

Samuel Bryan to Aedanus Burke, Philadelphia, post 5 December 1789

. . . When the federal constitution was proposed to the people the Desire of increasing the powers of Congress was great & this Object had a mighty Influence in its Favor. The popularity of Genl. W. & Doctor Franklin had still more. The people in the Towns who depended, in any Measure, on Trade, expected great Relief from it. The Gentlemen of the late Army, & the Tools of Aristocracy were loud in its Support;-- and as the chief Opposition to it was believed to arise from such as belonged to the Constitutional Party, the whole Body of the old Tories, a numerous & wealthy Sett of Men, joined in its support. There is too much Reason to believe that some men among us had deeper Views than they chose to declare & wished a Government even less popular than the one proposed; but in Pennsylvania they had been very reserved on this Head. The Opposition was very powerful & their language was for adopting the Constitution & procuring Amendments afterwards. . . .

The Parties Manes, before the Convention sat, were Whigs & Tories, which Names were wearing out;-- and Constitutionalists & those who called themselves Republicans who were also called Aristocrats & Anticonstitutionalists. In this last class were included most of the Merchants, most of the monied Men, most of the Gentlemen in the late Army & many of the Mob in the Towns.

The Names of Federalists or Federal Men grew up at New York & in the eastern States, some Time before the Calling of the Convention, to denominate such as were attached to the general Support of the United States, in Opposition to who preferred local & particular Advantages, such as those who opposed the five per Cent Duty or who with held their Quotas of Contribution to the general Treasury of the United States. This Name was taken possession of by those who were in favor of the new federal government as they called it & the opposers were called Antifederalists. . . .

. . . Those in Opposition seemed to have had no Preconcert, nor any Suspicion of what was coming forward. The same Objections were made in different Parts of the Continent, almost at the same Time, merely as they were obviously dictated by the Subject. Local Ideas seemed to have entered very little into the Objections. . . .

. . . The Evidence of a preconcerted System, in those who were called Federalists, appears rather from the Effort than from any certain Knowledge before hand. The thing however must have been easy to them from their Situation in the great Towns & many of them being wealthy Men & Merchants, who have continual Correspondence with each other.

Cite as: *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America*, ed. Charlene Bickford, et al. (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1986) Vol. 17, pp. 1732-34, <http://adh.sc.edu> [Accessed, 27 February 2013]