



# CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

csac.history.wisc.edu > Ratification at a Glance > Massachusetts > Significant Events and Outcomes Associated with Massachusetts > The Alleged Bribery of the Massachusetts Delegates

## *Massachusetts Centinel, 23 January 1788*

### *Detection of antifederal machinations.*

The following gross and infamous publication, viz.

[The text of “Bribery and Corruption” from the *Boston Gazette*, 21 January, was reprinted here without the signature “Centinel.”] having appeared in a paper of Monday, the friends to truth and honesty—the advocates for the federal Constitution, judging it to be the forgery of some enemy to *all government*, intending to raise suspicions and apprehensions in the minds of the good people of this Commonwealth, that if the proposed Constitution should be ratified by the Convention now sitting, its adoption was effected by corrupt and wicked means—and consequently that they may afterwards oppose its being carried into effect—were anxious that it should be inquired into; and if found fallacious, that it might be contradicted, and its fabricator exhibited to the indignation of his country.—As soon as our Convention met on Monday morning, the Hon. Mr. BOWDOIN, informed that Hon. body, of the publication, and introduced to the chair, a motion for an inquiry into the matter. This motion occasioned considerable conversation in the Convention. Many gentlemen urged the propriety of the investigation: that if true, the devisers of the plan might be known—and if false, that the infamous design of the incendiary be detected—and that the authour, who had thus insulted the dignity of the people of this State, by suggesting an idea that they had appointed men to represent them in Convention, capable of being bribed; should be exposed.—The speakers, who thus urged the inquiry were, the Hon Mr. Bowdoin, Judge Sumner, Hon. Messrs. Dalton, Sedgwick, Fuller, Gore, Jones, (of Boston) Col. Varnum, and others.—On the other hand, the Hon. Mr. White, Mr. Wedgery, and Gen. Thompson, opposed the inquiry, on the idea that it was assuming a legislative power—that the Convention had no right to question any person on the subject—and that it would tend to produce a repetition of such publications: But a great majority of the Convention considering with indignation the insult offered to the Commonwealth, by thus holding up the idea to our sister states, and foreigners, that undue means were taking to produce a measure, to effect which they conceived nothing but fair and candid arguments and reasonings were necessary; thought an enquiry absolutely indispensable; it was therefore ordered, that the Messenger be directed to request the Printers of the paper, to appear before the Convention forthwith, to give information respecting the publication—The messenger having waited on the Printers, they in the afternoon sent a letter to the Convention, acquainting that hon. body, that the gentleman who furnished them with the information had said he had good foundation for it, and that they could not give up his name.—On this a Committee was raised, to take the letter into consideration, who have

not yet reported; but from many circumstances that have transpired, we are authorized to assure the publick, that it is a FALSE and HELLISH FABRICATION.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. V: Massachusetts [2] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1998), 760–61.