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Philadelphiensis III

Philadelphia *Freeman's Journal*, 5 December 1787

(excerpts)

. . . Was there ever such an important time for America as this is? Can there be greater objects than these are, presented to the human understanding? I say there cannot: and I affirm it, that there is not a man in the United States, except some base assassin, or mean coward, who can be indifferent on this momentous occasion. Is there any one now among us who can remain unconcerned or neutral? If there be, I say he is not a man; no certainly, he is unworthy of that character; such a wretch can have no claim to the title of a free citizen of America, he is a pitiful sycophant, a cringing spaniel, a menial slave. . . .

For if we adopt this plan of government in its present form; I say that we shall have reason to curse the day that America became independent. Horrid thought! that the greatest blessing God ever bestowed on a nation, should terminate in its misery and disgrace. Strange reverse this! that the freemen of America, the favored of heaven, should submit to a government so arbitrary in its embryo, that even a bill of rights cannot be obtained, to secure to the people their unalienable privileges.

It was a common saying among many sensible men in Great Britain and Ireland, in the time of the war, that they doubted whether the great men of America, who had taken an active part in favor of independence, were influenced by pure patriotism: that it was not the love of their country they had so much at heart, as their own private interest; that a thirst after dominion and power, and not to protect the oppressed from the oppressor, was the great operative principle that induced these men to oppose Britain so strenuously. . . . But alas! the truth of the sentiment is now indisputably confirmed; facts are stubborn things, and these set the matter beyond controversy. The new constitution, and the conduct of its despotic advocates, shew that these men's doubts were really well founded. Unparalleled duplicity! that men should oppose tyranny under a pretence of patriotism, that they might themselves become the tyrants. How does such villainy disgrace human nature! Ah, my fellow-citizens, you have been strangely deceived indeed; when the wealthy of your own country assisted you to expel the foreign tyrant, only with a view to substitute themselves in his stead. . . .

As to this government being efficient, or rather sufficient to protect the people from the violence of a foreign enemy; the idea is so absurd that it offends common sense; it can neither have strength, energy, nor respectability, in the great scale of nations. For a new country to become strong and energetic, so as to be able to repel a foreign foe; the government must be free

and patriotic, and the people must be wealthy and well-affected to it. Now if these requisites be wanting, that country is in jeopardy every moment; in fact it is on the direct road of falling a prey to the surrounding nations. In this miserable predicament, then, must America stand if we adopt the new constitution: for the government will neither be free nor patriotic, but on the contrary, despotic and oppressive; and the people will be abject slaves toiling to support a government, which they curse in their hearts: a government composed only of an emperor and a few lordlings, surrounded by thousands of blood-suckers, and cringing sycophants. And in respect to the standing army, it will only be made up of profligate idle ruffians, whose prowess will chiefly consist in feats of cruelty exercised on their innocent fellow citizens; but in facing a foreign foe, they will prove themselves a body of mean cowards; like the Turkish janizaries, better acquainted with plundering their country than fighting for its protection. . . .

CITE AS: *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, ed. John P. Kaminski, et al., Commentaries on the Constitution, Volume XIV, No. 2, (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1983), 349-52.