# A Friend to the Rights of the People: Anti-Fœderalist, No. I, Exeter *Freeman's Oracle*, 8 February 1788 (excerpts)

*To the Inhabitants of* NEW-HAMPSHIRE.

The grand topick of the day is the New-Constitution, much has been said for, much has been said against it by able writers—On one side, it is warmly asserted, that the liberties of the people, are sufficiently secure, as it now stands—On the other it is urged with equal vehemence, they are not, amendments must be made—a Bill of Rights prefixed, or we are undone; so that it is very difficult, for common people to know what is right, any thing that may serve to throw light upon the subject, may be very useful at this juncture. Both sides, it appears to me, so far as I have had opportunity of reading, have kept the Constitution too much out of view. There seems to be a necessity of a more particular and impartial examination of the thing itself, which is the bone of so much contention. . . .

. . . It is therefore of vast importance that the constitution should be well considered, and carefully examined, for upon that and nothing else, rationally explained, according to the common usage of words, must we found our judgment of its goodness or badness;—My design therefore is to quote, and make some remarks upon some of the most capital propositions. . . .

*Remark* 5. Upon the slave trade, sect. 9. The migration, or importation of such persons, as any of the states shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by Congress prior to the year eighteen hundred and eight—By the importation of the persons above-mentioned, is doubtless meant the Guinea trade, by which thousands and millions of poor negroes have been wrested from their native country, their friends and all that is dear to them, and brought into a state of the most abject slavery and wretchedness—By the above article, this cruel and barbarous practice is not to be prohibited by Congress for twenty years to come, and even then, it is not said, it shall cease—Here is a permission granted, for the enslaving and making miserable our fellow men, totally contrary to all the principles of reason, justice, benevolence and humanity, and all the kind and compassionate dictates of the Christian Religion. Can we then hold up our hands for a Constitution that licences this bloody practice? Can we who have fought so hard for Liberty give our consent to have it taken away from others? May the powers above forbid. . . .

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