

Anti-Federalist No. 1, A Dangerous Plan of Benefit only to the "Aristocratick Combination" 26
November 1787 by A Federalist

From The Boston Gazette and Country Journal, November 26, 1787.

I am pleased to see a spirit of inquiry burst the band of constraint upon the subject of the NEW PLAN for consolidating the governments of the United States, as recommended by the late Convention. If it is suitable to the GENIUS and HABITS of the citizens of these states, it will bear the strictest scrutiny. The PEOPLE are the grand inquest who have a RIGHT to judge of its merits. The hideous daemon of Aristocracy has hitherto had so much influence as to bar the channels of investigation, preclude the people from inquiry and extinguish every spark of liberal information of its qualities. At length the luminary of intelligence begins to beam its effulgent rays upon this important production; the deceptive mists cast before the eyes of the people by the delusive machinations of its INTERESTED advocates begins to dissipate, as darkness flies before the burning taper; and I dare venture to predict, that in spite of those mercenary dectaimers, the plan will have a candid and complete examination. Those furious zealots who are for cramming it down the throats of the people, without allowing them either time or opportunity to scan or weigh it in the balance of their understandings, bear the same marks in their features as those who have been long wishing to erect an aristocracy in THIS COMMONWEALTH [of Massachusetts]. Their menacing cry is for a RIGID government, it matters little to them of what kind, provided it answers THAT description. As the plan now offered comes something near their wishes, and is the most consonant to their views of any they can hope for, they come boldly forward and DEMAND its adoption. They brand with infamy every man who is not as determined and zealous in its favor as themselves. They cry aloud the whole must be swallowed or none at all, thinking thereby to preclude any amendment; they are afraid of having it abated of its present RIGID aspect. They have strived to overawe or seduce printers to stifle and obstruct a free discussion, and have endeavored to hasten it to a decision before the people can duly reflect upon its properties. In order to deceive them, they incessantly declare that none can discover any defect in the system but bankrupts who wish no government, and officers of the present government who fear to lose a part of their power. These zealous partisans may injure their own cause, and endanger the public tranquility by impeding a proper inquiry; the people may suspect the WHOLE to be a dangerous plan, from such COVERED and DESIGNING schemes to enforce it upon them. Compulsive or treacherous measures to establish any government whatever,

will always excite jealousy among a free people: better remain single and alone, than blindly adopt whatever a few individuals shall demand, be they ever so wise. I had rather be a free citizen of the small republic of Massachusetts, than an oppressed subject of the great American empire. Let all act understandingly or not at all. If we can confederate upon terms that will secure to us our liberties, it is an object highly desirable, because of its additional security to the whole. If the proposed plan proves such an one, I hope it will be adopted, but if it will endanger our liberties as it stands, let it be amended; in order to which it must and ought to be open to inspection and free inquiry. The inundation of abuse that has been thrown out upon the heads of those who have had any doubts of its universal good qualities, have been so redundant, that it may not be improper to scan the characters of its most strenuous advocates. It will first be allowed that many undesigning citizens may wish its adoption from the best motives, but these are modest and silent, when compared to the greater number, who endeavor to suppress all attempts for investigation. These violent partisans are for having the people gulp down the gilded pill blindfolded, whole, and without any qualification whatever. These consist generally, of the NOBLE order of C[incinnatu]s, holders of public securities, men of great wealth and expectations of public office, B[an]k[er]s and L[aw]y[er]s: these with their train of dependents form the Aristocratick combination. The Lawyers in particular, keep up an incessant declamation for its adoption; like greedy gudgeons they long to satiate their voracious stomachs with the golden bait. The numerous tribunals to be erected by the new plan of consolidated empire, will find employment for ten times their present numbers; these are the LOAVES AND FISHES for which they hunger. They will probably find it suited to THEIR HABITS, if not to the HABITS OF THE PEOPLE. There may be reasons for having but few of them in the State Convention, lest THEIR [OWN] INTEREST should be too strongly considered. The time draws near for the choice of Delegates. I hope my fellow- citizens will look well to the characters of their preference, and remember the Old Patriots of 75; they have never led them astray, nor need they fear to try them on this momentous occasion.

16 January 1788

by Centinel

One of largest series of Antifederalist essays was penned under the pseudonym "CENTINEL." The Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer ran this 24 essay series between October 5, 1787 and November 24, 1788.

