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they perceive the necessity, or expedience, of any one amendment, or alteration, which hath yet been proposed.

That you are attached to the trial by jury; that you value, as you ought, the freedom of the press; that you are averse from those fetters, with which superstition and bigotry would enslave the mind,—all this I steadfastly believe.—That the most inestimable mode of trial is done away; and that the privilege of declaring and publishing your opinions, and the right of worshiping God in your own way, depend on a speedy revising of the system, is what no true federalist, that I know of, has ever yet admitted.

The particulars alluded to, constitute, as I am told, the "capital" objections of men, who would embrace the system with only its less material faults. They must permit me to make some few remarks on a subject which, although trite and hackneyed, appears not yet fully understood—

If congress can claim no authority, independent of the constitution, and yet enjoys absolute unlimited power; for what purpose, in the name of common sense, and common sense were particular powers enumerated and defined?

The constitution, I conceive, is a compact, according to which a number of states have consented to be governed, for the purpose of common defence and general welfare.

If the true construction of this compact allow congress the right of legislating in all cases whatever, he that would now restrain that absolute power no further, than by preventing it from abolishing the trial by jury, shackling the press, and establishing a national church, would allow them far greater authority, than any sound federal exponent, I have yet heard, or perused.

Allow not declamation and sophistry to bewilder your minds. Read carefully the constitution, and rely upon this,—that it requires no depth of science to discover the meaning of a contract.—A form of government, being no more than a general agreement, entered into by each member of society, must be construed, like other agreements, according to the plain common acceptance of the words—

Suppose then an agreement between two men for the sale of property from one to the other.—The vendor would be thought ridiculous in the last degree, should he suppose it necessary to except and reserve in the deed that part of his property, about which there was no bargain at all.—Suppose him to be seized of four tracts of land, and intending to convey only the first.—It would be a strange mode of effecting his intent, should the deed convey generally the whole of his real estate, except the three tracts therein described: The deed ought certainly to pursue the common mode of conveyancing, that is, it should do no more than convey the first tract by express words, describing it, according to course and distance, or metes and bounds. I demand whether such a deed would give the slightest pretext for the vendee to claim the other three tracts?

In like manner, my fellow-citizens, the constitution, or agreement of the whole people of America, is the only thing, which creates the powers of congress; when it enumerates and defines those powers; when it contains no general clause, which, by the most strained construction, can confer unlimited authority; is it possible, a man of common sense will believe, that congress may *rightfully* exercise power, not mentioned, or even alluded to, by the enumeration?

I say *rightfully*; because if you will suppose congress wicked enough to contravene the plain meaning of the compact, and to usurp authority, under an arbitrary construction, you ought not to suffer congress, or any other body of men, to legislate for America. But, if you will have a legislative body for these United States, it can make only one difference, whether you say to them in effect—"Thus far may you legislate." Or whether you say thus—"Do as you shall think best, provided you deprive us not of the trial by jury, abridge the freedom of religion, restrain the press, levy more than a reasonable proportion on the poll, &c. &c. &c.—The convention adopted the former mode of conferring the powers of government; and they did right. When men are conferring particular definite powers, they consider cautiously every thing, which may be done under those powers; but when men confer general power, limited only by express reservations and exceptions, they may probably omit such exceptions, as may afterwards be found material.

I have spoken thus far with respect to the necessity of amendments.

To men of extreme caution, who say, that amendments are expedient to quiet apprehension, (and such indeed is the language of more than one state convention,) I propose these simple questions.

May not the first congress remove every plausible or rational objection; and cure every uneasy scruple of the most timid mind, by a solemn declaration, to be entered on its journal, and deposited in all the archives of America?

Is it not probable, that a wise federal congress will immediately adopt this method of at once blasting opposition?

Would a declaration like this be held less sacred than a bill of rights, ingrafted on the constitution?

I mean not, that the declaration, in any manner, should be repugnant to the constitution.—I mean only, that it should explain, according to the ideas of the best and wisest federal men, those parts (if any) which are dubious, or "broad" enough to afford pretext for arbitrary power.

Will it not be early enough to appoint a general convention, and thereby set all things afloat on a wild tempestuous sea, when the first congress shall have failed of performing that, which every rational federalist expects and requires?

I shall not waste time, in urging a consideration, which hath often been suggested, and never once been answered.

