almost divine *Montesquieu*, who says, the remote parts of an extensive empire ought not to pay so heavy taxes to government, on account of the scarcity of money occasioned by the influx to the capital. . . .

Philadelphia, August 25, 1789.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. XL: Bill of Rights [4] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2024), 385–87.