The evils of anarchy have been portrayed with all the imagery of language in the growing colors of eloquence; the affrighted mind is thence led to clasp the

new Constitution as the instrument of deliverance, as the only avenue to safety and happiness. To avoid the possible and transitory evils of one extreme, it is seduced into the certain and permanent misery necessarily attendant on the other. A state of anarchy from its very nature can never be of long continuance; the greater its violence the shorter the duration. Order and security are immediately sought by the distracted people beneath the shelter of equal laws and the salutary restraints of regular government; and if this be not attainable, absolute power is assumed by the one, or a few, who shall be the most enterprising and successful. If anarchy, therefore, were the inevitable consequence of rejecting the new Constitution, it would be infinitely better to incur it, for even then there would be at least the chance of a good government rising out of licentiousness. But to rush at once into despotism because there is a bare possibility of anarchy ensuing from the rejection, or from what is yet more visionary, the small delay that would be occasioned by a revision and correction of the proposed system of government is so superlatively weak, so fatally blind, that it is astonishing any person of common understanding should suffer such an imposition to have the least influence on his judgment; still more astonishing that so flimsy and deceptive a doctrine should make converts among the enlightened freemen of America, who have so long enjoyed the blessings of liberty. But when I view among such converts men otherwise pre-eminent it raises a blush for the weakness of humanity that these, her brightest ornaments, should be so dim-sighted to what is self-evident to most men, that such imbecility of judgment should appear where so much perfection was looked for. This ought to teach us to depend more on our own judgment and the nature of the case than upon the opinions of the greatest and best of men, who, from constitutional infirmities or particular situations, may sometimes view an object through a delusive medium; but the opinions of great men are more frequently the dictates of ambition or private interest.

The source of the apprehensions of this so much dreaded anarchy would upon investigation be found to arise from the artful suggestions of designing men, and not from a rational probability grounded on the actual state of affairs. The least reflection is sufficient to detect the fallacy to show that there is no one circumstance to justify the prediction of such an event. On the contrary a short time will evince, to the utter dismay and confusion of the conspirators, that a

perseverance in cramming down their scheme of power upon the freemen of this State [Pennsylvania] will inevitably produce an anarchy destructive of their darling domination, and may kindle a flame prejudicial to their safety. They should be cautious not to trespass too far on the forbearance of freemen when wresting their dearest concerns, but prudently retreat from the gathering storm.

Anti-Federalist No. 16, Europeans Admire and Federalists Decry the Present System

"ALFRED" defended the Articles of Confederation, taken from The New-York Journal, December 25, 1787 as reprinted from the [Philadelphia] Independent Gazetteer.

15 December 1787 by Alfred

To the real PATRIOTS of America: ... America is now free. She now enjoys a greater portion of political liberty than any other country under heaven. How long she may continue so depends entirely upon her own caution and wisdom. If she would look to herself more, and to Europe less, I am persuaded it would tend to promote her felicity. She possesses all the advantages which characterize a rich country – rich within herself, she ought less to regard the politics, the manufactures, and the interests of distant nations.

When I look to our situation – climate, extent, soil, and its productions, rivers, ports; when I find I can at this time purchase grain, bread, meat, and other necessities of life at as reasonable a rate as in any country; when I see we are sending great quantities of tobacco, wheat and flour to England and other parts of the globe beyond the Atlantic; when I get on the other side of the western mountains, and see an extensive country, which for its multitude of rivers and fertility of soil is equal, if not superior, to any other whatever when I see these things, I cannot be brought to believe that America is in that deplorable ruined condition which some designing politicians represent; or that we are in a state of anarchy beyond redemption, unless we adopt, without any addition or amendment, the new constitution proposed by the late convention; a constitution which, in my humble opinion, contains the seeds and scions of slavery and despotism. When the volume of American constitutions [by John Adams] first made its appearance in Europe, we find some of the most eminent political writers of the present age, and the reviewers of literature, full of admiration and declaring they had never before seen so much good sense, freedom, and real wisdom in one publication. Our good friend Dr. [Richard] Price was charmed, and almost prophesied the near approach of the happy days

of the millennium. We have lived under these constitutions; and, after the experience of a few years, some among us are ready to trample them under their feet, though they have been esteemed, even by our enemies, as “pearls of great price.”

Let us not, ye lovers of freedom, be rash and hasty. Perhaps the real evils we labor under do not arise from these systems. There may be other causes to which our misfortunes may be properly attributed. Read the American constitutions, and you will find our essential rights and privileges well guarded and secured. May not our manners be the source of our national evils? May not our attachment to foreign trade increase them? Have we not acted imprudently in exporting almost all our gold and silver for foreign luxuries? It is now acknowledged that we have not a sufficient quantity of the precious metals to answer the various purposes of government and commerce; and without a breach of charity, it may be said, that this deficiency arises from the want of public virtue, in preferring private interest to every other consideration.

If the states had in any tolerable degree been able to answer the requisitions of Congress — if the continental treasury had been so far assisted, as to have enabled us to pay the interest of our foreign debt — possibly we should have heard little, very little about a new system of government. It is a just observation that in modern times money does everything. If a government can command this unum necessarium from a certain revenue, it may be considered as wealthy and respectable; if not, it will lose its dignity, become inefficient and contemptible. But cannot we regulate our finances and lay the foundations for a permanent and certain revenue, without undoing all that we have done, without making an entire new government? The most wise and philosophic characters have bestowed on our old systems the highest encomiums. Are we sure this new political phenomenon will not fail? If it should fail, is there not a great probability, that our last state will be worse than the first? Orators may declaim on the badness of the times as long as they please, but I must tell them that the want of public virtue, and the want of money, are two of the principal sources of our grievances; and if we are under the pressure of these wants, it ought to teach us frugality — to adopt a frugal administration of public affairs....

ALFRED