The best body of men, America ever produced, an assembly of its heroes, patriots and sages, devoted many months, to the most laborious and painful investigation of truth; seeking light from the precious remains of antiquity; adverting to the experience of more modern times; contemplating our own hasty institutions, and the evils resulting from their defects; above all attending to documents of the various interests of the states, with the manners, customs, habits and opinions, of a people, spread over this great and extended continent. Is it then conceivable, that an illiterate demagogue, or even the most sagacious theorist, shall be able to point out with certainty, and correct, the errors of their system? And if that body of men be capable of betraying their country, is it likely, that another general convention, chosen under the most unfavourable auspices, will be more zealous to preserve your rights, and promote your welfare.—Away then with the baneful project of a revival! Or wait, till time and experience shall demonstrate the defects and mistakes!

If with a proper frame of mind, you will attend to the foregoing considerations, I am persuaded you will have no difficulty in concluding aright. You will perceive that the men, who are steadfast for a fair essay of the government, and the sticklers for an immediate revision, compose two distinct separate classes, as distant from each other in their wishes, as "Heaven is from earth."—The leaders of the latter appear well apprised of the efficacy of names. They abhor a well known appellation. They once even contended for the name of "federalists," and wished much to distinguish the friends of government by that of "confederators." They attempt now to introduce new epithets, and assume to themselves, with humility, the distinction of "democratic," giving at the same time a more odious epithet to a vast majority of their fellow-citizens. For my part, I shall persist, for some time to come, in the use of well known appellations.—The vices indeed of a democracy, too frequent assemblies of the people, inflammatory harangues, popular rumours, violent proceedings, hasty decisions, are all favourable to their views. In what manner they are truly "democratic," or how far their opposition manifests their attachment to the first great principle of a democracy, they ought themselves to explain. This business, however, I presume, they will not, in a body, undertake. For, although nothing can be more strict than their union, their ideas of a federal constitution, or one government to pervade thirteen subsisting states, are no less discordant than their tempers and dispositions.

To denominate a vast majority of the people "aristocratic" is indecent and absurd. Can they point out in the constitution any one feature of an aristocracy?—It establishes no permanent hereditary rank, no discrimination amongst citizens.—No dignity, office, emolument or right, is confined to the "wealthy, or well-born," nor can they shew a possible interest, which any one man has in supporting the constitution, which is not common to men of all ranks, orders and denominations, to whom any regular efficient government is at all suitable. They speak of the hopes of office; and individuals will undoubtedly look forward to office under governments of every kind. But to pretend, that the government has been adopted from this general expectation, is truly contemptible. No! my fellow-citizens, the restoration of national honour; security against foreign foes; an exemption from civil war; the regular administration of justice; a remedy against all the danger and horrors of anarchy and confusion; these are the blessings expected generally from the new constitution.

In the state of Pennsylvania the contest is happily over. The FEDERALISTS there saw the necessity of union to counteract union. At a general meeting they therefore agreed on a ticket, or a list of characters, to be supported with all their powers, at the ensuing election. It is not conceivable, that the same eight men should be preferred to all others by twice as many thousands. But the thousands contemplated the common object.—They had prudence to perceive, that it was attainable only by concord and harmony; and that the union of thousands could not exist without mutual sacrifices of opinion. They have reaped the fruit of their wisdom, and their ticket has most honourably prevailed.

The choice of representatives to congress and electors of the presidents should be as diligently attended to by the citizens of each state, as if each state solely possessed the appointment. It is not wholly improbable, that the elections in this state may be decisive. Whether the most refined mode of electing representatives has been adopted, I shall not presume to say. With surprise and with sorrow I perceived, during the last session of assembly, nearly an equal division on all momentous questions, relative to the new government. To recapitulate, or comment on, the proceedings in the house, is neither my wish nor intent. I respect the character of delegate. I know what is due to the whole body; and shall never presume to censure publicly, but on the greatest occasions, and on the most thorough conviction. At this time I only remark, that, at meetings, out of the house, each division agreed on a ticket.—I will not say that the federal ticket for representatives has met my entire approbation. It was not on the whole agreeable to a single man concerned in its formation. The thing was impossible. And yet, though I neither attended their meetings, nor agreed to their ticket, I shall most certainly support it, so far as my suffrage and small influence shall extend.

