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A Friend to Law and Order

Philadelphia *Freeman's Journal*, 2 April 1788 (excerpts)

But you refer to the word conspiracy and ask me, if I really believe that a conspiracy has been formed, for the purpose of establishing a despotic government in this country. My friend, I have not the least doubt of it. Where, when, or how this conspiracy was hatched, I cannot pretend to say at present; but I have full faith that the time will come, when the whole mystery will be fully disclosed. I will take the liberty of stating a few of my ideas on this subject.

This conspiracy was not hatched in the late Federal Convention, but before it met. Many of the members of the Convention, were far from being engaged in it; but it is now no secret, that some of the members would have given us a more naked system of tyranny, if they could have prevailed. Several members acquiesced in the system proposed, for fear of a worse. Doctor Franklin, in the speech which has been published and, I believe, is genuine, plainly enough intimated, that he opposed the Constitution, in its present form, as long as he could do it with any prospect of success. General Washington was placed in a situation, in which he was bound to acquiesce in the decisions of the majority and, perhaps, that *great man's* character would, if possible, be still more perfect, if he had less diffidence in his own judgment, and did not sometimes listen to the advice of men, who are not possessed of a twentieth part of his understanding. But there was a number of the conspirators in the Convention, perhaps a majority; and there were many of them out of doors, ready to attempt to force down the most arbitrary system that could possibly be devised.

It is near a twelvemonth, since I was told, very seriously, that there was a communication between people in the different parts of the continent, to bring about a new revolution, at the expence of our liberties; and a number of circumstances were told to confirm it. I confess, at that time, I disbelieved it; but, from what has since happened, I have altered my opinion. The precipitancy and violence which was used and attempted, in different parts of the continent to fasten the new Constitution about our necks, before the people at large could know what was doing; the similarity of language and conduct, in different places at the same time, with the new and extraordinary appearance of *Mobs* with powdered hair, made me think seriously of what I had heard before. But, above all, when I reflect upon the attempts which are continually made, to prevent the communication of intelligence, between those who are not friends to the proposed Constitution *in toto*; or who wish for amendments; the stopping of news-papers, the breaking open of packets and destroying them, on the roads; the continual miscarriages of letters by every species of conveyance, if written by the friends of liberty, and which, I have no doubt, are intercepted by the conspirators and their tools: in short, when I observe the same system of fraud,

circumvention and violence, pervading most parts of the continent at once, I cannot ascribe it to accident; but to a preconcerted design amongst the chosen members of a conspiracy. I have no doubt, however, that the great body of the people are yet disposed to remain free and assert their liberty; and that they will finally reject the pretensions of a combination of men, who, assuming to themselves the name of I the better sort of people, seem to think that the right of governing this country belongs to them in the same manner as James the First, and Charles the First of England, were vested with despotic power, *jure divino*.

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