It is ridiculous for any single man to imagine, that his ideas can be fully carried into effect. As however

all things may depend on a proper representation from this state, and as I am satisfied that each man named in the ticket is straight in his principles, and respectable for his character; I consider it my duty, as a good citizen, to acquiesce; notwithstanding my predilection for others who are less known to the public than to me.

I conjure you again, my fellow-citizens, by all the ties which bind you to your country, to consider dispassionately the subjects of this address. You will be told, that it is an insult for any set of men to prescribe; that the formation of a ticket is an attempt to encroach on the freedom of election; that you should make a determined point of treating it with contempt. You will be told, that a man's own *selling merits*, "unconnected with tickets" should be the most powerful advocate; that you should compare the several candidates, and prefer those whom in your conscience you shall think the best qualified.

You will be told this, and a great deal more by men who will pursue a far different line of conduct; by men, who at this moment may be meditating the disappointment of Europe, as well as America in the choice of a president.—Their reasoning is fallacious, and they mean, either that you shall throw away your votes, or do *ill better for their purpose*, by voting, as they shall openly, or indirectly recommend.

A man, disaffected to the government, in the administration of which he wishes to share, should be obnoxious, in proportion to his abilities. The man likewise, whose sentiments are locked up in the repository of his own breast, deserves not the confidence of either side.—A large share of common sense, experience, tried integrity, strong motives of attachment to his country; these are the right qualifications of men to conduct the government. It requires not *genius*, nor first rate parts, or attainments, to discern the true interests of America.—I have lived long enough to see this subject in the proper point of view. Men of plain common sense and experience see nothing through a false medium. They adapt all their schemes to the nature of things, such as they are; and are seldom disposed to give up substance for shadow. Ambition, that never failing attendant on splendid talents, makes them much seldomer a blessing than a curse to their country. If in a statesman they be joined to a good heart, how often do they suggest brilliant projects, the success of which gives rather the shew than the reality of public good. If they be united with a depravity of soul, the perpetual succession of schemes, in which every thing must yield to private views, produces, at the best, a dreadful disorder in the state, and wretchedness to individuals.—Is there not at least an inconsistency in speaking at one time of the danger that awaits us from congress degenerating into an aristocracy, and, at another time, recommending to your confidence the very men, who on all accounts may be most likely to sacrifice the rights of citizens, and the dearest interests of their country, on the unallowed altars of ambition, avarice and revenge.

You have been lately warned of a design, which one might almost imagine to have been formed in a concave of demons. To prefer a leader of faction to the saviour of his country! To a comparison between the men what patriot would even condescend. To delineate the character of one would be a rash and needless attempt. It is engraven on your hearts; and the bare sound of his name calls forth ideas more lively, than all other words can convey.

There is a ticket for electors, which I conceive altogether unexceptionable. If their duty required superior talents, the list might possibly be bettered. If it demanded only dignity of character, the ticket could not, on that account, be rejected. But when their business is to choose presidents; when their essential qualifications are, knowledge of men, integrity and attachment to the federal cause; all which the candidates are known to possess; when they avow their determination of supporting, so far as their powers shall extend, the man against whom his masked enemies dare not utter a wish; how are we to account for the setting up of another ticket? It contains indeed honourable names; but by whom and for what was it framed? Is it intended merely to strengthen their interest? or is it seriously determined to stab the vitals of the government?—A wretch, capable of so damnable a plot, would be the most vehement in disclaiming it. There is indeed no man of my acquaintance, whom I can even strongly suspect. But it is the part of wise men to run no needless hazards; and for giving preference to the last mentioned ticket there can be no possible motive connected with public good.

ARISTIDES.

Annapolis, December 27, 1788

Subjoined are the federal tickets mentioned in the foregoing address.

FEDERAL ELECTORS.

- |                              |         |
|------------------------------|---------|
| William Tilghman,            | } E. S. |
| William Richardson, Colonel, |         |
| William Matthews, Doctor,    |         |
| George Plater, Colonel,      | } W. S. |
| John Rogers, Chancellor,     |         |
| Alexander Contee Hanon,      |         |
| Philip Thomas, Doctor,       |         |
| Robert Smith, Attorney.      |         |

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVES.

- |                          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Michael Stone,           | } E. and |
| Joshua Seney,            |          |
| Benjamin Contee,         |          |
| William Smith, Merchant, |          |
| George Galt,             |          |
| Daniel Carroll,          | } W. S.  |